



EMPOWERING PARENTS TO RAISE
THEIR CHILDREN TO BE SUBSTANCE-FREE

Talk Early And Often About Alcohol, Tobacco And Other Drugs, Even When It Gets Tough

Know! The Warning Signs of Teen Suicide

According to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, the majority of suicidal adolescents do not truly want to die, they just want to end their pain and sadness. Many youth, at some point during adolescence, will think about suicide; however most are able to come to terms with the permanency of it and choose to resolve the problem in other ways. But some young people, in the midst of a crisis, perceive their dilemma as inescapable and see no other way out.

Eighty percent of the time there are definite signs to indicate a suicidal plan is in process. The key to prevention is in being able to recognize those signs and not hesitating to take action. The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline shares the following list of warning signs designed around the word "FACTS," and says that the risk for suicide is greater if a particular behavior is new or has increased.

- **FEELINGS** that seem different from the past, like hopelessness, fear of losing control, helplessness, worthlessness, feeling overly anxious, worried or angry often.
- **ACTIONS** that are different from the way your child acted in the past, especially things like talking about death or suicide, taking dangerous risks, withdrawing from activities or sports or using alcohol or drugs.
- **CHANGES** in personality, behavior, sleeping patterns, eating habits, loss of interest in friends or activities or sudden improvement after a period of being down or withdrawn.
- **THREATS** that convey a sense of hopelessness, worthlessness, or preoccupation with death ("Life doesn't seem worth it sometimes"; "I wish I were dead"; "Heaven's got to be better than this"), giving away favorite things, studying ways to die, obtaining a weapon or stash of pills, suicide attempts like overdosing or cutting.
- **SITUATIONS** that can serve as "trigger points" for suicidal behaviors. These include things like loss or death, getting in trouble at home, in school or with the law, a break-up or impending changes for which your child feels scared or unprepared.

Teen suicide is preventable, but it must be brought out into the light. We must have conversations with our children on the topic, just like we do with drinking, smoking and any other risky behavior that could harm them. A common concern among parents is that talking about suicide with a child will somehow plant the idea of it in their head – which is simply not true.

The Society for the Prevention of Teen Suicide suggests a conversation that goes something like this:

Getting started: *I read that suicide is now the third leading cause of death for people your age.*

Acknowledge your discomfort, which will allow your child to do the same: *I know this may be an uncomfortable subject, but it is really important for us to talk about it.*

Talking regularly with kids about the dangers of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs reduces their risk of using.

Know! urges you to encourage other parents to join Know!.

[Click here for the Know! Parent Tip Sign-Up Page.](#)

Know! is a program of:



**Lifetime
Prevention
Lifetime Wellness**

Drug Free
Action Alliance
6155 Huntley Rd.
Suite H
Columbus, Ohio
43229



Link to the article on the Drug Free Action Alliance Facebook Page

Ask direct questions like: *What do you think about suicide? Is it something that any of your friends talk about? The statistics make it sound pretty common. Have you ever thought about it?*

Listen attentively and share your concerns if you have any: *What you're telling me has really gotten my attention and I need to think about it some more. Let's talk about this again, okay?*

Don't overreact - as it may prevent future conversations on the topic; but definitely don't under react - as it could have fatal consequences. Take ALL thoughts or talk of suicide seriously and seek help immediately, if needed.

If your son or daughter expresses past thoughts of suicide, for example, *"I felt that way a while ago but I don't anymore,"* ask about the problem that caused such thoughts and discuss how he/she resolved it. Remember, suicide is an attempt to solve a problem that seems impossible to solve in any other way.

By knowing the facts and talking openly with your child about suicide, you allow your son or daughter to feel more comfortable with the subject, and more likely to come to you with questions and concerns in the future.

If you, your child or someone else you know exhibits any of these signs, seek help as soon as possible by calling the Lifeline at **1-800-273-TALK** (8255).

Sources: [American Association of Suicidology](#). [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#). [Society for the Prevention of Suicide](#). [Youth Suicide Prevention Program](#).