



Because I Love You™

Parent and Youth Support Groups

SIGNS OF SUICIDE

Suicide is a frighteningly rational activity. Only about 4 percent of suicide completers have psychotic depressive disorders. The most common objectives of the suicides are to escape (pain, unhappiness, hopelessness, etc.) or to act aggressively against another person or situation. In most instances, suicide is deliberately and carefully planned over a period of time in order to permanently resolve a problem at hand. In this sense, then, suicidal behaviors are not crazy, confused, automatic, or accidental. Fortunately, because of this "rational" quality, people who are aware of the early warning signs can often stop suicide. Most suicides occur in the ages 65 and above, these often being the years when people become widowed, are not working, and are ill of health, therefore having little purpose in life. But suicide has also become a leading cause of death among young people. It is common for young people to feel depressed since youth is a time filled with change and loss including family divorce, pressure to succeed and rapid physical changes. Teen suicide also increases with increased teen drug use.

Child/Adolescent Suicide

One recent report details the bizarre death of a ten-year-old girl who was found hanging from the handle of the kitchen freezer. The strange position she assumed assures us of her intentions: she hanged herself sitting down. At any moment, she could have prevented strangulation simply by getting up. The manner of her death gives mute testimony to her will and determination to die. For many reasons, most of them understandable, adults prefer to believe that children and adolescents do not commit suicide. It seems inconceivable that children could become so desperate and suffer so

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much at their young age that they would choose death over life. The major risk of self-destructive behavior at a very young age is not the immediate possibility of death outright, rather, the emergence of a self-destructive personality. At a later period, the child may then carry out a complete suicide. For example, the increased rate of suicides among adolescents does not seem to arise simply from the sudden appearance of an intolerable life situation or the temporary emotional upsets that accompany this period of life. It seems more probable that those who choose to commit suicide in adolescence had the idea implanted at an early age. The stressful times of adolescence only trigger the hidden impulses. It is important, then, to watch even children for signs of depression or self-destructive behavior and to obtain professional help for problems at an early age.

Recognizing Suicidal Behavior

The warning signs of suicide are approximately the same for both adults and youth; however, the younger the suspect, the more we tend to ignore the signs: Recent loss, major life changes such as loss of an important person, job, relationship, etc.; or the heat of anger and frustration can lead people who have been contemplating suicide to complete it, making threats.

It is a common myth that people who speak of suicide don't commit it!

Take statements about death seriously.

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