National Suicide Prevention Week and World Suicide Prevention Day took place last week. The Counseling Center held their own event yesterday at Campus Crossroads and we proudly have on display heartwarming words of encouragement and kindness to those who are struggling with mental illness.

These special events are purposed to educate the public about suicide awareness and to offer support and solidarity to those who are currently struggling with mental health issues such as depression and alcohol abuse. Suicidal ideation is a common side effect of these types of issues. Thoughts of suicide can startlingly go from passively thinking about your death to planning out your demise.

That is the nature of depression. It is insidious and can overtake you before you're even aware of the degree of its severity. One minute you can still see a light and the next minute you're alone at the bottom of a hole feeling hopeless, isolated, and surrounded by darkness. The signs of depression are signals and symptoms that you are not well in much the same way that a high fever and unproductive cough says you’re ill. It’s your body telling you that you need to seek help immediately.

The social stigma of mental illness is one of the most appalling crises in our country. It would be as if you have a fever of 104 and are told by the people around you that you need to be tougher, get over it, and that seeking would be an embarrassment. So, whether you are fighting the battle of depression and entertaining thoughts of suicide or you are an observer of someone who is in the throes of the battle for their life consider this:

- In 2013-2014, almost 31% of college students have said they seriously considered suicide at some point in their lives. (Center for Collegiate Mental Health at Penn State)

- More than 1,000 college students kill themselves every year and suicide is the third-leading cause of death for people ages 15 to 24 (Emory University study)

Suicide is preventable. It is the ramification of a life threatening disease. If you know someone who may be considering suicide, do not leave him or her alone. Try to get your loved one to seek immediate help from a doctor or the nearest hospital emergency room, or call 911. Remove access to firearms or other potential tools for suicide, including medications. Learn the warning signs of suicide. Visit www.save.org to learn more.

Be sure to stop by Campus Crossroads this week to feel loved, encouraged, and accepted by the faculty, staff, and students of our university. Know that someone does care.

If you or someone you know needs help, please contact any of the following resources:

911
Counseling Center: 903-886-5145
UPD: 903-886-5868
Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)