

TEEN SUICIDE

LET'S TALK TO OUR KIDS

“Suicide is a permanent solution to a temporary problem”

In Canada suicide is the second leading cause of death for teens. For every completed adolescent suicide there are more than 60 unsuccessful adolescent attempts and countless more that are thinking about it.

There are many challenges that youth face. We need to become aware of the difficulties our youth are going through at this time. Adolescence is a time for dramatic change. The journey from child to adulthood can be complex and trying not only for the youth but for the families as well. Teens lack the life experience and the cognitive abilities to cope with difficult situations or overwhelming stress that they may find themselves in. Suicide can be viewed as the only solution and they can see no other way out of this state. They feel hopeless, helpless and isolated and just want a way out from the pain. Teens will often try to address these issues on their own or with their friends. This can be counterproductive and often doesn't lead to a positive outcome. **Suicidal thoughts and behaviour require professional help.**

It is not uncommon for teens to be aware of what was going on with respect to the victims prior to the suicide occurring. **We need teens to know that asking someone to help when a friend is feeling suicidal is not ratting, telling or betraying their friends.** We encourage anyone who knows of someone who might be at risk to tell a parent, teacher, counsellor, or adult of what is going on. If they don't feel comfortable addressing it directly please tell them to call 911 as they can remain anonymous. We do not want to lose any more kids!

CRISIS RESOURCES

Vancouver Island Crisis Line: 1-888-494-3888

Kids Help Line: 1-800-668-6868 or www.kidshelpphone.ca; www.youthspace.ca

Phone chat support via Texting: 778-783-0177

Victoria General Hospital: 250-727-4212 (call 911 for any and all emergencies)

'Project Alive' Suicide Intervention Services: 250-952-5073

Child & Youth Mental Health Services: 250-391-2223

Canadian Mental Health Association: www.cmha.ca , www.gotabrain.ca

FACTS & MYTHS:

MYTH – young people very rarely think about suicide.

FACT: most teens think about suicide at some point or have been affected by suicide.

MYTH – talking about suicide about will give the young person the idea or permission to consider suicide as a solution.

FACT: talking about suicide without showing fear or judgment can open the door to discussion; they have already considered it before it has crossed your mind.

MYTH – suicide is sudden and unpredictable.

FACT: suicide is most often a process not an event. 8 out of 10 people who die by suicide have provided indicators.

MYTH – suicide is a way to get attention or manipulate others.

FACT: all suicide threats **MUST** be taken seriously. Efforts to get attention- even if in a negative fashion- are still a cry for help.

MYTH – suicidal teens want to die.

FACT: suicidal youth are in pain and they want an end to the pain. Coping skills, mental health issues, lack of knowledge about resources all get in the way making death seem like the only solution.

RISK FACTORS:

- Death of a family member, friend, acquaintance, pet or classmate.
- Breakup of a relationship
- Addictions
- Mental Health Issues
- Abuse, physical, sexual, emotional or bullying
- Rejection from family friends or peers
- Divorce, separation or family dysfunction
- Issues around sexual identity
- Adolescence (just growing up)
- External pressures: school, job, sports, personal pressure, peer or social pressures

WHAT ARE THE SIGNS?

- Changes in mood
- Changes in behavior – always sad, feeling hopeless, feeling dejected, possibly being rebellious, defiant, isolating self from friends & family, aggression, any behavior that isn't normal for your teen
- Changes in mental process – lack of concentration, memory lapses, loss of self esteem, guilt, paranoia, anxiety
- Changes in biological functions – not eating, over eating, always tired, lack of physical activity, sleep disturbances
- School problems – change in school performance, problems with teachers, habitual missing of class
- Health complaints – something hurts
- Self medicating – drugs, alcohol, cutting
- “Hero Worship” of a friend or a person they know who have died of suicide
- Writing in a Diary, Journal or drawing images of death, poetry
- Making a Plan
- Commenting eg. “no one cares if I live or die”
- Giving away personal articles or saying goodbye, telling friends you always will love them
- Gathering information on death, dying or suicide and talking about it with peers.
- **Facebook, text messages, emails, MSN or online chats, blogs, etc.**

Be aware of what your child is doing online and what their interests are. Do not assume they are OK. Respecting their privacy is important but parents do have the right to access kid's rooms in their homes. Oftentimes parents are excluded from the bedroom sanctuary of their teens but there may be important clues to indicate the teen's emotional state.

WHAT TO DO:

- **Don't be afraid to ask your teen if they are considering suicide!** It shows that you care and understand, you aren't afraid to talk about it and you can help – which is what most kids want.
- **Ask your child how they are doing? And listen to the answer.** Don't minimize the answer you get or try and talk your child out of what they are feeling. These are their feelings and they are important.
- **Talk to Teachers and Friends.** They may have information that you are not aware of. Gather as much information as you can.
- **Don't be afraid to call** and discuss your concerns with Mental Health professionals, medical supports, crisis lines, school counsellor or Victim Services.
- Call 911 In Case of Emergency

You don't have to handle this on your own.