

SUICIDE PREVENTION & The Boys Town National Hotline

We deal on a daily basis with people who are at high risk for suicide. In 2008, the Boys Town National Hotline assisted over 11,000 callers who were thinking about, or who had just attempted suicide.

People commit suicide when they lose hope. Generally there are histories of drug/alcohol abuse, depression or aggression in the person's past. When these problems exist, a break-up, loss, or relationship issues can then trigger a person to contemplate suicide. Some reports show that 90% of all suicides are the result of an underlying psychiatric illness. It is important for people to be aware of the role that mental illness can play and people of all ages should be encouraged to get help.

We have an assessment tool that we use to determine the degree of risk that someone is at for attempting suicide. Unfortunately we aren't always sure what happens to our callers after a phone call. That is why we always try to provide referrals for counseling, encourage them to identify a support system of people that will help them, and coping skills like journaling or exercising for when they are feeling depressed.

When we have a caller who is suicidal, the most important thing is to listen. Our counselors listen, provide encouragement and support, and help callers look at other options for solving their problems. We also provide referrals for counseling, crisis intervention, etc.

It is essential for someone who is suicidal to talk to someone about how they are feeling. When teens call our Hotline, one of the first things that we assess is their support network. Who can they talk to? a parent, teacher, counselor, priest/minister, another relative or trusted adult? If depression or drug & alcohol abuse are factors, then the person needs to get some professional help.

If you know someone who is contemplating suicide, do not keep it to yourself or try to "fix" the person on your own. Even if you are sworn to secrecy by your friend to not tell anyone, you need to talk to someone you trust, in order to get them the help they need. It is better to have your friend angry with you for telling someone, than to have your friend die because you didn't do what you could to help them.

Teens should always tell an adult if they have a friend who is talking about killing him or herself. Never keep it a secret because out of fear they will be upset for telling someone. It is always better to have a friend who is mad at, than to lose them forever through suicide.

Warning signs:

- Talking about suicide.
- Statements about hopelessness, helplessness, or worthlessness.
- Preoccupation with death.
- Suddenly happier, calmer.
- Loss of interest in things one cares about.
- Visiting or calling people one cares about.
- Making arrangements; setting one's affairs in order.
- Giving things away.

You can also go to www.suicidology.org, www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org, or www.save.org, for more suicide information & statistics.

**If you or someone you know is thinking about suicide,
call the Boys Town National Hotline (1-800-448-3000), for help & support!**