

Help for Parents*

"I don't want him to be mad at me... It can't be my kid... What's wrong? ... She has everything she wants... I just don't understand..."

Parents want to know what is going on with their children. In order to really know they have to question, listen, learn and respect the thoughts and feelings of their children. Ideally, all parents would operate in such a manner. Realistically, however, being a parent means doing the best you can knowing what you are privileged to be told. The thoughts and feelings of your children are not always expressed. You can only be there and be ready to listen, accept and love.

"So what do I need to know?"

Statistics representing adolescent suicide are alarming. Acknowledging the problem is difficult, but necessary. It could be your child, or one you know.

Recognize

The first step is recognizing there is some concern and following up. In order to recognize the signs, you have to know what they are. In general a change in behavior or interaction is sign there is something going on. Though all adolescents don't exhibit the same signs, there are some common factors identified with increased risk. All signs are worth recognizing.

- » Ideation – Is your child talking, drawing or writing about death?
- » Substance Abuse – Is your child experimenting with drugs and/or alcohol?
- » Purposelessness – Does your child exhibit purpose and planning for the future?
- » Anxiety – Does your child seem nervous, worried or stressed?
- » Trapped – Is motivation poor? Does your child express feelings of being trapped?
- » Hopelessness – Is there promise? Is there consideration for the future and the rest yet to come?
- » Withdrawal – Is there a connection with you and your child? Does he/she connect with anyone?
- » Anger – Does your child seem increasingly agitated or aggressive?
- » Recklessness – Is your child engaging in risk-taking behaviors?
- » Mood Changes – Have there been unusual or dramatic changes in mood or behavior?

Respond

Know it is time to do something.

Acknowledge the concern and offer help. Many parents have been where you are and may feel what you feel. They know the difficulty in addressing the circumstances. They also know the potential of not doing so. Make the effort to open dialogue and communication with your teen regarding suicide.

TALK TO YOUR CHILD. PREVENTING SUICIDE IS WORTH THE DISCUSSION. LET YOUR CHILD KNOW IT IS OK AND HELP IS AVAILABLE. CALL 1-800-273-8255 24/7 FOR ASSISTANCE.

*Courtesy of Prevent Suicide WV: <http://preventsuicidewv.org/>