
Staff Workshop 1

Understanding Suicide Prevention in Senior Living Communities

What we will learn

The problem of suicide among residents of senior living communities

- How to recognize the warning signs of suicide
- What to do if we think a resident is showing the signs
- How we can promote emotional health of all of our residents

Coping with the issue of suicide

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255). 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

- Employee Assistance Program
- Clergy
- Social Worker
- Community Mental Health Center

Suicidal behavior includes:

- Suicide
- Suicide attempts
- Passive or indirect suicide



Suicide among older adults in the United States

Suicide rates increase with age

- More than 5,000 older adults die by suicide every year
- 80% of these suicides are white men

(Source: CDC. (2005). Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System (WISQARS). National Center for Injury Pre-vention and Control, CDC. Retrieved June, 1, 2009 from <http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/wisqars/default.htm>)

Older adults die more often in a suicide attempt

Young people

100 to 200 attempts: 1 death

Older adults

4 attempts: 1 death

(Source: American Association of Suicidology. (2009). 2006 official final data. Retrieved May 14, 2009 from <http://www.suicidology.org/web/guest/stats-and-tools/statistics>)

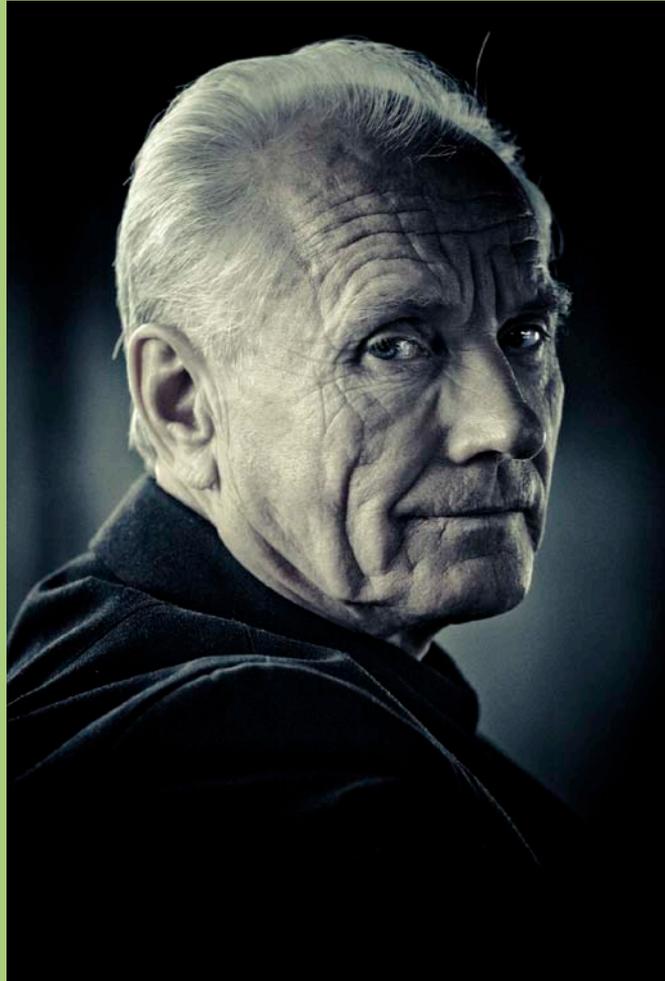
Suicide and suicide attempts in senior living communities

- Little is known
- Residents may have many risk factors for suicide
- Common means: jumping from building, hanging, cutting, and overdoses

Mrs. Smith



Mr. Jones



Two Questions:

1. Could we have known that Mrs. Smith and Mr. Jones would attempt suicide?
2. Can we do anything to prevent other suicides and suicide attempts?

Mrs. Smith's warning signs

Something seemed out of place...



Mr. Jones' Warning Signs



Warning signs of immediate risk of suicide

Someone...

- Threatening or talking about wanting to kill or hurt him/herself
- Looking for ways to kill him/herself
- Talking or writing about death, dying, or suicide, when this is out of the ordinary for the person

**Someone threatening to hurt
him/herself,
or talking about wanting to hurt
or kill him/herself may say:**

- “I’m going to kill myself.”
- “I’m going to end it all.”
- “I just want to die.”

Someone looking for ways to kill him/herself may:

- Stockpile pills
- Obtain a gun
- Steal a knife
- Refuse food or medicine



Someone talking or writing about death, dying, or suicide may say:

- “Death would solve all my problems.”
- “I wish I were dead.”

Take immediate action if you notice these warning signs

- Threatening or talking about wanting to kill or hurt him/herself
- Looking for ways to kill him/herself by seeking access to firearms, available pills, or other means
- Talking or writing about death, dying or suicide, when this is out of the ordinary for the person

If you see any immediate warning signs:

- Do not leave the resident alone
- Call 911 OR Contact _____ [in this facility]
- Call resident's emergency contact

Other warning signs

- Hopelessness
- Rage, uncontrolled anger, seeking revenge
- Acting reckless or engaging in risky activities, seemingly without thinking
- Feeling trapped - like there's no way out
- Increased alcohol or drug use

Other warning signs (cont.)

- Withdrawing from friends, family, or society
- Anxiety, agitation, unable to sleep or sleeping all the time
- Dramatic changes in mood
- No reason for living; no sense of purpose in life

If you see any of these less immediate warning signs:

- Contact _____ [mental health provider]
- Other: _____

Helping each other recognize and respond to the warning signs

Two volunteers needed



What to do in the event of a suicide death or attempt: *[Example]*

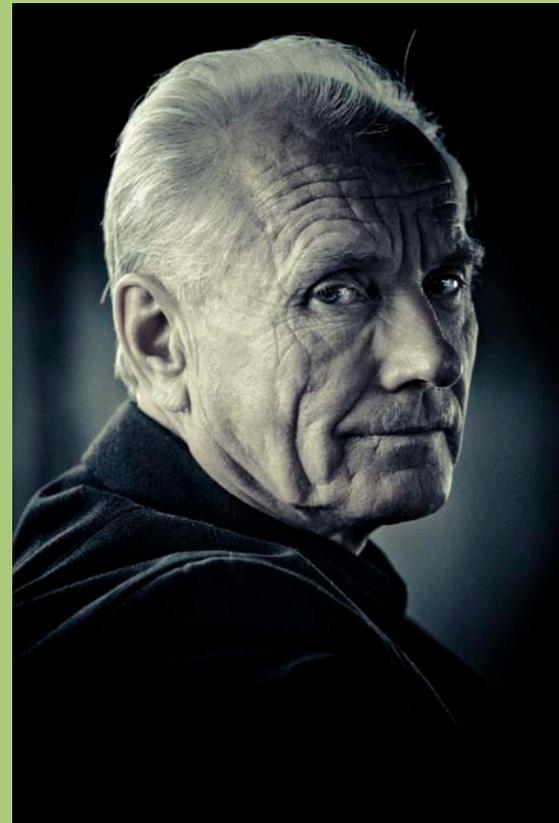
- Call 911
- _____ [*Staff / Department*] notifies resident's family
- _____ [*Staff/ Department*] assists other residents, family, and staff
- _____ [*Staff/ Department*] notifies regulatory authority

What to do after a suicide crisis

- Take care of yourself
- Take care of other residents and staff members
- Take care of residents' families



Mrs. Smith and Mr. Jones



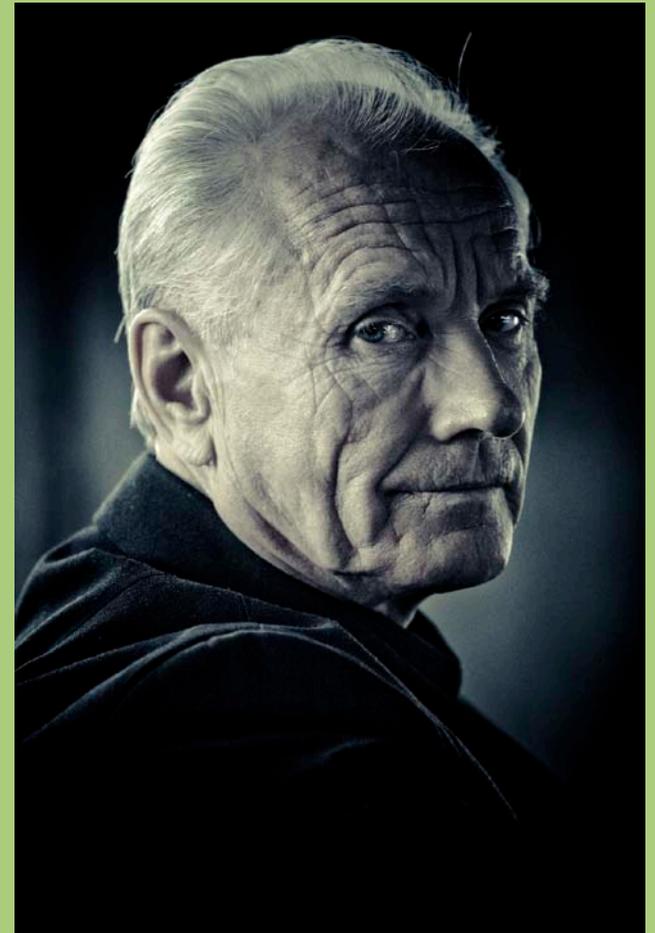
Mrs. Smith

- Suffered from depression
- Didn't leave her room



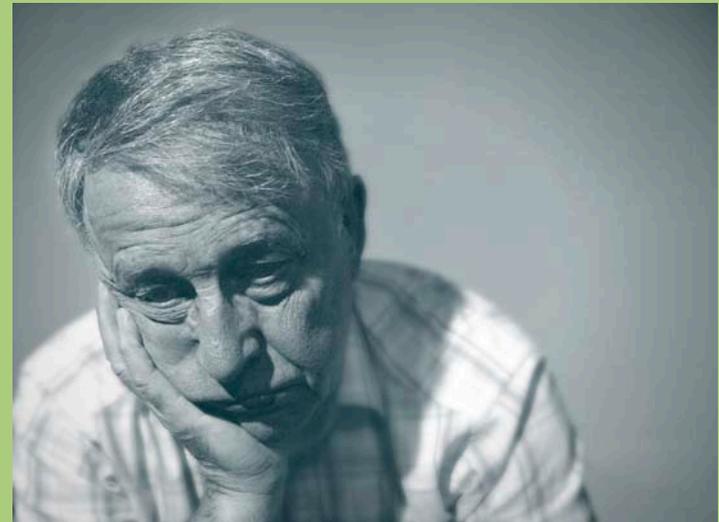
Mr. Jones

- Recently moved to the senior living community
- Wife died
- Stopped socializing
- Did not participate in activities
- Argued with son about money
- Was drinking heavily



Depression

- Depression can contribute to suicide risk.
- We can help residents who are depressed.
- If you think a resident is depressed, you should tell [*staff title*].



Substance abuse

- Alcohol
- Prescription and over-the-counter medication
- If you think a resident has a substance abuse problem, you should tell [*staff title*].



Reducing Suicide Risk



Volunteers needed

Helping Mrs. Williams

Activities help Mrs. Williams:

- Make friends and connections
- Feel good about herself and her life
- Have a sense of purpose



Helping ALL residents

Positive activities help reduce suicide risk among all residents



Reduce suicide risk through connections

- Family and friends
- Staff
- The community



Reduce suicide risk through a positive outlook and a sense of meaning in life



Reduce suicide risk with a positive physical environment

- Pleasant and homelike
- Promotes social connections



Some things to remember:



- Take action if you notice warning signs.
- Depression and suicide are not a normal part of aging.
- There are things we can do every day to help the residents be happier and healthier.



Thank-you!