

September 10, 2009

Suicide Prevention Day – understanding suicide and knowing how to help

September 10 marks Suicide Prevention Day, an internationally recognized event designed to raise awareness and dispel some of the myths related to suicide.

Suicide affects people of all ages and genders. Suicide is a preventable tragedy that starts with learning how to recognize the signs that someone may be suicidal. Although not all people show warning signs, most suicidal people show signs of their distress. Being aware of these signs can help someone identify and talk to a person at risk.

“There are many different warning signs and being aware of them is an important step in helping to prevent suicide,” said Dr. Michael Trew, Senior Medical Director, Addiction and Mental Health, Alberta Health Services. “Talking to someone who may be suicidal does not put the idea in their head. In fact, being able to openly discuss suicide lets the person know you care and can make a difference.”

Some of the suicide warning signs include:

- Talking about suicide or a plan
- Making statements about hopelessness, helplessness or worthlessness
- Showing a loss of interest in pleasurable activities
- Personality changes
- Becoming cheerful after a period of depression, which may mean the individual has already made the decision to escape their problems through suicide.

“Suicidal people are in pain and want their pain to end, but do not necessarily want to die,” says Dr. Trew. “Talking about suicide provides a clearer picture of how the person feels so they can get the help they need.”

If you or someone you know needs help, please call:

- HEALTHLink Alberta 1-866-408-LINK (5465)

Alberta Health Services is the provincial health authority responsible for planning and delivering health supports and services for more than 3.5 million adults and children living in Alberta. Its mission is to provide a patient-focused, quality health system that is accessible and sustainable for all Albertans.

- 30 -

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