Suicide Watch

One in 10 Latino high school students has tried to take his life. How can you help a loved one?

December 1, 2007 By Christina Padrés

"There is still a certain level of rejection" of mental health treatment in Latino culture, says Walter Pedemonte, head of the department of psychotherapy at Saints Mary and Elizabeth Medical Center in Chicago. "For years it's been said that you just have to will yourself to feel better, have fun or have a few drinks so that your problems go away."

WARNING SIGNS

Your loved one needs help if she or he:

- **Expresses a desire to die:** "People who keep saying they're going to kill themselves are looking for help," says Dr. Pedemonte
- **Consumes more alcohol or other drugs.**
- **Shows depression symptoms:** More than 90 percent of people who commit suicide suffer from some form of depression and mental illness. Symptoms include sadness, pessimism, anxiety, trouble sleeping, hopelessness and isolation.
- **Is planning an end:** "Giving away valued possessions, withdrawing from enjoyable activities and saying goodbye to friends are some signs," says Pedemonte
- **Takes unusual risks** such as driving too fast or running red lights
- **Has outbursts** of unexplained fury or anger.

ACT FAST

- **Talk** to the person; listen, be sympathetic and don't argue; tell them that depression and the desire to commit suicide are treatable.
- **Seek** a psychiatrist or go with the person to the consultation. Suicide attempts decrease after a

month of medical treatment or psychotherapy, according to a study in The American Journal of Psychiatry.

- **Call 800.SUICIDE, 800.273.TALK** (or **877.SUICIDA**). The service is bilingual and can refer you to a help center that offers low-cost counseling.
- **Take** the person to an emergency room if the situation is serious.

Only 1 in 4 Latinos with depression and anxiety receives appropriate care.

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