

HELPING TEENS WITH SUICIDAL THOUGHTS

If a parent believes their teen is depressed or suicidal, it's essential to take immediate and decisive action.

Stay Calm and Approachable: Maintain a calm and composed demeanor when talking to your teenager. They may already be feeling overwhelmed, and your approach can set the tone for the conversation.

Open and Non-Judgmental Communication: Approach your teenager with empathy and understanding. Create a safe space for them to express their feelings without fear of judgment.

Ask Directly About Suicidal Thoughts: If you suspect your teen may be suicidal, ask them directly about their thoughts and feelings. Phrases like "Are you thinking about hurting yourself?" or "Do you have thoughts of suicide?" can help initiate the conversation.

Listen Actively and Reassure: Listen attentively to what your teenager has to say. Reassure them that you are there to support and help them through this difficult time.

Don't Leave Them Alone: If there is an immediate concern about their safety, do not leave your teenager alone. Stay with them or seek immediate professional help.

Remove Access to Means: If there are potentially harmful objects or substances in the vicinity, remove them from your teenager's access.

Seek Professional Help: If your teenager expresses suicidal thoughts, consult a mental health professional or crisis hotline immediately. Many crisis hotlines are available 24/7 to provide immediate support.

Contact Emergency Services: If your teenager is in immediate danger or has made a suicide attempt, call emergency services (911 in the United States) or take them to the nearest emergency room.

Do Not Minimize Their Feelings: Avoid telling your teenager that their feelings are "just a phase" or that they should "snap out of it." Depression and suicidal thoughts are serious and require professional intervention.

Involve School and Counselors: Inform your teenager's school and their counselor about the situation, especially if the depressive symptoms or suicidal thoughts are affecting their academic performance.

Connect with Supportive Adults: Reach out to other trusted adults in your teenager's life, such as relatives, teachers, or coaches, to let them know about the situation.

Develop a Safety Plan: Work with a mental health professional to create a safety plan for your teenager. This plan should include strategies for coping with suicidal thoughts and emergency contacts.

Stay Informed: Educate yourself about depression and suicidal behavior to better understand what your teenager is going through.

Stay Patient and Supportive: Be patient with your teenager's recovery process. Offer consistent support and let them know that you are committed to helping them through this difficult time.

Limit Access to Harmful Content: Monitor and limit your teenager's exposure to harmful or triggering content on the internet or social media.

Encourage Professional Treatment: Encourage your teenager to engage in professional treatment, which may include therapy, counseling, or medication under the guidance of a mental health provider.

Remember that addressing depression and suicidal thoughts requires professional intervention. While you can provide immediate support, the expertise of mental health professionals is crucial for long-term treatment and recovery. Never hesitate to seek immediate assistance if you believe your teenager is in immediate danger.

Columbia-Suicide Severity Rating Scale (C-SSRS)

6 QUESTIONS YOU CAN ASK A LOVED ONE TO HELP SCREEN FOR SUICIDE RISK

Columbia University researchers have developed a community version of the Columbia-Suicide Severity Rating Scale (C-SSRS) that is recommended to be used by concerned friends and family members if they identify someone close to them as having some risk for suicide. The rating scaled involves asking the person a potential of six questions. These questions can be asked of people ages eight and older. They need to be included within a conversation indicating concern for the person, and asked in a nonalarming, matter-of-fact manner.

The **First 5 Questions** are about a person's feelings over the past month.
Question 6 should always be asked.

THE SIX QUESTIONS

Question 1: Have you wished you were dead or wished you could go to sleep and not wake up?

Question 2: Have you actually had any thoughts about killing yourself?

If the loved one answers **“yes” to question 2**, ask questions 3, 4, 5 and 6.
If the person answers **“no” to question 2**, go directly to question 6.

Question 3: Have you thought about how you might do this?

Question 4: Have you had any intention of acting on these thoughts of killing yourself, as opposed to you have the thoughts but you definitely would not act on them?

Question 5: Have you started to work out or worked out the details of how to kill yourself? Do you intend to carry out this plan?

Question 6: In the past three months, have you done anything, started to do anything, or prepared to do anything to end your life?

For example, have you...

- collected pills;
- obtained a gun;
- given away valuables;
- written a will or suicide note;
- held a gun but changed your mind;
- cut yourself;
- tried to hang yourself.

National Suicide and Crisis Hotline: Dial 988