

Suicide Prevention & Awareness



If you suspect that a child or adolescent in your life is considering suicide, talk about it immediately. Take it seriously and don't dismiss it as acting out, a bid for attention, or teenage drama. Contrary to popular belief, talking about suicide doesn't plant suicidal ideas in someone's head. In fact, addressing the topic head-on can do the very opposite. It can help them identify a problem and know how to ask for help if they have suicidal thoughts or behaviors.

If the child or adolescent mentions wanting to die or wishing they were dead, in the moment, it is okay to encourage them to talk about their distress.

Strategies for Getting the Child/Adolescent to Talk:

- **Encourage the child/adolescent to describe what they're feeling.** Say something like, "I had no idea things were so bad for you, talk to me about what's going on."
- **Ask the child/adolescent to share whether a specific incident/precipitating event led to suicidal thoughts.** Ask a question such as, "What happened? I want to know more, it might help to talk about it."
- **Don't be afraid to be direct.** Ask questions such as, "Have you considered hurting yourself?" "Do you have a specific plan or thought about how you'd hurt yourself?"
- **Don't invalidate the child's/adolescent's feelings.** Avoid saying things that may be perceived as empty or unhelpful such as, "You should appreciate all you have in life," or "I think you're overreacting." Those reactions downplay your teen's pain.
- **Show acceptance.** Listen without verbalizing judgement or disagreeing with their statements or feelings.

Offering Emotional Support

After gaining a better understanding, it's important to offer emotional support. Use the suggestions that best fit you, the child/adolescent and the situation.

- **Let the child/adolescent know you understand that they feel miserable.** Say something like, "It sounds like you've given up" or "I think you feel there's no way out."
Let the child/adolescent know you are deeply concerned about their well-being.
- **Be compassionate.** Say to the student, "I do not want you to hurt yourself and will do everything possible to keep you from committing suicide."
- **Gently point out that suicide is not a solution.** Try saying something such as, "I know there are options that could help; I'd like you to try them."
- **Provide reassurance.** Say something like, "You are not alone. I am here to help you now that I understand how bad things really are for you."

Supporting a Child/Adolescent Who is Suicidal

- **Make Safety a Top Priority**
A child/adolescent who is talking about suicide could be in immediate danger to himself or herself. Take the comments seriously. Stay with the child/adolescent – make sure they are not left alone during this crisis.
- **Connect the Child/Adolescent to Care**
St. Luke's Penn Foundation has a variety of child and adolescent services to help individuals who are struggling.

ADDITIONAL SUPPORT & RESOURCES

NATIONAL

National Suicide
Prevention Lifeline
800-273-8255

National Youth
Crisis Hotline
800-442-4673

BUCKS COUNTY

St. Luke's Penn
Foundation Children &
Adolescent Services
267-404-5847

NAMI Helpline
866-399-6264

Mobile Crisis Support
877-435-7709

Crisis Text
Text "NAMI" to 741741
(24/7 help)

For more information, call 215.257.6551
or visit www.PennFoundation.org



PENN FOUNDATION
BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES