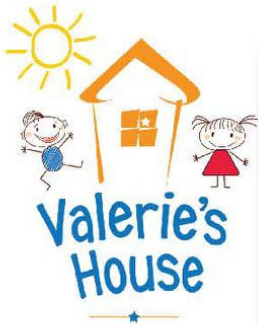


Supporting Children and Teens After a Death by Suicide

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Explaining a death by suicide to children and teens can feel overwhelming. We want to protect them, but talking about suicide can make a huge difference, as rates are increasing every year. It's important for parents to understand that talking about suicide does not encourage it, and children almost always know when adults are not sharing important information about a death.

3-6 year-olds

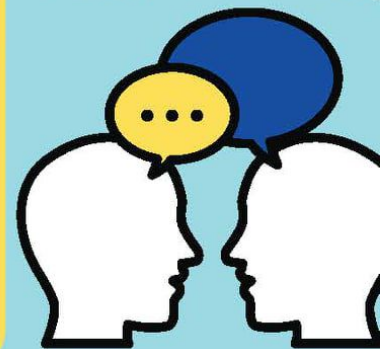


Even very young children can cope with difficult situations if they can talk openly about them with a trusted adult. Stick to the basics with this age group. Answer their questions truthfully but don't add extra information. Make sure your child understands that no matter how someone dies, they cannot come back. You can explain the person was sick and could not get better.

Example: "Suicide is when people decide they do not want their body to work anymore and stop it from working. There is always another way."

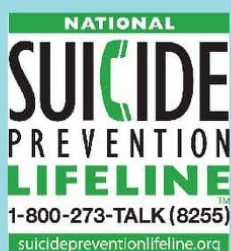
It is still important to emphasize that the death is sad and that the person died from a disease. Give short, true answers to any questions the child asks. You can use the same explanation about the person being so sick that they made their body stop working. Make sure the child understands that everyone is sad sometimes, but the person who died by suicide had a mental illness that went beyond being normally sad. Let them guide the conversation so you don't overwhelm them with information.

7-10 year-olds



11-14 year-olds

Be more concrete. Talk about the warning signs of suicidality. Many children have already experienced some mood dysregulation by this age, and it scares them. Ask them what they have heard and what they understand about suicide. Correct any misinformation they have. Make sure they know that people who die by suicide have an illness, they are not weak. Ask your children if they have ever thought about suicide or if any of their friends have. Ask questions clearly. Don't dance around the subject.



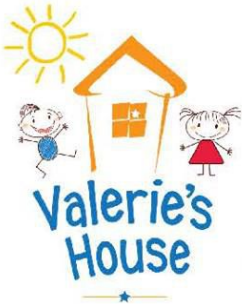
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Supporting Children and Teens after a Death by Suicide

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High Schoolers

A suicide can be a trigger for teens. Address this with teens as if you were talking to another adult about suicide. Ask them what they will do when they have these thoughts and feelings, or if a friend does. Reassure teens that having a mental health condition is as normal as having any other kind of illness and that there is help available. Suicide loss is often surrounded by silence and shame. It is important teens know that there is always help available and you are there to listen and support them.



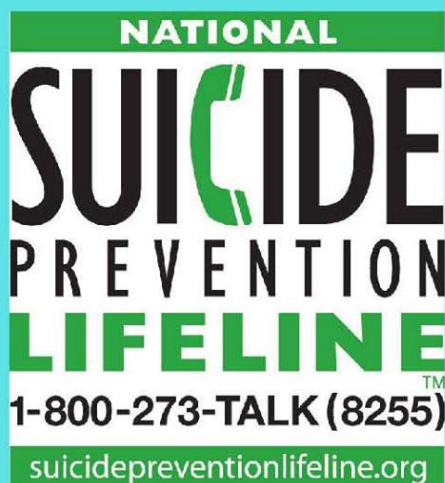
College-Aged

Touch base with young adult children. Make sure they know that you are there for them and ask them if there is anything you can do to help support them in the moment.



All Ages:

At any age, it is important for the child or young adult to know they are not alone in their grief. You are there with them to help and support them whatever they are feeling.



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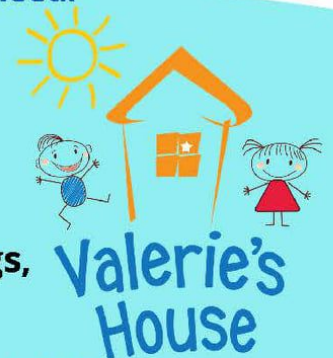
Warning Signs for Youth Regarding Suicidal Thoughts & Behaviors

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According to the latest data from the Youth Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, close to 1 in 5 high school students have seriously considered attempting suicide. Death by suicide is increasing in our nation at alarming rates across all age ranges and has seen steep increase among children. Now more than ever, we need to know how to get someone the help they need.

WARNING SIGNS:

- Threatening to hurt or kill themselves
- Looking for a means to hurt themselves (weapons, drugs, researching it online, etc.)
- Drawing or talking about suicide, self harm or death and dying
- Expressing feelings of hopelessness and having no purpose
- Talking about being a burden to others or that others would be better off without them
- Acting out, participating in reckless behavior, seeking revenge
- Expressing feelings of anger, rage or easily agitated
- Increased anxiety or anxious thoughts
- Withdrawing, isolating themselves from family and friends
- Not participating in activities that used to bring them joy
- Change in sleeping habits (sleeping too much or too little)
- Change in eating habits (eating too much or too little)
- Starting or increasing the use of alcohol or drugs
- Dramatic changes in mood or mood swings
- Giving away prized possessions



HELPLINES AND SUPPORT:

- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 800-273-8255
- 911
- 1-800-SUICIDE (784-2433)

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