

Suicide

Cont'd from page 3

Journal Volunteers section. The Suicide Prevention Hotline offered her an opportunity to volunteer in an area close to her future career goals of drug and alcohol abuse counseling, and it also was a service she could perform at home.

After training sessions, she was assigned a shift on the hotline. With the Hotline receiving some 400 calls a month, she has answered her share.

Possibly the hardest call Stuver has had to handle was earlier this month when she talked with a man who was despondent because his wife had recently died. The conversation ended without the hoped-for promise that he would seek specific help.

Usually, though, she said, the would-be suicides appear to have responded positively to her efforts.

"You can tell you are having an effect when the tone of voice changes," she said. "You know you've helped them get

through the crisis."

Stuver said a person considering suicide is generally overwhelmed by some crisis situation. "Loss of love is the most common," she said, "but anything that overwhelms the person can trigger suicidal thoughts."

The person often gives clues that suicide is being contemplated.

"You won't have to put up with me much longer" and other threats of suicide are among the common clues to the person's state of mind," she said.

Other danger signals include unusual purchases such as a knife or a rope, giving away valued personal belongings, themes of death in art, writing or conversation, or an unusual change in behavior, appearance or mood.

These signs alone are often enough to foretell a possible suicide, Stuver said, but combine them with drugs, alcohol, health

tempt, and the probability of lethal action rises.

Nevada has the dubious distinction of leading the nation in the number of suicides each year, and the high rate of success has created a new social problem as the victims' families and friends try to cope with the trauma.

The Suicide Prevention Hotline is forming a support group for these people, Stuver said.

"Grief is a natural consequence of losing a loved one and it must run its course, but with the support of others who are experiencing similar feelings and problems, the course can be traversed with less pain."

Trained professionals will oversee meetings of the group which will start in April. Anyone interested can call the Suicide Prevention Hotline at 731-2990.

"Be sure to identify your interest in the support group," Stuver cautioned, "or you may end up talking to a crisis counselor."

Suicide Prevention Tips

***DON'T** allow yourself to be sworn to secrecy if the person confides in you. Would you rather have a friend who is mad at you -- or dead?

***DON'T** try to shock or challenge. "Go ahead! Do it!" is NOT the proper response!

***DON'T** analyze the person's motives. "You're just feeling bad because..."

***DON'T** argue or try to reason. "You can't kill yourself because..."

***DO** show you take the person's feelings seriously and wish to help.

***DO** listen. Ask concerned questions.

***DO** ask the person if she or he is considering suicide. This won't encourage but may help by letting the person talk about it.

***DO** explain that with help and support, he or she can recover and enjoy good times again.

***DO** be honest. If you are worried and care, say so.

***DO** seek professional help. Some possibilities are listed below.

24-hour Suicide Prevention Hotline. 731-2990.

Clergy of choice

School counselor or a favorite teacher.

Las Vegas Mental Health Facilities (payment based on what you can afford, often free)

Mental Health professionals. Listed in the yellow pages under psychologists, psychiatrists, and counselors.

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