“If a young person you know seems depressed or gloomy and has been spending a lot of time questioning why life is worth the bother, it’s time to pay attention.”

Anonymous Parent,
(son lost to suicide)

Washington State Department of Health

PLEASE CALL
YOUR LOCAL CRISIS LINE

___ ___ ___ - ___ ___ ___ - ___ ___ ___ ___

DOH PUB 341-003 6/98

WATCH FOR SIGNS

STOP YOUTH SUICIDE

YOU CAN HELP

Youth suicide is a significant problem in our state. There are warning signs you can watch for — and specific actions you can take — to help prevent young people from taking their own lives.

SHOW YOU CARE

Inside you’ll learn how to recognize these warning signs, the “clues” that a young person might be considering suicide, and how to let them know you care.

ASK THE QUESTION

You’ll also learn what you can say to a young person who might be considering suicide, and the steps you can take to help prevent it.

CALL FOR HELP

Local and confidential resources are available to help. Call the crisis line nearest you.

WARNING SIGNS

Most suicidal young people don't really want to die — they just want their pain to end. There are several signs to watch for that may indicate someone is thinking about suicide. The more signs, the greater the risk.

- A previous suicide attempt.
- Current talk of suicide, or making a plan.
- Strong wish to die, preoccupation with death, giving away prized possessions.
- Signs of serious depression, such as moodiness, hopelessness, withdrawal.
- Increased alcohol and/or other drug use.
- Recent suicide attempt by a friend/family member.

There are other key "risk factors" to keep in mind that increase the likelihood of suicide attempts by young people. Again, the more signs observed, the greater the risk.

- Readily accessible firearms.
- Impulsiveness and taking unnecessary risks.
- Lack of connection to family and friends (no one to talk to).

Youth of all races, creeds, incomes and educational levels attempt or complete suicide. There is no typical suicide victim.

About 80% of the time people who kill themselves have given definite signals or talked about suicide. The key to prevention is knowing what the warning signs are, and what to do to help.

PREVENTION STEPS

If you're worried about a young person and suicide has crossed your mind as a concern, trust your judgment. Do something now! Here's what you might say to a young person who is thinking about suicide:

SHOW YOU CARE

Let the person know you really care. Talk about your feelings and ask about his or hers. Listen carefully to what they have to say.

"I'm concerned about you...about how you feel."
"Tell me about your pain."
"You mean a lot to me and I want to help."
"I care about you, about how you're holding up."
"I don't want you to kill yourself."
"I'm on your side...we'll get through this."

ASK THE QUESTION

Don't hesitate to raise the subject. Talking with young people about suicide won't put the idea in their heads. Chances are, if you've observed any of the warning signs, they're already thinking about it. Be direct in a caring, non-confrontational way. Get the conversation started.

"Are you thinking about suicide?"
"What thoughts or plans do you have?"
"Are you thinking about harming yourself, ending your life?"
"How long have you been thinking about suicide?"
"Have you thought about how you would do it?"
"Do you have _____?" (insert the lethal means they have mentioned.)
"Do you really want to die? Or do you want the pain to go away?"

CALL FOR HELP

The first steps toward instilling a sense of hope are: showing your concern, raising the issue, and listening to and understanding the young person's feelings. Keep moving forward, together. Call for help.

Again, here are some non-threatening things you might say to a young person considering suicide:

"Together I know we can figure something out to make you feel better."
"I know where we can get som help."
"I will stay with you...Let's call the crisis line.:"
"I can go with you to where we can get some help."
"Let's talk to someone who can help...let's call the crisis line, now."
"It's difficult to know what to do, but I know where we can get some help."
"You're not alone. Let me help you."

If the young person has expressed an immediate plan, or has access to a gun or other potentially deadly means, do not leave him or her alone: **get help immediately.**

YOUTH SUICIDE

OUR PREVENTABLE PROBLEM

In a recent state survey, more than one in every 10 high school students reported having attempted suicide; nearly one in four (20% - 25%) had seriously considered it.

STOP An average of two youth suicides a week in Washington state.

STOP The second leading cause of death for 15-19 year-olds.

STOP For every completed suicide there are at least 20 attempts.

STOP Youth suicides outnumber youth homicides nearly 2 to 1.

STOP Male youth are four times more likely to complete suicide; females are at greater risk for attempts.

Washington State Department of Health

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