

**For Information Contact:**

Eve Herold, 703-907-8640
press@psych.org
Beth Casteel, 703-907-8582
bcasteel@psych.org

For Immediate Release:

October 15, 2008
Release No. 08-58

Getting Help: Signs of Distress in Troubled Economic Times

ARLINGTON, Va. (October 15, 2008) — The worldwide financial crisis has caused a surge in mental health issues. Robert Simon, M.D., a member of the American Psychiatric Association Workgroup on Suicidal Behaviors, says a sudden catastrophic event, failure or humiliation through foreclosure or economic loss can leave people feeling desperate, profoundly depressed and unable to see a way out.

Suicides over foreclosures and financial difficulties have been reported in the media. Anyone who indicates they see suicide as an option should be taken seriously and guided to seek prompt attention from a knowledgeable professional.

While most people with financial troubles will not turn to suicide, Simon noted factors that can make individuals more vulnerable:

- Pre-existing depression: The individual may have been depressed a long time, and what appears to be financial calamity put them over the edge.
- Self-definition: If a person defines their value by their job or financial status, they may be vulnerable.
- Shame and humiliation: Sudden shame and humiliation over losing money or strong feelings of guilt or self-blame can be overwhelming.

Signs of trouble are comments such as:

- "I'm finished."
- "It's all over."
- "My family would be better off without me."
- "There's no hope. There's nothing I can do."
- "I made a tremendous blunder."

If someone indicates they are considering suicide, listen and take their concerns seriously. Don't be afraid to ask questions about their plans, and let them know you care and they are not alone. Encourage them to seek help immediately from a knowledgeable professional. Don't leave them alone.

"There are a lot of foreclosures and people feeling economically stressed, but most will not attempt suicide," Simon said. Protective factors include strong coping skills, close relationships and feelings of self-worth beyond financial status. For more information, visit HealthyMinds.org.

The American Psychiatric Association is a national medical specialty society whose more than 38,000 physician members specialize in diagnosis, treatment, prevention and research of mental illnesses including substance use disorders. Visit the APA at www.psych.org and www.HealthyMinds.org.

###