

Suicide claims more adolescents than any disease or natural cause. Adolescents now commit suicide at a higher rate than the national average of all ages. Suicidal behaviors are often associated with depression. However, depression by itself is seldom sufficient. Other co-existing disorders, such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, substance abuse or anxiety can increase the risk of suicide. Recent stressful events can trigger suicidal behavior, particularly in an impulsive youth. Girls may be more likely to make suicidal attempts, but boys are more likely to make a truly lethal suicide attempt.

Tips for Parents

- A teenager who is contemplating suicide may complain of being a bad person or feeling “rotten inside.”
- Some teens will give verbal hints with statements such as “I won’t be a problem for you much longer,” “Nothing matters,” “It’s no use,” and “I won’t see you again.”
- A teen contemplating suicide may put his/her affairs in order by giving away favorite possessions, cleaning his/her room or throwing away important belongings. Others may become suddenly cheerful after a period of depression or show signs of psychosis.
- If you believe your child may be thinking about suicide, ask the child directly or seek professional help. People often feel uncomfortable talking about death but asking a child if he/she is depressed or thinking about suicide can be helpful. Such questions may assure the child that someone cares and will give him/her the chance to talk about problems. Talking can lead to healing.
- If your child admits to suicidal feelings, don’t act shocked. This will put distance between you. Be willing to listen. Allow for the expression of those thoughts and accept that the child may very well feel that way.
- Don’t be judgmental, or debate whether suicide is right or wrong, or lecture on the value of life. Offer hope that alternatives are available.
- Don’t be sworn to secrecy. Seek support, **seek help immediately**. Get help from persons or agencies specializing in crisis intervention and suicide prevention.

If your child is actively suicidal or poses a danger to him or herself, seek IMMEDIATE medical treatment!

References: American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, The Centers For Disease Control and Prevention, American Association of Suicidology, American Foundation of Suicide Prevention” <http://www.afsp.org>