

Suicide Prevention Week 2017

#BeThe1To Know the Signs. Find the Words. Reach Out.



Each Mind Matters: California's Mental Health Movement supports that suicide prevention matters!



suicideispreventable.org

Don't Drive Like My Brother!

Sound familiar? “Car Talk” is the highly popular long-running radio show hosted by two brothers who dispense colorful advice to callers to help them solve their car problems. Imagine for a moment a similar show where men – and those who care about them – called in every Sunday morning to ask how to tune up their mental health, to keep their emotions from overheating, or their mind running smoothly?

Traditionally, men are raised to be self-sufficient, tough, and to protect their family and property. But what happens when the strong protector needs help? Fear of appearing weak or vulnerable, being unable to meet responsibilities or serve the role they expect of themselves can lead men to feel that they are a burden and that those around them might be better off if they ended their life. Men are less likely than women to reach out to mental health professionals or even to talk about their problems with doctors, family members, and friends.

To compound this, the signs of suicide among men are easily misinterpreted. Their despair may be concealed by stoicism, recklessness, drug or alcohol abuse, excessive working, isolation, irritability, anger or resentment. This can have the effect of further isolating men from those around them, pushing away the very people who would be in the best position to help. Suicidal despair and depression may be also hidden behind behaviors that tend to elicit less sympathy. Many men at risk are involved in the criminal justice system, and have financial or employment problems. They may be having problems with intimate partners, be involved in custody disputes, or be perpetrators of domestic violence.

More than two-thirds of suicides in California were among men, and half of all suicide deaths occurred by firearm. But most suicidal crises are short-lived; putting time and space between a suicidal person and highly lethal means can mean the difference between life and death.

Many men own firearms, especially middle aged and older men, and those who live in rural areas. Legal gun ownership is often closely tied to social and cultural factors, such as recreational activities like hunting and target practice. Gun clubs and shooting ranges can offer excellent opportunities for suicide prevention outreach and education. The Gun Shop Project (GSP) brings together the firearm and public health communities toward the common goal of preventing suicide. The GSP supports firearm dealers and gun range owners in order to know what to look for and how to help a customer who may be at risk.

In 2017 the California Gun Violence Restraining Order (GVRO) law went into effect. It establishes a process to allow law enforcement and/or immediate family members to petition a court to temporarily remove firearms from a person at risk of harm to self or others. The website www.speakforsafety.org outlines the steps in the GVRO process and links to additional information and resources.

How can you help?

Know the Signs. Learn when and how to help someone you are concerned about. Visit www.SuicidelsPreventable.org to learn the warning signs, how to have a conversation with someone you're concerned about, and to find resources in your area.

You are not alone, there is help. The [Suicide Prevention Lifeline](http://www.SuicidePreventionLifeline.org) (1-800-273-8255) is available 24/7, in Spanish and English and other languages, and with special services if you are a veteran or concerned about one. Chat services are also offered. Through Lifeline you or your loved one can be connected to a trained counselor who can help.

Trust your feelings. If you think something might be wrong, don't hesitate to ask your friend or loved one if he is considering ending his life. Be persistent and don't give up. You won't put the idea in his head or make his situation worse by letting him know he is important to you, that you care and you want to help.

If you recognize that your own depression and thoughts of suicide are starting to overwhelm you, call the Lifeline or talk to a friend. People care about you and will want to support you. It is not a sign of weakness to reach out: it takes strength and courage.

Find out more about resources that have been developed specifically to help men. Man Therapy (www.ManTherapy.org) is an interactive website based in Colorado that provides practical tools for men to assess their mental health and find support. Watch the real stories of men who have struggled with mental health challenges and suicidal feelings, but who found help and overcame their problems.

So, don't drive like my brother! Help the men in your life take care of their mental health the way they take care of their most prized vehicle: with special attention to what's under the hood.