



Suicide in Youth

What You Can Do About It

WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF ONE OF YOUR FRIENDS THREATENED TO COMMIT SUICIDE ?

Would you laugh it off?

Would you assume that the threat was just a joke or a way of getting attention?

Would you be shocked and tell him or her not to say things like that?

Would you ignore it?

If you reacted in any of those ways you might be missing an opportunity to save a life, perhaps the life of someone who is very close and important to you. You might later find yourself saying, "I didn't believe she was serious," or "I never thought he'd really do it."

Suicide is a major cause of death.

The American Association of Suicidology estimates that suicide claims 35,000 lives each year in the United States but the true figure may be much higher. A growing number of those lives are young people in their teens and early twenties. Although it is difficult to get an accurate count because many suicides are covered up or reported as accidents, suicide is now thought to be the second leading cause of death among young people.

If someone you know is suicidal, your ability to recognize the signs and your willingness to do something about it could make the difference between life and death.

DANGER SIGNS

No doubt you have heard that people who talk about suicide won't really do it. It isn't true. Before committing suicide, people often make direct statements about their intention to end their lives, or less direct comments about how they might as well be dead or that their friends and family would be better off without them. Suicide threats and similar statements should always be taken seriously.

People who have previously tried to kill themselves, even if their attempts didn't seem very serious, are also at risk. Unless they are helped they may try again, and the next time the result may be fatal. Four out of five persons who commit suicide have made at least one previous attempt.

Perhaps someone you know has suddenly begun to act very differently or seems to have taken on a whole new personality. The shy person becomes a thrill-seeker. The outgoing person becomes withdrawn, unfriendly and disinterested. When such changes take place for no apparent reason or persist for a period of time, it may be a clue to impending suicide.

Making final arrangements is another possible indication of suicidal risk. In young people, such arrangements often include giving away treasured personal possessions, such as a favorite book or record collection.

WHAT TO DO

If someone confides in you that he or she is thinking about suicide or shows other signs of being suicidal, don't be afraid to talk about it.



Your willingness to discuss it will show the person that you don't condemn him or her for having such feelings. Ask questions about how the person feels and about the reasons for those feelings. Ask whether a method of suicide has been considered, whether any specific plans have been made and whether any steps have been taken toward carrying out those plans, such as getting hold of whatever means of suicide has been decided upon.

Don't worry that your discussion will encourage the person to go through with the plan. On the contrary, it will help him or her to know that someone is willing to be a friend. It may save a life.

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On the other hand, don't try to turn the discussion off or offer advice such as, "Think about how much better off you are than most people. You should appreciate how lucky you are." Such comments only make the suicidal person feel more guilty, worthless, and hopeless than before. Be a concerned and willing listener. Keep calm. Discuss the subject as you would any other topic of concern with a friend.

GET HELP

Whenever you think that someone you know is in danger of suicide, get help. Suggest that he or she call a suicide prevention center, crisis intervention center or whatever similar organization serves your area. Or suggest that they talk with a sympathetic teacher, counselor, clergyman, doctor or other adult you respect. If your friend refuses, take it upon yourself to talk with one of these people for advice on handling the situation.

In some cases you may find yourself in the position of having to get direct help for someone who is suicidal and refuses to go for counseling. If so, do it. Don't be afraid of appearing disloyal. Many people who are suicidal have given up hope. They no longer believe they can be helped. They feel it is useless. The truth is, they can be helped. With time, most suicidal people can be restored to full and happy living. But when they are feeling hopeless, their judgment is impaired. They can't see a reason to go on living. In that case, it is up to you to use your judgment to see that they get the help they need. What at the time may appear to be an act of disloyalty or the breaking of a confidence could turn out to be the favor of a lifetime. Your courage and willingness to act could save a life.

WHAT ABOUT YOU

Perhaps you yourself have sometimes felt like ending your life. Don't be ashamed of it. Many people, young and old, have similar feelings. Talk to someone you trust. Things seem very bad sometimes. But those times don't last forever. Ask for help. You can be helped. Because you deserve it.

WARNING SIGNS OF SUICIDE

- Suicide threats
- Statements revealing a desire to die
- Previous suicide attempts
- Sudden changes in behavior (withdrawal, apathy, moodiness)
- Depression (crying, sleeplessness, loss of appetite, hopelessness)
- Final arrangements (such as giving away personal possessions)

What To Do – Things That Can Help

- ☑ Discuss it openly and frankly
- ☑ Show interest and support
- ☑ Get professional help



National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
1-800-273-TALK

Infoline Statewide Suicide and Crisis Hotline
2-1-1

Connecticut Crisis Centers

Derby

Griffin Hospital-Psychiatric Crisis Team
(203) 732-7541 or (800) 354-3094

Hartford

The Samaritans of the Capital Region
(860) 232-2121

Meriden

Midstate Behavioral Health System-Crisis Stabilization Program
(203) 630-5305

Middletown

River Valley Services
(860) 344-2100

Middletown

Middlesex Hospital-Crisis Assessment and Triage Service
(860) 344-6496

New Haven

CT Mental Health Center-Acute Care Services
(203) 974-7713

New Haven

Clifford W. Beers Guidance Clinic-CAMPES
(888) 97-YOUTH

Plainville

Wheeler Clinic, Inc.-Emergency Service
(860) 747-3434 Help Line or (860) 524-1182 Help Line
(860) 747-8719 Community Response Team

Rocky Hill

United Way of Connecticut/INFOLINE
211 or 800-203-1234 (cell phone users)

Waterbury

Waterbury Hospital Psychiatric Center
(203) 573-6500

West Mystic

Contact of Southeast Connecticut
(800) 848-1281 or (860) 848-1281

Connecticut Youth Suicide Advisory Board
www.state.ct.us/dcf/YSAB/

American Association of Suicidology
4201 Connecticut Ave., NW
Suite 408
Washington, DC 20008
(202) 237-2280
www.suicidology.org

Information Provided by:
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