

SIGNS & CONCERNS

Four out of five who die by suicide give clear warning signs of their intentions. This means that, if we learn the signs and know how to respond, we have an opportunity to assist 80% of those teens that are contemplating suicide.

Many times, signs of concern mimic “typical teenage behaviors”. So, how can we know if it’s just “being a teenager” or something more? If the signs are persisting over a period of time, several of the signs appear at the same time, and the behavior is “out of character” for the young person as you know him/her, then close attention is warranted.

The following are some signs of concern that you may see. This is, by no means, all of the signs.

Anytime you have a concern about a young person’s actions and/or behaviors, be proactive – have a conversation with the child. Seek professional help, if necessary.

Suicide Threats: Either Direct or Indirect Statements

People who talk about suicide, threaten suicide or call suicide crisis lines are 30 times more likely than average to kill themselves. Take suicide threats seriously.

- “I’d be better off dead.”
- “I won’t be bothering you much longer.”
- “You’ll be better off without me around.”
- “I hate my life.”
- “I am going to kill myself.”

Suicide threats are not always verbal.

- Text messages
- Social networks
- Twitter

PREOCCUPATION OR OBSESSION WITH DEATH OR SUICIDE

- Essays, writing about death
- Poems about death
- Artwork, drawings depicting death

DEPRESSION

- Sudden, abrupt changes in personality
- Expressions of hopelessness and despair
- Declining grades and school performance
- Lack of interest in activities once enjoyed
- Increased irritability and aggressiveness
- Withdrawal from family, friends and relationships
- Lack of hygiene
- Changes in eating and sleeping habits

FINAL ARRANGEMENTS

Once the decision has been made to end their life, some young people begin making final arrangements.

- Giving away prized or favorite possessions
- Putting their affairs in order
- Saying good-bye to family and friends
- Making funeral arrangements

OTHER SIGNS

- Experiencing a recent loss – a loved one, relationship, job, etc.
- Increased use or abuse of alcohol or drugs
- Recent separation or divorce of parents
- Feelings of loneliness or abandonment
- Feelings of shame, guilt, humiliation or rejection
- Emotional stress and difficulties may result in physical complaints, such as head-aches, stomach-aches, loss of energy, etc.
- Taking excessive risks, being reckless
- In real or serious trouble, especially for the first time
- Problems staying focused or paying attention

Remember: This is not an all-inclusive list of signs of concern. Anytime you notice behaviors that concern you, don’t hesitate or be afraid to ask questions.

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