



## Unemployment, Financial Problems, and Suicide

Mounting debt, losing a job, a home, or retirement income can be linked to a wide variety of negative health outcomes. Such stressors may lead to thoughts of suicide or even to attempts and completions.

### ***Do unemployment and financial problems cause suicide?***

Suicide is usually the result of a process occurring over time and involving many interrelated factors. Unemployment and financial problems may contribute to suicide risk, but do not alone cause suicide.

### ***How do unemployment and financial problems increase suicide risk?***

They are often associated with loss of self-esteem and a sense of shame, humiliation or despair. They may make those affected feel less connected or that they are burdens to their families and friends. They may increase hopelessness, depression, and social isolation, which are all serious risk factors for suicide.

### ***What are other risk factors that unemployment and financial problems may impact?***

Serious risk factors that may be affected are a past history of suicidal behavior, existing serious mental illness (particularly with a co-occurring anxiety or panic disorder), alcohol and substance abuse, marital, family, or other interpersonal conflict, and a background involving abuse, trauma, or violence.

### ***Are there population groups that have a high suicide risk?***

Anyone may become suicidal, but specific groups at high risk of suicide that may experience unemployment and financial problems include Native Americans, adult white males, veterans and current members of the military, those who own or have access to firearms, and those who have had psychiatric hospitalizations.

### ***What are some ways to lessen risk related to unemployment and financial problems?***

Maintain contact with family and friends, engage in activities that relieve stress, focus on things that provide a sense of control, and continue or initiate exercise routines. Consider self-help and mutual support resources.

Seek assistance from clergy or a counselor. Adhere to health and mental health treatment regimens.

### ***What are some of the early warning signs of suicide risk?***

Contact a mental health or medical provider if you encounter or experience any of these behaviors:

- Hopelessness, emptiness, or apathy
- Rage, anger, or recklessness
- Feeling helpless, trapped, out of control
- Increased drinking and/or drug use
- Withdrawal from family or friends
- Anxiety, agitation, sleep problems
- Dramatic mood changes
- Citing no reason for living, desire to die

### ***What are the immediate danger signs of high suicide risk?***

Immediately call a crisis center, 9-1-1, or 1-800-273-TALK (National Suicide Lifeline) if you encounter:

- Someone threatening to hurt or kill herself or himself
- Someone looking for ways to take her or his life (i.e., a gun, stockpiling pills, other lethal means)
- Someone talking, writing, or drawing about death, dying, or suicide

For more information see “Getting through Tough Economic Times” at [www.samhsa.gov/economy](http://www.samhsa.gov/economy)

For further information on mental health services in Pennsylvania, please use the following link:

[http://parecovery.org/services\\_suicide\\_prevention.shtml](http://parecovery.org/services_suicide_prevention.shtml).