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Suicide Prevention: Know the Signs and Symptoms; Seek Help

(Fort Myers, Fla. – June 8, 2018) --- Earlier this week, we learned about the tragic suicide of designer Kate Spade. Today, another celebrity, famous chef Anthony Bourdain, has committed suicide in France. As a society we have a tendency to put celebrities on a pedestal, at times over identify with them, believe that they have everything they could ever dream of and therefore should have no issues or concerns in their everyday life. As sometimes happens when high profile celebrities are found dead and suicide is either suspected or confirmed, you may find yourself or loved ones who are dealing with depression thinking, feeling or expressing fear and worry that “if they couldn’t deal with it and they had everything in the world, how am I supposed to deal with it?”

According to the Centers for Disease Control, Suicide is the 10th leading cause of death for Adults and the 2nd leading cause of death for ages 10-34. Unfortunately, between 1999 and 2016 the rate of suicide increased in nearly every US state and rose in some areas of the country by 30% which highlights the importance of suicide awareness and prevention as both a national and personal public health imperative. There is typically not a single reason that may be identified as the “cause” of suicide, but rather a combination of factors related to physical, environmental, financial and relationships.

According to the National Institutes of Mental Health, risk factors and signs/symptoms include such things as:

Risk Factors

- A history of a mental health condition
- A physical health condition including chronic pain
- Experiencing prolonged stressful situations such as harassment/bullying
- Experiencing a stressful life event such as divorce, death of a loved one and loss of financial security
- A family history of suicide
- A family history of mental health conditions or substance abuse
- Previous suicide attempts
- Childhood abuse and/or trauma
- Access to lethal means including firearms in the home
- Being exposed to others’ suicidal behavior including family members, friends and celebrities

Signs and Symptoms:

- Talking about wanting to die or killing themselves
- Making plans or researching ways of killing themselves

- Feelings of hopelessness and helplessness, guilt or shame, unbearable pain (physically or emotionally), and feeling like a burden to others
- Increased use of alcohol or other drugs
- Withdrawing or isolating from support systems
- Saying goodbye to friends and family, putting affairs in order and/or giving away important possessions

If you or someone you know is experiencing, expressing or displaying any of these warning signs, or other behaviors that are concerning or out of character, please reach out to someone immediately. Be there as a support for them, keep someone safe by removing access to lethal means, listen carefully to what they are thinking and feeling, and don't be afraid to ask directly if they are thinking of wanting to kill themselves; studies have shown this does not increase the risk of suicide. There are many resources available for someone in need that includes:

- The phone number to a trusted family member or friend
- The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255) or for the deaf and hard of hearing via TTY at 1-800-799-4889 - available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
- The Crisis Text Line: 741741
- The non-emergency number of your local law enforcement
- Call 911 for those in immediate risk of harm to self or others and request a CIT (Crisis Intervention Team) Officer as they have had additional training in working with those in crisis

If you want to learn more about Suicide Prevention and Awareness or other Mental Health Conditions, please visit the following internet sites:

- Suicide Prevention Lifeline: <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>
- National Institutes of Mental Health: <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/index.shtml>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <https://www.cdc.gov/>
- National Alliance on Mental Illness: <https://www.nami.org/>
- Suicide Prevention Resource Center: <http://www.sprc.org/>

The important thing to remember is that you are not alone even though it may feel that you are, you are loved even though you may not feel it, and you are needed even if you don't feel that you are. Help is available – please reach out.

The Lee Health Behavioral Health Center offers assistance and support. To speak with a team member for an appointment for you or a loved one, or to learn about additional resources in the community, please call us at 239-343-9180.

About Lee Health

Since the opening of the first hospital in 1916, Lee Health has been a health care leader in Southwest Florida, constantly evolving to meet the needs of the community. A non-profit, integrated health care services organization, Lee Health is committed to the well-being of every individual served, focused on healthy living and maintaining good health. Staffed by caring people, inspiring health, services are conveniently located throughout the community in four acute care hospitals, two specialty hospitals, outpatient centers, walk-in medical centers, primary care and specialty physician practices and other services across the continuum of care. Formerly known as Lee Memorial Health System, the organization began its second century of service with a new name in 2016. Learn more at www.LeeHealth.org.