

PROTECTING YOUTH FROM SUICIDE

WRITTEN BY LOCAL PARENTS FOR ALL PARENTS

Being a teenager is hard. Teens face greater social, emotional, and achievement pressures, which increases the risk for substance abuse, depression, anxiety, and suicide. There is not a single profile for youth at risk for suicide. It could be any child. It could be your child.
Being a parent is hard. We do the best we can with what we have and what we know. As parents, we play a key role in protecting our youth.

1



CONNECT

- o Teens want and need more time with parents, even if they do not act like it.
- o Join them in their interests (hiking, eating out, coffee, etc.).
- o Teens want connection with other trusted adults too. Be that for the kids around you.

2



LISTEN

- o Talk less, listen more.
- o Be ready to listen when they want to talk.
- o Be present, put phones/electronics away.
- o Listen without judgment.

3



ACCEPT

- o Let them be their own person. Respect your teen's values.
- o Love them for who they are and let them know they are loved.
- o Accept that mistakes happen, use them as opportunities for growth.
- o Be vulnerable and transparent with your own experiences and failures.
- o Model how to respond appropriately when things don't go well.

4



BUILD TRUST

- o Be a safe place for them to share the realities of their world.
- o Validate where they are coming from and take their concerns seriously.
- o Set and respect mutual expectations and limits. It's good to have boundaries, including around electronics.
- o If your teen is struggling, don't take away the things that connect them with others.
- o Be consistent and stay true to your word.

5



TALK

- o Talk to your teen about sex, drugs, screen time, harmful behaviors, and suicide.
- o Talking about it will not make them more likely to do these things.
- o Open the door to these conversations because they are likely being discussed around them.
- o Use open-ended questions to draw your child into conversation (What was the best/hardest part of your day?).

6



EMPOWER

- o Let them solve their own problems, teach them decision-making skills.
- o Serve as consultant (ask "What are your options?"), and avoid telling them what to do.
- o Foster their resilience—remind them that they can and will come back from disappointments, losses, and failures.

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CULTIVATE A HEALTHY HOME ENVIRONMENT

- o Recognize that family relationships are challenging.
- o Nurture family rituals and traditions (e.g., family dinners, holidays, game night).
- o Prioritize and protect family time. Have fun together!
- o Make the home a safe haven from the rest of the world.
- o Define and model what your family will stand for – love, laughter, faith/spirituality, honesty, respect, etc.
- o Secure any chemicals, medications and firearms from youth.

8



EMBRACE INTRINSIC VALUE

- o Recognize that our teens have value that has nothing to do with their accomplishments.
- o Value effort and character over achievement.
- o Encourage service to others; it brings purpose, joy, pride, and self-worth.
- o Every person's life has value. Choosing life is the norm.

9



SEEK HELP

- o Understand that some level of sadness, anxiousness and/or confusion is normal. Recognize when it goes on too long or gets worse, and ask other people in your teen's world what they're seeing or hearing.
- o **WARNING SIGNS** may include loss of interest in usual activities, withdrawal from social contact, thoughts of dying or suicide, changes in eating or sleeping patterns, drastic mood swings or personality changes, declining performance in school, and/or giving away personal items.
 - o Ask your teen directly about thoughts of suicide if they exhibit these signs.
 - o SEEK HELP if you have concerns about your child's safety or well-being.
- o Non-Crisis mental health resources:
 - o If an individual is not in immediate danger and does not require crisis services, resources may be found at:
https://www.elpasocountyhealth.org/sites/default/files/MentalHealthResources_2019.pdf
 - o General information about teen suicide prevention can be found at:
www.elpasocountyhealth.org/services/teen-suicide-prevention
 - o For safety concerns about your child or someone else, make an anonymous report to **SAFE-2-TELL (1-877-542-7233)**.

o **Life-Threatening Emergencies: dial 9-1-1**

o **CRISIS SERVICES:**

- **Colorado Crisis Services Hotline** – Trained professional will assess risk and determine need for mobile response. Call **1-844-493-8255**, or **text "TALK" to 38255**
- **Crisis Stabilization Unit** – Immediate walk-in help at no charge:

- o **Diversus Health Lighthouse Walk-In Crisis Center** - 115 S. Parkside Dr, Colorado Springs, CO 80910, **719-635-7000**

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TO HELP MINIMIZE
YOUR CHILD'S RISK



Prevent • Promote • Protect

For the latest version: www.elpasocountyhealth.org/services/teen-suicide-prevention 20 April

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