

Teen Suicide Risk Factors and Warning Signs

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Editor



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Teens with depression are some 12 times more likely to attempt suicide. It is vital that teens experiencing this mental health condition receive appropriate treatment and vital that those close to a teen with depression get educated about the signs and risk factors of suicide.

Factors that increase the risks of teen suicide include:

- Having a mental illness, such as depression or bipolar
- A substance abuse problem (or a co occurring problem of substance abuse and mental illness)
- An earlier suicide attempt
- Living through the suicide attempt of a loved one
- Having access to a gun in the home
- Being in jail
- A history of violence or abuse in the family
- Having a familial history of suicide
- A recent traumatic incident (the loss of a loved one, legal troubles, a hard break-up, etc.)
- Impulsiveness and aggressiveness as personality types
- Having parents with mental illness
- GLBT sexual orientation
- Others

80% of those that successfully commit suicide talk about their intentions at least once prior to the act. Teen suicide is enormously preventable, if only those close to teens are able to spot the warning signs and prepared to act in the face of evidence that points towards suicidal thoughts or intent.

Warnings signs of teen suicide include:

- Sudden changes in personality
- Sudden change in sleeping patterns

- The use of drugs or alcohol
- A sudden lack of concern about personal appearance or hygiene
- A sudden decline in school performance
- Engaging in unnecessary risky behaviors
- Frequently talking and thinking about death or dying
- An inability to accept praise
- Social withdrawal
- No longer feeling interested in activities that used to bring pleasure
- Frequently complaining of boredom
- Frequently complaining of aches or pains, such as stomach aches or headaches, that have no apparent physical cause
- Running away from home
- Engaging in violent activities

Dramatic warning signs include mentioning, writing about, drawing of or otherwise indicating a desire to commit suicide, including:

- Writing a practice suicide note
- Saying, "I want to die," or "I am going to kill myself" or other variations
- Giving away possessions
- A sudden brightened mood after a long period of depression
- Hinting around the issue, "If I were ever to die, I would want..."

Don't Wait - Act

Respond to any indication of thoughts of suicide by getting immediate professional help. It is nearly impossible to overreact to the threat of suicide, but very easy to tragically under react. Have a mental health professional evaluate the problem as soon as possible.

If you think that suicide is imminent, **DO NOT LEAVE THE TEEN ALONE, UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES.**

1-800-273-TALK Is a 24 hour a day toll free suicide helpline funded by the US Dept of Health and Human Services. Anyone in crisis and needing to talk or anyone concerned about the behaviors of a loved one can call for free, at any time, day or night.

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