

YOUTH SUICIDE AWARENESS (For more information, visit jasonfoundation.com)

Risk Factors and Warnings

RISK INDICATORS

- Threatening to hurt or kill self
- Looking for ways to kill self: seeking access to pill, weapons or other means
- Talking or writing about death, dying or suicide
- Self-Injurious/destructive behavior
- Hopelessness
- Rage, anger, seeking revenge
- Depression — feeling trapped — like there's no way out
- Increasing alcohol or drug use
- Withdrawing from family and friends
- Dramatic changes in mood

FACTORS THAT MAY INCREASE RISK

- Current Ideation, intent, plan, access to means
- Previous attempts
- Recent losses —physical, financial, personal
- History of abuse
- Family history of suicide
- Alcohol/Substance abuse
- Current or previous history of psychiatric diagnosis
- Same-sex sexual orientation

VERBAL WARNINGS — If someone you know makes statements like these, they could be thinking about suicide (must be taken in context)

- 1) Most suicidal teens either directly or indirectly tell others they plan to kill themselves
- 2) Direct threats should be taken seriously. even if they sound overly dramatic
- 3) Few people make serious statements about killing themselves just to be funny
- 4) Indirect threats can be difficult to spot as they slip into casual conversation
 - "I've decided to kill myself"
 - "I've had it. I'm through"
 - "Sometimes I just want it to be over with"

- "The only way out is death"
- "I just can't go any longer"
- "I'm getting out; I'm tired of life"
- "You won't be seeing me around"

Suicide Prevention Protocols

Phillipsburg Public Schools will follow the suicide prevention/intervention protocol listed below. If any peer, teacher or other school employee identifies someone as potentially suicidal because they have directly or indirectly expressed suicidal thoughts (ideation) or demonstrated clues or warning signs:

WE WILL

1. Take the threat of self-harm seriously
2. Take immediate action. The building administrator and/or counselor will be notified.
3. The reporting staff member/student will complete a Staff Suicide Risk Reporting Form explaining why the student was brought for assessment
4. If the administrator or counselor knows or has reasonable cause to suspect that the student has been, or is likely to be, abused or neglected, s/he must make a report of suspected abuse or neglect to the Department for Children and Family (DCF) services by calling the Kansas Protection Report Center at 1-800-922-5330
 - Employees of educational institutions are mandated reporters for suspected child abuse and neglect
5. If deemed necessary, or if the student refuses to give any information, the administrator or counselor will contact High Plains Mental Health to access the appropriate crisis intervention center near the school
6. Parent/guardian will be asked to complete an Intervention report indicating their proposed plan of action upon the release of their student from the school following the suicide intervention by school personnel.
7. All actions will be documented

The Grieving Process

Grief is a process.

There is no right or wrong way to grieve. Everyone must go through his own grief and no one can do it for you. The process of grief has four stages and there is no set time line for how long the grieving will last.

Stage One: Denial, shock and disbelief.

These are all part of the initial stages of grief. The thought that this can't be true or this can't be happening to me is primary.

Stage Two: Sadness and depression.

These are the two major feelings in the second stage. The sadness is often so overwhelming that it interferes with everyday activities and the ability to concentrate on the tasks at hand.

Stage Three: Anger.

Anger is the third stage of the grieving process, Feelings of "why me". unfairness, anger at God, anger at the situation and anger at people may be experienced during this stage.

Stage Four: Acceptance.

Acceptance is the final stage of grieving. The grieving person is finally able to accept what has happened and can move forward in his/her life. Memories are still present but the person has learned to cope and integrate the losses into their life.

These stages can be interchanged and at times one may slip back and forth. Each stage will vary in time depending on the person and their coping skills.

Suggestions For Coping

1. Give yourself time and permission to grieve by acknowledging your losses.
2. Focus on your strengths: spiritual, physical, mental and social.
3. Ask for support and help from your family, friends, church or other community resources. Join a support group.
4. Set small realistic goals to help tackle obstacles. Take one step at a time. This helps to keep from feeling overwhelmed.
5. Eat healthy.
6. Exercise.
7. Know your limits. Some things are beyond your control and therefore cannot be changed — don't fight it.

8. Make time for fun to break from your routine to relax and enjoy.
9. Learn and understand the reactions to disasters that people normally experience.
10. Learn to express feelings in healthy ways such as talking, drawing or writing journals.
11. Stay away from drugs and alcohol - they can stop you from healing.
12. Remember - you are not alone. There are others who have similar reactions and feelings. Stay connected to those who can share your feelings and concerns.

Tips For Teachers

Your principal will verify the extent of the crisis and notify you as soon as possible. Please be cautious about commenting to students until you are notified of the facts. Tell students to stay calm. that rumors can get out of hand. and that you will get them the facts as soon as you have them.

Reaction to a crisis can fall into the categories of panic or defeat. It is normal to have a lot of anxiety and to want to flee the scene or to feel that the world is not a very secure place. Unresolved issues based on our life histories may surface and add to our emotional state. Waves of emotion may flood our thoughts.

What Can A Teacher Do?

1. After receiving verification of the facts, openly and honestly acknowledge what has happened. Students need to be told the facts in age-appropriate terms.
2. Model expressions of your feelings and give the students permission to express their feelings. This helps relieve tension and fosters a return to normalcy more quickly.
3. Help students understand that many people will be experiencing a variety of emotions. There is not one correct way to feel. Anger and denial are very common feelings. Students may also experience feelings of guilt that are very irrational. This may range from confusion about causality in a young child dreams or bad thoughts I had caused this) to I should have stopped or prevented this crisis (i.e if I had been there....or I should have taken some action to stop this.) Some students may have valid reasons to feel guilty if they had some knowledge or clues about another person's behavior. (These persons need to be referred to a counselor).

4. Following the crisis, be alert for those students experiencing more extreme reaction in comparison to the norm and refer them to the appropriate counselor.
5. Be aware that some students may not react with expressions of sadness or remorse. Some may express their feelings through "acting out" behaviors.
6. Discuss the meaning and effect of loss and discuss funeral etiquette and appropriate memorials or remembrances of the deceased.
7. Be open to students who may seek counseling from you:
 - A) Encourage the expression of feelings; focus on feelings rather than what is said.
 - B) Try not to allow the discussion of glamorize/romanticize the act.
 - C) Remember it does not take strength (or will) to commit suicide—just the opposite.
 - D) Do not allow someone to become larger in death than in life.
 - E) Reinforce the idea that it is a tragedy.
 - F) Let students know that it is natural to experience a sense of guilt or responsibility.
 - G) No one person is responsible.
 - H) Suicide does not solve a problem; it creates one.
 - I) Expect anger and guilt.
 - J) Listen patiently, accept without judgement what the person is saying, regardless of how you feel about it.
 - K) Restate what you hear: this reflects to the student exactly what he or she is saying.
 - L) Avoid arguments about facts; often they are irrelevant to how the person is feeling.
 - M) Limit the expression of your views until the other person has stated theirs; be honest and straightforward.
 - N) Focus on the message, not what you are going to say next; be involved in listening not in strategy.