



## Suicidality and Trauma

Evidence suggests that there is a strong connection between trauma and suicidal behaviors. Results from the National Comorbidity Study found that Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), more than other anxiety disorders, had a strong connection with suicidal thoughts or attempts (Sareen, Houlahan, Cox, & Asmundson, 2005). In addition, research cited by the Department of Veterans Affairs found that exposure to others' suicide is traumatic as well, especially for adolescents and adults (United States Department of Veterans Affairs, 2013). The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (2012) cited risk factors as:

- ⇒ Mental health conditions
- ⇒ Previous suicide attempts
- ⇒ A family history of attempted or completed suicide
- ⇒ Serious medical condition and/or pain

The Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) study (Felitti, 2002) found that those participants with an ACE score (see section on Adverse Childhood Experiences) of 4 were 4.6 times more likely to have depression and 12.2 times more likely to have attempted suicide and at higher ACE scores there was an increase of 30 to 51 times (p. 6). This does not mean that trauma is a life sentence, it means we encounter crisis that we can turn into opportunity if we take the time to learn more about ourselves through peer support and other behavioral health services.

Warning signs of suicidality may include:

- ⇒ Statements that someone wants to die or die by suicide
  - ⇒ Having a specific plan
  - ⇒ Feeling as though they are a burden to others
  - ⇒ Intense anxiety or panic attacks
  - ⇒ Loss of interest in activities
  - ⇒ Distancing from family, friends or other supports
  - ⇒ Acting irritable or agitated
  - ⇒ Behaving recklessly
  - ⇒ Rage or talking about seeking revenge
  - ⇒ Looking for a way to die such as doing internet searches
  - ⇒ Behaviors such as hoarding medications or purchasing a gun
  - ⇒ Feeling trapped, desperate, or wanting to escape a situation that is seen as intolerable
  - ⇒ Increased use of drugs or alcohol
  - ⇒ Sleeping too little or too much
  - ⇒ Extreme mood swings
- (AFSP, 2013 & SPRC)



**Nebraska's Network of Care: [www.dhhs.ne.gov/networkofcare](http://www.dhhs.ne.gov/networkofcare)**

**Nebraska Family Helpline: 888-866-8660**

**Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 800-273-TALK**