



Teen Mental Health

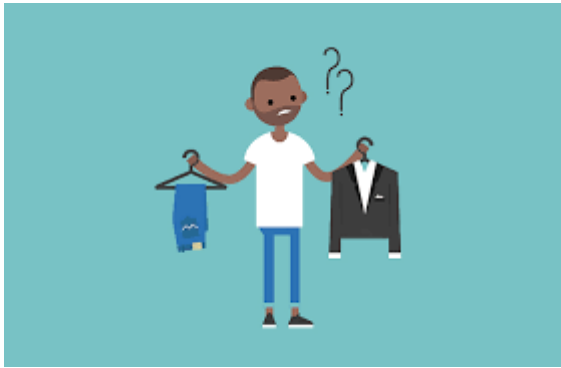
SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS THAT HELP
INDICATE YOUR TEEN MAY NEED SUPPORT

[Michelle Halm, MA, M.Ed., PEL, FT](#)
[Pillars Community Health | Buddy's Place](#)

Signs and Symptoms

Signs: things we can see or observe

Symptoms: something someone can feel



Appearance

Sweating, quick breathing, tense muscles, increase BP, poor hygiene, digestive issues



Behavior

Crying, withdrawing, loss of motivation, use of drugs or alcohol, changes in energy, NSSI, changes in sleep



Thoughts

Self-criticism or blame, difficult making decisions, rigid thinking, racing thoughts, lack of insight, thought of death or suicide



Feelings

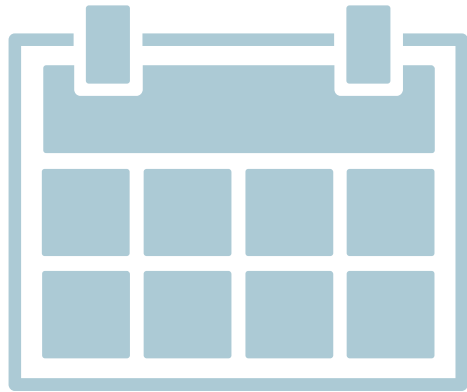
Mood swings or depressed mood, excessive anxiety or guilt, lack of inhibition, helplessness or hopelessness, low self-esteem, oversensitivity to comments or criticism

Typical Behaviors vs. Potential Warning Signs

| Typical Adolescent Behavior | Potential Warning Sign |
|---|---|
| Withdrawing from family to spend more time with friends. | Withdrawing from friends, family, and social activity. |
| Occasionally losing temper when things do not go their way. | Frequently arguing with adults and/or purposely breaking rules; displays aggressive behavior. |
| Moving from things they enjoyed as a child to more teen like activities | Losing interest in favorite activities and not replacing with other pursuits. |
| Occasionally struggling to finish something they may not enjoy. | Difficulty staying focused and concentrating across many different activities and settings. |
| | |

Becoming a Challenge: Signs and Symptoms

Source: National Council for Mental Wellbeing



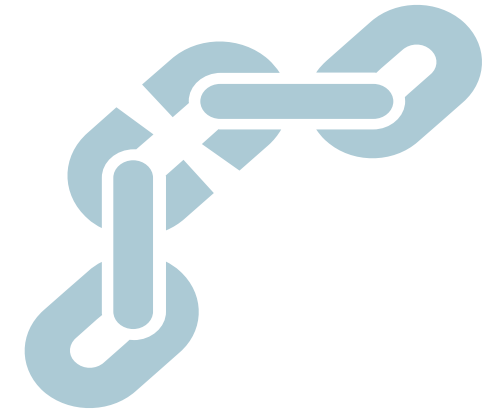
FREQUENCY

Individual experiences signs and symptoms most of the day or many times per day.



DURATION

Signs and symptoms have been present for a certain amount of time.



IMPACT

Signs and symptoms get in the way of work performance, relationships, or participation in usual activities.

Having conversations

Be clear and direct

- You may have to ask difficult questions
 - Listen with compassion and without shame or blame

Stay connected and allow dialogue to occur

Be patient and an active listener

- Reflect back to the teen what they are saying, thinking and feeling





SUICIDE PREVENTION



Information on Suicide Prevention

Resources (alphabetical order)

[American Foundation for Suicide Prevention](#)

- www.afsp.org

◦ [Elyssa's Mission](#)

- Resources - <https://elyssasmision.org/resources/>
- Signs of Suicide - <https://elyssasmision.org/signs-of-suicide/>

◦ [Hope For the Day](#)

- Hope For The Day's [Resource Compass](#) is a tool that allows us to search any US Zip Code for a variety of social services in the area, including free & sliding-scale resources for mental health.
- Download/Printable - <https://www.hftd.org/educationalmaterial> (scroll to the bottom)
- <https://www.hftd.org/geteducated>
- ISBE Community Partnership Grant
 - <https://www.hftd.org/blog/2022/7/15/isbe-community-partnerships>

◦ [Loft at Eight Corners \(Brookfield, IL\)](#)

- The Loft program is designed to engage teens in their mental health journey; to encourage teen voices to empower and advocate for their own services and family support
- The Loft in collaboration between [Pillars Community Health](#) and [NAMI Metro Suburban](#)
- www.loft8corners.org

- [Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#) – call 988
 - <https://988lifeline.org/>

- [Crisis Text Line](#) – Text “help” to 741-741

◦ [The Trevor Project](#)

- Trevor Helpline
 - Text – 678-678
 - Call - 866-488-7386

NYT article: [How to Help Teens Struggling With Mental Health - The New York Times \(nytimes.com\)](#)

- <https://www.nytimes.com/explain/2022/04/23/health/teen-mental-health-faq?smid=url-share>

Risk Factors and Warning Signs: Suicide

Risk Factors: Suicide is a complex behavior that is usually caused by a combination of risk factors in the presence of negative life events.

The first step in preventing suicide is to identify and understand the risk factors.

A risk factor is anything that increases the likelihood that a person will harm himself or herself. However, having these risk factors does not always mean that suicide will occur.

–Adapted from the National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center

Most Significant Risk Factors:

- Depression
- Substance Abuse
- Previous Suicide Attempt

Other Important Risk Factors: History of mental disorders (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, Anxiety, Depression)

- Self-injury
- History of alcohol and substance abuse
- Family history of suicide and/or child abuse
- Loss (death of a loved one, divorce, etc.)
- Physical illness
- Easy access to firearms

Changes in schoolwork completion or quality = grades

Changes in behavior

Mood swings

- mood swings are out of character for your teen
- extreme mood swings from very low depression to high mania
- depression or mania includes self-harm
- mood swings include dangerous, impulsive, or risky behavior
- pattern of stormy, intense relationships with others

Changes in Sleeping or Eating Patterns –

- not getting “restorative” sleep
- Lack of appetite or overeating

• Being Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered or Questioning

• Bullying/isolation

Excessive need to escape

Problems with peers

Warning Signs: Suicide

Warning Signs Demanding Immediate Attention:

- Talking about or writing about suicide or death
- Giving direct verbal cues, such as, “I wish I were dead” and “I’m going to end it all”
- Isolating from family and friends
- Giving away prized possessions
- Expressing the belief that life is meaningless
- Exhibiting a sudden or unexplained improvement in mood after being depressed and withdrawn
- Neglecting hygiene
- Dropping out of school or social, athletic, and/or community activities

Additional Warning Signs:

- Frequent tearfulness and/or crying
- Decreased interest in activities or inability to enjoy previously favorite activities
- Hopelessness, helplessness
- Persistent boredom or low energy
- Social isolation
- Increase or decrease in sleeping patterns
- Increase or decrease in eating patterns
- Low self-esteem/guilt
- Difficulty with relationships
- Increased irritability, anger or hostility
- Drug and alcohol use
- Obsessive risk-taking
- Marked personality change
- Absences in school and/or drop in school performance

Causes of Suicide



There is no single cause of suicide.

In most cases suicide is the result of a combination of different risk factors in conjunction with one or more precipitating life events.

These “triggers,” such as a break-up or being bullied are rarely the only “cause” of suicide, but rather the “last straw” that pushes an already at-risk individual over the edge.

An important statistic shows that 90% of people across all ages who die by suicide have a diagnosable mental disorder at the time of their death.

- This is why identifying and treating mental illnesses is crucial in working to prevent suicide.

Signs Someone May Need Support

Suicide and self-harm are preventable mental health crises.

We can be proactive by recognizing expressions of someone in distress.

- A few types of warning signs are:
 - Someone expressing feelings of being trapped, like there is no way out.
 - Someone expressing hopelessness or stating no reason for living
 - Someone withdrawing from family, their friends, or usual activities they like.
 - Someone talking or threatening to hurt or kill themselves.

These are only a couple of signatures, and there are different ways people exhibit pain.

Source: Hope for the Day

How To Ask For Help

When you're experiencing a mental health challenge, here is how you can reach out!

Reflect and recognize the amount of courage it takes to have this conversation in a world full of stigma. Be proud of yourself for taking this step!

WHO TO ASK: Make a list of the people you're considering! Include the people you feel closest to (parents, guardians, siblings, friends, teachers, partners, etc.). This list could also include hotlines, warmlines, and professionals like therapists or counselors.

HOW TO ASK: Some of the phrases you can say, when reaching out for help include:

- I'm struggling with my mental health, and all the coping skills I know aren't working. Can you help me figure out what to do next?
- I'm going through a tough time and I feel like you're someone I can trust. Are you free to talk *[insert day and time]*?
- I'm going through a stressful time. Can you check in with me on *[dates or days]* just to make sure I'm alright?

I'm having a hard time taking care of myself. I need extra support around *[insert task]*. Can you help me out?

- I'm not feeling like myself these days. I want to learn some strategies so I can start feeling better. Can you help me with that?
- I'm having a rough day *or* night, but I'm not ready to talk about it. Can you help distract me by *[insert activity]*?
- I don't want to be alone right now. Can you stay on the phone with me or come over until I calm down?
- I am feeling *[depressed, anxious, suicidal, etc.]*. I'm not sure what to ask for, but I need some help deciding what to do next.

OTHER RESOURCES: Hope For The Day's [Resource Compass](#) is a tool that allows us to search any US Zip Code for a variety of social services in the area, including free & sliding-scale resources for mental health.

You can also access any of these lifelines! Many of them are 24 hours, including the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline and the Crisis Text Line—where you can text with a trained crisis counselor.

Source: Hope for the Day

How to Ask for Help: Suicide Prevention

What Do I Do?

It's important to know what to do:

- **Be willing to listen.**
- **Take it seriously.** All suicide threats and attempts must be taken seriously or go to the nearest emergency room. [Click here for HOTLINES.](#)
- **Do not keep the information a secret.** You do not have to be certain that someone is suicidal before you talk with another person, preferably a trained adult such as a counselor, social worker, teacher, school nurse, family physician.
- **Seek professional help.** Encourage the person to see a physician or mental health professional immediately.

80% of all suicides give some warning of their intentions to a friend or family member. If your friend is depressed or exhibiting any of the warning signs, it is OK to ask her if she is considering suicide. In fact, that's a true friend.

For more information relevant to you, visit the [parent](#), [teen](#) or [school](#) page

Source: Elyssa's Mission

How to Be Supportive

How To Be Supportive

When someone experiences a mental health challenge, here is how you can be supportive:

LISTEN: Let someone really express their experiences. Being someone they can talk to is essential when giving support.

BE NON-JUDGMENTAL: Don't criticize or minimize the way they feel. You may not be able to understand exactly what they're going through, and that's ok.

ASK WHAT, NOT WHY: When you ask questions, avoid asking 'why' questions, and instead ask 'what' questions. Asking why can have a judgmental tone even if you don't mean it that way.

GIVE INFORMATION - DON'T DIAGNOSE: Don't assume they have an illness or condition. Provide direction to resources that can identify and treat mental health issues.

ACT AS A BRIDGE: You can connect someone to mental health resources. Resources include family, school guidance, mental health professionals, and organizations like H.F.T.D.

TEAMMATE IN SUPPORT: Being supportive doesn't mean your duty is to 'fix' someone. Mental health is complicated and solutions aren't overnight. As a teammate, the best support you can give is by being a trusting ear, helping to navigate resources, and acting as a source of encouragement

Source: Hope for the Day

Suicide Prevention: In the Schools

Elyssa's Mission

- Signs of Suicide - <https://elyssasmission.org/signs-of-suicide/>
 - The SOS program seeks to *teach* youth that depression is a treatable illness, *empower* them to respond to a potential suicide (themselves, a friend or a family member), and *prevent* teen suicide.
- How does the SOS program empower students?
 - By helping teens understand the important connection between undiagnosed, untreated mental illness and suicide
 - By teaching teens the signs of suicide
 - By outlining action steps for dealing with these signs as a *mental health emergency*
- Why did Elyssa's Mission choose the SOS program?
 - It was developed by mental health professionals (MindWise Innovations).
 - It is evidence-based; SOS was selected by SAMHSA for its National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices.
 - It is cost-effective.
 - The program is easily implemented by existing school personnel during one or two class periods.
 - It uses proven screening tools that ensure not just education, but also critical follow up.



Resource Information on NSSI

Understanding Non Suicidal Self Injury (N.S.S.I.)

Self harm is widely misunderstood and stigmatized by social media, medical professionals, clinicians, teachers, and general society. N.S.S.I. and self harm is often seen as “attention seeking” and “emo”—rather than a complicated coping strategy that should be taken seriously.

Self harm is any behavior used to inflict pain on one’s own body. It’s a coping strategy for emotional distress. Repeated self harm creates an adrenaline rush that often becomes addicting, comforting, and impulsive.

Not necessarily. Many people who self harm often do not intend to attempt suicide. Someone may self harm for years without any desire to die. However, they may cause more harm than they meant to while caught up in the moment—which can result in medical complications or death.

How To Respond When Learning About A Person’s Self Harm:

- Remain calm.
- Don’t shame the person about their behavior.
- Offer care and support (first aid, emotional support, doctor visit, therapist call, etc.)
- Invite conversation “You don’t have to talk if you don’t want to, but I can and want to listen.”
- Be patient with the person. Self harm is incredibly complicated. The best support you can be is to be a trusting ear and connect them with resources.
- Take care of yourself. It can be hard to learn someone is hurting themselves and you may need support too.

What To Do Next:

- Encourage them to work with a therapist.
- Explore swapping out this behavior for another less harmful coping strategy. (holding an ice cube, etc.)
- Offer resources specific to self harm and recovery!
- Continue to be patient as your person continues on their recovery journey. (Do not police their recovery.)

Resources

(alphabetical order)

[American Foundation for Suicide Prevention](#)

- www.afsp.org

◦ [Elyssa's Mission](#)

- Resources -
<https://elyssasmision.org/resources/>

◦ [Hope For the Day](#)

- Hope For The Day's [Resource Compass](#) is a tool that allows us to search any US Zip Code for a variety of social services in the area, including free & sliding-scale resources for mental health.
- Download/Printable -
<https://www.hftd.org/educationalmaterial>
(scroll to the bottom)
- <https://www.hftd.org/geteducated>

◦ [Loft at Eight Corners \(Brookfield, IL\)](#)

- The Loft program is designed to engage teens in their mental health journey; to encourage teen voices to empower and advocate for their own services and family support
- The Loft in collaboration between [Pillars Community Health](#) and [NAMI Metro Suburban](#)
- www.loft8corners.org

◦ [NAMI DuPage](#)

◦ [Pillars Community Health](#)

- 708-Pillars
- www.pillarscommunityhealth.org

◦ [Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#) –

- Call: 988
- <https://988lifeline.org/>

◦ [Crisis Text Line](#) – Text “help” to 741-741

◦ [The Trevor Project](#)

- Trevor Helpline
- Text – 678-678
- Call - 866-488-7386

NYT article: [How to Help Teens Struggling With Mental Health - The New York Times \(nytimes.com\)](https://www.nytimes.com/explain/2022/04/23/health/teen-mental-health-faq?smid=url-share)

- <https://www.nytimes.com/explain/2022/04/23/health/teen-mental-health-faq?smid=url-share>