WORRIED ABOUT SUICIDE?

Are you concerned that your child may be at risk for suicide? Your first step in helping may be as simple as learning the warning signs.

If your child displays any of these signs, it may mean that they are at risk for suicide, particularly if the child attempted suicide in the past.

Remember, suicide is not about parenting skills– at its very simplest, it's a sign that your child is in a vulnerable place and needs your help to stay safe.

IF YOU NOTICE ANY OF THESE WARNING SIGNS, TAKE ACTION!

1. Tell your child what you've observed that concerns you.
2. Ask directly about suicide.
3. Don't leave your child alone.
4. Connect your child to professional help.
5. Take weapons out of the house and lock the medicine cabinet.
6. Call or text the Suicide & Crisis Line at 988.

If you have **IMMEDIATE CONCERN**, call your local mental health crisis provider, take your child to the nearest emergency department, or call 911.

SUICIDE IS PREVENTABLE.

By taking time to notice and reach out to a your child, **you** can be the beginning of a positive solution.

NEW YORK STATE | Office of Mental Health

Call or Text:

988 SUICIDE & CRISIS LIFELINE

CRISIS TEXT LINE

Text "GOT5" to 741-741

What Every Parent & Caregiver Needs to Know:

Recognizing Suicide Risk in your child

NEW YORK STATE | Office of Mental Health | SPC NY Suicide Prevention Center of New York State

www.PreventSuicideNY.org

Youth Suicide Prevention is Everyone's Business!

SOMETIMES IT'S HARD TO BE A GOOD CAREGIVER.

While you can muddle your way through a lot of the challenging issues your kids present, addressing self-destructive and suicidal behavior is generally not one of them. Yet these situations are an unfortunate reality in the lives of youth today.

Suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death for youth in New York State and across the country.

While numbers are important, they don't provide any insight or guidance to you for understanding some of the signs that may signal your child is at risk for self-harm. Statistics also don't give you any direction for dealing with your concerns if you do notice signs of risk.

So how do you recognize that your child may be at risk for suicide?

It starts with acknowledging that suicide is a reality for today's youth - even those that come from good homes. It's not about parenting skills - at its simplest, it's a sign that a child is in a vulnerable place. Young people who are thinking clearly don't think about suicide as a solution to life problems. It takes more than good parenting and caregiving to address suicide risk. It is also common for parents and caregivers to dismiss suicidal threats as an attempt to get attention or manipulate a situation. You can never be 100% sure that is the case, so take all threats as a sign that your child needs some help.

The next step is to pay attention to your child's behavior.

Signs that your child may be at risk include the following F-A-C-T-S:

- **FEELINGS** like expressing hopelessness about the future, seeming sad and unhappy, being anxious and worried, or getting angry and aggressive.
- **ACTIONS** like withdrawing from activities or friendships, doing risky, dangerous things like drinking & driving, or researching ways to die *online*.
- **CHANGES** in the normal mood and behavior of your child. In some ways, this may be what is easiest for you to notice. If you observe changes that concern you, reach out to others in your child's life (i.e., teachers, friends, religious leaders) to see if they've also noticed changes.
- **THREATS** are sometimes direct like "I'd rather be dead". They can also be vague like "I just don't care about anything anymore."
- **SITUATIONS** are events that can serve as triggers for the suicidal behavior. These can include things like getting into trouble at home or school or with the law, experiencing some type of loss or facing a life change that the child finds overwhelming.

If you notice any of these FACTS, what do you do?

First, don't worry that you're overreacting.

Take your observations seriously– even if your child is not thinking about suicide, there is no risk in asking. Research has proven that asking about suicide cannot plant the idea in someone's mind. It can actually be a relief if the person has been keeping suicidal thoughts secret– it exposes them to the light of day and begins the process of getting help.

How do you bring up the subject?

Directly! Say something like:

"You haven't been yourself lately, I've noticed some things that concern me."

At this point, mention those changes you've noticed, then follow up with a statement like:

"I've heard that sometimes when kids act the way you do, they may think life isn't worth living anymore. Have you ever thought about taking your life?"

LISTEN to the answer!

If your child responds affirmatively, ask them to tell you more:

- When they think about suicide
- How often they think about it
- If they have a plan or have practiced it

Positive answers to these questions, especially the last one, mean **you need to take your child for help immediately!** It's also important that you **immediately** remove all the things in your house that could be deadly– especially firearms and medication (both prescription and over the counter drugs). Keep them somewhere else (outside of the home) until you are sure the risk of suicide has passed.

Finally, consider counseling for your child.

Your family doctor may be a good starting point for finding a mental health providers who works with children and youth, but don't wait. Make sure your doctor understands the concern is about suicide risk. If you are worried that your child is at immediate risk of self-harm, call your local mental health crisis support team, or go to your local emergency department.