



It's Up to Us[®]

to Create a Healthy & Supportive San Diego

A special bulletin covering mental health topics for San Diegans



Edition Twenty-Seven

About the Campaign

The “It’s Up to Us” campaign is designed to empower San Diegans to talk openly about mental illness, recognize symptoms, utilize local resources, and seek help. By raising awareness and providing access to local resources, we aim to inspire wellness, reduce stigma, and prevent suicide.

Recovery is possible and help is available. It’s Up to Us to make a difference in the lives of San Diegans experiencing mental health challenges by offering support and providing opportunities.

This campaign is developed through the County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency and supports the County’s *Live Well San Diego* vision to promote a community that is healthy, safe, and thriving.

Up2SD.org[®]
LINK UP FOR INFORMATION AND MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

Access & Crisis Line
(888) 724-7240

COMMUNITY RESOURCES
2-1-1



Keeping Our Loved Ones Safe

Restricting Access to Lethal Means Can Save Lives

When it comes to keeping suicidal people safe from harm, reducing their access to means of self-injury is one of the most important steps we can take. After all, it’s commonplace for us to place barriers between vulnerable people and something that might harm them, whether fencing around a swimming pool, childproof caps on bottles of medication, or locked and alarmed doors that lead to rooftops. Many of these steps can protect suicidal individuals as well as preventing unintentional injuries.

Research has shown that restricting lethal means, such as firearms, makes a difference:

- Removing access to the most deadly means improves the odds that a suicide attempt won’t result in death.
- It “buys time” for the person to get help and to recover from their crisis.
- Nearly 90% of people who survive a suicide attempt do not go on to die from suicide; they are able to change their minds, find reasons for living, and learn to cope with their feelings.
- For many suicidal people, the period of feeling suicidal lasts for a very short time, often less than an hour. But if they get their hands on a loaded gun during that period, the outcome can be fatal.

If you live with someone who is feeling suicidal, consider taking these measures:

Always keep firearms locked and unloaded. Consider keeping the key with a trusted friend outside the home or even in a safe deposit box. You may want to secure the firearms safely outside of the home with a family member, shooting club, or a gun shop. Visit StopFirearmSuicideSD.org for more information.

Store medications in a locked box. Safely dispose of medications you no longer need by taking them to one of the disposal sites located at several law enforcement locations, as well as many CVS pharmacies. Find a complete list at: <https://www.sandiego.gov/police/news/flash/prescriptiondropoff>.

Review your home from the point of view of someone who wants to harm themselves and remove sharp objects or other potential means.



Did You Know?

In the County of San Diego, suicides outnumber homicides by firearm 3 to 1. It's Up to Us to learn the warning signs for suicide and ask someone we care about if they are thinking about suicide.

Finding Answers in Troubling Times:

What Is the True Story about Mental Illness and Violence?

In the wake of so much senseless violence in our country, we are left trying to make sense of it. Why? Were there warning signs? Can a greater focus on mental health care prevent similar attacks? An article in the online magazine Vox explored the premise of whether an increase in mental health screening could accurately predict who will commit mass violence; not surprisingly, the article concluded that such a rare event is mathematically impossible to predict. In addition, research has shown that having a mental illness is *not* a predictor of violence.

Let's examine the first issue. The Vox article asks us to imagine scientists inventing a machine that can predict with 99% certainty who will commit an act of mass violence. This machine would determine people's intent and willingness to commit such a crime, as well as track their behavior online, their social connections, and purchasing decisions. Even if this imaginary machine really was 99% accurate, it would **falsely** label 1 out of every 100 people. Applied to all U.S. citizens, it would **falsely** identify around 3.2 million people as potential mass shooters or terrorists. In a world already marked by fear and distrust, can we imagine what would happen to our fellow humans that were false positives?

When it comes to people experiencing a severe mental illness, we don't have to imagine what happens. In public perception, mental illness and violence are often closely intertwined. The false positives are people experiencing a mental illness who will never turn violent, but nevertheless have to face the misperception that they are dangerous. As a result of shame and fear, many people delay seeking help, often as long as six to eight years, despite the fact that effective treatments are available. The perceived association of violence with mental illness has received extensive attention and publicity, but in fact most violence in society is caused by people without mental illness. Perhaps surprisingly, individuals with a severe mental illness constitute a high-risk group vulnerable to become victims of violence in the community. Symptoms of a severe mental illness can include disorganized thought processes, impulsivity, and poor problem-solving, which can compromise a person's ability to perceive risks and, as a result, may make them more vulnerable to physical assault.

Researchers have found that mental illness and violence are related primarily through the accumulation of risk factors. Past violence, juvenile detention, physical abuse, parental arrest record, substance abuse, age, sex, and contextual factors such as divorce, unemployment, or victimization are examples of risk factors found to be predictive of violence in people with and without a mental illness.

What Can You Do?

Speak Up. When you read or hear about a violent act, don't presume the perpetrator was mentally ill. And if you hear negative stereotypes about a person with mental illness, speak up and encourage people to learn the facts.

Read Up. Learn the facts about mental health and mental illness by visiting Up2SD.org.

Follow Up. Encourage a family member or friend who is showing symptoms of mental illness to seek help. Follow up with them and offer support.

Open Up. Talk openly about mental health and mental illness.

Most importantly, we need to live our lives from a place of hope, not fear and distrust. In the long term, hope and connectedness are the best predictors of a future where we can thrive with our mind, body, and spirit.





Video Games: Good or Bad for Our Mental Health?

Eat right, exercise, manage your stress, and learn positive thinking patterns: those are time-proven, effective strategies for improving your mental health. Smartphones allow us to have tools at our fingertips and can help make these behaviors easier and more fun. Many apps can connect you to other people working toward the same goal, giving you much-needed social support and accountability. But there's another, more surprising way you can use your smartphone for better mental health: play more video games. They don't even have to be "good for you" or "special healthy" video games. According to an East Carolina University study, playing games (such as the popular smartphone games Bejeweled® or Bookworm®) for 30 minutes per day can help alleviate clinical depression and anxiety at levels that rival the effectiveness of medication. There is also evidence that video games aren't just good for young people, but that continuing to play (or starting a new habit) in older years actually promotes a more positive aging experience and helps alleviate depression in older adults. Should you spend all day on your smartphone or playing video games? Probably not. As with most things in life, strive for moderation and balance: a little bit can be good, but too much is a problem!

Courtesy of EachMindMatters.org

Does playing violent video games cause aggression? This topic has been passionately debated in the scientific literature. A study published in *Molecular Psychiatry* in 2018 found that habitual playing of violent video games did not cause a long-term increase in aggression or a reduction in empathy.

Support Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Awareness

Connect with the "It's Up to Us" campaign for inspirational messages, educational facts, local resources, information on symptoms of mental illness, warning signs of suicide, updates on mental health and prevention efforts, and more!

Continue the conversation here:

 **Facebook:** www.facebook.com/up2sd

 **YouTube:** www.youtube.com/user/up2sd

Prefer Paperless? To view this campaign bulletin online or download as a PDF, visit: Up2SD.org/Bulletins.

SUICIDE IS PREVENTABLE

These signs may mean someone is at risk for suicide. Risk is greater if the behavior is new or has increased and if it seems related to a painful event, loss, or change.

Warning Signs

- ▶ Talking about wanting to die
- ▶ Looking for a way to kill oneself
- ▶ Talking about feeling hopeless or having no purpose
- ▶ Talking about feeling trapped or in unbearable pain
- ▶ Talking about being a burden to others
- ▶ Increasing the use of alcohol or drugs
- ▶ Acting anxious, agitated, or reckless
- ▶ Sleeping too little or too much
- ▶ Withdrawing or feeling isolated
- ▶ Showing rage or talking about seeking revenge
- ▶ Displaying extreme mood swings

What to Do

If someone you know exhibits warning signs of suicide:

- ▶ Do not leave the person alone
- ▶ Remove any firearms, drugs, alcohol, or sharp objects that could be used in an attempt
- ▶ For life-threatening emergencies or immediate response, call 9-1-1
- ▶ For urgent and other concerns, contact the Access & Crisis Line at (888) 724-7240

Tips to Prevent Firearm Suicides

The County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency launched a unique approach that recognizes the gun-owning and gun-selling community as partners in the efforts to prevent suicide. The result: an informative website and a brochure and poster that emphasize the warning signs of suicidality and offer gun safety tips, distributed at firearm retail locations throughout the county.

If you are concerned about a loved one who may have access to a firearm and is suicidal:

- Visit StopFirearmSuicideSD.org today to find out which gun shops and ranges are partnering in the San Diego County Gun Shop Project.
- Learn more about how to legally store a gun with a friend or family member.
- Request a free gun lock.
- Learn the warning signs of suicide, find the words to have a critical conversation with your loved one, and learn about local resources that can help.
- Always keep firearms locked with the ammunition stored separately.
- Remember that teens and even younger children often know where the key is kept, so store the key safely too.

The San Diego County Gun Shop Project brochures and posters are adapted from materials originally created in New Hampshire by NAMI-NH and the Firearms Safety Coalition, and have also been used in many other western states.



NEED TO TALK TO SOMEONE?

Unsure of where to go for help? Chat online or call a counselor today!

- Free confidential support
- Crisis intervention and suicide prevention
- Referrals for mental health and drug and alcohol needs



SAN DIEGO ACCESS & CRISIS LINE

- All languages
 - 7 days a week / 24 hours a day
- (888) 724-7240**

LIVE CHAT

- Chat with a counselor today!
 - Available Mon–Fri 4–10 p.m.
- Visit: OptumHealthSanDiego.com or Up2SD.org

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