

## SUICIDE: A PREVENTABLE EPIDEMIC

Suicides among teenagers in the United States have increased dramatically in recent years. Almost 5,000 teenagers commit suicide each year. "Suicide is the third leading cause of death for 15-to-24-year-olds, and the sixth leading cause of death for 5-to-14-year-olds."

**Don't let your friend  
or family member  
become a statistic.  
Review the warning  
signs and get help.**

Sources:

American Academy of  
Child and Adolescent Psychiatry  
[http://www.aacap.org/publications/  
factsfam/suicide.htm](http://www.aacap.org/publications/factsfam/suicide.htm)

NMHA Teen Suicide Fact Sheet  
[http://www.nmha.org/infoctr/factsheets/82.  
cfm](http://www.nmha.org/infoctr/factsheets/82.cfm)

## WHAT YOU CAN DO

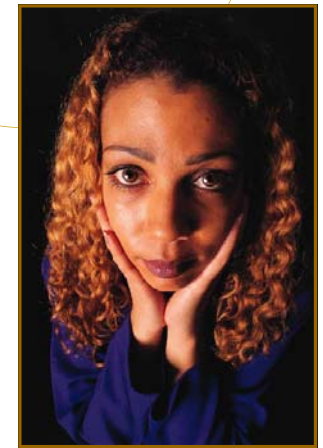
- **Take the threat seriously.** Studies have found that more than 75% of people who committed suicides did things in the few weeks or months prior to their deaths to indicate to others that they were in deep despair.
- **Ask.** Ask about the person's feelings to show you care and to help reduce their immediate distress. This can be a difficult question to ask, so here are some possible approaches:
  - "Are you feeling so bad that you're considering suicide?"
  - "That sounds like an awful lot for one person to take; has it made you think about killing yourself to escape?"
  - "Has all that pain you're going through made you think about hurting yourself?"
  - "Have you ever felt like just throwing it all away?"
- **Actively listen.** Allow the person to talk about his/her troubles and feelings. You don't need to say much and there are no magic words. Avoid arguments, criticism, and advice giving.
- **Be present.** If the person is intensely suicidal, do not leave him or her alone. Make sure he/she doesn't have access to alcohol, pills, weapons, etc.
- **No secrets.** Don't promise to "not tell anyone." Don't try to go it alone. Get help for the person and yourself by contacting a counselor or other adults.

[http://www.healthplace.com/communities/depression/children\\_9.asp](http://www.healthplace.com/communities/depression/children_9.asp),  
[http://www.healthplace.com/communities/depression/related/suicide\\_fa.  
.asp#Q3](http://www.healthplace.com/communities/depression/related/suicide_fa.asp#Q3)  
<http://www.metanoia.org/suicide/whattodo.htm>

## OTHER RESOURCES

SAIVE - Suicide Awareness\Voices of Education  
<http://www.save.org>  
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention  
<http://www.afsp.org>

## SUICIDE PREVENTION



*Don't think that  
it's just a phase...*

*That it's just  
going to go  
away...*

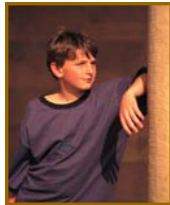
# How You Can Help Save a Life

## How you can help a teenager in crisis

### WARNING SIGNS

Friends and family should be aware of the following signs of teenagers who may try to commit suicide:

- Change in eating and sleeping habits
- Withdrawal from friends, family, and regular activities
- Violent actions, rebellious behavior, or running away
- Drug and alcohol use
- Unusual neglect of personal appearance
- Marked personality change
- Persistent boredom, difficulty concentrating, or a decline in the quality of schoolwork
- Frequent complaints about physical symptoms, often related to emotions, such as stomachaches, headaches, fatigue, etc.
- Loss of interest in pleasurable activities
- Not tolerating praise or rewards
- Complain of being a bad person or feeling rotten inside
- Give verbal hints with statements such as: *I won't be a problem for you much longer, Nothing matters, It's no use, and I won't see you again*
- Put his or her affairs in order, for example, give away favorite possessions, clean his or her room, throw away important belongings, etc.
- Become suddenly cheerful after a period of depression
- Have signs of psychosis (hallucinations or bizarre thoughts)



### LEARNING FROM LITERATURE

Although suicide is often a taboo subject, it's been with us forever. One of the more famous double-suicides in both literature and real life is the one committed by Romeo and Juliet. Both of them felt that they had no options left and had no one to turn to for help. Like many teenage suicides, their acts were impulsive and sudden. The risk factors for these literary characters are the same as for many teenagers today: loss of a loved one, isolation, exposure to violence inside and outside of the home, and easy access to a means of carrying out the suicide. But if they had just waited...for only a few more minutes, their deaths could have been prevented. That is why it is so important to step in early when you see there might be a problem. Those who are suicidal often don't see all the options, don't see that there can even be a tomorrow. It is

### WHERE TO GET HELP

#### National Hopeline Network 1-800-SUICIDE

Trained crisis counselors 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

#### National Hopeline Network Referral Information Evaluation System

<http://ries.continotech.com/ries/centerSearch.do>  
Enter your location to find local crisis centers

#### Suicide Hotlines

<http://suicidehotlines.com/>  
Scroll down to links to states for local crisis centers

#### Covenant House Nineline

1-800-999-9999  
24/7 Crisis hotline for teenagers—on any topic

Source for signs: American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry  
<http://www.aacap.org/publications/factsfam/suicide.htm>



### RISK FACTORS FOR SUICIDE

- Previous suicide attempts
- Close family member who has committed suicide
- Past psychiatric hospitalization
- Recent losses: This may include the death of a relative, a family divorce, or a breakup with a girlfriend/boyfriend
- Social isolation: The individual has poor relationship with parents and/or are socially isolated or rejected by peers
- Drug or alcohol abuse: Drugs decrease impulse control making impulsive suicide more likely
- Problems that are out of their control, such as divorce, alcoholism of a family member, physical or sexual abuse
- Exposure to violence in the home or the social environment
- Handguns in the home, especially if loaded
- The strongest risk factors for attempted suicide in youth are depression, alcohol or other drug use disorder, and aggressive or disruptive behaviors.

#### Sources for risk factors:

Child and Teen Suicide  
[http://www.healthypace.com/communities/depression/children\\_10.asp](http://www.healthypace.com/communities/depression/children_10.asp)  
Suicide Facts  
[http://www.healthypace.com/communities/depression/related/suicide\\_8.asp](http://www.healthypace.com/communities/depression/related/suicide_8.asp)  
Risk Factors  
[http://kidshealth.org/parent/emotions/behavior/suicide\\_p2.html](http://kidshealth.org/parent/emotions/behavior/suicide_p2.html)