A person may signal any number of warning signs that he or she may be contemplating suicide. Those signals can be verbal and nonverbal expressions, behavioral, or situational.

**Verbal and nonverbal Signs:**
- “I just can’t take it any longer.”
- “I’m no good anyway.”
- “They’d be better off without me.”
- “It doesn’t matter, I’m not going to be here much longer anyway.”
- Artwork with death and suicide themes
- Writing with themes of death and suicide
- Body language that indicates closing down or anxiety

**Behavioral Signs:**
- Depression
- Angry outbursts
- Prior suicide attempts
- Withdrawal or isolation
- Giving away prized possessions
- Use of alcohol and/or other drugs to escape pain
- Neglect of appearance or health
- Sudden and/or extreme changes in sleeping and/or eating patterns
- Changes in work/school attendance/performance
- Self-destructive and risk-taking acts

**Situational Signs:**
- Major loss – of a loved one, home, pet, status, relationship
- A suicide of a friend or family member
- A history of losses
- Life problems that appear to have no solution

**Warning Signs**

**What To Do**
- Tell the person that you are concerned about him or her
- Say what you have noticed that is making you concerned
- LISTEN – don’t give advice, make judgments, or attempt to solve his or her problems – just listen
- Take the problems seriously
- Acknowledge the pain and difficulties
- Tell the person that, for some people, the things you have noticed may be signs that he or she is thinking about suicide.

Ask one of these questions:
- Are you thinking about suicide?
- Are you feeling so bad that you want to die?
- Are you thinking of hurting yourself?
- If the answer is yes, keep asking questions:
  - How are you planning to do it?
  - When are you going to do it?
  - Do you have what you need to do it? (access to drugs, guns, knives, rope, a car)

The more dangerous and definite the plan, the greater the suicide risk.
- Be calm, reassuring, and supportive. Be patient if it takes time, and don’t blame.
- Don’t make promises. Don’t hold a secret that might result in death.
- Talk through some steps that will prevent imminent physical harm. Help work out a plan to ensure ongoing safety. If he or she refuses, seek help: a friend, family member, trusted adult, police, or the Crisisline.
- When the person is safe, find someone to talk to about how it was for you. You too need support. Take care of yourself.

Suicide Prevention & Crisis Service • 124 East Court Street, Ithaca, NY 14850
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www.suicidepreventionandcrisiservice.org
The mission of Suicide Prevention & Crisis Service is to promote constructive responses to crisis and trauma, and to prevent violence to self and others through direct support and community education.