

What Would You Do?

Your Role In Suicide Prevention

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(NAPSA)—Hilda Marie's worst nightmare was unfolding right before her eyes. Teetering at the edge of the platform was a woman poised to jump in front of an oncoming train.

What would you do?

For Hilda, there was no question. She turned to the skills she learned in the eight-hour Mental Health First Aid class she completed. She contacted the station manager to secure help and calmly talked to reassure the woman until help arrived. Her actions saved a life that day.

Mental Health First Aid doesn't teach you to be a therapist. It equips you to recognize signs of distress and guide a person toward appropriate treatments and other supportive health care. It teaches you how to help someone who is in crisis and how to be a support to someone struggling with mental health or substance use disorders.

And as Hilda learned, it also teaches you how to keep a bad situation from becoming a crisis.

Suicide is more common than you think. Someone in this country dies by suicide every 12.8 seconds, according to the most recent statistics from the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention. It could be a daughter struggling with the academic and social pressure of high school or a friend who is going through a divorce or a co-worker who is about to lose his job.

So what do you do if you think someone is considering suicide? Simply put, get a dialogue going. Fast!

Thoughts of suicide are not uncommon but they don't have to be acted upon. Learning how to help people talk about their feelings and reasons for wanting to die may provide a great deal of relief.

- Let the person know that you care and you want to help.
- Stay calm and nonjudgmental.
- Don't avoid using the word "suicide." It will not trigger a person to action.
- Ask questions like "Are you having thoughts of suicide?" and "Are you thinking about killing yourself?"

Unfortunately, we cannot prevent all suicides, but if more of us



You can learn to recognize signs of distress and to support someone struggling with mental health or substance use disorders.

learn what to look for and how to act, each of us can make a difference and maybe save a life.

Steve Andrews knows firsthand the pain of losing someone to suicide, an experience that turned him into an advocate for training people to recognize signs of distress. "I often wonder," he says about his mother's death, "if things could have turned out differently had she and her family and friends been more aware of this illness. Awareness of this illness...will save lives."

His passion for raising awareness of depression and suicide led him to found the Black Dog Ride, a group of Australian motorcyclists who are on a 19-city goodwill tour across the United States that ends October 3. Their mission is to make more Americans aware of depression and suicide prevention, and raise \$200,000 to train people in Mental Health First Aid for first responders and military members.

For more information about suicide prevention or to enroll in a Mental Health First Aid class near you, go to www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/cs/take-a-course.

National Council for Behavioral Health www.thenationalcouncil.org.

The National Council for Behavioral Health is the unifying voice of America's community mental health and addictions treatment organizations. The National Council, the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, and the Missouri Department of Mental Health pioneered Mental Health First Aid in the U.S. and have trained more than 450,000 individuals to connect youths and adults in need to mental health and addictions care in their communities. Donations to the Black Dog Ride, which is targeted to help first responders and military members, can be made online at <http://bit.ly/BlackDogRideUSA>.