

10

WAYS TO REDUCE YOUR TEEN'S SUICIDE RISK



1. KNOW THE CONNECTION TO MENTAL HEALTH

The vast majority of teens who die by suicide struggle with mental health conditions such as depression. Even teens who do not have underlying mental health issues may show signs that they're considering ending their own lives.

2. BE ON THE LOOKOUT FOR CHANGES

Signs that a teen is having mental health problems vary from person to person, but as a parent, you may have a good idea of what is normal for them. When you start to see changes in mood or behavior, that is the time to be more alert.

3. UNDERSTAND THE SYMPTOMS

Common indications that a teen is having mental health issues include but are not limited to withdrawing from friends and family, changes in sleeping or eating patterns, decreased energy, loss of interest in activities, and self-harm.

4. RECOGNIZE THE RISK FACTORS

The circumstances surrounding a child's suicide are never identical, but there are common risk factors such as the loss of a loved one, bullying, the end of a friendship or dating relationship, academic disappointment, and trauma.

5. DON'T DISMISS SYMPTOMS AS A PHASE OR DRAMA

If your teen is displaying signs of having a mental health issue, do not assume that it is just something that all teens go through. Never assume your child is exaggerating if they say things like, "I want to die."

6. TAKE THE INITIATIVE

If you see signs that your teen is at risk, do not wait for them to approach you about any issues they may have. The conversation may be difficult, but it is not one you can afford to postpone or avoid.

7. FOCUS ON EMPATHY AND UNDERSTANDING

You may feel shocked, hurt, or angry to discover your child has thought about suicide. You may even want to be in denial or argue with them. While this is understandable, you have to focus on your child's needs.

8. USE SUPPORTIVE LANGUAGE

Don't judge or criticize your child for feeling the way they do. Instead of saying things like, "That's ridiculous" or "You don't mean that," say "I'm sorry you are feeling this way—can you share a bit more?"

9. REMOVE OR SECURE METHODS

Eliminating access to the things that your teen could use to commit suicide is critical. Keep firearms out of their reach. Suicide attempts with firearms are almost always fatal. Keep medications locked away and, whenever possible, reduce the volume of medications on hand.

10. GET HELP RIGHT AWAY

If your teen is at immediate risk of attempting suicide, take them to the emergency department of your local hospital or call 9-1-1. Fast action is crucial when things have reached a crisis point.



A PARENT'S ROLE

As your child matures and becomes more independent, it can be increasingly difficult for you to know what they are experiencing and feeling. Are they just in a mood, or is it something more serious that you need to worry about? Remember that you can be an excellent source of support for your child by following the suggestions given here. However, if the situation is more serious, do not hesitate to reach out to healthcare professionals. The tragedy of teen suicide is real, but the good news is that there is an army of dedicated professionals who can help you and your teen.

**CONNECT, SUPPORT,
EMPOWER**

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Suicide and Crisis Lifeline
9-8-8
988lifeline.org/

The Jason Foundation
jasonfoundation.com/