Talking To Kids About Suicide

The tween and teen years are a time when your child experiences many changes. Although these may seem like some of the happiest years of your child’s life, they can also be the most confusing. Overwhelming feelings of stress, sadness, uncertainty and pressure to succeed are not uncommon during adolescence. These already strong feelings are often intensified by changes in their life, such as a move to a different community, a divorce, trouble with school or a breakup with a boyfriend or girlfriend. For some, suicide may seem like the only solution to their problems.

What’s a Parent to Do?

The best way to keep your kids safe is to be a nosy parent. Ask your children questions about issues that may be bothering them. Really listen to what they have to say. Remember that their issues, no matter how minor they may seem to you, may be overwhelming your adolescent. Never make fun of or disregard your teenager’s concerns, especially if they are making him or her unhappy.

In other words, simply talking to your kids about suicide may make them less likely to consider it, according to a study in the April 2005 Journal of the American Medical Association. This is different than the popular belief that talking to kids about suicide will only give them the idea.

How to Talk to Your Kids About Suicide

- First, be calm. If your child thinks that you are upset, he/she may want to spare you further worry and may not share true feelings and thoughts with you
- Let your child know that you love her and that she is important to you
- Tell him you're concerned about how he's feeling and want him to know he can talk to you about anything
- Ask her directly if she's ever thought of killing herself (Avoid asking, "Why are you sad?" as the child may not know why and may become frustrated)
- Listen to his feelings and concerns
- Tell her that you will help her or "we'll work on this together"
- Let him know that it's OK to feel sad sometimes, and you too feel sad at times
- Help your child identify other adults that she can go to if she isn't comfortable talking to you about this—a guidance counselor, a grandparent, aunt, uncle or other adults
- Suggest your child meet with a professional counselor either on his own or with you to help him feel better.

Even if you aren’t worried about your child, look for opportunities to discuss this sensitive topic. Mention an article you read in the paper, a movie or TV show that you saw or lyrics to a song you heard. Ask if she is worried about herself or her friends.
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Ask if he knows whom he could talk to if he’s worried or thinking about suicide.

Sometimes it’s easier for you and your child to talk when you are side-by-side rather than face-to-face. Talk while riding in the car, fixing a meal together, taking a walk or playing a board game. Time spent talking to your child is time well spent.

In the event that someone you know is considering suicide and needs immediate help, call 911.

For further information, please call:

**Anne Arundel County Crisis Warmline**
410-768-5522
24 hours a day, 7 days a week

**Maryland Youth Crisis Hotline**
1-800-422-0009
24 hours a day, 7 days a week

**Anne Arundel County Mental Health Agency**
410-222-7858

**Anne Arundel County Department of Health**
*Adolescent and Family Services*
410-222-6785

Or visit these websites:

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
[www.afsp.org](http://www.afsp.org)

Anne Arundel County Network of Care:
[www.networkofcare.org](http://www.networkofcare.org)

Suicide Prevention Resource Center
[www.sprc.org](http://www.sprc.org)

Suicide Awareness Voices of Education (SAVE)
[www.save.org](http://www.save.org)

Anne Arundel County Department of Health
[www.aahealth.org](http://www.aahealth.org)