



Champion COMMUNITY Page

Victims often silent but numbers speak volumes

By IRENE GENTLE
The Champion

The victims are often silent, but the numbers speak volumes. Suicide is the leading cause of death for Canadians aged 25 to 34 years, and the second leading cause for youths aged 14 to 19 years.

But the frequency of occurrence doesn't make it any easier for the average person to say the word aloud.

And the silence could be pulling Canadians to the brink of catastrophe.

According to Distress Centre figures, one in seven Canadians have seriously considered suicide in the past, and this country's suicide rate is higher than that of the United States.

Talking is key

One thing seems certain — talking forthrightly about suicide to someone who seems at risk won't push them into making that ultimate leap.

But it might bring them back.

"Ask them directly if they are thinking of suicide," said Judy Rasanen, director of the North Halton Distress Centre. "It won't put the thought in their head. It'll just clarify it."

For some, suicide may appear to be a one-person solution to a very singular pain.

But according to Ms Rasanen, six others are typically seriously affected by every suicide.

So if the blues appear to be dipping into code red territory, there are guidelines.

A key tip is to let the person talk.

"Listen. Please just listen," said Ms

Rasanen. "Let them talk. Don't judge them and don't minimize their feelings. Reinforce how important it is that they stay alive."

When dealing with a person in crisis, never promise not to tell someone else.

Every threat should be taken as a serious cry for help, and anyone troubled by suicidal thoughts should be referred to a professional as soon as possible.

"It's not betraying your friend," said Ms Rasanen. "It's helping your friend."

Be aware of the risk factors for suicide.

They include previous suicide attempts, mental or physical illness, abuse, major losses including unemployment, bereavement and divorce, and substance abuse.

But as demographics change, the profile of the vulnerable change with it. Today, lonely seniors are in particular peril.

"We never used to think that but it's my understanding that's the highest risk group," said Ms Rasanen.

Reach out for help

But no one is immune to the anger, depression or loss that can slowly and inexorably creep toward fantasies of self-annihilation.

If plagued by suicidal thoughts, reach out for help.

Call a crisis line, speak to a clergy person or visit a doctor or emergency department.

In many cases, communication is the light that guides one out of the dark place where thoughts of suicide can blossom into action.

"A lot of people need to talk and sort through their feelings," said Ms Rasanen. "Somebody will listen."

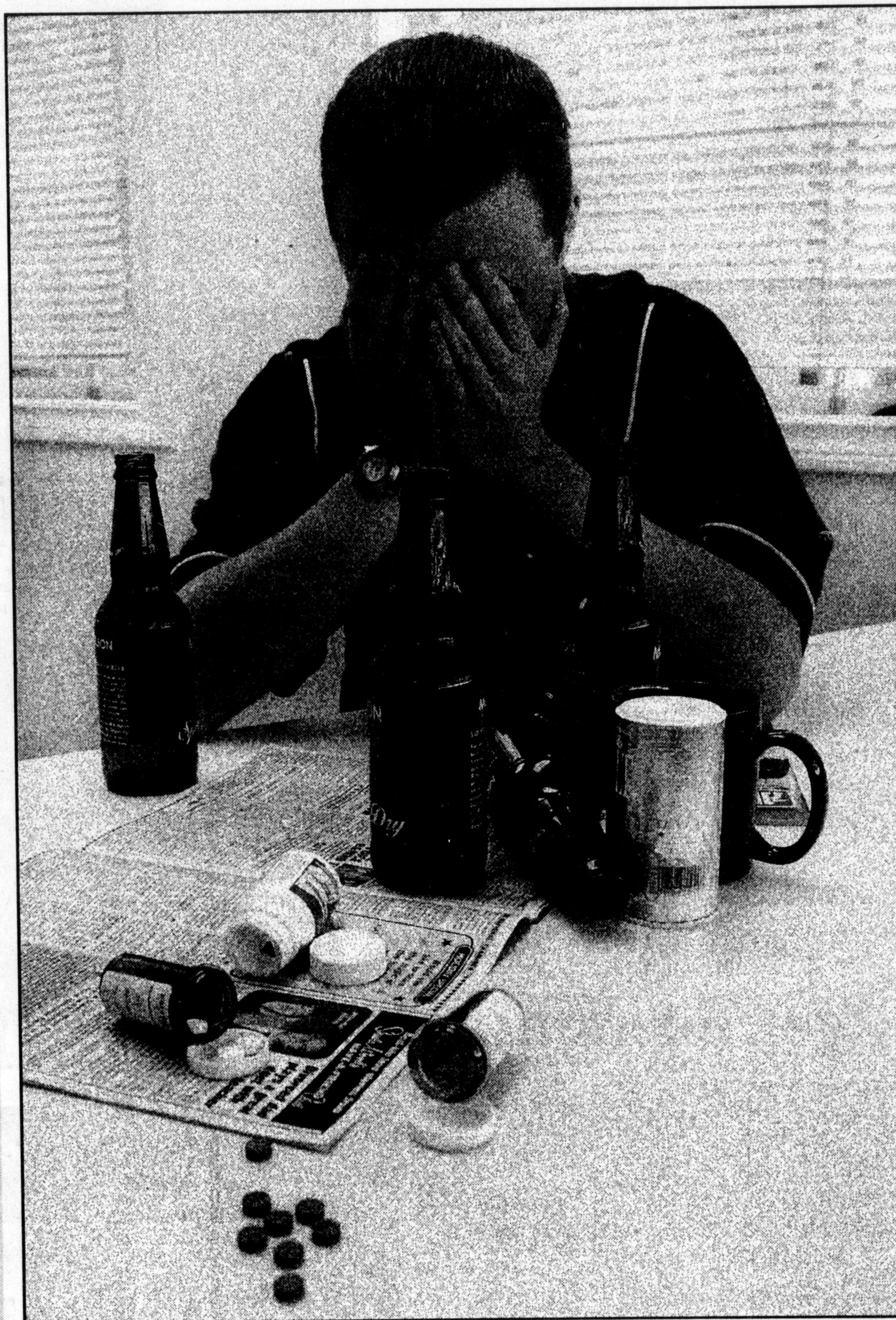


Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

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Suicide warning signs

There's no typical suicide victim, but fortunately there are some common warning signals.

They include:

- talk about committing suicide
- trouble eating or sleeping
- drastic changes in behaviour
- withdrawing from friends and/or social activities
- loss of interest in hobbies, work, school, etc.

- death preparation like making out a will and final arrangements
- giving away prized possessions
- having attempted suicide before
- taking unnecessary risks
- having a recent severe loss
- preoccupation with death and dying
- loss of interest in personal appearance
- history of substance abuse
- increasing use of alcohol or drugs.

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Tuesday, July 4th	Wednesday, July 5th	Thursday, July 6th	Monday, July 10th
10am, 11am, Noon Plugged In! Encore	10am, 11am, Noon Plugged In! Encore	10am, 11am, Noon Plugged In! Encore	10am, 11am, Noon Plugged In! Encore
5:30, 6:30, 7:30pm Plugged In!	5:30, 6:30, 7:30pm Plugged In!	5:30, 6:30, 7:30pm Plugged In!	5:30, 6:30, 7:30pm Plugged In!
6:00pm Hands up Puppeteers	6:00pm Cable in the Classroom	6:00pm The Local Scene	6:00pm Classics Against Cancer
7:00pm The Local Scene	7:00pm Down To Earth	7:00pm Money Week	7:00pm Hands Across The World
8:00pm Cogeco Sports: Flamboro Speedway	8:00pm Milton Council: July 4th	8:00pm Cogeco Sports: Tigercat CFL Football	8:00pm E.C. Dury Student Awards

Your Community Television taking you there! "Tigercat CFL Football" - Thursday, 8 pm