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Suicide

The recent news of the shocking deaths of fashion designer Kate Spade and celebrity chef Anthony Bourdain highlights the importance of recognizing the potential warning signs when someone intends to end their life.

Data show that high-profile suicides lead to a rise in copycat deaths. "With Robin William's death in 2014, we saw a 10 percent increase in suicides over the subsequent month and in total for the remainder of the year," said West Care Medical Director Dr. Herbert Cruz. Dr. Cruz says suicide prevention is all about getting people the right information before it is too late. "As a psychiatrist, I would say 90 percent of the patients I see or come in contact with are suicidal or have had suicidal thoughts at one point or another," said Dr. Cruz.

If there is a teachable moment that can come out of tragedies of the recent celebrity deaths, it is how to educate ourselves about prevention.

In a world where we are looking for happiness in all the wrong places, stress and depression lead some people to drug addiction and even suicide, continuing to hinder the state of happiness for many. One recent study suggests that as many as 26% of overdoses treated in U.S. emergency departments were intentional attempts to kill themselves. Suicide destroys families from every walk of life in Illinois and the United States of America. We should learn about how to prevent suicide and look and listen to our loved ones for signs of despair, depression and talk of suicide - but sometimes, there are no signs.

Suicide took the life of the only father I have ever known in my life. It will always leave me wondering what I did wrong, or what I could have done differently to be there for him, just like he was there for me when I was growing up. I will always wonder why I didn't see any signs of suicide. The truth is, I never thought suicide was even considered in the community where I grow up. I never thought that a Christian man who taught me values and how to deal with the streets could ever be suicidal. Well, I was wrong - and one day we had to go to identify the body of the person we all loved. We had to learn that he was not happy - and none of us recognized the level of sadness and loneliness he was living with each and every day.

Suicide Facts & Figures: 2018

Based on most recent 2016 data from CDC: On average, one person dies by suicide every six hours in Illinois. More people die by suicide in Illinois annually than by homicide. The total deaths to suicide reflect a total of 28,070 years of potential life lost (YPLL) before age 65. Suicide cost Illinois a total of \$1,391,865,000 of combined lifetime medical and work loss cost in 2010 or an average of \$1,181,549 per suicide death.

Suicide Prevention Programs and Initiatives

- The Suicide Prevention, Education and Treatment Act (§ 410 ILCS 53/) created the Illinois Suicide Prevention Alliance, which serves as an advisory board to the Illinois Department of Public Health and strives to bring together public and private organizations and stakeholders concerned with mental health to implement the state's Suicide Prevention Strategic Plan. See <http://www.dph.illinois.gov/topics-services/prevention-wellness/suicide-prevention>.
- The 2007 Illinois Suicide Prevention Strategic Plan (<http://bit.ly/2Fvx1f>) features 10 goals for reducing suicide using a public health approach, and challenges communities, public health professionals, and healthcare providers to educate, inform, and motivate the public to maximize resources to reduce the burden of suicide in the state.
- Illinois law (§ 105 ILCS 5/34-18.7) requires that school guidance counselors, teachers, social workers, and other personnel who work with grades 7-12 be trained to identify the warning signs of suicidal behavior in adolescents and teens and be taught intervention techniques.
 - Illinois law (§ 105 ILCS 110/3) encourages comprehensive health education programs in all elementary and secondary schools to include suicide prevention.
 - Illinois law (§ 410 ILCS 53/30) encourages the Director of Public Health to ensure that pilot suicide prevention programs include health provider and physician training and consultation about high-risk cases.

Warning Signs for Suicide

Seek help as soon as possible by contacting a mental health professional or by calling the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at **1-800-273-TALK** if you or someone you know exhibits any of the following signs:

- Threatening to hurt or kill oneself or talking about wanting to hurt or kill oneself
- Looking for ways to kill oneself by seeking access to firearms, available pills, or other means
- Talking or writing about death, dying, or suicide when these actions are out of the ordinary for the person
- Feeling hopeless
- Feeling rage or uncontrolled anger or seeking revenge
- Acting reckless or engaging in risky activities - seemingly without thinking
- Feeling trapped - like there's no way out
- Increasing alcohol or drug use
- Withdrawing from friends, family, and society
- Feeling anxious, agitated, or unable to sleep or sleeping all the time
- Experiencing dramatic mood changes
- Seeing no reason for living or having no sense of purpose in life

If you are in crisis, please call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255) or contact the Crisis Text Line by texting **TALK to 741741.**

Sincerely,



La Shawn K. Ford
State Representative-Eighth District