



Counselor's Corner

September 7th-10th, 2021

Youth Suicide: Risk Factors, Warning Signs and What to Do

Suicide is the second leading cause of death among ages 10-24. However, suicide is preventable. Youth who are contemplating suicide frequently give warning signs of their distress. Parents, teachers, and friends are in a key position to pick up on these signs and get help.

Suicide Risk Factors

Although far from perfect predictors, certain characteristics are associated with increased odd of having suicidal thoughts. These include:

- Mental illness including depression, conduct disorders, and substance abuse.
- Family stress/dysfunction.
- Environmental risks, including presence of a firearm in the home.
- Situational crises (e.g., traumatic death of a loved one, physical or sexual abuse, family violence).

Suicide Warning Signs

Most suicidal youth demonstrate observable behaviors that signal their suicidal thinking. These include:

- Suicidal threats in the form of direct ("I am going to kill myself") and indirect ("I wish I could fall asleep and never wake up again") statements.
- Suicide notes and plans (including online postings).
- Prior suicidal behavior.
- Making final arrangements (e.g., making funeral arrangements, writing a will, giving away prized possessions).
- Preoccupation with death.
- Changes in behavior, sleeping habits, eating habits, appearance, thoughts and/or feelings.

What to Do

Youth who feel suicidal are not likely to seek help directly. When a youth gives signs that they may be considering suicide, the following actions should be taken:

- Remain calm.
- Ask the youth directly if he or she is thinking about suicide (e.g., "Are you thinking of suicide?").
- Focus on your concern for their well-being and avoid being accusatory.
- Listen.
- Reassure them that there is help and they will not feel like this forever.
- Do not judge.
- Provide constant supervision. Do not leave the youth alone.
- Remove means for self-harm.
- Get help: Parents should seek help from school or community mental health resources as soon as possible.

If you or someone you know is suicidal, get help immediately and call 911

For more information on National Suicide Prevention Week, including resources and virtual events, visit: <https://afsp.org/keepgoing>

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Teens can call or text
602-248-8336
for help!

Resources for teens, parents
and educators available at
TeenLifeline.org

**Southwest Behavioral
& Health Services**
<https://www.sbhservices.org/>

Outpatient counseling services for students are available through our school-based provider, Southwest Behavioral Health. For information and referrals, please contact Mrs. Cavallo