

TIP SHEET: SUICIDE PREVENTION IN TEENS

How to Help

Talking about suicide doesn't increase a person's likelihood to attempt suicide. It's important to speak explicitly about their suicidality: "*Are you thinking about killing yourself?*"

There is a difference between suicidal thoughts (such as, thinking about death or thinking they would be better off dead) and having a specific plan and means to kill themselves. Ask the teen, "*Do you have a plan to kill yourself?*" If the answer is yes, don't wait to seek professional help. For example, reach out to their therapist or contact one of the resources below.

What to do:

- Be empathetic.
- Stay calm even though you don't feel calm.
- Listen to what they want to share.
- Acknowledge the difficulty of sharing and thank them for being honest.
- Validate their thoughts, and remind them that thoughts of suicide aren't uncommon and don't have to be acted on.
- Express your concern for *them* and talk to someone else about how *you're* feeling.
- Remove the means such as knives, guns, and pills. Get a lock box if needed.
- Don't promise to keep their thoughts a secret.
- **Seek professional help** as well as support from other family and friends.

Resources

Advocates Psychiatric Emergency Services
available 24/7: (800) 540-5806

Emergency Room: Mount Auburn Hospital,
725 Concord Ave #5100, Cambridge, MA
02138

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline:
(800) 273-8255

Crisis Text Line: Text HOME to 741-741

Warning Signs

- Self-harming or threatening to kill themselves.
- Talking or writing about death.
- Engaging in risky and reckless behaviors.
- Seeking ways to hurt or kill themselves.
- Persistent and intense crying or anger, or a dramatic mood change (even a shift to happiness).
- Isolating from friends and family.
- Giving away prized possessions.
- Expressing hopelessness and negative thoughts about themselves.
- Changes in personal hygiene or sleep patterns.

Identifying suicidal thoughts in your teen

- Recognizing suicidal thoughts can be subtle and confusing for many families. For example, self-harm doesn't usually mean suicidal ideation (self-harm is often a manifestation of emotional pain). See the above warning signs.
- If your teen doesn't want to talk to you or isn't showing the above warning signs, here are some additional suggestions:
 - Internet monitoring: There are internet monitoring services (such as Qustodio) that you can review regularly to find internet searches about ways to harm themselves.
 - Friends of your teen: Reach out to your child's close friends and their parents. Ask to be informed of any concerning information.

Prepared by Sophia Suarez-Friedman and
Madison Tyler, Belmont Wellness Coalition

More Resources:

[Mental Health First Aid for Youth](#)
[Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#)

