

Preventing Teen Suicide and Depression

As a parent, teacher, or friend of a teen with depression or thoughts of suicide, you play a vital role in suicide and depression prevention.

- Watch for the warning signs and symptoms of depression. Seek the advice and attention of a medical professional if behavior persists.
- Avoid making petty comments about their depression.
- Encourage your teen to talk to you or someone they trust.
- Tell them how much they mean to you and how much you care.
- Spend time with them; let them know you want to understand.
- Ensure they are never left alone.
- Hide firearms and any other dangerous items.
- Build up and praise their abilities, talents and accomplishments.
- Encourage healthy eating habits and an early bedtime; nutritional and sleep deficiencies can become a risk factor.
- Encourage participation in sports, clubs and extracurricular activities.
- Encourage them to avoid alcohol, illegal drugs and caffeine.

Recognizing and preventing teen depression will vastly improve your efforts at suicide prevention. If you feel your teen is thinking about suicide, contact a health care professional or suicide crisis line immediately.

Sadness vs. Depression

Sadness . . .

- is an emotion.
- eventually goes away.
- is not usually severe enough to interfere with daily activities.

Depression . . .

- is a mental health disorder.
- is defined as low moods that last for more than two weeks.
- prevents you from functioning normally.
- can get worse if you do not seek help for treatment.

If you or someone you know in Niagara County is thinking about suicide or threatening to commit suicide, call the **Niagara County Crisis Hotline at 716-285-3515 for 24-hour emergency help.**



THE
CHILD ADVOCACY CENTER
OF NIAGARA

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Teen Suicide and Depression Statistics

- Suicide is the third leading cause of death among young people ages 15 to 24.
- Among people ages 15 to 24, there are approximately 100 to 200 attempts for every completed suicide.
- In 2007, more than 34,000 suicides occurred in the United States.
- Every 15 minutes, someone in the United States dies by suicide.
- Four times as many men as women commit suicide, while young women attempt suicide three times more frequently than young men.
- Fifty-three percent of young people who commit suicide abuse drugs or alcohol.
- One-third of those who commit suicide were positive for alcohol at the time of death.
- Firearms (guns) are used in just over fifty percent of all youth suicides.
- People who are depressed are 14 times more likely to commit suicide.
- One in eight teens suffers from depression.
- More than fifty percent of all kids who suffer from depression will eventually attempt suicide at least once, and more than seven percent will die as a result.

“Life must be lived and curiosity kept alive. One must never, for whatever reason, turn his back on life.”

~Eleanor Roosevelt

For more facts and teen suicide statistics, visit the website of the American Psychiatric Association at www.healthyminds.org, the Centers for Disease Control at www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention and the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention at www.afsp.org.

Suicide Risks and Warning Signs

Risk Factors

- Depression
- Access to firearms (guns)
- Anxiety disorders
- Conduct disorders
- Physical, mental or sexual abuse
- Previous suicide attempts
- Family history of suicide
- Stressful life events
- Drug and alcohol abuse
- Teen Pregnancy
- Frequent episodes of running away or being incarcerated

The risk of suicide increases with each new risk factor.

Signs of Suicidal Behavior

- Difficulty functioning at home, work, school and in social settings
- Feeling overwhelming guilt, shame or hopelessness
- Feeling trapped or abandoned
- Giving or throwing away possessions
- Sudden change in personality or appearance
- Sudden cheerfulness after depression
- Thinking and talking consistently about death or desire to be dead
- Thinking or behaving abnormally
- Threatening suicide both directly (“I’m going to kill myself”) and indirectly (“The world would be better off without me”)

Never dismiss any of these signs or assume that a teen doesn’t mean it if they exhibit suicidal behavior. These signs should always be taken seriously.

Teen Depression

Depression can be defined as low moods lasting more than two weeks. Here are some risks and symptoms to look out for:

Risks of Teen Depression

- Physical, emotional or sexual abuse
- Conflict at home
- Bullied at school
- Family history of depression or other mental illness
- Insomnia (trouble sleeping)
- Low self-esteem
- Nutrient deficiencies
- Underlying disorders
- Stressful life events
- Drug and alcohol abuse

Symptoms of Depression

- Agitation (restlessness)
- Apathy (lack of concern or emotion)
- Fatigue (sleepiness/weariness)
- Change in personality, appetite or sleep patterns
- Destructive behavior
- Eating disorders
- Substance abuse
- Lack of energy and concentration
- Feelings of worthlessness
- Sadness
- Talk of death and suicide
- Withdrawal
- Boredom
- Loss of interest in activities, friends, etc.

If you or a teen you know are experiencing any of these symptoms, speak with someone you trust about getting help.