



## suicide

Are you concerned about a child or teen who is depressed thinking of suicide?

### What drives young people to thoughts of suicide today?

Most kids who kill themselves, or try to, simply can't think of any other way to solve their problems. If a child or teen you are concerned is **depressed** or **thinking of suicide** this is the place to talk to someone who can help you help them find a better solution.

Suicide is the third leading cause of death in 15 to 24 year olds (after accidents and homicide). Teenagers are under a lot of stress to be liked, to do well in school, to get along with their families and to make important decisions that will lead to a happy adult life. Most of this stress is unavoidable, and it is natural to worry.

Many things can make one feel lonely, helpless, hopeless and depressed. There are many reasons why teenagers become suicidal. They include everything from stress to the loss of someone they love. If someone you know is considering solving these or other problems through suicide – it's best to seek help. Suffering these feelings alone can only make them worse, and make problems seem insurmountable. Helping the youth you are concerned about, help them to know they are not alone.

#### **1. Feelings of loneliness, helplessness, hopelessness and depression:**

- Loss of a loved one (the breakup, separation or death of a boyfriend/girlfriend, family member, friend, pet)
- Loss of self-esteem (poor school performance; physical, sexual or psychological abuse)
- Physical changes (having to wear glasses, braces, or a cast, or a changing body)
- Change in their family (new step-parent; a parent who suddenly goes to work after having been home all of the time)
- Change in their living situation (moving; running away from home; becoming homeless)

#### **2. The chronic mental illness, depression or suicide of a friend or family member**

Most teenagers look up to their friends and family members. If they have a chronically mentally ill or seriously depressed friend, parent or other family member - they might find themselves overwhelmed and frightened by their behavior and begin to behave that way themselves.

#### **3. Family changes**

Teenagers rely on their families a lot as they grow into adults themselves. They may feel lost or confused by an unstable family. Perhaps their family moves so much that they have to adjust to new schools and friends. Or perhaps their parents have granted them too much independence and they feel they're not ready to make all their own decisions just yet. If their family structure changes suddenly – through separation, divorce, the absence or death of a parent – they might feel a sudden change in their outlook on life.

#### **4. Stress, fear of failure and the pressure to succeed**



Being a teenager is an extremely stressful time. A teen's physical growth, sexuality, pressures of relationships, school and more can lead to so much stress they may feel they just cannot cope. The pressure to succeed at home or school can also lead to depression and thoughts of suicide. Some kids snap under the intense pressure and are embarrassed when they think they've failed. Many kids experience seemingly overwhelming problems – simply because they've had little experience handling stress. They may doubt their ability to survive a particular crisis and choose suicide as a way out.

### **5. Drugs And Alcohol**

Drugs or alcohol are involved in 70% of all teen suicides. Abuse of these substances affects one's judgment and can exaggerate bad feelings. For most people who are feeling anxious, depressed, angry or hopeless, drinking or taking drugs only makes them feel worse. Abuse of drugs or alcoholic substances can also create a false sense of courage needed to follow through with suicide.



## What are the warning signs?

Youth feel anxious, depressed or suicidal for many different reasons. Many young people blame themselves for all kinds of problems or conflicts they have with family, friends, or even in school. They start to believe that their families and/or the world would be much better off without them. It's much more helpful to figure out why they feel this way and find help rather than allowing them to continue to blame themselves or someone else.

If the warning signs below describe a youth you are concerned about – you need to help them receive help. If you are not capable to talk through it with them, or feel that they are beyond advise and dialogue contact **911** immediately or **Nineline**, or have them do it with you.

Some warning signs include:

- Feelings of anxiety, loneliness, grief, anger or depression**
- Talk of suicide, death, dying or the afterlife**
- Impulsive and aggressive behavior; frequent expressions of rage**
- Previous exposure to someone else that committed suicide**
- Family loss, instability or a significant family conflict**
- Recent stress (e.g., difficulties in dealing with sexual orientation; unplanned pregnancy or other significant real or impending loss)**
- Reliance on drugs or alcohol**

Also, things to look out for are sudden changes in ones behavior. Or if you know they just experienced a sudden or extreme change in their personal lives, it is a good idea to start paying closer attention to them, so you may notice any changes that may occur.



## What can I say or do to help the child or teen I care about?

**IF A CHILD OR TEEN YOU ARE CONCERNED ABOUT IS FEELING LIKE HE/SHE WANTS TO KILL OR HARM HIMSELF/HERSELF RIGHT NOW, PLEASE CALL 911 AND ASK FOR EMERGENCY MEDICAL ASSISTANCE, OR GO TO THE NEAREST HOSPITAL EMERGENCY ROOM!**

If they are not in immediate danger and want help with anxiety, depression and/or thoughts of suicide, there are many places to turn for help with feelings of anxiety, depression or thoughts of suicide, including the Covenant House **Nineline**.

The best thing you, as an adult in youth' lives do, is **talk with** them about things they are concerned about. From there, you can address the problem, or direct them to someone who can.

Just call the **Covenant House Nineline** at **1-800-999-9999**; TTY: 1-800-999-9915 or follow this link to the **Nineline Forum on suicide**. The Nineline staff is ready to talk with you *any time* of day. You talk. We'll listen.

### **Other resources we recommend include:**

National Hopeline Network/**National Suicide Hotline**, 1-800-**SUICIDE**  
(1-800-784-2433)

**National Prevention Lifeline**, 1-800-273-TALK

**The Trevor Helpline** specializing in gay and lesbian suicide prevention 1-800-850-8078