

# SUICIDE PREVENTION

Hope When Life Seems Hopeless



## June Hunt



HOPE  
for the Heart

**#1 FABLE: “Never talk about suicide with deeply depressed people—it could give them ideas.”<sup>7</sup>**

▶ **FACT:** Asking about what someone is feeling doesn’t create suicidal thoughts. You can assume that most depressed or very anxious people have given some thought to taking their lives. Demystify the subject by talking about suicide. Ask questions such as:

- “What do you think about suicide?”
- “Do your friends talk about it?”
- “Do you know anyone who has died of suicide?”
- “Would you ever take your own life?”

▶ For a person considering suicide, having someone to talk with can be a powerful preventive. The Bible says ...

*“The wise in heart are called discerning, and pleasant words promote instruction.”*  
(Proverbs 16:21)

**#2 FABLE: “People who talk about killing themselves never do it.”**

▶ **FACT:** Of those who took their own lives, approximately 75% gave clues or warnings to friends or family. Take any threat of suicide seriously. Someone who talks about suicide gives others the opportunity to intervene. God’s Word says ...

*“Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.”* (Ephesians 4:2)

## WHAT IS the Path of Potential Suicide?

Every sheep needs a shepherd. It's a life-and-death matter. When a sheep crosses a stream, if its wool coat becomes saturated with water, the top-heavy sheep topples over. The sheep is said to be "cast down." Without the aid of a shepherd, this sheep literally cannot stand up. Soon the sheep will die.

If you become so heavy-laden that you fall with the weight you are carrying, you too need the Shepherd—you need a strong hand to help you up—for it, too, could be a matter of life or death for you. The psalmist, who clearly understood tragedy and despair, wrote these graphic words:

**“Why are you downcast, O my soul?  
Why so disturbed within me?  
Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise  
him, my Savior and my God.”  
(Psalm 42:11)**

Be aware of the three stages of being “cast down.”<sup>14</sup>

### **Three Stages of Potential Suicide**

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#### **1 DOWNCAST: Early Stage**

- Dejection
- Change in eating and sleeping habits
- Avoidance of family
- Decline in work or school performance
- Anxiety
- Inability to concentrate or make decisions

- Boredom
- Lack of interest in the future

*“I remember my affliction and my wandering, the bitterness and the gall. I well remember them, and my soul is downcast within me.”*  
(Lamentations 3:19–20)

## **2** DISTRESSED: Advanced Stage

- Depression
- Withdrawal from family and friends
- Rapid mood swings
- Physical problems, self injury, anorexia
- Self-pity
- Excessive absences from work or school
- Either apathy or anger
- Neglect of personal appearance

*“Trouble and distress have come upon me. ... Be merciful to me, O Lord, for I am in distress; my eyes grow weak with sorrow, my soul and my body with grief.”* (Psalm 119:143; Psalm 31:9)

## **3** DESPAIRING: Danger Stage

- Hopelessness
- Giving away personal possessions
- Deep remorse
- Suicidal threats or previous attempts
- Abusing alcohol/drugs

- Organizing personal affairs: making a will, paying off debts
- Isolation or morose behavior
- Sudden change from depression to cheerfulness (being at peace with the decision of suicide)

*“The cords of the grave coiled around me; the snares of death confronted me.” (2 Samuel 22:6)*

Note: If you are experiencing any of these physical or emotional problems, be sure to consult your health care professional.

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## HOW TO Present “The Contract”

The most essential lifeline you can provide to a suicidal struggler is HOPE. Even if you feel inadequate to become involved with someone who is suicidal, God may draw you into that person’s life to be a reflection of His love. Consider such a divine encounter to be a candle of hope to someone living in darkness. Jesus said ...

**“Let your light shine before men,  
that they may see your good deeds and  
praise your Father in heaven.”  
(Matthew 5:16)**

### **Where There’s Life, There’s HOPE!**

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*“We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure.” (Hebrews 6:19)*

### **HONESTLY CONFRONT**

- ▶ Take all talk of death and suicide seriously. Repeat back what was said: *“I’m hearing you say life’s not worth living. Is that right?”*
- ▶ Identify with their pain and express your concern. *“That must feel painfully empty. I want you to know I care about your pain!”*
- ▶ Ask these direct questions: *“Are you thinking about harming yourself? How? Do you have a plan?”*
- ▶ Seek to find out what problem is causing the pain. Ask, *“What has been so painful that you don’t want to live?”*

The Bible explains this compassionate approach:

**“The purposes of a man’s heart are deep waters, but a man of understanding draws them out.”  
(Proverbs 20:5)**

## **O**FFER OPTIONS

- ▶ Acknowledge the fact that life is hard.
- ▶ Point out that choices in life often consist of unpleasant possibilities.
- ▶ List possible options on a sheet of paper.
- ▶ Rank the options in order of preference.
- ▶ Communicate God’s purposes for suffering. One purpose, for example, is to develop compassion: *“Many people are hurting just like you are. They feel desperately alone, assuming that no one understands their pain. You know what it’s like to hurt. Your personal pain enables you to have a ministry of compassion. You are being prepared right now to be a lifeline of hope for someone else who feels hopeless.”* When you speak with kindness and compassion, you reflect the wisdom of God’s Word.

**“As God’s chosen people,  
holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves  
with compassion, kindness, humility,  
gentleness and patience.”  
(Colossians 3:12)**

## **P**RESENT A CONTRACT (SEE PAGE 81)

- ▶ Build a relationship by showing your care and willingness to help.
- ▶ Ask if the person would be willing to make a contract with you. *“Will you promise that if you are considering harming yourself, you will call me before doing anything?”*
- ▶ Be sure to obtain a signature.
- ▶ Make a commitment to stay in contact.

**“Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.”  
(Galatians 6:2)**

## **E**NLIST HELP

- ▶ Encourage the person to have a physical checkup.
- ▶ Seek a trained counselor or therapist.
- ▶ Call a minister.
- ▶ Contact the Suicide Crisis Center in your city (area).
- ▶ Help make arrangements for hospitalization.

**“Plans fail for lack of counsel,  
but with many advisers they succeed.”  
(Proverbs 15:22)**



## **My Contract of HOPE**

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The following is a solemn binding contract. This contract cannot be declared null and void without the written agreement of both parties.

*I promise that if I should consider harming myself, I will talk with you before I do anything destructive.*

*I sign my name as a pledge of my integrity.*

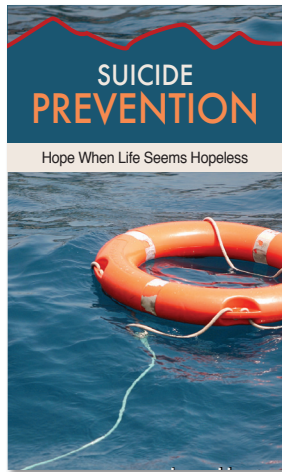
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**“Anyone who is among the living has hope.”  
(Ecclesiastes 9:4)**

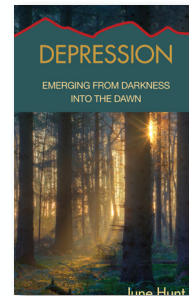


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## Suicide Prevention: Hope When Life Seems Hopeless [Hope For The Heart Series]

Nothing is as heart-breaking as a loved one who has lost hope and is contemplating suicide. A person who seems cheerful one day can slip into despair and hopelessness the next. God's heart is tender and full of compassion toward those experiencing deep pain. Prevention requires compassion toward the sufferer, along with practical steps and biblical assurance of God's love. *Suicide Prevention* covers the steps to identifying and preventing suicide using a Christian approach. You'll learn how to better reflect God's heart to help those hurting, and you'll gain practical insight on what to say and what to do as you reach out to a suicidal loved one.

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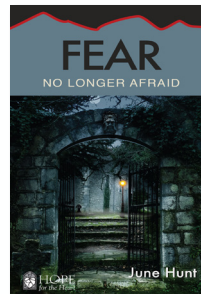


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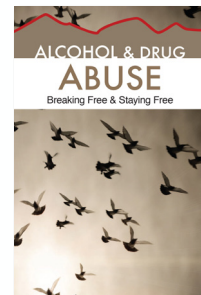


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