

15) Describe the following:

a. The indications that someone might be a danger to themselves or others.

b. What action you should take if you suspect that someone might be a danger to themselves or others.

Mental illness is a tough topic, and one we don't talk about enough. Unfortunately, suicide is among the leading causes of death in the United States, and is especially prevalent among young people. But what does that have to do with first aid?

Like a wound, fracture, or cardiac arrest, the desire to harm oneself or others is a medical emergency — and one that you can help with until medical care is reached. There are many possible indications that someone may be at risk, and we recommend this article from [the Cleveland Clinic](#) for a full list. Here are a few key themes to notice:

- **A traumatic event.** If someone has recently experienced a major loss or trauma, they may be more likely to be suicidal.
- **Sadness and despair.** If someone seems depressed, it's important to show them support. It is especially concerning if they express a feeling of complete hopelessness or despair.
- **Sudden calmness.** Someone who has been depressed or moody and decides to harm themselves may become calm because they feel at peace with their decision. In other words, a sudden improvement is actually a cause for concern.
- **Changes in behavior.** This is a broad category, but it might include someone becoming more reckless, caring less about their appearance, hurting themselves, or withdrawing from others.
- **Putting their affairs in order.** Someone planning to end their life may start giving away their possessions, making a will, etc.
- **Talking about suicide.** This may seem obvious, but talking about a desire to die is a major warning sign. Not everyone who talks about harming themselves or others will do so, but their words should still be taken very seriously.

If you suspect that someone may be a danger to themselves or others, it is important to get help. **If anyone is in immediate danger, call 911.** If you are concerned that danger is present but it is not immediate, you can call or text 988 or chat at [988lifeline.org](https://www.988lifeline.org) for guidance. Anyone experiencing a mental health crisis can also use these lifeline resources.

In severe situations, if it is possible and safe for you to do so, stay with the person who is in distress. Do what you can to remove their access to dangerous things like knives or medications they could use to overdose. **With the help of the 988 lifeline, try to connect them with a mental health professional.**

In less severe situations — for example, if you are concerned that a friend seems to be down — make sure that the person knows there is support available. Offer to be a listening ear. **Encourage them to connect with a mental health professional while remaining nonjudgmental and expressing that you are there for them.**