

**Offer to go with the person to seek help from her parents, a counselor, or other sources of support.**

### What Is Counseling?

Counseling is a process that helps people resolve personal, academic, social, or vocational problems. Pace University's Counseling Center is here to enable students to make the best possible decisions and to provide them with support. As an active, collaborative effort, a student and a counselor work together to clarify issues and concerns, set goals, and explore possible courses of action. Through this process, students often become more self-aware, independent, and effective at pursuing their personal goals. Sometimes personal problems get in the way of academic success and speaking to a counselor during a difficult time can help students bring their focus back to their studies.

The Counseling Center's services are free of charge to currently enrolled Pace Students. Services are confidential, and the Center's policy on confidentiality is in accordance with the ethical standards of the American Psychological Association.

### You Can Help

First and foremost, take suicide seriously. It is always better to overreact than underreact. Additionally, here are other steps you can take when someone you know exhibits potential warning signs for suicide:

- Seek support from others. Do not allow yourself to be sworn to secrecy.
- Listen and accept the other person's feelings. Try not to judge or argue.
- Be direct and listen. Don't act shocked by her plans.
- Never dare someone to kill themselves.
- Offer to go with the person to seek help from her parents, a counselor, or other source of support.
- If possible, never leave the person alone.

### Find Someone Else Who Can Help

- The Counseling Center
- Resident advisers
- Campus Security
- Family or friends
- A religious or spiritual counselor

**We are here to help.**

Counseling Center  
156 William Street  
12th floor  
New York, NY 10038  
(212) 346-1526  
[www.pace.edu/counseling](http://www.pace.edu/counseling)



**Get in the Know:  
Suicide Prevention  
for Latina  
College Students**

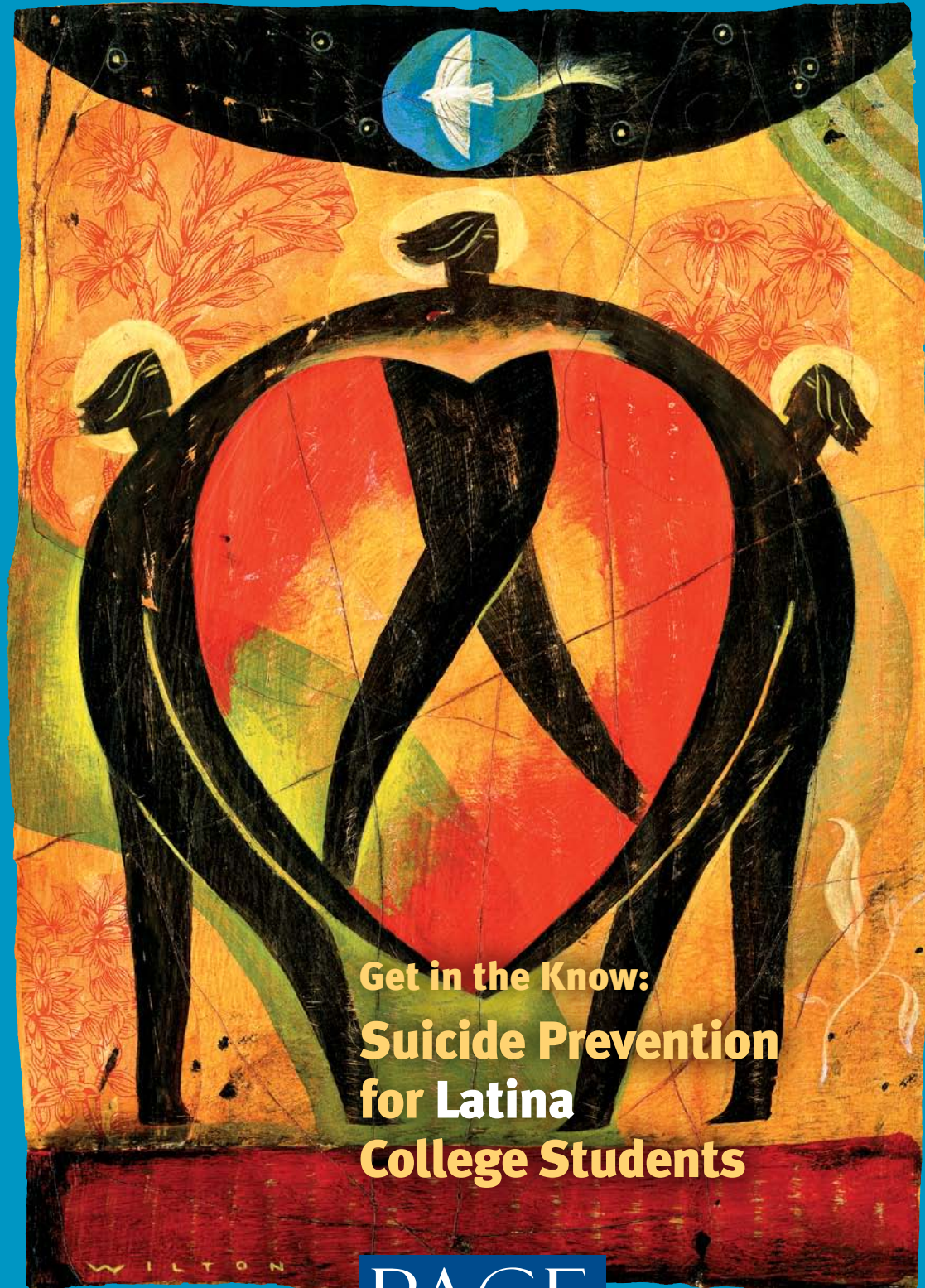


Illustration by Nicholas Wilton

# Latina College Students, Depression, and Suicide

Latinas are at a higher risk for attempting suicide than individuals from many other ethnic groups, and are twice as likely to commit suicide as Latinos. This underlines the need for suicide awareness, outreach, and prevention efforts within the Latin community. Additionally, Latinas report some of the highest rates of depression. Problems related to school, including poor academic performance, are correlated with those who commit suicide.

## Risk Factors

- A history of physical or sexual abuse
- A family history of depression and/or suicide
- Conflicts within family, particularly problems communicating with parents
- Questioning one's sexuality
- Breakup with a romantic partner
- Conflicts with friends, roommates, or peers
- Previous suicide attempt(s) or thoughts of killing oneself
- A recent loss (e.g., death)
- Impulsive inclinations
- Isolation from spiritual community
- Discrimination
- Difficulty with acculturation
- Generational conflicts
- Unwillingness to seek mental health services

## Know the Warning Signs

Although individuals vary in how they respond to suicidal thoughts, there are common warning signs that may suggest someone is considering suicide. It's especially important to notice and follow up when someone you know is acting out of character. An individual may be at risk for suicide if she:

- Reports feeling depressed
- Talks about wanting to commit suicide
- Experiences anxiety and/or stress
- Is focused on death and dying
- Writes poems, letters, or stories about death and/or suicide
- Starts giving away possessions
- Experiences feelings of hopelessness and helplessness
- Is having academic problems
- Withdraws from family, community, or friends, or has lost interest in activities she once enjoyed
- Prepares for death by making out a will
- Says things like, "I don't deserve to be here," "I wish I were dead," "I am going to kill myself," or "I want to die."
- Increases use of alcohol and/or other drugs
- Engages in reckless behaviors

## Family Factors

It's important to consider the central role of family in the Latino community. For adolescent Latinas, there can be a strong clash between familismo—strong identification with the nuclear and extended family—and a young woman's desire for autonomy. Entering college, choosing a major, and contemplating a career outside of the home may go against this cultural belief. Conflicts may be worsened by cultural expectations that limit the freedom of choice or expression in activities outside of classes, or choices regarding romantic partners as well. Some may feel guilty or disloyal to their family by discussing family issues with others.

## Protective Factors

Protective factors reduce the likelihood of suicide. They often counterbalance the potential for suicide. Some factors include:

- Religion
- Family relationships (e.g., positive support from parents)
- Romantic relationships
- Friendships
- Future personal and academic goals
- Strong sense of cultural identity
- Fear of death



## What Is Depression?

Depression is a condition that affects people of all ages, races, genders, and sexual orientations. Contrary to what many believe, a person with depression cannot "get over it" or "snap out of it" any more than someone

with a medical problem can get over an illness. Depression can be passed from one generation to the next. Sometimes stress or other life events trigger depression, or it results from a combination of factors. When someone is depressed, she typically feels sadness that lasts longer than a few days or weeks. This can be accompanied by thoughts of wanting to hurt or kill oneself. Fortunately, depression can be treated.

## What Does Depression Look Like?

Recognizing depression is a critical first step in getting yourself or a friend help. Keep in mind that friends or loved ones may not know how to ask for help, so it's important to understand what to look for.

## Common Concerns among Latina College Students Who Experience Depression

- Engaging in risky behaviors: Violence, unprotected sexual practices, alcohol and other drug abuse, and/or driving under the influence
- Relationship problems: Conflicts with roommates, parents, friends, and/or romantic partners
- Academic problems: Missing classes, not completing assignments, inattentiveness, conflicts with professors, and/or failing exams and courses

Latinas report some of the highest rates of depression. Problems related to school, including poor academic performance, are correlated with those who commit suicide.