

SUICIDE PREVENTION

Risk Factors for Suicide

- Previous suicide attempts.
- Close family member who has committed suicide.
- Past psychiatric hospitalization.
- Recent losses: This may include the death of a relative, a family divorce, or a breakup with a girlfriend.
- Social isolation: The individual does not have social alternatives or skills to find alternatives to suicide.
- Drug or alcohol abuse: Drugs decrease impulse control making impulsive suicide more likely. Additionally, some individuals try to self-medicate their depression with drugs or alcohol.
- Exposure to violence in the home or the social environment: The individual sees violent behavior as a viable solution to life problems.
- Handguns in the home, especially if loaded.

Warning Signs for Suicide

- Suicidal talk
- Preoccupation with death and dying
- Signs of depression
- Behavioral changes
- Giving away special possessions and making arrangements to take care of unfinished business
- Difficulty with appetite and sleep
- Taking excessive risks
- Increased drug use
- Loss of interest in usual activities

Signs of Depression in Teens

- Sad, anxious or “empty” mood
- Declining school performance
- Loss of pleasure/interest in social and sports activities
- Sleeping too much or too little
- Changes in weight or appetite

Three steps parents can take:

- Take your friend’s actions seriously
- Encourage your friend to seek professional help, accompany if necessary
- Talk to an adult you trust. Don’t be alone in helping your friend.

Adolescents often will try to support a suicidal friend by themselves. They may feel bound to secrecy, or feel that adults are not to be trusted. This may delay needed treatment. If the **student does commit suicide**, the friends will feel a tremendous burden of guilt and failure. It is important to make students understand that one must report **suicidal statements** to a responsible adult. Ideally, a **teenage friend**

should listen to the suicidal youth in an empathetic way, but then insist on getting the youth immediate adult help.

Please contact your school administrator or counselor if you have concerns about a child or friend. For more information please contact any school administrator, counselor, or Jackie Steinhoff, Director of Student Services at (715)425-1800.

Also, the National Hopeline Network 1-800-SUICIDE provides access to trained telephone counselors, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Suggested Readings

1. Conquering the Beast Within (Book for Teens)
2. When Nothing Matters Anymore: A Survival Guide For Depressed Teens (Book for Teens)
3. But I Didn't Say Goodbye: For Parents and Professionals Helping Child Suicide Survivors (Book for Parents)
4. Someone I Loved Died By Suicide (Book For Teens)
5. After A Parent's Suicide: Helping Children Heal (Book for Teens)
6. After A Suicide: A Workbook for Grieving Kids (Book for Parents and Kids)
7. No One Saw My Pain: Why Teens Kill Themselves (Book for Parents and Teens)
8. The Power to Prevent Suicide: A Guide For Teens Helping Teens (Book for Teens)