



Know! You Are Not Alone

May is Mental Health Month and the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) is spreading the message: *You Are Not Alone*. Now more than ever, people need to know they're not alone. There is an especially urgent need to raise awareness on the importance of mental health, as anxiety, depression, and thoughts of suicide have skyrocketed since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

As we are all aware, sheltering-in-place and social distancing went into effect to reduce human contact and slow the spread of the virus. According to a report in the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA), while these efforts have been successful in flattening the curve, they have unfortunately brought about some devastating secondary consequences that increase the risk for depression and suicide, including:

- Economic stress
- Social isolation
- Barriers to mental health treatment
- Illness and medical problems
- Outcomes of national anxiety
- Increase in suicide rates for health care professionals
- Increase in firearm sales (number one method of suicide in the U.S.)

It is not human nature to isolate or socially distance oneself from others. Fortunately, many people are reaching out for help. One resource people are turning to is the [Disaster Distress Helpline](#), a national hotline dedicated to providing immediate crisis counseling for people who are experiencing emotional distress related to any natural or human-caused disaster. According to a CNN report, in

March 2020, [the helpline saw a 338% increase in call volume compared with February 2020](#). And compared to last year for the month of March, they had an 891% increase of calls.

Suicide has been on the rise for the past two decades. It is the second leading cause of death among 15 to 24-year-olds and more than 9.4 million adults in the United States report having had serious thoughts of suicide within the past 12 months. Keep in mind, these numbers are prior to the various economic, psychological, and health-associated changes that COVID-19 has introduced.

Some are calling this pandemic the perfect storm for increased suicides because so many negative factors are striking all at once. The risk is even higher for those already dealing with mental health issues. It is critically important to check in on your children regularly, as well as other family members and friends regarding their mental well-being. You must also take into consideration your own mental health, and be aware of the warning signs of suicide. If someone you know is showing one or more of the following behaviors, he or she may be thinking about suicide. Do not ignore these warning signs. Get help immediately.

- Talking about wanting to die or to kill oneself
- Looking for a way to kill oneself
- Talking about feeling hopeless or having no reason to live
- Talking about feeling trapped or in unbearable pain
- Talking about being a burden to others
- Increasing the use of alcohol or drugs
- Acting anxious or agitated
- Behaving recklessly
- Sleeping too little or too much
- Withdrawing or feeling isolated
- Showing rage or talking about seeking revenge
- Displaying extreme mood swings

Remember, you are not alone. If you or someone you know needs help, please call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255). Trained crisis workers are available to talk 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Or, get help from the Crisis Text Line by texting 4hope to 741 741 or call the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services' COVID CareLine at 1-800-720-9616.

If you think someone is in immediate danger, do not leave that person alone—stay there or stay connected and call 911.

For more information visit National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at suicidepreventionlifeline.org.

Sources

[Amanda Jackson, CNN: A crisis mental-health hotline has seen an 891% spike in calls. April 10, 2020. National Suicide Prevention Lifeline.](#)

[Reger MA, Stanley IH, Joiner TE. Suicide Mortality and Coronavirus Disease 2019—A Perfect Storm? JAMA Psychiatry. Published online April 10, 2020. doi:10.1001/jamapsychiatry.2020.1060.](#)

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