

SUICIDE & TEENS

THE FACTS

WHAT'S THIS?

"Restricting access to lethal means" means getting rid of or locking away potentially dangerous items in the home. This includes any items that one may use to hurt oneself such as razors, knives, guns, rope, pills, etc.

ALTHOUGH SUICIDE DEATHS ARE RELATIVELY RARE (1-2/10,000 TEENS DIE BY SUICIDE EACH YEAR), THOUGHTS OF SUICIDE AND SUICIDE ATTEMPTS ARE MORE COMMON

ACCORDING TO THE CDC, RESTRICTING ACCESS TO LETHAL MEANS IS LIKELY THE MOST PROMISING & UNDERUSED PREVENTION STRATEGY

INDIGENOUS YOUTH REPORT THE HIGHEST RATES OF SUICIDAL THOUGHTS, NON-FATAL SUICIDAL BEHAVIORS, AND SUICIDE DEATH WHEN COMPARED TO OTHER RACES AND ETHNICITIES

BLACK ADOLESCENTS ARE LESS LIKELY TO EXPERIENCE SUICIDAL THOUGHTS, BUT RATES OF SUICIDE ATTEMPT AND DEATH ARE INCREASING MORE QUICKLY AMONG BLACK COMPARED TO WHITE YOUTH

LGBTQ+ YOUTH SERIOUSLY CONSIDER SUICIDE AT ALMOST 3X THE RATE OF CISGENDER HETEROSEXUAL YOUTH & ARE ALMOST 5X AS LIKELY TO HAVE ATTEMPTED SUICIDE COMPARED TO HETEROSEXUAL YOUTH

CISGENDER TEENAGE GIRLS ARE MORE LIKELY TO THINK ABOUT AND ATTEMPT SUICIDE, AND CISGENDER TEENAGE BOYS ARE MORE LIKELY TO DIE BY SUICIDE

THE MYTHS

PEOPLE TALKING ABOUT SUICIDE ARE DOING IT FOR ATTENTION

Most people who talk about wanting to kill themselves do so because they are thinking about suicide and they are looking for help and support. If someone tells you they are suicidal, listen to them nonjudgmentally and empathetically

SUICIDE ATTEMPTS ARE IMPULSIVE

"Impulsive" suicides are not the norm, it is likely those considering suicide have told someone in the past.

IT'S DANGEROUS TO TALK ABOUT SUICIDE & INCREASES THE LIKELIHOOD THAT SOMEONE WILL ACT ON THEIR SUICIDAL THOUGHTS

Research shows the opposite to be true; talking about suicide can be helpful for making the person feel less alone, and it can be an important first step in seeking treatment

PEOPLE WHO FEEL SUICIDAL CANNOT BE STOPPED

Feeling suicidal can be temporary, so support is crucial. With the person's permission, collaboratively reach out to friends and family and help them build a support system to get through the tough time. Encourage them to focus on self-care through things like eating, sleeping, bathing, etc.

SUICIDE ONLY AFFECTS THOSE WITH A MENTAL HEALTH CONDITION

Many individuals with mental illness are not affected by suicidal thoughts and not all people who attempt or die by suicide have mental illness. Any major life stressor can be associated with suicidal thoughts and behaviors

ONCE SOMEONE IS SUICIDAL, THEY ALWAYS WILL BE

Suicidal thinking can look really different for different people. It's important to know that, for most people, these thoughts come and go in waves

THOSE WHO THINK ABOUT AND/OR DIE BY SUICIDE ARE SELFISH

People who think about and die by suicide are often experiencing extreme pain. Contrary to the feelings of their loved ones, people who think about and/or die by suicide may think that they are a burden on others, and seek to end their lives to help those around them

ONCE SOMEONE HAS ATTEMPTED SUICIDE, IT'S UNLIKELY THEY WILL TRY AGAIN

Whereas some only attempt suicide once, others try to kill themselves several times across their lives

PEOPLE THAT TALK ABOUT KILLING THEMSELVES WILL NEVER DO IT

Most people who talk about wanting to kill themselves do so because they are thinking about suicide and they are looking for help and support. If someone tells you they are suicidal, listen to them nonjudgmentally and empathetically

IF MY TEEN SAYS THEY ARE SUICIDAL, IT'S TO GET OUT OF DOING SOMETHING OR TO RECEIVE SPECIAL TREATMENT

When your teen says they are thinking about about suicide or that they want to die, take it seriously. Ask them follow up questions, tell them that you love them and want to support them, and come up with a plan to start/continue therapy and to keep themselves safe

WE CAN USUALLY PREDICT WHETHER AND WHEN SOMEONE WILL THINK ABOUT, ATTEMPT, OR DIE BY SUICIDE

Sadly no. These thoughts and behaviors are complex and we are not able to predict whether or when someone will think about or die by suicide

I'D BE ABLE TO TELL IF MY TEEN WAS SUICIDAL

Research shows that most teens don't tell their parents about suicidal thoughts and don't want them to know

THE WARNING SIGNS

UNFORTUNATELY, IT'S NEARLY IMPOSSIBLE FOR US TO ACCURATELY PREDICT WHO WILL TRY TO KILL THEMSELVES AND WHO WILL DIE BY SUICIDE. THESE BEHAVIORS ARE EXTREMELY COMPLEX, AND THE REASONS FOR SUICIDE LIKELY VARY FROM PERSON-TO-PERSON, AND EVEN WITHIN PEOPLE ACROSS TIME. THAT SAID, IT'S IMPORTANT THAT YOU TRY TO HELP THOSE AROUND YOU WHO ARE GOING THROUGH A HARD TIME. BELOW, WE LIST SOME SIGNS THAT SOMEONE IS STRUGGLING AND LIKELY IN NEED OF SUPPORT

TALKING ABOUT WANTING TO DIE OR KILL ONESELF

TALKING ABOUT FEELING HOPELESS, HAVING NO PURPOSE, FEELING TRAPPED, BEING IN PAIN

TALKING ABOUT BEING A BURDEN TO OTHERS

COLLECTING PILLS

ACTING ANXIOUS, RECKLESS, OR AGITATED

SLEEPING TOO LITTLE OR TOO MUCH

WITHDRAWING OR SELF-ISOLATING

SHOWING RAGE OR TALKING ABOUT SEEKING REVENGE

EXTREME MOOD SWINGS

INCREASED DRUG OR ALCOHOL USE

HOW TO HELP YOUR TEEN

SEEK PROFESSIONAL HELP RIGHT AWAY

Therapy can be helpful for kids who are struggling with thoughts of suicide. Unfortunately, finding the right therapist can be a slow process. Don't wait to contact your pediatrician/local mental health care provider so that your teen can be evaluated and can start therapy. It's important that you remind your teen (and yourself!) that therapy can be a difficult process, and that you shouldn't expect immediate results. That said, if your teen tells you that they don't like or can't trust their therapist, help them to find an alternative option!

LISTEN AND PROVIDE SUPPORT

When your teen shares that they're thinking about suicide, don't make it about you. We know that it can be hard to watch your teen struggle, but seek out support for yourself from your loved ones or your own therapist, not with your child. Instead, let your teen know that they aren't alone and that they are loved. Listen when they talk to you about what's going on, and avoid minimizing their struggle. Help to instill hope by reminding them that a lot of teens think about suicide, and that therapy can help. You can also discuss with your teen (and eventually their therapist) how you can be supportive in their treatment, including by making changes at home.

NEVER SHRUG OFF THREATS OF SUICIDE AS "TYPICAL TEENAGE MELODRAMA"

When talking about suicide, don't assume that your teen is overreacting, lying, or trying to manipulate you. Whenever possible, avoid punishment and taking away privileges when your child shares these thoughts.

URGE YOUR TEEN NOT TO DEMAND TOO MUCH OF THEMSELVES

Be considerate of all your teen's responsibilities and discuss ways you can relieve some stress. Be mindful that they may not be able to handle as much as they normally can, and their abilities may shift from day to day. Encourage your teen to avoid isolating at home and with friends.

ACCEPT YOUR TEEN AS THEY ARE

Accepting your teens' identity expression is crucial for their mental health and for your relationship with them. This includes accepting their gender, sexuality, and any other identities. Remember: it's less important that you fully understand their identity than that you accept their identities, and tell your child that you love and respect them no matter what. There are resources available for you to learn more!

[THE TREVOR PROJECT](#)



[PFLAG](#)

HOW TO FIND A THERAPIST NEAR YOU

[AMERICAN PSYCHIATRIC ASSOCIATION](#)

1-888-357-7924 AND PRESS 0

[AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION](#)

1-800-964-2000

[AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL THERAPY](#)

[DIALECTICAL BEHAVIORAL THERAPY THERAPISTS](#)

NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION LIFELINE

1-800-273-TALK (8255)
or text HOME to 741741

WHAT TO DO IF YOUR TEEN IS AT HIGH RISK FOR SUICIDE

CALL CRISIS SERVICES OR TAKE YOUR TEEN TO THE EMERGENCY ROOM

If you feel your teen is at imminent risk for serious harm or have a gut feeling that something is wrong, seek emergency services to ensure their safety

1-844-493-TALK in Colorado



SCHEDULE PROFESSIONAL HELP

Be sure that your teen has a scheduled appointment with a mental health professional ASAP. Try to have your teen in treatment within the next one to two weeks and be sure that your teen attends this appointment

HAVE A PLAN FOR SUPERVISING YOUR TEEN

Until you think your teen is no longer at very high or imminent risk for suicide, have a plan for monitoring their feelings and behaviors to know that they are safe.

Consider the following supervisions*:

Implement a rule that your teen cannot be in a room with a locked door

Plan frequent check-ins with your teen about their mood and safety

Decrease and/or eliminate alone time without an adult

Monitor cellphone, internet, and social media activity

*Note: these methods should not be used every time your child reports having thoughts of suicide or going through a difficult time. These steps are for use when you do not think your teen can keep themselves safe.

RESTRICT ACCESS TO LETHAL MEANS

When emotions are high, certain items in the home can place your teen at an increased risk for a suicide attempt. By making it more difficult to access lethal items, it provides more time for the strong emotions to subside before acting rashly.

To the extent possible, remove these items from the home or lock them away so that your teen cannot access them:



- Guns and other weapons**
- Medications (including OTC)**
- Lethal chemicals (i.e., bleach, harsh cleaners)**
- Knives and razors**
- Ropes, belts, and/or scarves**

