



YOUTH SUICIDE

Problem:

“More teenagers and young adults die from suicide than from cancer, heart disease, AIDS, birth defects, stroke, pneumonia, influenza, and chronic lung disease **COMBINED**”, Surgeon General Satcher stated in the 2002 National Call to Action for Suicide Prevention.

The teenage and young adult years can be a period of loneliness and confusion. Youth deal with a number of new experiences such as new relationships, decisions about their future and the physical changes that are taking place in their bodies.

- Suicide is the third leading cause of death among young people ages 15 to 24.
- Every day 12 young people die by suicide.
- Male youth are 5 times more likely than females to die by suicide.
- In a survey of Tennessee teens, 1 in 14 admitted that they attempted suicide.
- Firearms are the most commonly used suicide method.
- 53% of young people who die by suicide abused drugs or alcohol.

The Key Risk Factors and Warning Signs:

- Impulsivity
- Lack of connection to family or friends
- Ready access to firearms
- Depression, moodiness, expression of hopelessness
- A previous suicide attempt
- Current talk about suicide (direct or shielded, “You’d be better off if I’m gone.”)
- Strong wish to die, giving away prized possessions
- Suicide attempt or suicide by a friend or family member
- Withdrawing from friends or family
- Increased alcohol or drug use
- Rage, anger, acting reckless
- Hopelessness

Untreated depression is the # 1 cause of suicide

Recommendations:

- Talk, offer help and hope. Most important, listen if you think someone is considering suicide. ASK. It won't put the idea in their head if that isn't what they are thinking.
- Teens need reassurance that someone cares. Show interest, non-judgmentally, be supportive. Let them know help is available
- Trust your instincts, if you feel the situation is critical get immediate help, call 911
- Don't act shocked, judgmental or lecture on all the reasons they have to live
- Don't give advice or false reassurances
- Don't be afraid to talk directly about suicide, ask specifics, how they would do it, when and do they have the means
- Don't dismiss problems as unimportant and don't assume they are just seeking attention

Resources:

- There are many resources; your physician and your local mental health agency are two important sources of help
- The National Lifeline 1-800-273-TALK is a resource that will automatically connect you to the nearest crisis service where help and direction can be obtained.
- Youth Villages have staff that are available to do an onsite assessment (800) 791- 9221
- Tennessee Suicide Prevention Network
www.TSPN.org
- Jason Foundation
1- 888- 881- 2323
www.jasonfoundation.org
- American Association of Suicidology
www.suicidology.org
- Tennessee Voices for Children
www.TNVoices.org
- National Institute of Mental Health Fact Sheets
www.nimh.nih.gov/research/suicidefaq.cfm
- Suicide Prevention Resource Center
www.sprc.org