Youth Suicide: Know the Warning Signs and How to Help

Talking with your child about suicide might be difficult, but it could save their life.

Know the signs

Warning signs that a young person might be depressed or suicidal:

- Changes in eating and/or sleeping habits.
- Withdrawal from family and friends or activities they enjoyed participating in.
- A drastic change in personality or extreme mood swings.
- Unusual or unexplained behavior including irritability, rage, self-harm, risk-taking, promiscuity, use of drugs or alcohol, or sudden change in grades.
- A sense of hopelessness, guilt, shame, or that they are a burden to others.
- A preoccupation with death and/or talking or writing about suicide or wanting to die.
- Saying goodbye or giving away important possessions.

Four out of five teens who attempt suicide have given clear warning signs. It's important to take all threats of suicide seriously.

If a youth has a trusted adult in their world, their risk of attempting suicide decreases.

How to help

If you notice possible warning signs and are concerned that your child might be depressed or in danger, talk to them immediately. You can start the conversation by simply asking, "Are you okay?"

You do not need to have the answers. Just listen with an open heart and without judgement. Take their feelings seriously and offer support, compassion and understanding, resisting the urge to offer quick fixes. Take talk of suicide seriously and use the word "suicide." Asking about suicide will not plant an idea or increase their risk. Instead, it lets them know that it is safe for them to talk with you about their feelings. Let them know they are not alone.

Be sure to let your child know that your love is unconditional and that you will be there to help them get the support they need. Let them know it's okay to ask for help and talk about how to seek support. Reach out for professional help if needed. Visit healthybarrington.org for information about local providers.

If it is a crisis situation, call the Suicide Prevention Lifeline, the Trevor Project LGBTQ Crisis Hotline, or text the Crisis Text Line to speak with a trained counselor.

In an emergency, call 911.

Resources

Healthy Barrington *(healthybarrington.org)*
BStrong Together *(bstrongtogether.org)*
Barrington Youth & Family Services *(barringtonbyfs.org)*
Samaritan Counseling Center *(sccnw.org)*
NAMI Barrington Area *(namiba.org)*
The National Institute for Mental Health *(nimh.nih.gov)*
The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention *(afsp.org)*
Erika's Lighthouse *(erikaslighthouse.org)*
The Trevor Project *(thetrevorproject.org)*
The Jason Foundation *(jasonfoundation.com)*

NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION LIFELINE™
1-800-273-TALK (8255)
suicidepreventionlifeline.org

CRISIS TEXT LINE
Text HELLO to 741741
Free, 24/7, Confidential

THE TREVOR PROJECT
LGBTQ CRISIS HOTLINE
CALL 1-866-488-7386

Enhancing the health and well-being of Barrington area children and youth in mind, body, and spirit.

bstrongtogether.org

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