

Dear Parents and Guardians,

Why We Need to Talk About *13 Reasons Why*

School halls across the country are likely buzzing with students discussing the most recent Netflix series hit, *13 Reasons Why*, based on the popular book by Jay Asher. The series follows a group of high school students as they piece together a story left behind for them by their classmate Hannah Baker, who died by suicide.



While this popular series sheds light on important topics, there are some shortcomings in its execution. Without mention of mental illness, which affects one in five adolescents, and coming dangerously close to romanticizing suicide, this show is missing a crucial opportunity to discuss an issue that is affecting so many teenagers. Additionally, there is no example of successful help-seeking with a theme of silence throughout the story. As Hannah's classmates struggle with the aftermath of her suicide, there are no scenes highlighting her peers reaching out to talk with their parents, teachers, or coaches despite having a difficult time coping. Without showing how to ask for help, or that treatment and counseling are available, the show is only depicting what not to do without giving an example of what to do.

In addition, there is an unfortunate scene in which Hannah visits a counselor at school and discloses that she has been raped and is struggling. The counselor not only doesn't offer hope, compassion, or resources, but blames her for the rape and lets her leave while she is clearly distressed. Schools need to be aware that teens are getting this message and make sure students know that their counselors are responsive.

Despite some of its faults, *13 Reasons Why* does provide insight into the cultural psyche of the 21st century American teen, and will certainly resonate with viewers. It is a good time to remind students of the messages of hope that we have instilled using the suicide prevention program here at TJ, Signs of Suicide, and stress that suicide is never the solution. Remind

students that there is always something they can do if they are concerned about something someone has said or done in person or online: **ACT**

- **Acknowledge** that they are seeing warning signs and that it is serious
- **Care:** show the person your concern
- **Tell** a trusted adult

If you know your child plans to watch or is watching this show, we recommend that you view the program together and have conversations about the situations and topics it presents. We know that these conversations are difficult to have, so we have attached a resource that can support you in that effort.

For more discussion points about *13 Reasons Why*, SAVE, in partnership with the Jed Foundation, drafted talking points to assist parents, teachers, and other gatekeepers in talking to youth about suicide as it relates to the situational drama that unfolds in the series.

Additional discussion resources include:

Resources for discussions about *13 Reasons Why*:

* NASP (National Association of School Psychologists) *13 Reasons Why* Netflix Series: Considerations for Educators: <http://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources/school-safety-and-crisis/preventing-youth-suicide/13-reasons-why-netflix-series-considerations-for-educators>

* Screenagers Tech Talk Tuesday feature: <http://bit.ly/2p2APAR>,

Additional Mental Health and Safety Resources:

* Safe2Tell: Anonymous hotline: <https://safe2tell.org/> (877)542-7233
* National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: <http://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/> and (800)273-8255
* Colorado Crisis Services: Mental Health supports (844-493-8255 and www.ColoradoCrisisServices.org

If you have any questions or concerns, please reach out to the school mental health team:

Natalie Koncz, School Psychologist and Samanda Davis, Social Worker.