Increased alcohol and drug use is a risk factor for suicide. Substance use can impair one’s ability to make good decisions. It can lead to impulsive actions. It can make it difficult to maintain employment and relationships. Sometimes people who are experiencing negative thoughts like feeling hopeless or wanting to die turn to alcohol and drugs to “self-medicate” their pain. Although such use may provide temporary escape, it usually makes one’s situation worse.

Both alcohol/drug addiction and suicide are more common with men. Men are 1.9 times more likely to have an alcohol addiction compared to women. Men are 1.7 times more likely to have an illicit drug addiction (SAMHSA, 2016). Men are 3.6 times more likely to die by suicide (CDC, 2016). Worried about what people think, some may not seek help and their situation tends to get worse. Help can be as easy as talking to your doctor.

What to know?
- Know that substance addiction, depression, anxiety, or suicidal thoughts have nothing to do with one’s personality or character.
- If one is experiencing depression, anxiety, or suicidal thoughts, avoid substance use altogether.
- When does alcohol and drugs become a problem? You need more to feel the same effect. You continue to use even though you know it is hurting you. It causes you to miss work. You can’t hold on to your job. It is the source of family arguments. You feel you need to lie about your use. It causes you to get in trouble with the law. You are neglecting family responsibilities. You are spending money on alcohol or drugs instead of paying bills.
- Seeking help is a sign of strength. It is the first step in taking control.
- Know that you are worth saving. You are worth saving.
- The pain you feel is real and can be treated. Substance addiction, depression, anxiety, and feelings of suicide can be treated at the same time.
- To talk to someone about suicide, call the National Suicide Lifeline 1-800-273-8255. Lifeline is free, confidential and available 24/7. If anyone is in immediate danger, call 911.
- To find a treatment facility in Missouri, call the Department of Mental Health at 1-800-364-9687 or visit the website at www.dmh.mo.gov.

Suicide is very much preventable. For more information, go to HelpHimStay.org.