

Suicide Prevention: Warning Signs and Triggers

People considering suicide *usually* provide signs of their intentions. Suicidal youths feel deep emotional pain and isolation. Feelings of hopelessness, sadness, worthlessness, anger and loneliness are often compounded by the belief that no one else can understand – or help – their pain. And, as a result, the majority of these youth either attempt to keep their decision a secret or cry for help indirectly (Lieberman, Poland & Cowan 2006). Typically, a combination of factors will compel a youth to attempt suicide – individual, environmental, familial and situational. We, as a school community, can help to prevent a suicide by recognizing these signs, engaging the person appropriately and seeking help immediately.

Warning Signs

- Verbal and written statements about death and dying
- Fascination with death and dying
- Dramatic changes in behavior or personality that are self-destructive
- Feelings of helplessness and/or hopelessness and believing things will never get better
- If a person goes from extreme depression to sudden sense of peace and happiness
- Giving away prized possessions, making out a will or saying goodbye to friends and/or family
- Withdrawing from family and friends with increasing social isolation
- Interpersonal conflicts or loss

Triggers

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Death of a loved one/loss• Family conflict/dysfunction• Bullying or victimization• Abuse• Trauma exposure• Knowing someone who died by suicide• Anniversary of the death of a loved one• Breakup with a boyfriend or a girlfriend | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Getting into trouble with authorities• Academic crisis or school failure• Disappointment or rejection• Getting into trouble with authorities |
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