



**Mental Health First Aider eNews:** This biweekly newsletter provides news, updates, and useful resources for people trained in Mental Health First Aid.



### Action A: Assess for Risk of Suicide or Harm

This issue we are focusing on the A in the 5-step action plan (ALGEE): Assess for risk of suicide or harm. As you may remember from your Mental Health First Aid course, it involves approaching someone you are concerned about to assess if he or she is in crisis. Possible crises may include:

- Harm to self by attempting suicide, engaging in self-injury, attempting extreme weight loss, or abusing substances
- Extreme distress, such as a panic attack or reaction to a traumatic event
- Distressing behavior, such as a loss of touch with reality or aggression

If a person demonstrates any of the above behaviors, the first aider must seek professional help for them immediately.

### The Connection between Stress and Sleep

How many hours of sleep are you averaging a night? If you find yourself waking up multiple times during the night and can't seem to fall back asleep, your body may be releasing stress hormones. A recent poll from NPR, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the Harvard School of Public Health, [Skimping on Sleep Can Stress Body and Brain](#), reported 70% of those experiencing a lot of stress were also experiencing trouble sleeping. To help with these interruptions, researchers suggest you establish a consistent sleep pattern (by falling asleep and waking up at the same time each day) and turn off electronics, as the short wave lights can emit melatonin.

You can also view sleeping suggestions from the Depression Bipolar Support Alliance's [Positive6 Campaign](#), a 6-month campaign that challenges individuals to make small, positive changes to their lives.

*Mental Health First Aid USA is coordinated by the National Council for Behavioral Health, the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, and the Missouri Department of Mental Health.*



#### FAST FACT

- Suicide is the 11th most common cause of death in the US
- 87% of people who die by suicide have a mental illness
- Among males, adults 75 and older have the highest rate of suicide

#### Suicide FAQs

Who is at risk of suicide? How can suicide be prevented? What can you do if you know someone is in crisis? Your Mental Health First Aid manual can help answer these questions, and you can also view the National Institute of Mental Health's [FAQs on Suicide](#).

