



Youth Suicide Prevention: Know the Warning Signs

Most suicidal young people don't really want to die; they just want their pain to end. About 80% of the time, people who kill themselves have given definite signals or talked about suicide. The key to prevention is to know these signs and what to do to help.

Watch for these signs.

They may indicate someone is thinking about suicide. The more signs you see, the greater the risk.

- A previous suicide attempt
- Current talk of suicide or making a plan
- Strong wish to die or a preoccupation with death
- Giving away prized possessions
- Signs of depression, such as moodiness, hopelessness, withdrawal
- Increased alcohol and/or other drug use
- Hinting at not being around in the future or saying good-bye

These warning signs are especially noteworthy in light of:

- a recent death or suicide of a friend or family member
- a recent break-up with a boyfriend or girlfriend, or conflict with parents
- news reports of other suicides by young people in the same school or community

Other key risk factors include:

- Readily accessible firearms
- Impulsiveness and taking unnecessary risks
- Lack of connection to family and friends (no one to talk to)

What to do if you see the warning signs?

If a friend mentions suicide, take it seriously. If he or she has expressed an immediate plan, or has access to a gun or other potentially deadly means, do not leave him or her alone. Get help immediately.

These steps can be effective:

Show You care | Ask the Question | Get Help

Show You Care

Often, suicidal thinking comes from a wish to end deep psychological pain. Death seems like the only way out. But it isn't. Let the person know you really care. Talk about your feelings and ask about his or hers. Listen carefully to what they have to say.

- *"I'm worried about you, about how you feel."*
- *"You mean a lot to me. I want to help."*
- *"I'm here, if you need someone to talk to."*



Ask the Question

Don't hesitate to raise the subject. Talking with young people about suicide won't put the idea in their heads. Chances are, if you've observed any of the warning signs, they're already thinking about it. Be direct in a caring, non-confrontational way. Get the conversation started.

- *"Are you thinking about suicide?"*
- *"Do you really want to die?"*
- *"Do you want your problems to go away?"*

Get Help

- Call 1-800-273-TALK or 1-866-4-U-Trevor
- School counselor, teacher or coach
- Crisis telephone helplines [1-800-273-TALK or LGBTQ Focus 1-866-4-U-Trevor]
- Private therapist, or counselor
- Mental health agency
- Hospital emergency room
- Clergy or religious leader

Never keep talk of suicide a secret, even if they ask you to. It's better to risk a friendship than a life. Do not try to handle the situation on your own. You can be the most help by referring your friend to someone with professional skills to provide the help that he or she needs, while you continue to offer support.

- *"I know where we can get some help."*
- *"Let's talk to someone who can help...let's call the crisis line,now."*
- *"I can go with you to get some help."*

Resources:

- Youth Suicide Prevention Program Resources: www.yspp.org/resources/GLBTQResources.htm
- Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255) | TTY: 1-800-799-4889 | www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org
- 1-866-TEENLINK | 866-833-6546 | www.866teenlink.org
- Washington Recovery Help Line (24 hours): Support and resources for youth struggling with substance abuse, problem gambling, and/or mental health. Confidential and anonymous. Toll Free 1-866-789-1511 | www.warecoveryhelpline.org
- Greater Seattle Alateen & Alanon: Support groups for youth struggling with addiction. Meetings available in King, Pierce, Snohomish and Kitsap Counties. Visit their website for more information and a list of meetings in your area. Call 24-Hour Hotline (206) 625-0000 | www.seattle-al-anon.org
- LGBTQAI+ Youth: Call 24-Hour Hotline 1-866-488-7386 | www.thetrevorproject.org
- 1-855-DRUGFREE | www.drugfree.com