

## what to do

- Take the risk factors and signals seriously. If you think someone is considering suicide, ASK HIM OR HER “Are you suicidal?” or “Do you want to kill yourself?” If the answer is “yes,” GET HELP.
- Show interest in the person and be supportive of him or her.
- Offer hope that there are alternatives to suicide.
- Take action. Remove methods the person might use to kill him or herself.
- Seek help from his or her family, friend, physician, clergy, etc.
- IMMEDIATELY contact a person or organization that specializes in crisis intervention or suicide prevention for help. (See the back of this brochure).

## what to avoid

- Avoid acting shocked or lecturing the person on the value of life.
- Avoid taunting or daring him or her to “do it.”
- Avoid judging. Allow him or her to express his or her thoughts or feelings.
- Avoid debates over whether suicide is right or wrong.
- Avoid offering glib reassurance—it may make the person feel as if you really don’t understand or care about him or her.
- Don’t keep yours or another person’s suicidal thoughts a secret. GET HELP. Remember - saving a life is more important than keeping a promise. Silence can be DEADLY!

## where to get help

If you or someone you know is thinking about suicide, call **800-273-TALK** (8255).

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline will automatically connect you with a certified local crisis center 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.



For additional information on suicide prevention or publications contact:

**Tennessee Suicide Prevention Network**   
*Saving Lives in Tennessee*

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[www.tspn.org](http://www.tspn.org)

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## the facts

Too often, parents and teachers fail to notice when a child is being bullied or is bullying someone else. When they do hear about it, they frequently downplay it as a rite of passage or blame the victim. But it can cause real psychological damage, triggering anxiety, low self-esteem, depression, and even suicide.

Bullying can take many different forms, from violent physical assaults to more subtle forms, like name-calling or spreading rumors. Increasingly, cyberbullying—the use of electronic social media like e-mail, texting, etc. to harass others—is becoming a problem for children and the adults in their lives.

Victims of bullying are not the only ones at risk for mental health problems. Bullies themselves may have power and control problems or suffer from serious personality disorders. Parents, teachers, administrators, and other students need to know how to recognize a bullying problem and how to help students who may be driven to the edge.

### *By the numbers:*

- The National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center within the CDC estimates that 13 percent of children engage in bullying behavior. 11 percent are targets of bullies, and 6 percent are both bullies and victims. In all, 5.7 million children in the US are involved in a bully-victim relationship.
- According to the 2009 Tennessee Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 17.3% of all participating high-school students had been bullied on school property during the past 12 months. Girls and younger students were more likely to be victims of bullying.

## signals

The signs of bullying for both victims and aggressors are not always easy to spot. Victims too often keep their suffering a secret, wanting to deal with it on their own or believing that no one can help them. Bullies may anticipate punishment if their actions become known, or conversely may see nothing wrong with it and therefore not worth mentioning.

### *Your child may be a victim of bullying if he or she:*

- Comes home from school with torn or dirty clothes or damaged books
- Has cuts, bruises, and scratches
- Has few or no friends
- Seems afraid to go to school, or complains of headaches, stomach pains, or other ailments
- Does not sleep well or has nightmares
- Loses interest in schoolwork
- Seems sad, depressed, moody, or anxious
- Has poor self-esteem
- Is quiet, sensitive, or passive

### *Your child may be a bully if he or she:*

- Teases, threatens, or hits others
- Is hot-tempered or impulsive
- Has a hard time following rules
- Is aggressive towards adults
- Lacks sympathy for children who are bullied
- Has been involved in other problem behavior, like vandalism or theft

It should be noted that adults can be bullies and victims as well, depending on the circumstances. While this brochure focuses on children, these signals may apply to adults as well.

Source: “Bullying in Schools”, U.S. Department of Justice, 2004.

## risk factors

Most suicidal people give some of the clues and warning signs listed here. By learning the warning signs, paying attention and trusting your own judgment, you can make the difference between life and death.

- Previous suicide attempts
- Giving away prized possessions, making final arrangements, putting affairs in order
- Themes of death or depression in conversation, writing, reading or art
- Recent loss of friend or family member, especially through divorce, death, or suicide
- Sudden dramatic decline or improvement in schoolwork
- Use or increased use of drugs and/or alcohol
- Chronic headaches, stomachaches, or fatigue
- Withdrawal or isolation from friends, family or school activities
- Neglect of personal appearance
- Taking unnecessary risks
- No longer interested in favorite activities or hobbies
- Changed eating or sleeping patterns
- Talking about, making plans or threatening suicide. (If this happens, TAKE IMMEDIATE ACTION.)

### **Remember.....**

Any one of these signals alone doesn't necessarily indicate a person is suicidal. However, several signals may be cause for concern. Signals are especially important if the person has attempted suicide in the past. Listen. Be a friend. Get professional help. *Your actions may save a life!*