

PROTECTING YOUTH FROM SUICIDE

WRITTEN BY LOCAL PARENTS FOR ALL PARENTS

Being a teenager is hard. There are greater social, emotional, and achievement pressures, which increase 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 Meet 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 away.
- o Listen without judgment.

3



ACCEPT

- o Let them be their own person.
- o Love them for who they are and let them know.
- 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 appropriately respond when you fail.

4



BUILD TRUST

- o Be a safe place for them to share the good and bad 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.
- o Be consistent and stay true to your word.

5



TALK

- o Do not be afraid to 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 with you because they are already happening all around them.
- o Use open-ended questions to draw your child into conversation (What was the best/worst part of your day?).

6



EMPOWER

- o Let them solve their own problems, encourage decision-making skills.
- o Serve as consultant (Ask "What are your options?"), not CEO (Telling them what to do).
- o Build their confidence by expanding their responsibilities with age.
- o Foster their resilience—remind them that they can and will come back from failures, disappointment, and losses.

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CULTIVATE A HEALTHY HOME ENVIRONMENT

- o Recognize that families 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 rest of world.
- o Define and model what your family will stand for – love, laughter, faith/spirituality, honesty, respect, etc.
- o Secure medications and firearms.

8



EMBRACE INTRINSIC VALUE

- o Recognize that our kids 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.

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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.

- 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 www.elpasocountyhealth.org/services/teen-suicide-prevention

- o For a safety concern 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 **Aspen Pointe** - 115 S. Parkside Dr, Colorado Springs, CO 80909, **719-314-4308**

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TO HELP MINIMIZE
YOUR CHILD'S RISK



Prevent • Promote • Protect