

HOW COMMON IS THIS?

Very common— according to leading research, an estimated 1 in 4 young people experience suicidal thoughts at some point. BUT, what's important is there are lots of ways of dealing with these feelings and healing from them. Building connected, non-judgmental, trusting relationships with adults and therapists is one a significant way we can help.

HOW TO RESPOND

When your child says they are feeling suicidal or don't want to live anymore...

- Be compassionate—recognize and respect their feelings.
- Be a good listener— let them talk openly, avoid shame and blame
- Make sure they know they can always ask for help, even if its not from you.
- Validate their emotions/concerns. "I'm proud of you for telling someone", "Talking about this is really brave"

HOW DID I MISS THE SIGNS?

Puberty causes youth brains to grow rapidly, which leads to lots of behavioral changes. Since most of these changes are typical it can be hard to recognize warning signs. There is a typical range of moodiness, irritability, and pushing you away; this is a natural part of adolescent development. But if you notice signs of hopelessness or worthlessness, a withdrawal from friends and usual activities there might be something else going on.

KEEPING THE CONVERSATION GOING?

"Tell me more about that. I'd love to understand"
"When they said that/did that, how did you feel?"
It may seem awkward to bring up the subject but its important to be frequently checking in. Ask open-ended questions and resist the urge to offer quick fixes. Ask "Do you want comfort or solutions?" "I'm here to listen and support you." Follow their lead. If they're not ready to talk that's ok, but remind them often you're there when they are ready.

**FOR
PARENTS/
GUARDIANS**

Common Questions about Suicidal Ideation

NEXT STEPS

Getting more information is key— why they are struggling and to what degree. Check out the chart about the spectrum of suicidality on the back. Let this help guide you in seeking help for your child. Seeking help could be talking their doctor or school counselor, or calling a hotline if you feel they are in more immediate crisis.

WORDS AND ACTIONS TO AVOID

Avoid interrupting or accusatory statements. It can be hard to know the best way to respond, but try not to minimize or ignore their anxieties or emotions. Youth tend to pull away when they feel misunderstood. Try to think of this as **"support seeking" instead of "attention seeking"**. Suicidal thoughts should always be taken very seriously and you should ask your child's school or doctor for help if you need it.

TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

You can't give from an empty cup! Taking care of yourself as well is very important in taking care of a struggling child. Make time to do something you enjoy or find relaxing, even if its something small. Find someone to talk to about what YOU are going through too. Being gentle with yourself is essential when trying to care for anyone.

HOW DO I KNOW WHEN THEY ARE SAFE AGAIN?

We know the more trust you give, the more trust you'll get back. Name how YOU feel— "I'm feeling worried. You say you're feeling better today, but are you feeling safe to be alone after school?" Offer them space to be honest. Respond with kindness, support and creative options. Be calm. Check in, **a lot**. Avoid shame or blame. Try "How can I help keep you safe?"

The Spectrum of Suicidality



Need to Talk?

1-800-370-9085

NAMI Compass Helpline
Mon-Fri 9am-5pm

1-800-562-0112

Clinical Support Options (CSO) Crisis Line

1-866-488-7386

The Trevor Project
LGBTQIA Crisis Line

1-800-407-4515

NAMI Peer Support Warmline
Mon-Thurs 7am-9pm
Fri-Sun 7am-10pm

Resources/Support around Suicidal Ideation

FOR PARENTS/GUARDIANS

THERAPY

The best option is to connect with a therapist but you can also start by talking with their doctor, school counselor or local youth serving organization to help find other resources in your area. Try to engage your child in these conversations- the more control they have, the more engaged they will likely be.

SUPPORT GROUPS

- **Western Mass NAMI Connection Support Group** - Mondays and Wednesdays over zoom from 6-7:30 Find out more at namiwm.org/support
- **TREVORspace** - online social media platform for LGBTQ youth with clubs for support and hobbies
- **TeenTribe** - online peer-to-peer support group for teens with mental health challenges divided into different categories

Technology has come a long way in the therapy world! There are many websites and apps that provide talk and text therapy for all ages. Below are also some helpful apps for anxiety, panic attacks, depression, gratitude, mediation, motivation, journaling and mood tracking. Some cost money but many are free!

HELPFUL APPS

- **Headspace**- free-fitness app w/ meditation, workouts, other cool supports
- **7 Cups**- free- 24/7 chat support for teens from trained peer listeners
- **Mindshift**- free- teaches behavioral therapy skills to support teens mental health
- **What's Up**- great mood tracking app
- **TalkSpace**- fee for service- #1 text/voice/video therapy sessions 24/7!
- **Daylio Journal**- free- mood tracker and journaling app for teens



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