

Youth Suicide Prevention: What Every Parent Should Know

Provided by West County Psychological Associates, St. Louis MO ~ 314.275.8599 ~ www.wcpastl.com

Youth Suicide is Increasing Suicide among youth continues to increase every year and is now the **second** leading cause of death in individuals of middle school, high school, and college age, exceeded only by accidents. Suicide is responsible for more deaths of 10-24 year olds each year in the U.S. than all natural causes *combined*.

Which youth complete suicide? Males complete suicide 3-4 times more often than females, although females attempt suicide 2-3 more as often as males. These differences are due primarily to the lethality of the method used. Males are more likely to choose more lethal methods, including firearms and hanging.

Youth Suicide is Often Impulsive Approximately 50% of adolescent suicide is believed to be impulsive, after a triggering situation, such as a break-up, bullying, or a family crisis. In these situations, a youth's first action toward suicide occurs less than ten minutes after their first thought of suicide. In this impulsive moment, whether the youth has access to a highly lethal method of suicide is *the* determining factor for life or death. This is why it's so important to restrict youth's unsupervised access to loaded firearms at all times.

RISK FACTORS

- Unsupervised access to loaded firearms
- Previous suicide attempts
- Self-harming behaviors, such as cutting
- Mental health problems, such as depression
- Alcohol or drug use
- Physical or sexual abuse or other trauma
- Serious family stress or conflict
- Knowing a person who died by suicide
- Peer conflict, rejection or bullying

WARNING SIGNS

80% of youth who die by suicide tell someone about their plans, directly or indirectly, within the weeks prior to their death. So when a young person displays warning signs, we should never assume that they "just want attention."

- Threatening suicide in person or online
- Focusing on suicidal themes in their writing, in their artwork, or in the media they watch/listen to
- Writing a suicide note, plan, will, or letter of goodbye
- Making suicidal statements or "jokes"
- Giving away prized personal possessions

If You Know or Suspect that Your Child is Considering Suicide:

- Increase supervision for your child until they can be assessed by a professional
- Immediately make an appointment with your child's therapist or pediatrician or go to the ER
- Communicate important information with the school, so they can help keep your child safe
- Follow through with the treatment recommendations from your doctor and therapist

* If your child comes to you and says they are concerned about a suicidal friend, do not hesitate. Notify the other child's parent, the school, law enforcement or a suicide hotline right away. You might save that child's life!

RESOURCES FOR HELP



National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-8255
National Crisis Text Line: 741741

In the St. Louis area:

Behavioral Health Response (BHR) 314.469.6644 or 800.811.4760
24/7/365 help in a mental health crisis

West County Psychological Associates 314.275.8599 www.wcpastl.com
Counseling services for children, teens, adults, families, and seniors