SBISD Mental Health News DECEMBER 2024

In This Issue

Suicide Prevention and Strategies

At Spring Branch ISD, the mental health and well-being of our students are always a top priority. We are committed to promoting mental wellness through education, awareness, and open communication to help prevent suicide and provide students with the support they need.

We want our students to know that there is help available, and we want them to feel empowered to come to their campus counselors or a trusted adult for help. Our goal is to focus on increasing awareness among secondary students and motivating them to seek assistance when necessary. For elementary students, age-appropriate lessons are provided by their campus counselors on making healthy choices and showing care and concern for themselves and others.

Depression is a treatable condition, but it is also one of the leading risk factors for suicide. Educating students on the signs of depression, encouraging help-seeking behavior, and promoting peer support can make a significant difference. Emphasizing that no one is alone in facing these challenges can help build a culture where students feel safe reaching out and supporting each other.

Parents bring a deep understanding of their child's unique behaviors, emotions, and experiences, which can be crucial in identifying early warning signs of distress. When schools, parents, and mental health professionals work together, they create a strong safety net. Schools can help by offering resources, regular check-ins, and creating an environment where students feel safe seeking help. Mental health professionals bring clinical expertise, offering strategies and support that can be tailored to each student's needs.

Let's Talk About
Suicide Prevention.

Empower Hope; Prevent Suicide

Teens and suicide: What should parents know?

Parents play a vital role in creating a supportive environment where children feel safe discussing their feelings and mental health challenges. Just as they would monitor a child's physical health or ensure their safety in other areas, parents can engage in open, judgment-free conversations about mental health. This approach helps normalize discussions around emotional well-being and lets children know they are not alone.

Why should parents be concerned about teen suicide?

Suicide is now the second leading cause of death for children ages 10 and older. Social media can amplify feelings of inadequacy, anxiety, and isolation, often exacerbating underlying mental health conditions like depression and anxiety. Many studies indicate that young people are especially vulnerable to these pressures, with some experiencing intense emotional distress at a developmental stage when they are still learning coping mechanisms.

Every 40 seconds, someone loses their life to suicide.

It's time to raise awareness and recognize our role to help prevent it.

Risk factors that increase the chance that a person may try to take their life:

Mental Health Conditions

- Depression
- Substance use problems
- Bipolar disorder / Schizophrenia
- Personality traits of aggression, mood changes and poor relationships
- Conduct disorder / Anxiety disorders
- Serious physical health conditions including pain

Environmental

- Access to lethal means including firearms and drugs
- Prolonged stress, such as harassment, bullying, or relationship problems
- Stressful life events, like rejection, divorce, financial crisis, other life transitions or loss
- Exposure to another person's suicide; graphic or sensationalized accounts of suicide

Historical

- Previous suicide attempts
- Family history of suicide
- Childhood abuse, neglect, or trauma
- Generational trauma

Protective Factors

- Access to mental health care and being proactive about mental health
- Feeling connected to family and community support
- Problem-solving and coping skills
- Limited access to lethal means

Warning Signs

Something to look out for when you are concerned that a person may be suicidal is a change in behavior or completely new behaviors. This is most concerning if the new or changed behavior is related to a painful event, loss, or change. Most people who take their lives exhibit one or more warning signs; either through what they say or what they do.

Talk

If a person talks about:

- Killing themselves
- Feeling hopeless
- Having no reason to live
- Being a burden to others
- Feeling trapped
- Unbearable pain

Mood

People who are considering suicide often display one or more of the following moods:

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Loss of interest
- Irritability
- Humiliation/Shame
- Agitation/Anger
- Relief/Sudden improvement

Behavior

Behaviors that may signal risk, especially if related to a painful event, loss or change:

- Increased use of alcohol or drugs
- Looking for a way to end their lives, such as searching online for methods
- Withdrawing from activities
- Isolating from family and friends
- Sleeping too much or too little
- Visiting or calling people to say goodbye
- Giving away prized possessions
- Aggression
- Fatigue

5 Action Steps for Helping Someone in Emotional Pain

ASK

"Are you thinking about killing yourself?"

KEEP THEM SAFE

Reduce access to lethal items or places.

BE THERE

Listen carefully and acknowledge their feelings.

HELP THEM CONNECT

Call or text the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline number (988).

STAY CONNECTED

Follow up and stay in touch after a crisis.

nimh.nih.gov/suicideprevention

Firearm Safety

Why secure firearms?

Firearms are the leading method of suicide deaths. Every year, an average of 2,192 people in Texas die by gun suicides and 238 are wounded by gun suicide attempts. In 2023, the United States saw a record high in gun suicides, with 27,300 people dying by firearm suicide, a 1.5% increase from the previous year. This makes firearm safety an important factor in keeping you and your family safe.

How to Secure Firearms in the Home

What is safe firearm storage?

To many people, firearm safety is only about the handling of a firearm, but that responsibility also extends beyond safe handling. Securing your firearm at home is just as important. Safe firearm storage involves practices and devices designed to prevent unauthorized or accidental access to firearms, particularly by children or individuals who may be at risk of harm.

Firearm Safety Tips

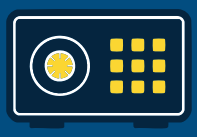
1 CABLE LOCKS

Prevents a firearm from being loaded and fired.

2 GUN CASE

Storage solution to secure, conceal, protect, and legally transport a firearm.

3 LOCK BOX



Provides reliable protection for firearms.

4 FULL SIZE GUN SAFE

Allows you to store multiple firearms in one place.

Parents Can Model Healthy Ways Of Grieving

Just like other firsts in our lives, we learn by watching and imitating others. Maintaining a connection with a loved one who has passed is a deeply personal and ongoing part of the grieving process. Finding ways to honor and remember them in your daily life, during holidays, and on anniversaries can bring a sense of comfort and continuity.

Talking openly with children about their feelings and thoughts helps build trust and gives them a safe space to express themselves. By responding with honesty and being mindful of what is developmentally appropriate, we make it easier for them to process emotions without feeling overwhelmed. Encouraging open dialogue also fosters emotional intelligence and resilience, so they feel more comfortable coming to you with questions and concerns in the future.

Ways to support a grieving child include:

- Having a consistent and regular routine include eating well, staying hydrated, doing physical activity, and getting good sleep are vital
- Being patient and gentle, in order to not add additional stress
- Allowing for moments of connection and assisting in the expression of grief
- Providing opportunities to remember and talk about the person who has died
- Listening without judgment or adverse reaction
- Offering reassurance and teaching your children to breathe through their feelings
- Incorporate mindfulness to notice their feelings right now and let them know it is ok to name the emotions and not fight them
- Encourage children to notice how the feelings will come and go; some feelings will be intense and some will be mild
- Creating outlets for healing through time outdoors, arts and crafts, writing or journaling, music, watching a movie, or spending time with friends
- Children may grieve differently than a parent or sibling, and it is important to recognize and accept that
- Many good books for children explain the grieving process to help guide conversations and provide language to prompt and answer children's questions

It is healthy and normal for children to need connection with peers to play, laugh, and have time aside from talking about the loss. This is part of the healing and grieving process.

If you feel grief has become complicated for your child, resources are available to help, including grief support groups, your health care team, employee assistance programs through your employer, and professional counseling services.

Grieving is not about pushing the pain away or getting through it fast and moving on. Grief is a natural and necessary part of healing. When you honor grief, you heal and grow through grief. You cannot take away your children's pain, but it can be an opportunity to teach them to grieve in a good way and watch them learn to heal.

If you or someone you know is experiencing thoughts of suicide, immediate help is available. Call, text, or chat 988 to connect with a trained crisis counselor.

Citations

Source: National Institute of Mental Health
https://www.nimh.nih.gov/
Source: Mental Health of America
https://mhanational.org/
Source: American Psychiatric Association
https://www.psychiatry.org
Source: National Mental Health Association
http://www.nmha.org
Source: World Health Organization
http://www.who.int/

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