

Teens and Suicide

A Difficult Conversation



Why I'm here....



Scary Statistics

- Suicide is the second leading cause of death for Americans between the ages of 10 - 34.
- In 2018, there were more than twice as many suicides in America as there were homicides.
- On average, there are 132 suicides per day in America.

National Institute for Mental Health, 2018

Signs and Symptoms

Depressive symptoms that last two weeks or more and include:

- A hopeless outlook
- Loss of interest
- Increased fatigue or sleep problems
- Anxiety
- Irritability
- Changes in appetite or weight
- Uncontrollable emotions
- Suicidal ideation

Timothy J. Legg, PhD

The importance of objectivity

Separate your emotions from your child's.

Practice grounding as you speak to your child:

- Connect to your breath
- Look at visual details
- Feel in your own body where tension seems to manifest

Consider getting support yourself.

Normalizing suicidal thinking

*Talking about suicide does not increase the risk of death.

“Findings suggest talking about suicide may in fact reduce, rather than increase suicidal ideation, and may lead to improvements in mental health.”

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/24998511/>

Ice Breakers...how to talk to our kids about tough stuff



First, an observation...

You seem/I feel like you're...

- super stressed out lately
- really exhausted this week
- not having much fun recently
- pretty down on yourself
- struggling with something
- not sleeping as well as you usually do

Next, an open question...

- I wonder if there's something I can do to help?
- Is it something at school or is it more about friends?
- Is there something different going on?
- What's your biggest problem right now?
- How are you feeling about life in general?
- Is there one issue you wish would just disappear?

Finally, reflect feelings....

It seems like you're really

- Sad
- Frustrated
- Stressed
- Pissed off
- Exhausted
- Down

The dreaded teen eye roll...

Not to worry!



Active versus passive suicidal ideation

Passive

- Thoughts of just “not being here” but no plan of action.

Active

- Thoughts of self harm and a plan to complete suicide.

You can say... “You know, most people think about just taking a pass on life every now and then. Do you ever think stuff like that? Does it ever get pretty intense?”

Talking about getting into treatment

Use Ice Breakers...

- It seems like you could use an extra person to bounce stuff off of. Have you ever thought about therapy? Does it seem scary/weird/stupid?
- I wonder if seeing someone a few times might help. Do you think you might consider it? Does that sound annoying?
- You've been feeling down for a while. If you still feel bad in a week or so can we revisit this? Does that seem reasonable?

Not all therapy is created equal

- Modalities
- Licensure
- Personal preference



Keeping our own houses clean



How to help families suffering from loss

- Offer practical help
- Bring up any memories of their loved one, either first or second hand
- Offer resources
- Remember anniversaries
- Anything you do is better than nothing

Resources



<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/index.shtml>

<https://willowhouse.org/>

<https://www.catholiccharities.net/GetHelp/OurServices/Counseling/Loss.aspx>

<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/index.shtml>

<http://elyssasmission.org/>

<https://www.catchiscommunity.org/>

<http://soundmindcounsel.com/>

De-Escalate: How to Calm an Angry Person in 90 Seconds or Less - Douglas E. Knoll