

Preventing Youth Suicide: Tips for Parents and Educators

If you or someone you know is suicidal, get help immediately via 911, the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK or the Crisis Text Line (text "HOME" to 741741).

Suicide is preventable. Youth who are contemplating suicide frequently give warning signs. Do not be afraid to ask about suicidal thoughts. Never take warning signs lightly or promise to keep them secret.

Risk Factors



- Hopelessness
- Non-suicidal self injury (e.g., cutting)
- Mental illness, especially severe depression, but also post traumatic stress, ADHD, and substance abuse
- History of suicidal thinking and behavior
- Prior suicide among peers or family members
- Interpersonal conflict, family stress/dysfunction
- Presence of a firearm in the home

Warning Signs



- Suicidal threats in the form of direct (e.g., "I want to die") and indirect (e.g. "I wish I could go to sleep and not wake up") statements
- Suicide notes, plans, online postings
- Making final arrangements
- Preoccupation with death
- Giving away prized possessions
- Talking about death
- Sudden unexplained happiness
- Increased risk taking
- Heavy drug/alcohol use

What to Do



- Remain calm, nonjudgmental and listen.
- Ask directly about suicide (e.g., "Are you thinking about suicide").
- Focus on your concern for their well-being
- Avoid being accusatory (e.g., don't say, "You aren't going to do anything stupid are you?").
- Reassure them that there is help; they will not feel like this forever.
- Provide constant supervision. Do not leave the youth alone.
- Remove means for self-harm, especially firearms.
- **Get help!** Never agree to keep suicidal thoughts a secret. Tell an appropriate caregiving adult. Parents should seek help from school or community mental health resources as soon as possible. School staff should take the student to a school-employed mental health professional.

Reminders for Parents



After a school notifies a parent of their child's risk for suicide and provides referral information, parents must:

- **Continue to take threats seriously.** Follow through is important even after the child calms down or informs the parent "they didn't mean it."
- **Access school supports.** If parents are uncomfortable with following through on referrals, they can give the school psychologist permission to contact the referral agency, provide referral information, and follow up on the visit.
- **Maintain communication with school.** After an intervention, the school will also provide follow-up supports. Your communication will be crucial to ensuring that the school is the safest, most comfortable place possible for your child.



There is Hope. There is Help. Suicide is Preventable.

If you or someone you know is thinking of dying by suicide, get help immediately.

Call 911 or the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at **1-800-273-TALK**
or text "HOME" to 741741 to the Crisis Text Line.

Things to Know and Say



Everyone's life matters.
Help is available.

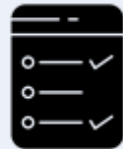


People do care.
Treatment works.



Don't keep it to yourself.
Tell a trusted adult.

What to Do



- Identify trusted adults at school and home.
- Avoid drugs and alcohol.
- Consider downloading helping apps like Virtual Hope Box, MY3, or A Friend Asks.
- Recognize the warning signs in yourself, your friends, on social media.
- **Get help. You can't do it alone.**
 - Tell a school psychologist, counselor, teacher, parent, or other adult.
 - Call 911 or 1-800-273-TALK or text "HOME" to 741741.

Reminders for Friends



- **Connect.** Listen, be accepting, don't judge.
- **Confirm.** Ask if they have thoughts of dying or of suicide.
- **Protect.** Take any threats they make seriously. **Do not agree to keep a secret!** Tell someone.
- **Stay.** Do not leave alone a person you are concerned about being at imminent risk. You might be their lifeline.
- **Act.** Call for help immediately!

Risk Factors



- Feeling depressed, hopeless
- Deliberate self injury ("cutting")
- Prior suicidal thinking and behavior
- Having family members or friends who have attempted or died by suicide
- Loss of an important relationship (e.g., breaking up)
- Being isolated or alone
- Having been traumatized or abused
- Drug and alcohol use

Warning Signs



- Suicidal threats, both direct ("I want to die") and indirect ("I wish I could go to sleep and not wake up")
- Suicide notes, plans, social media posts
- Making final plans; giving away favorite things
- Preoccupation with death or revenge
- Changes in behavior, sleeping, eating, appearance, thoughts and/or feelings
- Extreme mood swings, rage, withdrawal
- Sudden unexplained happiness