Tiana had worked with Jennifer for three years. Although they were not good friends, they got along well at work. In the past few months, Tiana noticed that Jennifer seemed different from her usual self. Typically, she was calm and focused on her work. But now she seemed either agitated or really tired and would snap at co-workers about little things. In addition, Tiana overheard her crying and arguing on the phone with her boyfriend. Because Tiana was concerned about Jennifer, she asked the Human Resources (HR) department for advice. They recommended that she reach out to Jennifer and suggest to her that she meet with HR. If Jennifer didn’t agree to this, they suggested that Tiana give Jennifer information about their workplace’s Employee Assistance Program (EAP).

When Tiana talked with Jennifer, she was initially reluctant to open up. But Tiana persisted and let her know that she was concerned about her health and was there to support her. She said that she had encouraged others with similar problems to seek counseling, and they later told her how helpful it had been. Jennifer agreed to take the EAP information as a way to start. When Tiana followed up with Jennifer the next week, she learned that Jennifer had made an appointment with a mental health professional.

In this vignette, Tiana played an important role by encouraging Jennifer to get help. She cared about her.
Workplace, From Front

coworker and wanted the best for her. As a co-worker, you are well positioned to notice if someone at work is struggling and to take the first steps in assisting him or her to get help.

You spend a lot of time at work and have day-to-day contact with those around you. You get to know your co-workers over time, can observe changes in their behavior, and may see them at critical times in their life.

You can help foster a sense of community, belonging, and respect in your workplace. Feeling connected to a community promotes emotional well-being and can decrease risk for suicide.

In addition, workplaces often have a structure, like the HR department or an Employee Assistance Program, to which you can refer co-workers to help them find a mental health professional.

The Village EAP provides confidential counseling and referrals for employees and their household members who have personal difficulties, such as mental health, substance abuse, work, financial and family/relationship problems that impact their ability to function. EAP professionals have significant training in assessment, referral, and short-term counseling. To access your EAP benefits, call 1-800-627-8220.

TAKE ACTION, REACH OUT

Be prepared by knowing who to contact in your workplace if a co-worker is in distress or suicidal. Human Resources or The Village EAP are appropriate first points of contact.

Take immediate action if a co-worker is talking about wanting to die or kill himself, is looking for a way to kill himself (such as searching online or obtaining a gun), or is talking about feeling hopeless or having no reason to live. If the danger of self-harm seems imminent, call 911.

If you feel a co-worker may be at risk for suicide, reach out to the person. Ask how he or she is doing, listen without judgment, and suggest he or she talk to an EAP counselor, your HR department or another mental health professional. Offer to help arrange an appointment and go with the person. Continue to stay in contact and pay attention to how he or she is doing.

SUPPORT EACH OTHER

It is also important for you and your co-workers to support each other in coping with a suicide of someone from work. Such an event can have a profound emotional effect on the workplace.

Some people may struggle with guilt and unanswered questions about what they think they should have done to help. Some may experience depression or suicidal thoughts themselves.

People experiencing a suicide loss usually need the same things that people who experience loss from other causes of death need: support, time to grieve, and space to share stories of the person they love. Contact your HR department or The Village EAP to ask about resources.

Reprinted with permission from Suicide Prevention Resource Center (www.sprc.org)

KNOW THE FACTS

Suicide touches everyone—but especially working age adults. These statistics come from a 2015 CDC fact sheet:

• Suicide takes the lives of about 41,000 Americans each year.
• The majority of the suicide deaths in the United States are among working age adults (ages 24–64), especially men.
• Each year over 9 million adults have suicidal thoughts, and nearly 3 million people make a plan about how they would attempt suicide.

However, there is help and hope when individuals and workplaces join forces to prevent suicide.

2. Be willing to listen. Allow expressions of feelings. Accept the feelings.
3. Be non-judgmental. Don’t debate whether suicide is right or wrong, or whether feelings are good or bad. Don’t lecture on the value of life.
5. Don’t dare him or her to do it.
6. Don’t act shocked. This will put distance between you.
7. Don’t be sworn to secrecy. Seek support.
8. Offer hope. That alternatives are available but do not offer glib reassurance.
9. Take action. Remove means, like weapons or pills.
10. Get help from people or agencies specializing in crisis intervention and suicide prevention.

Counselor Column, From Front

others, acting recklessly, not engaging in activities she normally would or activities that she enjoys? She might be increasing alcohol or other drug use, and may be giving away prized possessions. Are these changes coming after a painful event or loss? Has she attempted suicide in the past? Has a family member or friend attempted or died by suicide?

If you find yourself answering “yes” to these questions, it is time to take appropriate action. You can call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255 for support. Veterans can call 1-800-273-8255 then press 1.

NSPL recommends the following steps if you are concerned about someone:

WORRIED ABOUT DEBT?

We can help! Financial counseling is part of your EAP. Call 1-800-627-8220 for more info.

The Village Business Institute
a division of The Village Family Service Center
Back issues available at www.VillageEAP.com

TO RECEIVE THIS NEWSLETTER IN YOUR INBOX, SEND AN EMAIL REQUEST TO VBI@THEVILLAGEFAMILY.ORG