



ACPeds Parent Talk

Keeping parents up to date on the latest news in child and teen health

Netflix show glorifying teen suicide is impacting our teens

As you may already know, "**13 Reasons Why**" is a popular Netflix show, based on a book of the same name, for teens and young adults--so popular that it was named the most tweeted about show of 2017 (1).

Though classified as a teen show, the show depicts graphic portrayals of teen suicide, substance abuse, and even rape.

One of the show's main characters, a 17-year-old girl named Hannah Baker, is graphically shown killing herself in the season finale. Her suicide, however, is not the cliffhanger. Instead, the episode ends with another teen's serious attempt at suicide, showing that even the creators of the show recognize the contagiousness of suicide.

4 OUT OF 5 who attempt suicide have given **CLEAR WARNING SIGNS.**



TEEN SUICIDE RATES HAVE TRIPLED since 1960.



(2)

Why it matters?

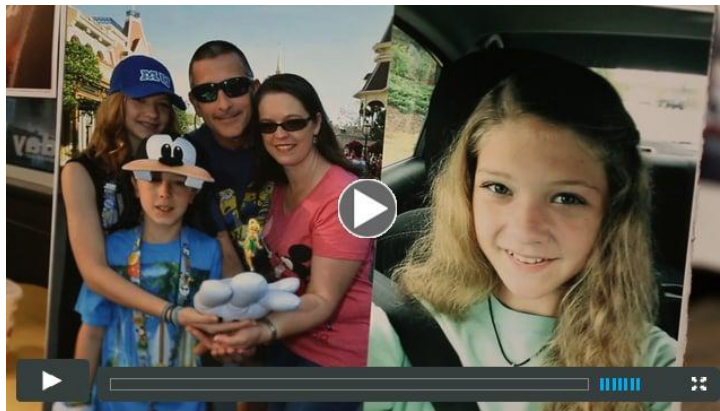
According to recent research (3), **suicide is the second-leading cause of death for youth aged 15-24 years** and takes the lives of more teenagers and young adults than cancer, heart disease, diabetes, congenital birth defects, stroke, pneumonia, influenza, and chronic lung disease combined.

Although the show's producers claim that the purpose of the show is to raise awareness about suicide, **mental health professionals, parents, and school officials have argued that the show glamorizes suicide** and does little to guide teens who are struggling with suicidal thoughts.

One study (4) showed that **suicide-related search engine queries were 19 percent higher than expected following the show** and an alarming percentage of the spike

came from phrases like **"how to commit suicide"** (up 26 percent), **"commit suicide"** (up 18 percent) and **"how to kill yourself"** (up 9 percent).

Multiple families have released statements blaming the show for the deaths of their own teens. [Two families in California](#) (5) suffered the losses of their 15 year old daughters who took their own lives just days after watching the show and another [14 year old girl recently committed suicide after binge-watching](#) (6) the entire season in one sitting. A short video about her story is on the right.



Anna Bright Story (7)

According to [Dr. Harold S. Koplewicz](#) (8), the founding president of the Child Mind Institute, "The prefrontal cortex, which helps us analyze risks and rewards and inhibit emotional responses, is not fully integrated into its regulatory role for other brain regions until the age of 25. When teens are put in a tough spot - a breakup, a social slight, academic disappointment - they often see it as hopeless, and take action impulsively...**13 Reasons Why is exceptionally dangerous to the teenage population - the exact audience the program targets - because it capitalizes on these teen traits** without any effort to educate viewers or mitigate the risk of suicide contagion."

*In addition, the show ignores decades of [research](#) (9) by epidemiologists and public health experts who have demonstrated that **when teenagers view television programs depicting suicide, it results in a significant increase in suicide attempts and in suicide completion.***

▶ **20% OF ALL TEENAGERS** In the United States **CONTEMPLATE SUICIDE** every year.

▶ **90% OF ALL TEEN SUICIDES** have been **LINKED TO** diagnosable and **TREATABLE PSYCHIATRIC DISORDERS.**

▶ More than **2,000 TEENS DIE BY SUICIDE EVERY YEAR** in the United States.

(10)

What's being done about it?

The second season is scheduled to premiere later this year, and [Netflix is implementing some changes](#) (11) as a result of the backlash and public outcry the series garnered last year. Changes include

- [the addition of a custom warning video](#) that will play at the start of each season,
- [a downloadable viewing guide to help parents and teens](#) talk about the show's difficult themes,
- [a PIN parental control for individual movies and series](#) to give parents and guardians more specific control over what children can watch on the service, and

- a **more prominently displayed maturity level rating** for a series or film once a member hits play on a title.

What should parents do about it?

- **Have discussions with your kids, teenagers especially, about suicide**, why it should never be an option, how it affects the people left behind and what type of help is available to people having suicidal thoughts.
- **If your children haven't already seen the show, don't let them watch it or at the very least, watch the show with them** so you can pause the show to create time for discussions and forward past some of the more graphic scenes. Make sure to **set up the parental controls implemented by Netflix** so that your children cannot watch the show at home or on their devices without your permission.

SIGN THE PETITION



It's a shame that Netflix would romanticize and sensationalize sensitive subjects like teen suicide, self-harm, substance abuse and rape as a way to make money. Our kids and teens deserve better. Please, [join us in asking Netflix to drop this dangerous television series by signing this petition, and then sharing it](#) (12) to warn other friends, family, and church members about the dangers of 13 Reasons Why.



Don't hesitate to contact us with your questions and comments. We look forward to hearing from you.

www.acpeds.org

American College of Pediatricians, P.O. Box 357190, Gainesville, FL 32635

Links

1. <http://variety.com/2017/tv/news/netflix-13-reasons-why-twitter-most-popular-show-2017-1202392460/>
2. <https://www.teachthevote.org/blog-content/uploads/2015/04/hb-2186-testimony-infographic.jpg>
3. <http://files.constantcontact.com/6c7b7138001/d75c29c1-7d5e-4ff4-a684-1e27a74beb89.pdf>
4. http://newscenter.sdsu.edu/sdsu_newscenter/news_story.aspx?sid=76849
5. <http://www.ktvu.com/news/2-families-endure-suicides-blame-popular-netflix-show>
6. <https://afa.net/activism/action-alerts/2018/did-netflix-show-kill-anna-bright/>
7. <https://vimeo.com/261191655>
8. <https://www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/2017/05/05/13-reasons-why-suicide-mental-health-dangerous-column/101262330/>
9. <http://www.nejm.org/doi/pdf/10.1056/NEJM198609113151106>
10. <https://www.teachthevote.org/blog-content/uploads/2015/04/hb-2186-testimony-infographic.jpg>
11. <https://media.netflix.com/en/company-blog/introducing-pin-protection-and-other-enhancements-for-informed-viewing>
12. <https://afa.net/netflix>