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Warning words often precede suicides

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You might be surprised how often you have actually heard the not so obvious suicidal statements that friends, loved ones and even brief acquaintances may have made. “I am just so tired... I can’t do this anymore.” “I have really tried to hang in there but I am not sure I can keep doing it.” “I am a failure and can’t do anything right.” “No one listen... no one cares.”

When we hear these kinds of statements it is crucial to follow up with a clarifying question — “Have you thought about hurting yourself?”

You will be surprised at the response. As a mental health professional, my experience is that individual will quickly answer the question either “yes” or “no.” I continue to be amazed at how honest and open people are regarding this very private experience. One might ask themselves why are they so forthright? I believe it is because they are reaching out, even in the depths of depression, to see if someone is really listening.

Here in Elkhart County there have been 17 deaths by suicide since January. The number is higher than the previous years. These deaths cut across gender, age, marital status, education and occupation. Anyone can be at risk. Remember to listen and then ask about those subtle cues of depression and distress and realize that you can make a difference.

— Katharine Schrock

Elkhart County Suicide Prevention Coalition