

Depression and Suicide in Today's Teens

Teen suicide is not a rare event. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, suicide is the fifth leading cause of death among 5 to 14 year olds, and the third leading cause of death for those ages 15 to 24, surpassed only by care accidents and homicide.

Suicide rates increase in the teen years due to many factors, including greater access to lethal weapons, such as firearms, greater access to drugs and alcohol and access to motor vehicles.

Teens are in a transitional period between childhood and adulthood, and this can lead to confusion and anxiety at times. Teens with a good support system usually find an appropriate outlet for handling stress, disappointment and frustration. Teens without a proper support system may feel isolated from people who care and thus feel they do not have the ability to express their problems with others. Signs and symptoms of severe depression and suicide include:

- feelings of inadequacy and worthlessness
- repeated failures at school
- overwhelmed by violence in the home
- isolates from peers
- talk of suicide
- loss of interest in favorite possessions
- self destructive behavior

These warning signs are an indicator that the teenager is in need of the attention of mental health professional. Contrary to popular belief, people who talk about suicide are likely to follow through.

Although you may feel powerless, there are a number of things you can do to help a teen who is going through a difficult time. If you are concerned about your teen's behavior:

- Make sure your teen has a support system which are composed of people that they can confide in.

- Do not reduce or discount any pain that the teen expresses no matter how insignificant it appears to you.
- See a mental health professional immediately to assess needs
- Let your child know that their pain is not unique and that there are professionals that are trained to help people in these situations.

Information received from KidsHealth for Parents

Website: <http://www.kidshealth.org>