



## Teen Suicide

Nationwide, suicides among young people have increased dramatically in recent years. Suicide is the second leading cause of death among 15-24 year olds.

Many teenagers experience strong feelings of stress, confusion and self-doubt in the process of growing up. Pressures to succeed, the economy and the environment can intensify these feelings.

For some teenagers, divorce, the formation of a new family with step-parents and step-siblings, or moving to a new community can be very unsettling. In some cases suicide appears to be a solution.

Depression and suicidal feelings are treatable mental disorders. When parents are in doubt whether their child has a serious problem, a psychiatric examination does no harm to the youngster.

Many symptoms of suicidal feelings are similar to those of depression. Parents should be aware of the following warning signs of adolescents who may try to kill themselves.

If one or more of these signs occur, talk to your child or seek professional help if the concerns persist.

Change in eating and sleeping habits

Withdrawal from friends and family and from regular activities

Violent or rebellious behavior or running away

Drug and alcohol abuse

Unusual neglect of personal appearance

Radical personality change

Persistent boredom, difficulty concentrating, or a decline in the quality of schoolwork

Frequent complaints about physical symptoms, often related to emotions, such as stomachache, headache, fatigue

Loss of interest in pleasurable activities

Not tolerating praise or rewards



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A teenager who is planning to commit suicide may also:

Complain of being "rotten inside"

Give verbal hints with statements such as: "I won't be a problem for you much longer," "Nothing matters," "It's no use," "I won't see you again."

Put his or her affairs in order; for example, give away favorite possessions, clean his or her room, throw things away, etc.

Become suddenly cheerful after a period of depression

People often feel uncomfortable talking about death. However, it can be helpful to ask the child or adolescent whether they are depressed or thinking about suicide. Rather than "putting thoughts into the child's head," such a question will provide assurance that somebody cares and will give the young person the chance to talk about their problems.

With support from family and friends and professional treatment, children and teenagers who are suicidal can be restored to a more healthy path of development.

*Source: Information taken from American Academy of Child Psychiatry materials.*