

## 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.
- Talk, offer help and most importantly, LISTEN.
- Teens need reassurance that someone cares. Show interest in the person and be supportive. Let the person know that help is available.
- Trust your instincts. If the situation seems serious, seek prompt help.
- Talk directly about suicide, and get specifics. The more specific the plan, the greater the risk.
- Treatment for depression and suicidal tendencies is of utmost importance. Alert key adults—family, friends, teachers, or coaches. Seek professional help. (For resources, see the back of this brochure.)

## what to avoid

- Avoid acting shocked or judgmental, or lecturing the person on reasons to live. Allow the person to express his or her feelings and accept those feelings.
- Avoid giving advice or false reassurances, or offering easy answers.
- Avoid dismissing problems or minimizing the threat.
- Never keep a person’s suicidal thoughts a secret. 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**



Or for information on suicide prevention training contact:

**Tennessee Lives Count Project**



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**Saving Teen and Young Adult Lives** in Tennessee

**Tennessee Suicide Prevention Network**

*Saving Lives in Tennessee*

## the facts

The teenage and young adult years can be a period of loneliness and confusion. Youth deal with a number of new experiences such as new relationships, decisions about the future, and the physical changes that are taking place in their bodies.

Young people are crying out for help. About 4,000 young people between the ages of 10 and 24 die by suicide each year. Youth suicide rates in the U. S. have tripled since the 1950s.

- Suicide is the third-leading cause of death among young people ages 10 to 24 years of age in this country.
- Every day, 12 young people die by suicide. That's one every two hours.
- 53% of young people who die by suicide have abused drugs or alcohol.
- Male youths are 5 times more likely than females to complete a suicide.

### In Tennessee

- In 2009, 115 people between the ages of 10 and 24 died by suicide.
- In 2009, 1 in 14 high school students surveyed admitted that they attempted suicide in the past year.
- In a 2009 survey of students in grades nine through twelve, 13.6% reported seriously considering suicide in the past year.

## risk factors

Suicide is never caused by a single event. It is the result of many factors over a period of time. Following are some common causes of suicidal thoughts or behavior in teens and young adults:

**PRESSURES** such as unrealistic academic, peer, social or family expectations can create a strong sense of rejection and can lead to deep disappointment. Teens and young adults are especially prone to feelings of loneliness, hopelessness and rejection as a result of these pressures.

**DEPRESSION** in young people is increasing at an alarming rate. Recent surveys indicate that as many as 1 in 5 teens suffers from clinical depression, and it can be difficult to detect in young people. But it is extremely important that depressed youth receive prompt, professional treatment.

**HIGH-RISK BEHAVIORS** such as substance abuse, unsafe sexual behavior, reckless spending, or self-injury behaviors are ways that some young people cope with feelings of depression or loneliness. However, such behaviors only lead to new problems and a deeper level of depression.

**ISOLATION OR WITHDRAWAL** can also be a coping strategy for the suicidal youth making them even more susceptible to loneliness, depression and substance abuse.

**CERTAIN POPULATIONS** of youth such as people with mental or physical disabilities, GLBT youth, or people who are victims of bullying are at higher risk for suicide and suicide attempts.

## signals

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
- Access to a firearm or other potentially lethal means of suicide
- 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!*