DEPRESSION IN TEENS: FACING THE DANGER OF TEEN SUICIDE

Sometimes teens feel so depressed that they consider ending their lives. Each year, almost 5,000 young people, ages 15 to 24, kill themselves. The rate of suicide for this age group has nearly tripled since 1960, making it the third leading cause of death in adolescents and the second leading cause of death among college-age youth.

Studies show that suicide attempts among young people may be based on long-standing problems triggered by a specific event. Suicidal adolescents may view a temporary situation as a permanent condition. Feelings of anger and resentment combined with exaggerated guilt can lead to impulsive, self-destructive acts.

Recognizing the Warning Signs

Four out of five teens who attempt suicide have given clear warnings. Pay attention to these warning signs:

- Suicide threats, direct and indirect
- Obsession with death
- Poems, essays and drawings that refer to death
- Dramatic change in personality or appearance
- Irrational, bizarre behavior
- Overwhelming sense of guilt, shame or rejection
- Changed eating or sleeping patterns
- Severe drop in school performance
- Giving away belongings

REMEMBER!!! These warning signs should be taken seriously. Obtain help immediately. Caring and support can save a young life.

Helping Suicidal Teens

- Offer help and listen. Encourage depressed teens to talk about their feelings. Listen, don’t lecture.
- Trust your instincts. If it seems that the situation may be serious, seek prompt help. Break a confidence if necessary, in order to save a life.
- Pay attention to talk about suicide. Ask direct questions and don’t be afraid of frank discussions. Silence is deadly!
- Seek professional help. It is essential to seek expert advice from a mental health professional who has experience helping depressed teens. Also, alert key adults in the teen’s life — family, friends and teachers.

Looking To The Future

When adolescents are depressed, they have a tough time believing that their outlook can improve. But professional treatment can have a dramatic impact on their lives. It can put them back on track and bring them hope for the future.
Tennessee Voices for Children speaks out as active advocates for the emotional and behavioral well-being of children and their families. We provide Advocacy, Training, Support, Referral, Prevention, and Early Intervention Services. For more information, visit http://www.tnvoices.org or call 1-800-670-9882.

If you or someone you know is contemplating suicide, call 1-800-273-TALK [hyperlink to www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org] (1-800-273-8255).

Other Resources

American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
3615 Wisconsin Ave., N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20016-3007
Phone Number: (202) 966-7300
Fax: (202) 966-2891
Email Address: clinical@aacap.org
Website URL: www.aacap.org

American Association of Suicidology
4201 Connecticut Avenue NW; Suite 310
Washington, DC 20008
Phone: 202-237-2280

Information via Mental Health America. Please visit http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/ for more information.

For more information, visit http://www.tnvoices.org or call 1-800-670-9882.
Offices in Nashville, Memphis, Knoxville, Jackson, and Columbia.