

TALKING TO YOUR KIDS ABOUT SUICIDE



You've talked to them about drinking, risky sex, wearing a seat belt and other behaviors that put them at personal risk.

Suicide is no different.

The truth is, suicide can happen to ANY kid in ANY family at ANY time. Did you know that...

- * 2nd leading cause of death in Washington State for adolescents ages 15-24 is suicide
- * 17% of our nation's High School students admit to thinking about suicide
- * 8% of our nation's High School students acknowledge making a suicide attempt

Won't talking about suicide plant the idea in someone's head? NO. That's a myth. Talking about suicide can open up communication that is often kept a secret. Secrets that are exposed often become less powerful and scary. You also give your child permission to bring up the subject again in the future.

Approaching the Topic - If it isn't prompted by something your kid is saying or doing that worries you, approach this the same way as other subjects that are important to you, but may or may not be important to your child:

- **Timing.** Pick a time when you have the best chance of getting your child's attention. A car ride can give you a more captive, attentive audience, or a suicide that has received media attention.
- **Think about what you want to say.** Rehearse a script ahead of time if necessary. Think of a reference point. *"I was reading in the paper that youth suicide has been increasing..."* or *"I saw that your school is having a training."*
- **Be Honest.** Just admit if this is a hard topic to talk about. *"You know, I never thought this was something I'd be talking with you about, but I think it's really important."* Acknowledging discomfort gives everyone permission.
- **Be Direct.** Ask for your child's response. *"What do you think about suicide?"; "Is it something that any of your friends talk about?"; "Have you ever/are you thinking about suicide? What about your friends?"*
- **Listen.** If you hear something that worries you, be honest about that too. *"What you're telling me has really gotten my attention and I need to think about it some more. Let's talk about this again, okay?"*
- **Don't overreact or underreact.** Overreaction can close off future communication. Under reacting is often a way to make ourselves feel better. ANY thoughts or talk of suicide *"I felt that way a while ago but don't any more"* should ALWAYS be revisited.

Adapted from: Society for the Prevention of Teen Suicide.

Use LEARN™ to remember what to do

Look for Warning Signs - Feelings, Behaviors, Situations.
Empathize and Listen - Don't try to fix or minimize situation.
Ask about Suicide - Ask directly. Say the word suicide.
Reduce the Danger - Remove/reduce lethal means.
Next Steps - Never leave this person alone. Refer for help.

Call 911 for imminent danger.
For all other crises, call these 24-hr resources.

Crisis Clinic
Helping Lives On the Line

1-866-427-4747

Suicide Prevention Lifeline



1 - 800 - 273 - TALK