



How to Talk with Your Teen about Suicide

Whether at school, in books, on television, or over social media, teenagers will inevitably encounter the topic of suicide. As a parent, it can be challenging to know what to say about suicide—and how exactly to say it. Still, it's far better to acknowledge the subject and address its impact on your teen than to say nothing at all. By communicating openly with your son or daughter in an intentional, informed, and compassionate way, you can help your teen understand how to assist their peers in getting help if they are upset or coping with a death by suicide. This resource offers some concrete tips on how to approach this sensitive topic with your teen.

Educate Yourself

Take time to prepare for the conversation by educating yourself on risk factors, which are the personal and environmental characteristics that can increase the likelihood of suicide. Examples of risk factors in teens include alcohol and other substance use, access to a firearm, mental illness, and experiencing a sense of hopelessness. Learn about protective factors, those personal and environmental characteristics that can decrease the likelihood of suicide in teens. Examples of protective factors include social connectedness, restricted access to firearms, a positive sense of self-esteem, and the presence of a caring adult. Also, know the warning signs of suicide.

Empower Your Teen

Many teens who are at risk may not directly talk about suicide. However, they may say something, do something, or write or draw something that comes to the attention of a peer or a friend. They can serve as **"gatekeepers,"** that is individuals who are aware of the warning signs of suicide and how to take action.

Parents can empower their teenagers to be gatekeepers. ***"Don't be afraid to speak up if you feel like a peer is at risk."*** Help your teen identify trusted adults at home and at school to whom they can talk if a friend or other peer seems to be in trouble. Then, provide action steps that your teen can take as a gatekeeper if he or she thinks a friend or other peer may be at risk:

1. Take seriously any warning signs (such as an expression of hopelessness over social media or a suicidal message via text).
2. React immediately by telling a trusted adult. (As a parent, you might add, ***"I hope I am a trusted adult for you."***)

Talking to Your Teen after a Death by Suicide

In the hours, days, and weeks following a death by suicide of a friend, other peer, or adult in the community, it is an especially important time to talk with your teen about suicide. In such circumstances, there are concrete steps that you can take as a parent to be supportive. Here are some ideas to consider and things you can say to your teen.

Safe Messaging

When talking about suicide with your teen, it's important to keep these messages in mind:

- Everyone can play a role in prevention efforts.
- Build trust with your son or daughter. Practice compassion and empathy.
- Treatment and support are available.
- Young people are resilient, and they can get better!

Warning Signs

The following signs may indicate a person may be at risk for suicide:

- Talking about or making plans for suicide, including suicidal notes, texts, social media posts, or threats, such as "I'm going to kill myself."
- Expressing hopelessness about the future, such as "No one will miss me" or "The world will be better without me."
- Displaying severe or overwhelming emotional pain or distress.



This material was developed thanks to the support of Universal Health Services, Inc. (UHS).

- **Be honest.** *“Talking about suicide is difficult for me, too.”*
- **Replace rumors with facts.** *“Rumors can be very harmful and hurt those who are grieving.”*
- **Allow your teen to express his or her feelings.** Validate a range of your teen’s reactions, whatever those may be. *“Everyone responds to shocking news differently: Some may look numb. Some may get angry. Some may cry, and others may even act silly.”*
- **Express empathy.** *“I am so sorry that this has happened to you.”*
- **Remind your teen of his or her role as a gatekeeper.** Ask about your teen’s peers who may also have been affected by this suicide: *“Is there anyone you may be concerned about?”* Remind your teen of the action steps to take if they think a friend or other peer may be at risk.
- **Brainstorm with your teen ways that they can grieve.** Plan to go to the funeral with your teen or to help reach out to the family of the deceased. *“I will help you get through this. If you want to go to the funeral, I will go with you.”*
- **Remind your teen that suicide is complex.** Your teen may hear or read about simplistic explanations for suicide, such as *“the bullying caused it” or “the breakup of a romance caused it.”* Reassure your teen, *“Suicide is a very complex thing, and no one person, no one thing, is ever to blame.”* Some teenagers who were close to the deceased may need more reassurance: *“You are not to blame, and this is not your fault.”*

Myths about Suicide

Here are some common misconceptions about suicide:

- Talking about suicide puts ideas into a young person’s head.
- Most suicides occur with little to no warning.
- Only experts can prevent suicide.
- If individuals are really intent on killing themselves, there is nothing that we can do to stop them.
- Younger children don’t have the capacity to think about suicide.

Here are some truths about suicide:

- Studies have shown that talking about suicide does not put ideas in a child’s head—as a matter of fact, it lowers anxiety.
- Most suicidal individuals do give some warning that they are in emotional pain.
- Teens are ambivalent about taking their lives. Any action by a well-caring adult can help prevent a young person from dying by suicide.
- Young people who experience suicidal thoughts and behaviors can go on to lead normal, healthy lives.

Resources for Parents

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is a network of call centers that offer free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)

Lifeline Crisis Text Line is a free, 24/7, confidential text service for people in crisis: <https://www.crisistextline.org/>. Text HOME to 741741 anytime, about any kind of crisis.

The Trevor Project is a national, 24-hour, toll-free confidential suicide hotline for LGBT teens: <http://www.thetrevorproject.org/>

The Society for the Prevention of Teen Suicide provides resources for parents on teen suicide and the role of parents in prevention: <http://www.sptsusa.org/>

Acknowledgement

Our thanks to Richard Lieberman, MA, NCSP Graduate School of Education, Loyola Marymount University, for sharing this knowledge and expertise in the development of this handout.



This material was developed thanks to the support of Universal Health Services, Inc. (UHS).

Glynn County Resource List:

Emergency Assistance Agencies & Call Centers:

1. 911 Call Center

Phone: 9-1-1 or 912-554-3645

Address 157 Public Safety Blvd. Brunswick, GA 31525

Services: Emergency Response, Provides Public Safety & Communication services for the citizens, communities, and public safety responders of Glynn County.

For more information visit www.glynncounty.org/63/911-Center

2. American Red Cross: Brunswick GA location

Phone: 912-265-1695

Address: 207 Rose Dr. Brunswick, GA 31520

Services: Disaster relief, health & safety training, blood donations, Distribution of emergency supplies, food support, mental health and medical resources, emergency communications, Hurricane relief, flood relief, tornado/earthquake relief.

For more information visit www.redcross.org/about-us/our-work/disaster-relief

3. Brunswick Police Department

Phone: 912-267-5559

Address 206 Mansfield St. Brunswick, GA 31520

Services: City Police Officers who serve and protect within the city limits of Brunswick Georgia.

4. FEMA Federal Emergency Management Association

Phone: For Disaster Survivors: 1-800-621-3362

Address: will setup disaster relief tents in the event of an emergency go to website for more information and to see if you qualify for assistance.

Services: Government Disaster prevention and relief agency

For more information visit www.fema.gov/

5. GCAL (Georgia Crisis & Access Line)

Phone: 1-800-715-4225

Address N/a - Call center

Services: 24/7 Hotline for accessing mental health services in the state of Georgia. Provides treatment and support services to people with mental illness and addictive disease. Can send emergency mobile units to people's homes or wherever the crisis is occurring.

For more information visit www.namiga.org/georgia-crisis-and-access-line/

6. Glynn County Police Dept

Phone: 912-554-7800

Address 157 Public Safety Boulevard Brunswick, GA 31525

Services: County police emergency and non-emergency assistance

For more information visit www.glynncountypolicedepartment.zohosites.com/

7. SAMHSA Substance Abuse & Mental Health Service Administration

Phone: Disaster Distress Helpline: 1-800-985-5990 or 1-877-726-4727

National Help Line: 1-800-662-4357 National Suicide Prevention Line: 1-800-273-8255

Address: N/a Hotline/Website

Services: 24/7 FREE National Helpline and treatment referral source, Behavioral Health Treatment Locator, Disaster Distress Helpline, Disaster Mobile App, Disaster Technical Assistance Center, Survivor tips, Crisis Counseling Assistance and training program, Webinars, podcasts, and resilience and stress management training.

For more information visit www.samhsa.gov/disaster-preparedness

Psychiatric/ Substance Abuse Facilities:

8. Gateway Behavioral Health Hospital

Phone: 912-554-8500 or 1-866-557-9955

Address 600 Coastal Village Dr. Brunswick, GA 31520

Services: **Adults ONLY** - State- Funded inpatient & outpatient Mental Health & Substance Abuse Facility. 30 bed acute care facility. Offers Group Therapy, IOP, PHP, Medication management, ACT team intensive case management, and individual counseling. Takes Medicare, Medicaid, most commercial insurances, as well as self-pay and FREE income-based services. Must help all unfunded patients first.

Visit www.gatewaybhs.org for more information.

9. Saint Simons By-the-sea Behavioral Health Hospital

Phone: 912-638-1999 or

Address 2927 Demere Rd. Saint Simons Island, GA 31522

Services: **Adults & Adolescents** - Inpatient acute care & rehab 101 bed facility for adolescents and adults with Mental Health & Substance abuse issues. 3 Units; Mental Health & Substance Abuse Adolescents Ages 12-17, Adult Psychiatric Unit 18+, and The Recovery Center Detox & Rehab unit 18+. The facility takes Medicare, Managed Medicaid, and most commercial insurances.

For more information visit www.ssbythesea.com

Psychiatry/Counseling:

10. Centered for Life

Phone: 912-268-4488

Address 2487 Demere Rd. Saint Simons Island, GA 31522

Services: Non-profit Christian counseling center, provides a safe place to help restore sanity and stability to individuals, so they can achieve hope, healing, change, and restoration. Centered for Life offers individual counseling, life coaching, marriage and family counseling, adolescent/youth counseling, clinical and pastoral counseling, and provides group therapy as well as retreats, intensives, and conference work.

For more information visit centeredforlife.com

11. Emerald Isle Counseling

Phone: 912-268-4750

Address 1612 Newcastle St. Brunswick, GA 31520

& 300 Oak St. Suite 203 Saint Simons Island, GA 31522

Services: Counseling for children, adults, couples, and groups. They now have offices in Brunswick, St. Simons Island, and also offer tele-mental-health services. Takes

Medicare, managed Medicaid, most commercial insurances, and self-pay for services.

Visit www.emeraldislecounseling.com for more information.

12. The Eupatheia Center

Phone: 912-285-1610

Address 1200 Fountain Park Circle Brunswick, GA 31520

Services: The Eupatheia Center (Formerly known as Psychological Services of Waycross) offers consulting, therapy, and testing for those with and without Autism Spectrum Disorder.

For more information visit www.eupatheiacenter.com

13. Gateway Outpatient Services

Phone: 912-554-8500 or 1-866-557-9955

Address 600 Coastal Village Drive. Brunswick, GA 31520

Services: State- Funded outpatient Mental Health & Substance Abuse Facility. Offers Group Therapy, IOP, PHP, Medication management, ACT team intensive case management, and individual counseling. Takes Medicare, Medicaid, most commercial insurances, as well as self-pay and FREE income-based services.

Visit www.gatewaybhs.org for more information.

14. Heart Smart Counseling, Coaching, & Consulting

Phone: 912-401-5969

Address 172 Follins Ln. Saint Simons Island, GA 31522

Services: Heart Smart - Counseling, Coaching and Consulting Stephen Hendrix, LPC, CADC II, and with his wife, Shelley Hendrix, Author, Speaker, Spiritual Director and Life Coach. The Hendrix's work with couples, individuals, families and organizational teams. For more information visit www.heartsmartlife.com.

15. Living Transformations LLC

Phone: 912-268-4747

Address 1801-E Gloucester St. Brunswick, GA 31520

Services: Counseling services for children, adolescents, and adults who are suffering with Trauma, grief / loss, depression, and anxiety. Offers TeleMental Health/Video counseling. For more information visit www.lt-counseling.com

16. Malinda Graham & Associates

Phone: 912-275-7471

Address 4216 Coral Park Dr. Brunswick, GA 31520

Services: Therapy, Psychological Testing, & Psychiatry. Medicaid & CORE in-home services provided. Individual Counseling, Behavioral Assistance, Family training/counseling, 24-Hour Crisis Intervention, Intensive Family Intervention, Community Support Individual, Substance Abuse Assessments and Treatment, Medication Management.

Visit www.mgacommunityservices.com for more information.

17. Martelli & Associates

Phone: 912-267-0774

Address 7 St. Andrews Ct. Brunswick, GA 31520

Services: Offers individual Psychiatry and Counseling services. Practice takes Medicare, managed Medicaid, most commercial insurances, and self-pay for services.

18. Radiant Counseling LLC

Phone: 912-595-4723

Address 502 Gloucester St. Brunswick, GA 31520

Services: Individual, family, couples, and group counseling and mindfulness. Take most commercial insurances and do sliding scale fees.

Visit www.radiantcounseling.net to learn how to connect with them.

19. The Remedy Project

Phone: 912-580-7679

Address: P.O. Box 20341 Saint Simons Island, GA 31522

Services: Christian based FREE counseling and support groups. Non-profit created for people and their family members who are struggling with substance abuse. Programs available; Family & Friends of Recovery support group meetings Counseling, Clinical Assessment, and Detox assistance.

Visit www.theremedyproject.com for more information.

20. Tideline Counseling & Mental Health Associates

Phone: 912-510-0669

Address 1606 Gloucester St. Brunswick, GA 31520

Services: Provides Psychiatric treatment/medication management, Psychological testing, and individual/family/couples counseling services. Takes Medicare, managed Medicaid, most commercial insurances, and self-pay for services.

Visit www.tidelinecounseling.com for more information.

21. Dr. Davanzo

Phone: 912-634-7714

Address: 143 Follins Lane Saint Simons Island, GA 31522

Services: Psychiatry, medication management

Support Groups:

22. NAMI Connection

Phone: 912-222-9416

Address SGHS 2415 Parkwood Dr. Brunswick, GA 31520

Services: Mental health support group. Speaker meetings last Thursday of every month
7pm-8:30pm www.nami.org/

23. NAMI Family Support

Phone: 912-506-2963 or 912-264-0122

Address SGHS 2415 Parkwood Dr. Brunswick, GA 31520

Services: mental health family/peer support group. Meetings Every Thursday 7pm-
8:30pm www.nami.org/

24. Alcoholics Anonymous

Phone: 912-265-0892

Address: Brunswick & St. Simons Island

Services: Alcoholics Peer Support Group <https://www.aageorgia.org/3a-meetings.html>

25. Narcotics Anonymous

Phone: 1-800-334-3322

Address: Brunswick & St. Simons Island

Services: Narcotic Addiction Peer Support Group <https://grscna.com/meetings-2/>

26. Over Eaters Anonymous

Phone: 912-506-5675

Address SGHS 2415 Parkwood Dr. Brunswick, GA 31520

Services: Overeaters support group meetings every Thursday 7pm-8pm. SGHS Hospital
For more information visit www.sghs.org/Events/Event-Details.aspx?Event=417

27. Family & Friends in Recovery

Phone: 912-580-7679

Address 1126 Albany St. Brunswick, GA 31520

Services: Support Group for those who have a family member struggling with addictive
disease. For more information visit www.theremedypointproject.com

28. Compassionate Friends Grief Support Group

Phone: 912-262-0013 Or 912-554-3922

Address Boyd's Transmission: 3123 Norwich St Brunswick, GA 31520

Services: (Grief support for loss of a child) Meets 2nd Tuesday of each month - 6pm

For more information visit www.compassionatefriends.org/find-support/chapters/chapter-locator/

29. Hospice Grief Support Group

Phone: 912-267-5462

Address 1692 Glynnco Parkway Brunswick, GA 31520

Services: Grief Support Groups Schedule Sponsored by Hospice of the Golden Isles

- St. Simons Group: 2nd Thursday of the month - 1pm to 2pm

Address: St. Simons Presbyterian Church 205 Kings Way SSI, GA 31522

- Brunswick Group: 3rd Monday of the month- 5:30pm to 6:30 pm

Address: Hospice of the Golden Isles 1692 Glynco Parkway BWK, GA 31520

For more information visit www.hospice.me/services/grief-support-groups-schedule/