What parents need to know about teen suicide

Resources for Living
In this session, we will discuss

- Facts about youth suicide
- Risk factors and warning signs
- How to talk to your teen
- How to seek crisis support and resources
What do you think?

**True or False?**

- Suicide is the 8th leading cause of death for teens ages 12-24
- Teens that make threats about suicide are typically attention seeking
- Talking about suicide or asking about suicidal intentions will encourage a young person to make an attempt
- All people who are suicidal have a diagnosis of depression
- Teens that think about suicide are just overly dramatic
- Once a person wants to die by suicide, there is generally nothing you can do about it
- Young people often tell others, especially their peers about their suicidal thoughts and intentions
The truth

National Youth Suicide Statistics\textsuperscript{1,2, 3}

• Second leading cause of death for young people between ages 10-34
• 1 in 5 (18.8\%) seriously considered attempting suicide
• 1 in 6 (15.7\%) seriously made a plan about how they would attempt suicide
• 1 in 11 (8.9\%) made and attempt
• Each day more than 3700 9\textsuperscript{th}-12\textsuperscript{th} grade students attempt suicide
• Four out of Five teens who attempt suicide gave warnings

\textsuperscript{1} Suicide Statistics, American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP). Accessed May 03, 2021
Could it be my teen?

- Typical adolescence vs. something else?
- Males vs. females
- Cultural considerations
- Social factors
- LGBTQ Youth
- Perfectionistic personalities
- Self esteem
- Learning abilities
Suicide is complex

It’s never just one thing

• Early childhood development
• Health/ mental health history
• Family mental health history
• Previous suicide attempt
• Family history of loss by suicide
• Socioeconomic factors
• Significant stressors
• Relationships
What should I look for?

**Potential warning signs**

- Withdraw from family and friends
- Change in mood or behavior that is uncharacteristic
- Seem sad or anxious all the time
- Have a hard time functioning in more than one area of life (school, work and friends)
- Withdraw from activities that were once enjoyable
- Significant change in sleep and appetite
- New or increased drug or alcohol use/abuse
- Significant decline in personal hygiene/self-care
Worsening signs

- Talking, writing about, or posting about suicide
- Preoccupation with death or suicide
- Sense of hopelessness, worthlessness
- Lacking interest in the future
- Increased secrecy, need for privacy

- Giving away coveted or meaningful possessions
- Risk taking behavior
- Drastic change in mood, irritability
- Sudden resolve, calm, peace/ taking steps to say good-bye
If you are concerned...

- Collect your thoughts before reaching out
- Talk to your teen in a quiet, private place
- Speak in a calm, caring manner (it’s okay to be nervous and show your emotions)
- Express your concern
- Share your observations in an open, non-judgmental manner
- Allow time and space for your child to respond without pressure
Always ask

Trust your gut

- Ask openly and directly about thoughts of suicide
  - “Are you thinking about killing yourself?”
  - “Do you want to die?”
  - “Are you considering suicide?”

If YES

(with each additional ‘Yes’ response, continue asking the next question)

1. “Have you thought about how you would end your life?”
2. “Do you have what you need to carry out your plan?”
3. “When would you end your life?”
If your teen is suicidal

- Don’t leave them alone
- Limit/ remove access to lethal means
- Remain calm, supportive
- Seek immediate assistance
  - Family doctor
  - Therapist
  - Mobile crisis
  - Crisis Hotline
  - Emergency room
  - 911
It’s not helpful

Avoid/ Do not

- Lecture your teen
- Convince your child on why life is worth living
- Judge, shame, scold, punish, threaten
- Diminish, dismiss, ignore
- Tell your teen not to tell anyone- to keep their feelings a secret
What to say

**Instead of...**
- “Suicide is selfish”
- “Others are worse off”
- “But your life is so good!”
- “Have you tried ___?”
- “Don’t say that”

**Say...**
- “You’re having a really tough time”
- “You are not alone.”
- “I love you no matter what.”
- “I’m glad you said something. Let’s get you some help.”
There is hope

- It's okay to struggle, things can improve
- Accepting help is not a weakness
- Treatment is not one size fits all
- Reinforce care, concern, compassion
- Create a safety plan
- Allow time to heal, space to talk, room to listen
Seeking Help

- Your family physician or pediatrician
- Mobile Crisis Unit
- A local emergency room
- Behavioral Health professional

- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1-800-273-TALK (8255) or suicidepreventionlifeline.org
- Crisis Text Line – Text “HELLO” to 741741 from anywhere in the United States
More Resources

- **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline** - 800-273-8255 (soon to be 988)
- **Crisis Text Line** - Text HOME to 741741
- **The Trevor Project** 866-488-7386
  LGBTQ Youth/Suicide Prevention and Support
- **The Jed Foundation**
  Teen/Young Adult Mental Health and Suicide Prevention
- **Seize the Awkward**
  Conversations about mental health
- **The Jason Foundation**
  Youth Suicide Prevention
- **American Foundation For Suicide Prevention**
- **Born This Way Foundation**
  Mental wellness and empowerment of young people

- **Talking to Your Kid About Suicide**
- **A Voice at the Table**
- **Navigating Family Life after a Suicide Attempt**
- **The Relationship between Bullying and Suicide**
Thank you for attending!

All calls are confidential, except as required by law.

Information is believed to be accurate as of the production date; however, it is subject to change.