

# SUICIDE PREVENTION IN YOUR COMMUNITY!

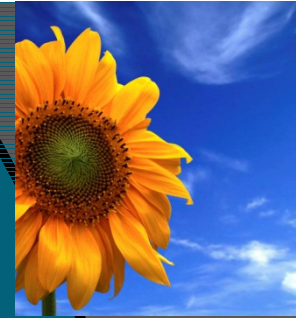
**How to have a suicide safer community and  
move from blame to collaboration**

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# It Takes A Village



- Bullying is a community problem, not just a problem for schools. By intervening to support children who are aggressive and those who are victimized, we can promote children's well-being and prevent many significant problems in both the short- and long-term.
- We need broad-based community efforts to protect children and change attitudes that support the use of aggression by those who hold power. There are excellent models for significant social change over the past few decades (e.g., environmental awareness, seat belts, concern for wife assault and child abuse). It can be done if we pull together to support all children and adolescents

# What Are the Types of Bullying?

- Bullying can take many forms. It can be direct, indirect, physical, verbal, or psychological. We consider sexual harassment and racist comments as bullying as they focus on a potential vulnerability and inequities.



# What Are the Types of Bullying?

## Direct (Face-to-Face)

- Verbal (teasing, insults, put-downs, harassment\*)
- Physical (shoves, pushes, hitting, assault\*)
- Psychological (making a mean face, rolling your eyes, "dirty looks", uttering threats\*, extortion\*)\*These actions are against the law.



# What Are the Types of Bullying?

## Indirect (Behind Someone's Back)

- Gossip (lowering people's opinions about the victim)
- Leaving out, Exclusion, Shunning
- Social aggression (Telling people not to be friends with a victim)



# Who Is At Risk for Bullying and Victimization?

## Who Is At Risk for Bullying and Victimization?

Some children are more at risk of becoming bullies and victims than others, although this is in no way predetermined. It depends on a combination of individual, family, peer, school, and broader experiences.



# Previous Experiences that May Contribute to Bullying and Victimization

## Individual characteristics of the child

- Bullying: Difficult temperament, Attention Problems, Hyperactivity.
- Victimization: Anxious temperament, Social Withdrawal, Exceptionality





# Previous Experiences that May Contribute to Bullying and Victimization

## Family Factors

- Bullying: Aggression within the home, Ineffective Parenting, Family Stress.
- Victimization: Over-protective parents, Family Stress.

## Peer Factors

- Bullying: Aggressive peers, Rejection, Marginalization,
- Victimization: Rejection, Isolation, Marginalization, Reputation

## School Factors

- Bullying: Ignoring antisocial behavior, inconsistent consequences, alienating interactions
- Victimization: Lack of recognition, communication, and openness around victimization.

# The Melissa Institute for Violence Prevention and Treatment

## **Contact Information:**

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## **“ACT Against Violence Training Program”**

**Adults and Children Together Against Violence (ACT) is a program designed by the American Psychological Association (APA) to train early childhood, mental health and service agency professionals to deliver an enhanced parent education curriculum.**

**For more information and to register, contact the Melissa Institute. 786-662-5210.**

# Prevalence

- In a recent SAMSHA study, it was noted that 8.2 million people have thoughts of suicide in the United States
- Suicide is the third leading cause of death among teenagers in the United States(CDC WISQARS, 2007)
- One of every 14 high school students has attempted suicide, and one of every 7 has serious suicidal thoughts (CDC, 2008).
- Every 2 hours and 15 minutes, a person under the age of 25 dies by suicide.

\*This means that during the time it takes for you to enjoy a basketball game or a movie, another young person dies by suicide.

# Prevalence Continued

- Approximately 4100 young people between ages 15 and 24 die by suicide each year (CDC WISQARS ,2007)
- For each suicide death among young people, there may be as many as 100-200 suicide attempts—that is, between 250,000 and 500,000 young Americans may attempt suicide each year (Goldsmith et al. 2002)
- Approximately 1 in every 14 high school students attempts suicide each year (CDC 2008).

# Warning signs for youth...

**F**eelings

**A**ctions

**C**hanges

**T**hreats

**S**ituations

# Warning signs for Parents to be aware of...

- Statements conveying a sense of hopelessness, worthlessness, or preoccupation with death
- Behavioral changes from usual patterns
- Feelings or moods that seem uncharacteristic for that teen, such as loss of interest or hopelessness
- Situations that can serve as trigger points for suicidal behaviors such as: suicide of another, death of another or losses, getting in trouble at school or with the law, relationship issues, impending changes for which teen feels scared or unprepared, and conflicts within the home

# Assessment tips for parents.

- Ask the teen about their concerns
- LISTEN to the answer
- Paraphrase back to the teen what you believe the teen is saying to help you (the parent) see the teen's world through their eyes.
- Offer to help the teen deal with issues/resolve the problems and then follow through
- Be specific as to why you have concerns and why you are asking questions
- Ask teachers about the teen and how they feel the teen is doing
- Ask about suicide directly, remembering that you will not plant the idea about suicide in someone's head.
- Don't try to minimize or "talk the teen out of their feelings"

# How to talk to your teen about Suicide...

## Parents should:

- Pick a time when the parent has the teen's attention – such as when in the car together
- Think about what they want to say to the teen in advance.
- Be honest if it is a hard topic for you to discuss
- Ask your teen for their response and be direct in the questions
- Listen to what your teen has to say
- It is important not to over react or under react!
- Act immediately to get the family help if the parent has concerns about suicide or the teen talks about suicide
- Call the local hospital to determine if they have help for suicidal teens or call the National suicide crisis line.

# NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION LIFE LINE

**1-800-273-TALK (8255)**

\*Press one for Veterans

**DO NOT  
PROMISE SECRECY**

# What to do when a teen's friend dies by suicide...

- Deal with your own shock first before approaching your child
- Recognize when the “whys” come up that suicide is a complex act that is always related to a variety of causes.
- We may never fully know why
- Parents must recognize that they too will miss their child's friend
- Grief of the parent's own child must be the parent's first priority
- Processing loss by a teen can be in short and intense moments of emotion
- Moments pass quickly, parents must try to catch them to discuss the teen's emotions with them when the “door is open”

# What to do

- Parent can start by sharing their own sadness and confusion about the death, followed by asking the teen to share their emotions
- Validate whatever you hear from your teen
- Parent should deal with the rumors as best they can, including indicating that they may never know the full story
- Parents should be aware that texting and social networking sites are powerful sources of positive and negative information.
- Emphasize the most important aspect of the event is that the deceased was doing so badly and was in so much pain they did not realize the consequences of what they were doing. Suicide is a permanent solution to a temporary problem!
- Because of the potential for “copy cat” behaviors parents must underscore the dangerousness of their behaviors

# What to do

- Emphasize the thinness of the line between dangerous behaviors and deadly behaviors
- Parents can ask their teens who they would turn to for help with a serious problem and not be upset if they identify someone other than a parent
- If a teen is experiencing a problem serious enough to consider suicide as a solution, then it would be important for them to seek help from adults as well as friends. Parents should discuss who trusted adults would be in this situation.
- Revisit message about help seeking again, feelings about suicide linger for teens
- A suicide can also profoundly affect staff. Staff members will experience their own grief as well as the stress of responding to the emotional pain of students, parents, and other members of the community.

# What to Do: Using Social Media

- One school district in which a student died by suicide created a online young writer's page where students could express their feelings through poetry and other forms of writing as well as a Facebook page that students could use to express their feelings about the suicide. The school monitored these two social media channels and reached out to students they thought needed help. The local funeral home also had an online condolence page that students used. Another district provided students with information, such as hotline numbers, that they could post on their Facebook pages.
- Schools may be inclined to try to shut down social media communications before they can do harm, but this would be virtually impossible to control and is not advised. Instead, social media should be seen as an opportunity to engage students, parents, and school staff in a more constructive, prevention-oriented dialogue after a suicide. While these communications generally take place outside of school, they can play an essential role in a school's response after a student's suicide.

# Social Media

- Schools and parents need to be aware of the social media students are using to determine when and how to enter conversations related to a student's death. Again, schools and parents are encouraged to take advantage of opportunities to engage students in promoting messages that emphasize prevention
- The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline has developed an online postvention manual, which details how to find social media profiles or groups, post resources on these profiles, and outreach to parents. It also includes some case examples and resource links

# General Warning Signs of Suicide

- Threatening to hurt or kill oneself or talking about wanting to hurt or kill oneself.
- Looking for ways to kill oneself by seeking access to guns, pills or other means.
- Talking or writing about death, dying or suicide when these actions are out of ordinary for the person.
- Feeling hopeless.
- Feeling rage or uncontrolled anger or feeling a need to seek revenge.
- Acting reckless or engaging in risky activities, seemingly without thinking.
- Feeling trapped, or like there's no way out of a situation.
- Increasing alcohol or drug use.
- Withdrawing from friends, family and society.
- Feeling anxious, agitated or unable to sleep. Or, conversely, sleeping all the time.
- Experiencing dramatic mood changes.
- Seeing no reason for living or having no sense of purpose of life.

# What to do next/Resources

- Connect to local resources for help

- Let your kids know about online resources:

<http://www.reachout.com>

<http://www.halfopus.com>

<http://mindyourmind.ca>

<http://www.lifeline-gallery.org>

- 1-800-273-Talk (8255), Press 1 for Veterans

- SUICIDE IS PREVENTABLE IN YOUR COMMUNITY!

