



Parent Manual

High School Year 1

Disclaimer: Hope Squad® is designed to support a community and school-based suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention program and is not intended to provide counseling or mental health services.

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Printed in the United States of America, Provo, Utah.

Second Edition, 2021

www.hopesquad.com



Dear Hope Squad Parent,

Welcome to the Hope Squad family. We are excited to have your child be part of your school's program. This manual will help keep you informed about what your child is learning in the Hope Squad. We hope you will take the time to review it and use it to better understand what your child is learning and how to assist them.

Being on the Hope Squad can be one of the greatest service opportunities your child will ever have the opportunity to participate in. It can also be daunting at times when a peer is struggling. Be sure to check in with your child to see how you can support them. Do not be afraid to ask specific questions. Hope Squad members are given permission to share the work they are doing with their parents.

You know your child better than anyone else. If you have any concerns, please do not hesitate to contact the school Hope Squad advisor. While being on the Hope Squad can be a powerful motivator, it can also wear kids out if they do not take time for self-care.

We are honored to work with your child. Your child has been nominated by their peers as someone they trust and feel comfortable going to in times of stress.

If you have any questions, please contact your school's Hope Squad advisor.

Best,

Dr. Gregory A. Hudnall

Founder and Executive Director

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Hope Squad
and this
Manual

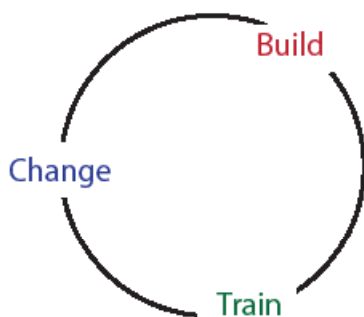
What Are Hope Squads?

Hope Squads are comprised of students identified by classmates and peers as trustworthy. These students are trained to watch for at-risk peers. Squad members provide friendship, identify warning signs, and seek help from adults. Hope Squad members are NOT taught to act as counselors, but rather are educated to recognize signs of suicide contemplation and respectfully report concerns to an adult. Hope Squads utilize three key elements: QPR Partnership, phases, and advisors.

QPR Partnership. Hope Squad has partnered with QPR to provide a more comprehensive and effective training for squad members. QPR's mission is "to save lives and reduce suicidal behaviors by providing innovative, practical and proven suicide prevention training." QPR stands for Question, Persuade, and Refer; anyone can learn these three simple steps to help save a life from suicide. Each Hope Squad member will be trained using the QPR curriculum. For more information on the QPR curriculum visit www.qprinstitute.com.

Phases. The foundational skills of the Hope Squad program, including suicide warning signs, peer advocacy, and self-care, are presented in lessons known as phases. Phase stands for Promoting Hope and Student Empowerment. Each phase includes a presentation, discussion topics, media breaks, and at least one activity.

Advisors. Advisors use phases to train Hope Squad members at least once a month on suicide prevention and peer-to-peer support. Advisors (e.g., counselors, psychologists, social workers, teachers, staff, or parents) attend training to review the curriculum (phases) and receive instruction from current Hope Squad advisors on how to implement and develop the program.



Hope Squads seek to reduce self-destructive behavior and youth suicide by training, building, and creating change in schools and communities.

Train

- Hope Squads will train students and staff in schools to recognize suicide-warning signs and act upon those warnings to break the code of silence.
- Hope Squads will train students and staff to identify adolescents with undetected, untreated, or emerging mental disorders.

Build

- Hope Squads will build positive relationships among peers and faculty in schools to facilitate acceptance for students seeking help.
- Hope Squads will build strong relationships with local mental health agencies and communities while educating students, parents, and school staff about available community mental health resources.

Change

- Hope Squads will work to change the school culture regarding suicide by reducing stigma about suicide and mental health.
- Hope Squads will work to change community perceptions of mental health by creating awareness about suicide and the tools available to prevent suicide.

How Do I Use this Manual?

The following content is split into four sections: Talking With Your Child, Curriculum Overview, Frequently Asked Questions, and Resources.

The first section, Talking With Your Child, provides practical and important information about having conversations with your child regarding difficult topics, such as suicide, bullying, and emotional health. This section also covers how to find support as you assist your child and stay emotionally healthy yourself.

The next section, Curriculum Overview, is designed to be used with your child after they have completed the corresponding Hope Squad phase. For each phase, you will find an outline of the key points, a summary of the activities, challenges for you and your child, and talking points to facilitate a discussion about what your child learned.

The final sections, Frequently Asked Questions and Resources, provide information about commonly asked questions and suicide prevention resources.



Talking
with
Your Child

Introduction

Though the curriculum is structured to thoroughly educate your child regarding suicide awareness and prevention, communication between you and your child is crucial. Talking about suicide, the risk factors that can often predict it, and habits that can help prevent it will create a safe environment for open communication. This will benefit your child's mental health awareness and strengthen your relationship with your child.

Importance of Communication

Building a healthy relationship and having a close connection with your child is vital when communicating about hard topics. Be honest, open, and willing to listen. Children whose parents build open and honest relationships value their parent's opinions when serious decisions or crises arise. Inversely, children with poor communication with their parents typically suffer from unhealthy weight, substance abuse, depression, and low self-esteem, all of which are risk factors for suicide. As a parent, focus on healthy communication skills to help your child with their mental health awareness.

Ideas for Healthy Communication

- Be patient and respectful of your child's emotions and thoughts.
- Be aware of your resources for handling bullying, suicide, mental health issues, and all other important hard topics (see pages 59–63 for resources).
- Have a meaningful conversation; don't lecture or attack.
- The conversation should be simple and easy to understand. Seize the moment as you get your child to talk to you.
- Address your concerns, but also try to understand their point of view.
- Don't be defensive, judgmental, or critical.
- Be honest, loving, and caring.

How Do I Talk About Suicide With My Child?

- Talking about suicide WILL NOT “plant” the idea in your child’s head. Research shows that talking about suicide lowers anxiety, opens up communication, and lowers the risk of an impulsive act.
- Learn about suicide so you feel comfortable answering questions and talking with your child about suicide prevention. Look up your local mental health agency for resources.
- Pick an appropriate place and time for the conversation(s). Make sure to establish a safe and comfortable environment for you and your child.
- Acknowledge any discomfort you have, but discuss why it’s alright to talk about suicide. This acknowledgment lets your child know it’s okay to feel uncomfortable while keeping the conversation direct and upfront. Do not over or underreact.
- Ask your child questions like: “What do you know about suicide?”, “Have you thought about killing yourself?”, and “What questions do you have about suicide?” Talk about what your child would do if he or she were having thoughts of suicide. Make a list of people to go to for help.
- It’s okay to admit that you don’t know an answer to a question. Refer to the Resources section (page 59) for help and information. Try looking for answers with your child to show where he or she can find more resources.
- If your child is displaying warning signs (see page 8), seek additional help from the websites listed in this manual or from a mental health professional. The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (1-800-273-TALK) is available for additional support.

Learn more at

- www.sptsusa.org/parents/talking-to-your-kid-about-suicide
- www.childmind.org/topics/concerns/suicide-and-self-harm
- www.helpguide.org/articles/depression/parents-guide-to-teen-depression.htm
- www.familylives.org.uk/advice/teenagers/communicating-with-teenagers/the-importance-of-communicating-with-teenagers

Suicide Warning Signs

Talk

- Being a burden to others
- Feeling trapped
- Experiencing unbearable pain
- **Having no reason to live**
- **Talking about killing themselves**



Actions

- Increased use of alcohol or drugs
- **Looking for a way to kill themselves (looking online for materials or means)**
- Acting recklessly
- Withdrawing from activities
- Isolating from family and friends
- Trouble eating or sleeping
- **Visiting, calling, or texting people to say goodbye.**
- Giving away prized possessions
- Aggression
- Drastic changes in behavior
- Preoccupation with death and dying
- Unusual neglect of personal appearance
- Frequent complaints of physical symptoms (headaches, stomach problems, fatigue, etc.)

Feelings

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Hopelessness
- Loneliness
- Rage
- Loss of interest
- Irritability
- Humiliation
- Guilt and shame
- Extreme mood swings
- **Sudden lift in mood after feeling extremely depressed, which may indicate relief about making the decision to attempt suicide.**

{ **Bolded warning signs** indicate an immediate risk of suicide. Get help as soon as possible by calling the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255) or a mental health professional. }

How To Help If A Suicide Happens

If your child is familiar with or a friend of the person who died by suicide, they will need your support. Below are some suggestions for helping your child if a suicide occurs.

- **Remember, each person responds to a crisis differently.** Common responses include fatigue, shock, anger, sadness, guilt, and lower productivity in school.
- **Be patient.** Your child may not want to talk about the event right away.
- **Acknowledge the situation and use the word “suicide.”** Avoid using the word “committed” because that refers to when suicide was considered a crime.
- **Be nonjudgmental of the situation.** Remain nonjudgmental of your child and of the person who died by suicide.
- **Be genuine and express your honest feelings.** Sometimes, it is best to express that you don’t know all the answers. Help your child understand you care and are available for them.
- **Check for and correct false ideas about responsibility.** Help your child understand that he or she is not responsible for another person’s choices.
- **Ask about thoughts on suicide.** Ask your child what kinds of things are being said at school and if they have questions.
- **Emphasize and encourage healthy responses.** Though each person has a different reaction, you can help your child by encouraging some of these principles:
 - **Do not turn to unhealthy behaviors.** A teen may want to use alcohol, other drugs, or risky behaviors to block out the pain. Help your child see there are healthier ways to feel better.
 - **Keep a normal routine.** Participate in self-care: eat healthy, get enough sleep, exercise, etc.
 - **Prioritize tasks.** Grief can be overwhelming. Encouraging your child to prioritize their most important tasks and setting aside others can give your child time to heal.

- **Remember the person who died.** Ask your child what they remember about their peer or look at photos together. Help your child recall happy memories they have of the deceased.
- **Write or draw.** Journaling or expressing emotion through art can be cathartic.
- *If your child has difficulty coping with their loss or expresses suicidal thoughts, seek professional help.*

Learn more at:

- www.jedfoundation.org/my-child-has-lost-someone-to-suicide/#card=1
- www.childmind.org/article/supporting-children-after-the-suicide-of-a-classmate
- www.sptsusa.org/parents/when-a-childs-friend-dies-by-suicide
- www.cmhc.utexas.edu/bethatone/friendscopingsuicide.html
- www.supportaftersuicide.org.au/living-with-grief



How Do I Talk to My Child About Bullying?

Children who experience bullying are at greater risk for depression and suicide attempts. One in five students reports being bullied nationwide. Teaching kids about bullying decreases bullying by 25%. Bullying includes behaviors from peers such as verbal abuse, physical abuse, cyber-bullying, rumors/gossip, or active isolation from others. It is very important to address bullying the moment that it is discovered. Additionally, it is crucial to teach your child to be an active bystander if they know someone who is experiencing bullying.

- Encourage your child to talk to a trusted adult if they or someone they know is being bullied. Help them create a list of people they could go to.
- Learn the teen lingo when it comes to bullying, such as referring to bullying as “drama” or a “joke.”
- Choose an appropriate and safe environment for these discussions.
- Be direct but not overpowering. Avoid lecturing or judgment.
- Educate yourself on the various types of bullying. Bullying is defined here as any adverse behavior that reduces the child’s ability to function fully at their emotional, social, intellectual, physical, or psychological level.
- Give your child the benefit of the doubt. Make sure they know you are ready to validate their claims, not investigate them.
- Educate yourself and your child on resources to go to if they experience bullying. 70–80% of bullying goes unreported, so emphasize the positive outcomes of reporting.
- Encourage your child to be an effective bystander by reporting bullying in others and decreasing behaviors in themselves that lead to bullying (gossiping, rumor-spreading, name-calling, etc.). If someone intervenes, most bullying stops in under 10 seconds.
- Make sure your child understands the connection between bullying and suicide.
- Remember, it is okay to admit you don’t know all the answers. Refer to the resources below for additional help and information.

Learn more at

- www.stopbullying.gov
- www.pacerteensagainstbullying.org/bullying-defined
- www.parents.au.reachout.com/common-concerns/everyday-issuesbullying-and-teenagers

How Do I Talk to My Child About Emotional Health?

Adolescence is a crucial time to form lifelong habits. Teens at this age are learning to fit into certain social groups, develop peer interaction skills, and develop a level of independence different from any other stage of their lives. Most emotional health problems begin in adolescence and young adulthood, with half of all disorders starting by age 14. Depression is one of the most common emotional health problems among youth, with an estimated 11% of U.S. adolescents diagnosed with depression by age 18. Youth with depression are more likely to engage in suicidal behavior, drop out of school, use alcohol or drugs, have unsafe sexual activity, and have difficulties with peer and family relationships. Self-care and healthy coping skills help youth form positive relationships, face challenges, and function better at home, at school, and in life.

- Allow your child to fully express their emotions. Help them know that it's okay to feel every emotion. Expressing emotion is healthier than bottling up inside. Discourage the labeling of emotions as good or bad. Ask your child why they feel the way they do and allow them to express those emotions in a way they choose.
- Screening, early identification, and treatment are critical, as untreated mental illness can disrupt children's development, academic achievement, and their ability to lead healthy, productive lives. If you notice your child showing signs of mental health issues, get help as soon as possible.
- Give your child freedom to think how they want to think. Let them solve problems and find solutions to difficult life questions. Be nurturing and empathetic as you guide them through their thinking process.
- Build a strong support system and spend quality time with your child. Let them know that you are there to help guide them through their struggles and problems. Teach your child self-care skills and problem-solving skills to help them get through troubling times.
- Resilience helps individuals to thrive despite hard times. Learning to build resilience will help you and your child better deal with and learn from challenging life events.
- Gain more knowledge about being emotionally healthy. Prepare yourself and practice the important techniques of self-care before discussing them with your child. As you feel comfortable with the skills, it will be easier for you to discuss them with your child.

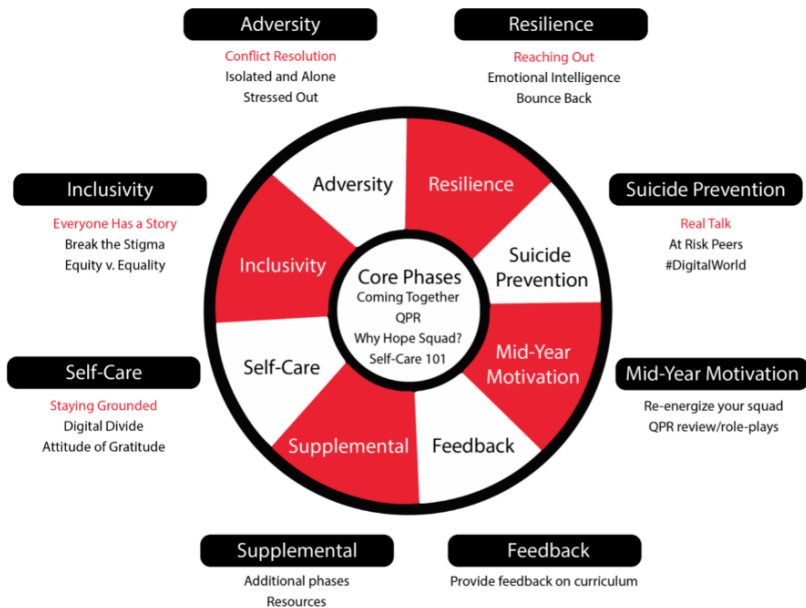
Learn more at

- www.psychcentral.com/lib/how-to-raise-emotionally-healthy-children
- www.teenmentalhealth.org/product/parenting-your-teen
- www.handinhandparenting.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/Parent-Child-Connectedness-Bridge-Project.pdf
- www.apa.org/topics/emotion
- www.apa.org/topics/children-teens-stress



Curriculum Overview

The Hope Squad curriculum is flexible according to the needs of the school and Hope Squad. Advisors are required to teach the four Core Phases first. Then they can move on to the five strands: Suicide Prevention, Resilience, Adversity, Inclusivity, and Self-Care. Your child will likely not learn all 19 phases. Advisors are asked to teach one phase from each strand, in any order, although they are welcome to teach more if time permits. Communicate with your child or advisor about which phases they are using so you can have discussions about what they are learning and doing.



Core | Coming Together

Phase Summary

Your child will discover and build skills needed to collaborate and work with others. Your child will also learn about and practice the skills of active listening, vulnerability, and communicating boundaries in order to effectively build relationships. These skills help Hope Squad members achieve the goal of connecting with others and impacting their lives. In Hope Squad, the acronym T.E.A.M. (Together Everyone Achieves More) means working together to keep others safe and to achieve their mission of suicide prevention.

Family Connection

Working together and building relationships is crucial to suicide prevention. As a family, discuss goals you'd like to achieve together. Choose a goal and make sure everyone understands what the goal is meant to achieve. Break the goal into steps and give each family member a role. Make a plan for how often you'll meet together to report on your goal's progress. To practice building relationships, work as a family to brainstorm ways members of your family can improve their relationships with each other. You might consider practicing relationship-building skills, such as active listening, vulnerability, and communicating boundaries.

Activities

“Similarities” - Hope Squad members work in pairs to discuss questions about collaboration.



“Common Trio” - Hope Squad members work in groups and discover three things they have in common with those in their group.

“Active Listening” - Hope Squad members work in groups to practice active listening skills in a mock interview and to give feedback as an observer.

Lifesaver Challenge



Learn five new names this week and use them each time you see that person.

Questions to Discuss with Your Child



Why do you need to work well with others in Hope Squad?

How can you collaborate with your fellow Hope Squad members?

How does building relationships with others help with suicide prevention?

Core | QPR

Phase Summary

Your child will learn about some myths and facts related to suicide prevention and learn about signs of suicidal thinking. There are three ways someone might communicate suicidal intent:

- Indirect or direct words (“I’ve decided to kill myself” and “No one would care if I were dead”)
- Actions or behaviors (giving away prized possessions or exhibiting recurring mood swings)
- Situations or conditions (being bullied or losing a family member, especially if it’s to suicide)

Your child will also learn how to use the QPR method (Question, Persuade, Refer) to bring hope and help to someone thinking about suicide. You are familiar with CPR, a medical intervention designed to stabilize people who are struggling to breathe until the person can reach a hospital or other care. Similarly, QPR is an emergency mental health intervention for people at risk of suicide. The intent is to identify and interrupt a crisis while directing the person to the proper care.

Family Connection

Discuss as a family several myths and facts related to suicide prevention. Practice role-playing situations where you explain why the myths are false. Once you feel everyone understands the myths and facts, talk about signs of suicide. Use role-playing to practice asking someone if they’re considering suicide and persuading them to get help. Make an effort in your own life to correct the myths of suicide prevention and to actively watch for warning signs of suicide in others.

Activities



“Group Role-Play” - Hope Squad members practice using QPR in different realistic scenarios.

“Role-Play with a Partner” - Hope Squad members practice QPR skills using role-play. Partners take turns role-playing the Hope Squad member and the peer in crisis. The Hope Squad member questions, persuades, and refers their peer.

Lifesaver Challenge



Hope Squad members practice the process of QPR at home or with someone they trust. Then they journal how it felt and what they feel they can do to make the process more natural and organic.

Questions to Discuss with Your Child



What can you do if you notice someone who may be struggling with suicidal thoughts?

How do you feel about talking to someone with suicidal thoughts?

Who can you talk with after finding out someone is thinking about suicide?



“Hope helps prevent suicide. When you apply QPR, you are planting seeds of hope.”

— QPR Institute

Core | Why Hope Squad?

Phase Summary

Your child will learn about the main actions of being on Hope Squad:

Hold

On

Persuade

Empower

From recognizing warning signs, to helping peers hold on to life, persuading peers to seek help, and empowering others with suicide prevention knowledge, your child will be able to reduce the stigma of suicidal feelings and act to help others. However, your child is not meant to carry out these actions alone. Trusted adults can help with each action to give guidance, to validate feelings, or to lend a listening ear.

Family Connection

Find stories in the media about celebrities or members of your community who struggle with mental health. Share the stories with your family and discuss the impact of mental health. Many people struggle with mental illness, even famous people or those who seem to have their life all together. The more people share about their struggles, the more likely others are to speak up and get help. Brainstorm resources family members can use when they are struggling or when they know someone who is, including trusted people they can turn toward for help. You might consider listing all the resources on a sheet to hang on the fridge or somewhere the whole family will have easy access.

Activities



“Safety Net” - Hope Squad members identify trusted adults they could talk to, tossing a ball of yarn to each other and creating a “safety net”.

“Resource Roadmap” - Hope Squad members write down national, local, human, and digital resources they can use to make a referral.

Lifesaver Challenge



Hope Squad members practice “seeing” their peers during class changes. As they walk the halls, they put away phones, try to make contact, and say hello to those they pass.

Questions to Discuss with Your Child



What questions do you have about mental health?

Have you ever experienced feelings of depression or anxiety?

How did those feelings impact your day?

Who are some of the trusted adults you would feel comfortable talking with?



“Suicide prevention is everybody’s business. Anyone can help prevent the tragedy of suicide.”

— QPR Institute

“Suicide prevention can—and should—take place in many settings. Almost anyone can take action to help prevent suicide.”

— National Suicide Prevention Resource Center

Core | Self-Care 101

Phase Summary

Your child will learn how to create a plan to ensure they are practicing self-care and learn why self-care is important. Effective self-care has four components:

- **Physical health** is caring for your body in multiple ways that help you to stay healthy now and in the future.
- **Emotional health** includes understanding and respecting your own feelings, values, and attitudes and appreciating the feelings of others.
- **Interpersonal health** includes forming and maintaining healthy relationships with others, enjoying being with others, and contributing to your community.
- **Spiritual health** includes finding a purpose and connecting to meaning in your life and taking part in activities that are consistent with your beliefs and values.

Self-care is also about respecting physical, emotional, and mental boundaries. Your child will practice identifying when a boundary has been crossed. Through practicing self-care, your child will be better able to have good mental health and help peers.

Family Connection

Evaluate each family member's self-care practices, including any boundaries that are in place. How does each member feel they are doing on self-care? If anyone needs help, work together to brainstorm ideas of what individual members can do to meet their need for self-care. Also consider thinking of self-care practices that could be done as a family, such as exercise or a fun family outing.

Activities



“Teamwork” - Hope Squad members will work as a group to discuss one of the components of mental health and write it down, then give feedback on others’ work.

“Personal Self-Care Plan” - Hope Squad members will create their own plan of action for health care to see where they can improve to ensure they have the self-care they need for good mental health.

Lifesaver Challenge



Hope Squad members identify one of the self-care areas they need to spend some time in. Then they develop a plan and journal or share with someone how it felt to practice self-care.

Questions to Discuss with Your Child



Do you remember a time you weren’t practicing enough self-care? How did you feel?

What can you do if you feel like someone has crossed one of your boundaries?



“QPR is most effective as a team. Don’t do everything alone. By involving others, you will not be overwhelmed while you help others.”

— QPR Institute

“Self-care is not self-indulgence; it is self-preservation.”

— Audre Lorde

Suicide Prevention | Real Talk

Phase Summary

Your child will work with other members to practice effective communication skills, including active listening. How to show someone you're listening includes the following:

- Putting away distractions
- Encouraging sharing by asking open-ended questions
- Seeking to understand by viewing the situation from his or her perspective and by withholding judgment

Active listening will aid in communication with others about suicide topics. Being an active listener is important when talking about sensitive subjects, such as suicidal feelings, because the individual needs to feel heard and supported.

Family Connection

While this phase focuses on how active listening helps your child with suicide prevention, the skills are applicable to other family members as well. As a family, take turns role-playing first as someone who isn't listening to what the other person is saying and second as someone who is actively listening. Talk about the difference in the emotions that were felt by the person talking in both scenarios. Make a plan as a family of how members will implement active listening with each other. Make an effort in your own family to practice active listening so your family members feel supported and heard.

Activity



“Turn and Talk” - Hope Squad members watch a clip of a conversation and answer questions about the characters’ behavior during conversation.

“Active Listening” - In pairs, Hope Squad members discuss how it makes them feel when they feel heard to help them understand the role listening plays in helping others.

Questions to Discuss with Your Child



What is challenging about active listening?

How does it feel when someone isn’t listening to you? How could you kindly ask them to pay attention?



“The deepest need of the human heart is to be understood. Everyone wants to be respected and valued for who they are — a unique, one-of-a-kind, never-to-be-cloned (at least for now) individual. People won’t expose their soft centers unless they feel genuine love and understanding. Once they feel it, however, they will tell you more than you may want to hear.”

— Sean Covey,
7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens

Suicide Prevention | At-Risk Peers

Phase Summary

Your child will learn about what self-harm is. Self-harm is an act of harm done to oneself without the intention of suicide. It is a choice people make to release emotion and cope with difficulties. Although the practice is not new, self-harm is coming more to light due to social media. Finding out that someone has been practicing self-harm can be jarring. Your child will receive guidance on what to say or do if they find themselves in that situation so that they can help their peer.

Family Connection

The more comfortable your family gets about starting difficult conversations in the home, the more comfortable each member will be starting difficult conversations with others outside of the home. Make a habit of periodically and intentionally starting conversations with your child about self-harm, suicide, anxiety, depression, or other hard topics. If you notice changes in their behavior, ask them directly about it. Ask them if they have had feelings of depression and anxiety or have experienced thoughts of self harm or suicide. In all your conversations, be sure to stay calm, listen carefully, and express your love for them.

Activities



“Seize the Awkward” - In groups, Hope Squad members role-play scenarios in which they practice starting a difficult conversation with someone.

Questions to Discuss with Your Child



How will you start a conversation with someone about self-harm?

What will you do if someone tells you they practice self-harm?

What would you do if you had thoughts of self-harm? Who could you turn to for help?

Suicide Prevention | #DigitalWorld

Phase Summary

Many adolescents feel comfortable communicating through digital platforms, such as social media. Sometimes, people considering suicide may display warning signs online. Your child will learn about the difficulties recognizing these signs online and what they may look like. Some examples include:

- An excessive amount of time spent online
- Trolling and leaving extremely aggressive comments
- Late-night activity
- Sudden unfriending or blocking
- Negative social interactions from others
- An addiction to the Internet

Your child will learn about ways to communicate with peers digitally, particularly when one of the above warning signs are present, and review the referral protocol.

Family Connection

On social media, people have the ability to remain anonymous and may not worry about their teachers, administration, or parents finding out what they post and comment. This anonymity can encourage children to post hurtful comments about others. Discuss with your child what they can do if they are the target of cyberbullying, such as blocking or reporting someone who continually posts hurtful things. Help them understand that some people will look for something negative to say about others, and that your child should not blame themselves or internalize other people's opinions.

Activities



“Face-to-Face vs. Digital” - Hope Squad members look at fake social media posts and determine if they are concerning and how to respond.

“How to Be an Upstander” - Hope Squad members do a simulation to practice responding to cyberbullying.

Questions to Discuss with Your Child



What are some warning signs you might notice online?

Are the social interactions you have on social media mostly positive or negative? Have you ever come across trolling, hate speech, or cyberbullying?

What could you do if noticed a peer displaying unhealthy behaviors online?



“The simple truth is that technology is still a poor substitute for human interaction.”

— Robert G. Thompson

Resilience | Reaching Out

Phase Summary

Your child will learn what resilience is and how and when to reach out for help. Resilience is the ability to thrive while facing adversity or trauma – in other words, it's how people are able to successfully handle the hardships of life. Some qualities of resilient people include the following:

- Aware of thoughts and feelings during difficult times
- Ability to think rationally and calmly instead of uncontrollably or emotionally about adversity
- Physical, emotional, and mental fitness to deal with challenges
- Reaching out to others for help

The last point is the focus of the phase, as it shows the importance of having healthy relationships with healthy boundaries from which to seek help during challenging times.

Family Connection

When your child is going through challenges, he or she may need to reach out for help sometimes. However, deciding to reach out can be difficult. Sit down with your child and talk about things that require courage. Then talk about how being vulnerable takes courage. Encourage your child to come to you or another trusted adult for help during hard times. Remind your child that asking for help actually helps their resilience. You might consider sharing experiences you've had with asking for help.

Activities



“Application” - Hope Squad members complete a diagram of their support network and contact information for each person in their network.

Questions to Discuss with Your Child



Have you ever had a hard time reaching out?

Why is it hard to reach out for help sometimes?

What made you decide to reach out?



“QPR is most effective as a team. Don’t do everything alone. By involving others, you will not be overwhelmed while you help others.”

— QPR Institute

“Be strong enough to face the world each day. Be weak enough to know you cannot do everything alone.”

— Author Unknown

Resilience | Emotional Intelligence

Phase Summary

Emotional intelligence (EQ) is different from cognitive intelligence (IQ) in that it demonstrates a person's ability to understand, use, and manage one's own emotions, as well as being able to relate to others. Having a high EQ means the person can communicate effectively, has empathy for others, and can manage stress effectively.

In this phase, your child will learn about the effect emotions have on their thoughts and behaviors. Recognizing this and focusing on the components of emotional intelligence will empower your child to more effectively help peers. Emotional intelligence has four components: self awareness, self regulation, social skills, and empathy. Though all components are needed and none are more important than the others, empathy is given special focus as it is especially important when helping others.

Family Connection

Although emotional intelligence is an important tool for your child to have when helping others, it also allows your child to understand and help his- or herself. Sit down with your child and evaluate his or her current emotional intelligence. There are several online tools you can look at together to help assess emotional intelligence. If there are any areas that could use some improvement, brainstorm ideas or goals of what your child could do to increase emotional intelligence to better manage and understand his or her emotions.

Activities



“Reflecting on Empathy” - Hope Squad members choose a component of empathy and discuss its importance, then find partners to further discuss that component.

“Q” - Hope Squad members read a scenario and answer related questions about strategies used (or not used), warning signs exhibited, and how members would show empathy to those in the scenario.

Questions to Discuss with Your Child



How do you show others empathy? How do you like others to show empathy to you?

How do you think your emotions affect others? How do your emotions affect you?

Resilience | Bounce Back

Phase Summary

Resilience is the ability to withstand adversity and bounce back from difficult life events. Your child will learn what resilience is and is not. Being resilient does not mean that people don't experience stress, emotional upheaval, and suffering. Some people equate resilience with mental toughness, but demonstrating resilience includes working through emotional pain and suffering. Resilience involves:

- “bouncing back” from difficult experiences
- experiencing personal growth
- painful events not determining the outcome of your life

Your child will learn techniques to build four types of resilience (mental, emotional, physical, and social), as well as common barriers to resilience. Your child will brainstorm ways to increase their resilience and set a short-term and a long-term goal.

Family Connection

Connectedness is one of the biggest factors that can increase resilience. You can help your child build their resilience by encouraging them to engage with their peers and family members. You can also empower your child by encouraging them to challenge themselves and solve problems on their own. Doing so will help give them a sense of self-efficacy and independence. Try to be there as a “lighthouse”—someone whom your child can turn to for support and guidance.

Activities



“Superbetter Quest” - Hope Squad members follow along with a video that teaches resilience techniques.

“Resilience Score” - Hope Squad members take an online assessment to determine their resilience score.

“Setting Goals for Resilience” - Hope Squad members set short- and long-term goals to increase resilience.

Questions to Discuss with Your Child



How do you maintain resilience mentally, emotionally, physically, and socially?

Tell me about a challenge that was difficult to bounce back from.

What are some resilience techniques you can use the next time you’re going through a hard time?



“Resilience is knowing that you are the only one that has the power and the responsibility to pick yourself up.”

— Mary Holloway

Adversity | Conflict Resolution

Phase Summary

Your child will learn about conflict and about strategies to resolve conflict they may face as part of being on Hope Squad. Conflict is a struggle or tension through which the parties involved perceive a threat to their needs, interests, or concerns. Your child may face conflict while on Hope Squad with peers who don't understand the role of Hope Squad or with peers he or she is trying to help. Some skills your child can use while attempting to resolve a conflict include the following:

- Recognize and manage emotions
- Make it a fair fight
- Use active listening
- Pick his or her battles
- Prioritize the relationship over winning
- Use appropriate nonverbal communication

In addition to these skills, your child has a network of support to turn to if he or she needs help resolving a conflict.

Family Connection

As a family, have a discussion about conflict. Make a list of things members can do when conflict arises in different settings (e.g., at home, at work, at school, at the store). Talk about any differences in how conflict is handled in these different settings. Take turns role-playing resolving a conflict and have the other family members give feedback. Practice conflict resolution skills at home.

Activities



“What is Conflict?” - Hope Squad members keep working in pairs until the members are divided into two groups. Members work together to think of words associated with conflict, share four of those words, and debrief the activity all together.

Questions to Discuss with Your Child



How do you feel when you face conflict?

How do you feel about your ability to resolve a conflict?

If a conflict seems too big or hard to handle by yourself, who can you go to for help?

Adversity | Isolated and Alone

Phase Summary

Your child will learn how loneliness and isolation impact mental, physical, and emotional health. Loneliness and social isolation are different but related.

Loneliness is an emotion—the distressing feeling of being alone or separated. Loneliness can occur due to situations, such as a breakup, making it possible to feel lonely while being with other people.

Social isolation, on the other hand, is a lack of social contacts and having few people to interact with regularly. This makes it possible to live alone and not feel lonely or socially isolated.

Both can contribute to mental health illnesses, such as depression and addiction, and increase the chance of suicide.

Family Connection

It is normal for children to want some alone time once in a while or to not be as social as other children. However, if you notice any warning signs of depression or anxiety, or if your child's behavior worries you, talk with him or her. Have an authentic conversation with your child about his or her feelings and any challenges. If applicable, brainstorm solutions together. Let your child know that you are there for him or her.

Activities



“Authentic Conversation” - Hope Squad members get into pairs and ask each other genuine questions, switch roles, and then respond to the other person’s answers.

Questions to Discuss with Your Child



Have you ever felt lonely? What helped you feel better?

How do you find out if someone is by themselves because they want to be or because they really feel lonely?

Do you ever isolate yourself socially? If so, why?



“Follow up with the person in whatever way feels comfortable to you. Let the person know you care what happens to him or her.”

— QPR Institute

“Do not confuse solitude with loneliness. One builds and the other destroys.”

— Author Unknown

Adversity | Stressed Out

Phase Summary

Your child will learn how to experience stress better. Stress is an unavoidable part of life. However, positively coping with stress can help lessen its impact on body, mind, and relationships. Some coping techniques include the following:

- Getting enough sleep
- Eating healthy food
- Exercising
- Doing breathing exercises
- Practicing mindfulness
- Redefining boundaries

Family Connection

As a family, come up with a list of ideas of healthy activities members can do during times of stress. Consider making a big poster or list to hang somewhere in the house where everyone will be able to see it easily. Discuss together the benefits of doing these activities as opposed to turning to unhealthy coping techniques. Encourage each member to take a few ideas from the list to make more specific for themselves. Not every item on the list will work for each member of the family, so this will help members have a tailored list just for them. Having ideas readily available will save time and stress whenever someone needs to find something to do to combat stress.

Activities



“Coping with Breathing” - Hope Squad members practice a box breathing exercise.

“Coping with Meditation” - Hope Squad members follow a guided meditation.

Questions to Discuss with Your Child



What do you do when you feel stressed? Do you feel like that helps or hurts you?

Who could you turn to if your stress seemed overwhelming?

What would you say to a friend who was really stressed out? What do you say to yourself when you're really stressed out?

“Challenges are what make life interesting; overcoming them is what makes life meaningful.”

— Joshua J. Marine



“You may want to reach out to someone to talk about how you're feeling or to get advice on how to help a friend. Consider talking to a family member, trusted friend, school counselor, teacher or coach, or faith leader.”

— National Alliance on Mental Illness

Inclusivity | Everyone Has a Story

Phase Summary

Your child will explore their personal identity and how that affects how he or she interacts with others. This knowledge will help your child remember that everyone has a story and give ideas on how to approach peers who may have stories “under the surface” that no one can see.

There are many reasons people hide parts of themselves, including the following:

- Don’t want others to know the information
- No one has asked the right questions so it can be brought up in conversation
- Don’t have someone they trust enough to share the information with

Regardless of why people hide parts of themselves, understanding that everyone has a story can help your child share parts of his- or herself to build trusting relationships among members of Hope Squad as well as with peers your child is striving to help.

Family Connection

Gather together as a family and play some “get to know you” games, but encourage everyone to try to share things that maybe other family members don’t know. This can be anywhere from funny dreams they’ve had to hard things they’ve had to endure at school. Ensure everyone shows respect to whomever is talking and practices active listening.

Activities



“Identity Diagram” - Hope Squad members will create personal Identity Diagrams to show what’s “under the surface” for them and realize others also have untold stories.

Questions to Discuss with Your Child



Do you ever wish people knew more about you?

Is there anything you want to know about me?

How can you show your peers you care about their story, especially when you’re trying to help them?



“Your willingness to listen and help can rekindle hope and make a difference.”

— QPR Institute

“Everyone has a story to tell, but not a person to listen.”

— Bharath Sirikonda

Inclusivity | Break the Stigma

Phase Summary

Your child will learn about what stigma is and how to remove the stigma surrounding mental illness. Mental illness refers to conditions that can be diagnosed. These conditions are disorders of the brain. Mental health problems, on the other hand, describe the more common struggles and difficulties that all people experience and affect how we think, feel, and act. There is much misinformation about both of these, which feeds into the stigma surrounding mental illness.

Family Connection

Research some facts and misbeliefs about mental illness and mental health problems. Play a “true or false” game with your family members. Discuss why each point is a fact or why it’s incorrect. Make a plan of how your family can work together to break the stigma.

Activities



“True or False” - Hope Squad members vote individually whether a statement about mental illness is true or false.

“Strategies to Remove Stigma” - Hope Squad members work in groups to come up with a strategy for how they can remove stigma.

Questions to Discuss with Your Child



Why is it important to break stigmas?

Do any of the false statements about mental illness surprise you? Why? What about the true statements? Why?

If you were suffering from mental illness or mental health problems, how would it make you feel that some people believe the incorrect information?



“Suicide is the most preventable kind of death and almost any positive action may save a life.”

— QPR Institute

“Never give up on someone with a mental illness. When the ‘I’ is replaced by ‘We’—Illness becomes Wellness.”

— Shannon Alder

Inclusivity | Essence of Equity

Phase Summary

Your child will learn about what equity and equality is. There are several similarities and differences between the two, and both can be related to the mental health care available to individuals.

Equality means each individual or group of people is given the same resources or opportunities regardless of individual circumstances. It does not recognize that each person may have different needs.

Equity recognizes that each person has different circumstances and allocates the exact resources and opportunities needed to reach an equal outcome. It does not use a “one size fits all” model. It recognizes that each person may have different needs.

There is not a single solution to achieve equity for everyone, and the process of finding solutions is ongoing.

Family Connection

Look for opportunities to start a conversation about equity and inequity with your family members. Ensure they know the difference between equality and equity. Share examples (or ask family members to share, if they have any) of inequity in the news or in the community. Give everyone a chance to say how the inequity makes them feel. Discuss ways your family could support equity within the family and within the community.

Activities



“Inclusivity – Essence of Equity” - Hope Squad members use band-aids to explore the difference between equity and equality and discuss thoughts and answer questions as a group.

Questions to Discuss with Your Child



Have you seen any examples of inequity at school? How did you handle or how might you handle that situation?

How do you feel about people being treated differently because of their race, gender, mental illness, or other quality?

Self-Care | Staying Grounded

Phase Summary

Your child will learn about emotional triggers and how to respond when they happen. An emotional trigger is anything, including memories, experiences, or events that spark an intense reaction, regardless of one's current mood. Some examples include the anniversary of the death of a loved one, feeling overwhelmed, being yelled at, and being ignored. By noting what situations bring out strong responses (physical or emotional), people can learn to recognize their triggers and use the following steps.

- Stop and consider what just happened and the response it activated.
- Trace the roots of these feelings back to their origins.
- Approach emotions with curiosity instead of ignoring them to get more insight on what may have triggered them.

Once a trigger is recognized, people need to choose how to respond. Although a reaction to a trigger is normal, it's important to know how to respond in a healthy and helpful way. Some healthy responses include owning feelings, keeping an open mind, and using "I" statements. Your child will also learn how to use self-care rather than avoidance or escape.

Family Connection

Recognizing and responding positively to emotional triggers can help mental health. Sit down with your family and start a discussion on triggers. What pushes other members' buttons? Do they know? If needed, look up scenarios to see whose buttons are pushed by them. (If members don't know or can't determine their triggers yet, encourage them to keep working at it and follow up with them at a later date.) Make a list of ways to positively respond to triggers when they happen. Hang the list where everyone can see it.

If you haven't already, have each family member create a self-care plan to further improve their mental health.

Activities



“What Pushes My Buttons” - Hope Squad members listen to scenarios that might push their buttons and decide whether or not they did push any buttons.

“Four Components of Self-Care” - Hope Squad members work in groups to brainstorm activity ideas for each of the four components of self-care on their own charts and on the charts of other groups.

Questions to Discuss with Your Child



Do you have any emotional triggers that you can recognize? When and where do those triggers occur?

What, if any, escape or avoidance techniques do you use when things get hard?

Are the approaches you have on your self-care plan still working for you? Why or why not? How can you improve your plan? Is there anything you'd like me to do to help you?



“Do something today that your future self will thank you for.”

— Sean Patrick Flanery

Self-Care | Digital Divide

Phase Summary

Technology is everywhere, for better or for worse. In this phase, your child will have the chance to reflect on their social media usage. There are two ways to use digital media: actively (engaging with others through comments, messages, likes, etc. while online) and passively (scrolling through but not participating or engaging with others). Both ways can lead to positive and negative impacts on people.

- Positive impacts: connecting to others, building a community, learning new information
- Negative impacts: fear of missing out, bullying, misinformation

Digital media affects individuals differently. Your child will have the chance to reflect on how the different digital media outlets make him or her feel and how to notice any red flags in his or her online usage.

Family Connection

On average, teens spend 4.5 to 5 hours on their phones on social media. Even if you aren't concerned with how much your child is on social media, you can help evaluate his or her usage. Ask questions about and pay special attention to the emotions social media makes your child feel. If your discussion reveals copious amounts of time spent online or that being online negatively affects your child's emotional wellbeing, work with your child to come up with a social media plan. You may also consider creating a plan for the whole family. The website [healthychildren.org](https://www.healthychildren.org) has a template for creating each family member's media use plan.

Activities



“Social Media Test Drive” - Hope Squad members go through a simulation about how social media can impact emotions and then answer questions at the end.

Questions to Discuss with Your Child



Have you ever seen anything on social media that upset you? Can you tell me about it?

How do you feel about your online usage?

How do you feel when you're on social media?

What could you do if you find that social media is making you feel sad? Or if you read something that you're not sure is true or not?



“If we all work together, there is no telling how we can change the world through the impact of promoting positivity online.”

— Germany Kent

Self-Care | Attitude of Gratitude

Phase Summary

Your child will learn how gratitude affects his or her thoughts, feelings, resilience, and actions.

Showing gratitude has several benefits, including the following:

- Promotes healthier living
- Increases selflessness and humility
- Promotes meaningful connections to others
- Builds resilience and other active coping skills

Showing gratitude does not mean hiding true feelings; feeling guilty about emotions; chastising others for not showing gratitude even when their situation is hard; or saying, “It could be worse” to one’s self or to others. These and other behaviors are part of toxic positivity, which could actually harm one’s self or others going through difficult times.

Your child will also have an opportunity to review his or her self-care plan and modify or add parts to include gratitude.

Family Connection

Implement an activity in your house to cultivate an attitude of gratitude. Some ideas include each member writing one thing that he or she is grateful for on a poster board each day; having a family meeting once a week to talk about what they’re grateful for, especially as it pertains to their family members; and having a contest to see who can keep a gratitude journal the longest and think of the most unique things to be grateful for.

Activities



“Jamboard” - Hope Squad members list things they are grateful for and ways they can show gratitude and then discuss their lists with those around them.

Questions to Discuss with Your Child



Do you ever set aside time to think about what you're grateful for? How does it make you feel?

What do you do to have gratitude even when things are hard?

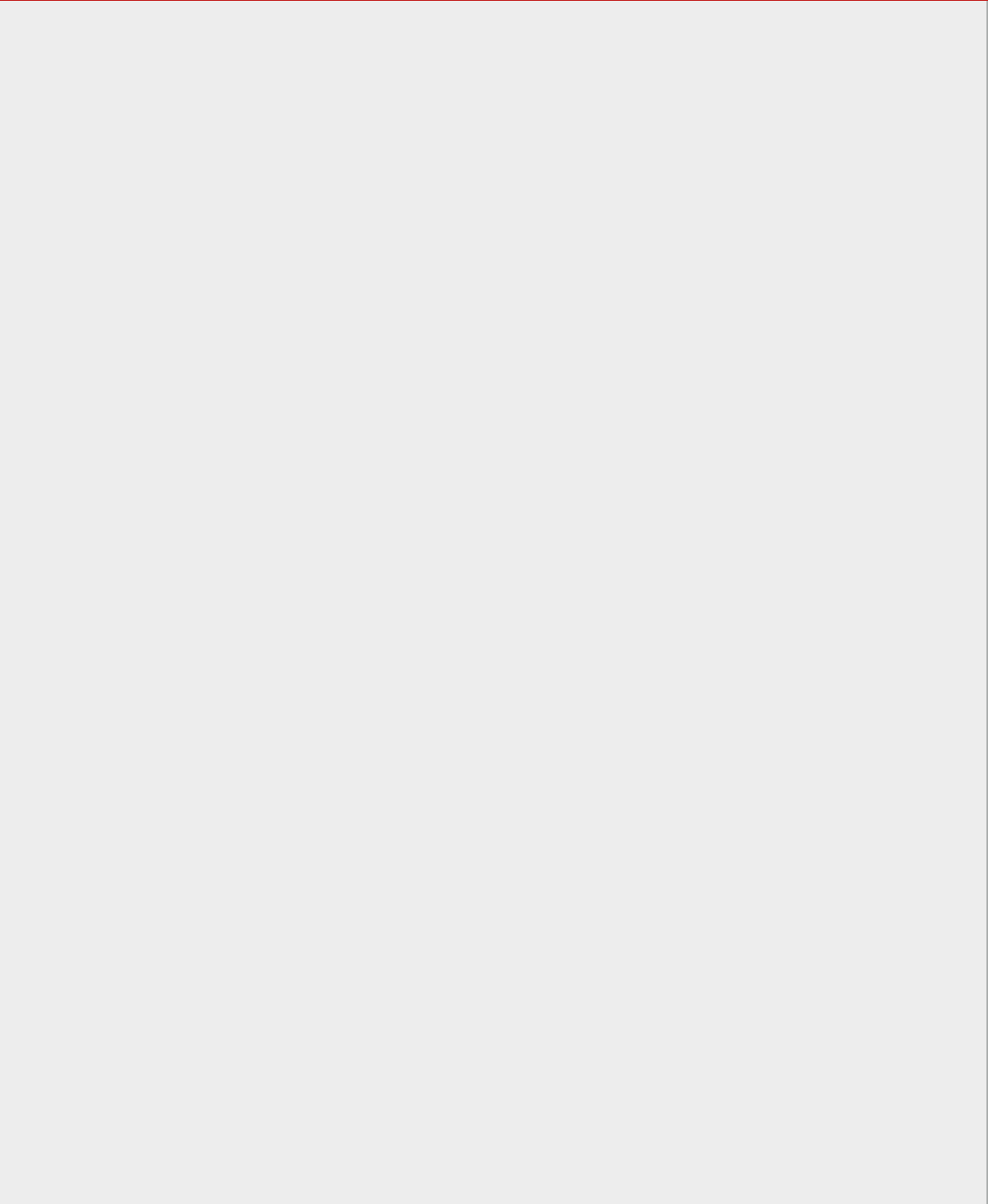


“Over time, feeling grateful boosts happiness and fosters both physical and psychological health.”

— *Psychology Today*

“Embrace every new day with gratitude, hope, and love.”

— Lailah Gifty Akita





Frequently Asked Questions

Frequently Asked Questions

Are Hope Squads successful?

Our research has shown that Hope Squads are very successful in reaching out to fellow students who may be struggling by breaking the code of silence and referring these students to an adult. Hope Squad increases knowledge of suicide warning signs, peer advocacy, and help-seeking behavior among youth.

How can I be involved in my child's Hope Squad?

The best way to get involved in your child's Hope Squad experience is to encourage discussions about what he or she is learning and monitor their well-being. Talk to your child's Hope Squad advisor to learn about different ways to get more involved.

How much time does it take?

Your child's participation varies depending on the school. A retreat or training may be provided prior to the beginning of the school year. Extra time for activities and retreats will vary depending on individual Hope Squads. Refer to your child's Hope Squad advisor for more absolute times.

How do Hope Squads promote mental wellness in schools?

Hope Squads are encouraged to hold a Hope Week each year or Hope Day each month to provide positive school-wide activities. These activities increase suicide awareness and help-seeking, and also promote inclusion and connectedness.

What benefits will my child receive from being on the Hope Squad?

Your child will an opportunity to practice and apply skills like active listening, empathy, and how to talk to someone with suicidal thoughts or behavior. Your child will help create a safe environment at school to discuss difficult topics and support fellow students while being part of a team that strives to help and encourage one another. Your child will also develop personal wellness skills as he or she learns about boundaries, self-care, and resilience.

Are there risks to being a member of the Hope Squad?

Hope Squad members spend time and effort assisting others. Being natural helpers, some squad members may neglect to practice self-care (activities that uphold and improve overall well-being while reducing stress.) However, the majority of the Hope Squad members and advisors indicate they have received tremendous support from fellow students, parents, and other school staff. Along with the support and commitment of parents, administration, teachers, and advisors, Hope Squad members receive help and training about how to succeed in peer advocacy and how to practice appropriate self-care.

How can I monitor my child's well-being as a Hope Squad member?

Your child may be approached by others with some serious conversations. It is important for you, as a parent, to make sure your child is participating in self-care, emotionally, mentally, and physically. Be sure to check in with your child; ask your child about what he or she is learning, the experiences he or she is having, and what self-care activities he or she is participating in.

Will talking about suicide increase my child's likelihood of attempting suicide?

No. This is a myth. Research indicates that talking about suicide does not increase a person's risk of attempting suicide. It is normal to be nervous about talking about suicide with your child, but you can take comfort in a vast body of research that proves talking about suicide openly is one of the best ways to prevent suicide.

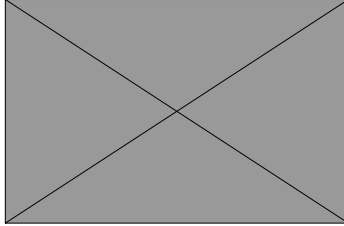
How do I talk to my child about the things she or he learns about in the Hope Squad?

This manual provides example discussion questions for each phase found in Hope Squad trainings. Resources listed in each section or the end of this manual provide more information. Additionally, there is a section (see page 5) specifically aimed at helping you know how to discuss issues related to suicide, bullying, and emotional health.



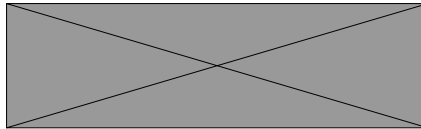
Resources

Resources



ParentGuidance.org

This free resource from the Cook Center for Human Connection offers parents access to courses delivered by licensed therapists. There are dozens of courses, with topics such as helping a child with depression, identifying anxiety, and coping with grief and loss. It not only offers parenting advice but also helps parents explore their own mental health, giving parents the tools to lead happy, confident lives. Parents can also anonymously submit questions and receive a written/video response by a therapist.



Boystown.org/parenting

Boys Town offers a vast library of parenting information and articles developed over many decades by child behavior experts. Explore the Boys Town's Parenting Principles, based on 100 years of real-world experience with tens of thousands of families. They have parenting guides, articles, videos, tools, and quick tips on a variety of subjects.

Lifelines

Resource	How It Helps	How to Use/Contact
National Suicide Prevention Lifeline	This national network of local crisis centers is open 24/7 to provide confidential, free emotional support to people who are struggling with suicidal thoughts. Parents concerned for their child can also call the lifeline for guidance.	<p>Call: 1-800-273-8255</p> <p>Chat online: suicidepreventionlifeline.org/chat</p> <p>Spanish: 1-888-628-9454</p> <p>Veterans: 1-800-273-8255, press 1 OR text 838255</p> <p>Disaster Distress Helpline: 1-800-985-5990</p>
Crisis Text Line	This line is open 24/7 for free help with any kind of crisis. A trained Crisis Counselor will respond to give the caller support.	Text "HOME" to 741741.
TeenLine	This line is open 6:00pm to 10:00pm PT and connects callers with trained teen counselors to talk about anything causing stress or worry.	<p>Call: 800-852-8336</p> <p>Text: 839863</p> <p>Email: teenlineonline.org/talk-now</p> <p>Download the Teen Talk app for iOS.</p>
The Trevor Project Lifeline	This line offers free, confidential, 24/7 support to LGBTQ youth. The website also offers suicide prevention services for LGBTQ youth, as well as guidance and resources for parents to create a safe, accepting, and inclusive home.	<p>Call: 1-866-488-7386</p> <p>Text START to 678678</p> <p>Chat: thetrevorproject.org/get-help-now</p>

More Resources

Resource	How It Helps	How to Use/Contact
Hope Squad Parent Portal	This page offers family mental health lessons and monthly parent newsletters.	Visit hopesquad.com/parents
MY3	This free app is for those who feel depressed or are having thoughts of suicide. It helps them create a safety plan so they always know where to turn for help.	Download for Android or iOS.
The Society for the Prevention of Teen Suicide	A nonprofit organization that offers FAQs and parenting tips about suicide, bullying, responding to a crisis, and fostering resilience.	Visit sptsusa.org/parents
Child Mind Institute	Child Mind Institute offers insights and advice on common family concerns and tips for facing challenges.	Visit childmind.org
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention	Includes crisis hotlines, advice for finding mental health care, substance abuse treatment, and resources for those who have lost someone to suicide, as well as resources for issues that overlap with suicide.	Visit afsp.org

Resource	How It Helps	How to Use/Contact
Suicide Prevention Resource Center	One of the most comprehensive databases for suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention. Find toolkits, fact sheets, and other resources to help you take effective action.	Visit sprc.org
National Institute of Mental Health	Symptoms, descriptions, and treatment options that can help parents understand the connection between mental illness and suicide and how to help a child with a mental illness.	Visit nimh.nih.gov
National Institute on Drug Abuse for Teens	Information to help you talk with your child about drugs and their effects, and learn where to go for help. Substance abuse is the second largest risk factor for suicide.	Visit teens.drugabuse.gov
HelpGuide	Information about mental illnesses, advice for improving mental and physical health, and family and relationship guidance, as well as advice for people contemplating suicide and those who want to help someone who is at risk.	Visit helpguide.org

