



## **Cheat Sheet: Suicide Warning Signs**

### **Introduction**

Warning Signs of suicide are those things to watch out for in a person’s life and actions that may indicate they are contemplating or planning suicide. They are different than risk factors which are things about a person’s history and background that statistically make them more likely to commit suicide. It is important to consider both the warning signs (current and specific to an individual) and the risk factors (historic and based on a person’s experiences) when assessing their risk of suicide.

### **IS PATH WARM**

The American Association of Suicidology suggests the phrase “**IS PATH WARM**” as a method for remembering the warning signs of suicide.

<b>I</b> deation	<i>Ideation can include threats (spoken or written) to harm or kill themselves, looking for means to commit suicide, talking or writing about suicide, or writing a suicide note. This can also show itself in the form of making final arrangements – saying goodbye, giving things away, deleting social media and/or unexpected visits to family and friends. 80% of people who attempt suicide speak to someone first.</i>
<b>S</b> ubstance Abuse	<i>A person may begin to use alcohol, drug or other controlled substances or increase their usage. This can be related to the anxiety, hopelessness or recklessness discussed below.</i>
<b>P</b> urposelessness	<i>The person may begin to express that they have no reason for living.</i>
<b>A</b> nxiety	<i>The individual may feel an overwhelming sense of anxiety or fear. This can cause them to seem agitated or they may experience sleep problems. It is sometimes the results of a feeling of irresolvable guilt.</i>
<b>T</b> rapped	<i>The person may exhibit a general feeling that they are trapped and there is no way out or the world would be a better place without them.</i>
<b>H</b> opelessness	<i>An overwhelming sense of hopelessness or depression often (though not always) precedes suicidal thoughts. Suicide is viewed as an escape or a “way out.” It is often accompanied by tunnel vision or black and white thinking. Prior suicide attempts are also a significant warning sign.</i>
<b>W</b> ithdrawal	<i>Withdrawing from family or friends (or from society as a whole) can be a warning sign. A person contemplating suicide often feels isolated and has difficulty expressing their emotions and pain.</i>
<b>A</b> nger	<i>Uncontrollable anger or rage or seeking revenge on someone (or a group of people) can be a warning sign – particularly when it is out of character.</i>
<b>R</b> ecklessness	<i>An increase in recklessness or risk-taking behaviors can be a warning sign of suicide. These behaviors are often seemingly undertaken with little or no thought.</i>
<b>M</b> ood changes	<i>Mood changes include uncharacteristic and often dramatic changes in mood, habits or behavior. This can often be observed in irrational outbursts and/or changes in school, eating or sleeping habits.</i>

Hope 4 Hurting Kids Cheat Sheets are one page resources designed to provide a high-level overview of the topic covered. They are not intended as a comprehensive resource, and we encourage you to check out <http://Hope4HurtingKids.com> for more information.