



# TEEN SUICIDE PREVENTION: HOW PARENTS CAN HELP

## Signs of Suicide Among Youth

- Threatening to hurt or kill oneself or someone else
- Talking, writing, or drawing about death, dying, or suicide
- Feeling hopeless, worthless, or making comments of being a burden to others
- Acting recklessly or engaging in risky activities and in self-harming behaviors
- Increasing alcohol or drug use
- Withdrawing from family and/or friends
- Demonstrating rage and anger or seeking revenge
- Appearing agitated, anxious, with or without a dramatic change in mood

## Clues to Look for

- Past Suicide Attempt
- Sleeping too much or too little
- Increased and unexplained anger, irritability, aggression
- Chronic truancy
- Perfectionism
- Victim of assault or bullying
- Recent losses
- Recent rejection
- Multiple unexplained physical symptoms
- Fighting with friends and family

## Risk Factors

- Alcohol Use and Increase in Abuse
  - Often to Self-Medicate Depression
- Mental Illness (Treated and Untreated)
- Increased Use and Access to Drugs
  - Most common: methamphetamines, marijuana, synthetics, heroine, and prescription drug dependence combined with alcohol
- Abuse – Physical, Sexual, Emotional, etc.
- Legal Issues
  - Typically drug and alcohol related offenses; released from/or facing prison; for teens with court dates, jail time, and/or probation sentences
- Relationship and Family Issues
  - Youth don't have 'trusted adult' they can confide in; Young adults having difficulty starting out in life

- Financial Issues
  - Individual can't 'find a way out' of financial burdens
- Exposure to Suicide (having lost someone to suicide and/or close to others having attempted)

## Untreated Mental Illness & Suicide Risk....

- Youth Must Receive Treatment & Ongoing Support Systems
  - Parent/Family Education
  - Community Education – Church Groups, Youth Groups, Civic Groups
  - Teacher/School Education & Programming
  - “Trusted Adults”
  - Youth & Peer-to-Peer Mentors – Who They Talk to
- Healthcare & Behavioral Healthcare Training – Get Youth to a Primary Care Provider, Pediatrician, and/or Mental Health Provider Immediately
- Community Service Provider Interventions – Know the Signs and How to Help

## How to Ask About Suicide

- Be Prepared to Listen Patiently (Without Judgement)
- When They Answer ask Directly:
  - “Are you thinking about Suicide?”
  - “Are you thinking about killing yourself”
  - “Do you want to end your life?”
- **Never** Ask the Question This Way:
  - “You’re Not Thinking about Suicide, Are You?”

## Getting Help

- Take Every Comment, Threat, and ‘Yes’ Answer Seriously
  - Trust Your Instincts if they say ‘No’
- Show Concern while Getting Them to Hospital or Outpatient Mental Health Care (Outpatient Care If Not Imminent Plan)
- When in Doubt, Always Call: 911
  - Crisis Text Line: 741-741 and Text “Hello” or “Help”
  - National Suicide Prevention Lifeline – 800-273-TALK (8255)

For more information and suicide loss survivor support services, please contact:

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