

Acknowledge, Care, Tell for Parents and Caregivers



A.C.T.

Adolescent suicide is a tragedy that no one wants to face. Recent studies indicate a rise in suicidal ideation especially among teen girls and LGBTQ+ teens. What can you do to prevent suicide or get help for a child who may be in crisis?

A

ACKNOWLEDGE: Realize that struggles and stressors can happen to anyone. You know your child best. If something seems off, talk to them. Don't be afraid to discuss suicide. Initiate the discussion, listen, and stay calm.

C

CARE: Life is hectic, but try to set aside time on a regular basis to check in with your child. Talk to your child during a commute to school, walking the dog, or going for a hike. Kids often express their feelings more openly when they don't have to make direct eye contact or are engaged in another activity.

Use language that is caring and inclusive. The Defense Suicide Prevention Office created the Your Words Matter fact sheet for reference at www.DSPO.mil/download/. Practice lethal means safety (LMS). LMS is locking up your firearms and medications to restrict access. Putting time and distance between suicidal thoughts and the means to act can save a life.

T

TELL: Safety is always first. Go to an emergency room if you think a child is in a suicidal crisis, call 988 and press 1 for the Veterans Crisis Line/Military Crisis Line (VCL/MCL), or access the chat at veteranscrisisline.net. For children who are not in immediate danger, there are resources available. Remember safety is always the priority. Be available, listen without judgment, and use the available resources. For more information access these websites: MilitaryOneSource.mil/Non-medical-counseling, TRICARE.mil/coveredservices/Mental/GettingMHCare, and 988Lifeline.org.

SUICIDE IS A DIFFICULT TOPIC, BUT IT IS A VERY IMPORTANT CONVERSATION.

If a child won't open up to you, don't take it personally. If there is a trusted adult in your child's life that can reach them, request help. When discussing suicide be brave enough to ask important questions like these:

- Are you thinking of hurting yourself?
- Have you tried to hurt yourself in the past?
- What can I do to help?
- What do we need to do to make sure you are ok?

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Adults sometimes blame themselves or react in a negative way that can stop a child from seeking help. Be aware of your reaction. Find support for yourself through a trusted friend or family member or seek out your own counseling support.

Here are some common myths vs. facts:

MYTH: Mentioning suicide will put the idea in their mind.

FACT: Discussing suicide will not push your child to contemplate suicide. Discuss the fact that suicide is not the answer to a problem and that there are many helpful treatment options.

MYTH: If my child is struggling with suicidal thoughts, then it means I am a bad parent or caregiver.

FACT: The factors that are at play when someone is thinking about dying by suicide are numerous and complex. Keeping your focus on how to help rather than where to place blame will be the most helpful. The fact that you are taking the time to read this and have challenging conversations is a good indicator of how much you care.

MYTH: I have to have all the answers and offer a solution.

FACT: People often just want to be heard. Let there be moments of silence during the conversation. Listening is key. This is also, likely, a new situation for you. It is okay to be transparent and let them know that you will search for a solution together.

No one, regardless of who they are, is immune to struggles and stressors. Sometimes, those concerns can lead to suicidal thoughts. There is help. If we join together as a community, we can support children challenged by suicidal ideation. ***We can Connect to Protect.***



In Europe Call 00800 1273 8255 or DSN 118

In Korea Call 080-855-5118 or DSN 118

In the Philippines Dial #MYVA or 02-8550-3888 and press 7