



FACTS ON SUICIDE

Copy each item onto an index card.

- Teenage suicide is preventable. When a person is depressed, they are NOT thinking, feeling, or acting the way they normally do. We must get them help, to get them back on track. We must learn what the warning signs are and who is at higher risk.
- Among young people aged 15-24, suicide is the 3rd leading cause of death, behind accidents and homicide. The number has tripled in recent years.
- Every day in the U.S., approximately 14 young people between the ages of 15-24 die at their own hands. That's one suicide every 1 hour and 40 minutes.

MYTHS OF SUICIDE

Copy each item onto an index card.

- **Teenagers who talk about attempting suicide are doing it for attention.**
True, and they NEED the attention. There is something going on that's causing them to feel this way. They need people to listen, and professionals to help them.
- **All teenagers who are suicidal are depressed.**
This statement is true, but the reverse is not true, most people will experience times in their lives when they are depressed, but have no suicidal ideation.
- **Suicidal people really want to die, so there's no way to stop them.**
False. They are depressed and need help. With help, they can feel better and find other solutions.
- **Talking about suicide will cause a student to attempt suicide.**
False. It's just the opposite: not talking about it could escalate the problem. Even thinking about it makes the suicidal person feel worse. Talking will help bring understanding. Talking about it can relieve suicidal students and get them the help that's needed. Discussing the subject openly shows that you take the person seriously and that you care.
- **If a person really wants to kill himself or herself, no one has the right to stop him or her.**
False. We would help a person who was physically sick or injured; we need to help a person who is mentally ill.
- **Once a person is suicidal, they're suicidal forever.**
False. Teens who are suicidal can go on to lead useful lives, once they get help. Usually the suicidal feelings are for a limited period of time.
- **Improvement following a suicidal crisis means that the suicide risk is over.**

False. Most suicides occur within 3 months following the beginning of "improvement", when the teen has the energy to put their morbid thoughts and feelings into effect. Relatives and physicians should be especially vigilant during this period.

STUDENTS WHO ARE AT HIGHER RISK

Copy each item onto an index card.

- Teenagers who have attempted suicide previously, especially if problems and other recurring concerns were not completely resolved
- Teenagers with little self-esteem
- Teenagers in trouble with the law
- Teenagers who are suffering from depression
- Teenagers who have been abused, molested, or neglected
- Teenagers who abuse drugs and/or alcohol
- Teenagers who are perfectionists
- Teenagers who are struggling with sexual orientation (gays and lesbians)
- Teenagers who are in dysfunctional families
- Teenagers who fail in school-potential dropouts

WARNING SIGNS OF SUICIDE

Copy each item onto an index card.

- A recent suicide in the family or friend. Teens are especially vulnerable when a close family member or friend commits suicide. The grieving process and depression can interrupt normal thought processes.
- Trouble coping with recent losses, death, divorce, moving, break-ups, etc.
- Experience with a traumatic event. Sometimes a significant traumatic event can create feelings of hopelessness and despair.
- Making final arrangements, such as writing a will or eulogy, or taking care of details (i.e. closing a bank account).
- Gathering of lethal weapons (purchasing weapons, collecting pills, etc.).
- Giving away prized possessions such as clothes, CD's, sports equipment, treasured jewelry, etc.
- Preoccupation with death, such as death and/or 'dark' themes in writing, art, music lyrics, etc. Note that today's music has more of this and is not necessarily related to suicidal feelings.
- Sudden changes in personality or attitude, appearance, chemical use, or school behavior.

VERBAL SIGNS OF SUICIDE

Copy each item onto an index card.

- "I can't go on anymore"
- "I wish I was never born"
- "I wish I were dead"
- "I won't need this anymore"
- "My parents won't have to worry about me anymore"
- "Everyone would be better off if I was dead"
- "Life sucks. Nobody cares if I live or die"

WHAT'S GOING ON? - LATOSHA'S STORY

Latosha was a 15-year-old girl who lived in the Midwest.

Her parents had recently divorced, which forced her to move to a new community of 3,000 people. She hated the small town atmosphere, and didn't make any new friends. Her sister Tiffany, her 'only' friend, was going away to college in the fall, which made her feel even worse.

Latosha was having trouble sleeping, her grades were falling, and she was crying almost everyday. She tried to tell her dad and new stepmom that she was feeling terrible, but they said that things would get better if she would just give it some time.

She gave her sister her birthstone ring, and said she wouldn't need it anymore.

WHAT'S GOING ON? - LATOSHA'S STORY - ANSWERS

At-Risk Group:

- Teen suffering from depression
- Teen who is failing in school

Warning Signs:

- Recent losses: moving and sister leaving
- Gives away prized possession (ring)
- Can't sleep, crying alot

Verbal Warning:

- "I won't need this ring anymore"

WHAT'S GOING ON? - HALEY'S STORY

Haley was sixteen and had been dealing with depression since she was 12 years old. She never felt 'quite right' in middle school, feeling like she didn't fit in. She started using alcohol on a regular basis, and then marijuana.

Most of her old friends didn't do this, so she started hanging around with a different group of teenagers. She put herself at risk by having unprotected sex with friends in the group. Since school didn't seem important anymore, she started skipping classes.

She was sinking lower and lower, and thinking that it was not going to get any better. She told her mom that she accidentally threw away her prescription anti-depressant drugs, and needed a new bottle. Her mom got the bottle refilled.

She told her friends that "life wasn't worth living," and said she was going to run away the next weekend. Thinking she wasn't going to be home, her friends didn't call on Friday or Saturday. Her parents found her dead from an pill overdose, Saturday night in the park, after a long search.

WHAT'S GOING ON? - HALEY'S STORY - ANSWERS

At-Risk Group:

- Teen suffering from depression
- Teen with little self-esteem (risky sexual behavior)
- Teen who abuses drugs

Warning Signs:

- Changes in chemical use and school behavior
- Gathering of weapons (pills)

Verbal Warning:

- "Life isn't worth living."

WHAT'S GOING ON? - RYAN'S STORY

Ryan was an 17-year-old who seemed to "have it all." He was popular at school, had lots of friends, and his grades were always straight "A". He was a member of the soccer and golf teamS, and president of a school club. He strived to be the very best that he could, since his father had died and he wanted to be a good example for his younger siblings.

He filled out many college applications, but because of a poor SAT score, just couldn't seem to get admitted to the top colleges. His family thought that he should study harder and retake the test. Ryan started to feel very anxious, sad, and desperate. He told his brother and sisters that "it just wasn't worth it

anymore" and went for a drive. His pickup was found, totalled. He had been thrown 50 feet and died instantly of a broken neck.

The officer brought up the fact that it didn't look like an accidental death. His mother denied that it was a suicide, insisting that her son had everything to live for, and probably just fell asleep.

WHAT'S GOING ON? - RYAN'S STORY - ANSWERS

At-Risk Group:

- Perfectionist

Warning Signs:

- Recent loss (father)
- Depression (sad, anxious, desperate)
- Change in behavior (recklessness)
- Traumatic event

Verbal Warning:

- "It just isn't worth it."

WHAT'S GOING ON? - PETER'S STORY

Peter, 16 years old, never did very well at school. In fact, he was barely passing. But he was a very talented musician, and wrote many songs about death and the life hereafter. He changed his appearance, colored his hair, and experimented a little with drugs.

During his 9th grade year, he realized that his feelings about his friends were different. He felt an attraction to his male friends, but never addressed the feelings. He knew that they wouldn't understand, and the worst thing in the world would be to be called a "fag."

He started to use heavier drugs to help him handle the feelings. He bought a gun from one of his new friends. He wrote his last song, "I Found The Way," after a long night of drinking. His dad found the lyrics and gun beside him, as he lay in a pool of blood.

WHAT'S GOING ON? - PETER'S STORY - ANSWERS

At-Risk Group:

- Teen who fails in school

- Teen struggling with sexual orientation

Warning Signs:

- Change in appearance
- Change in chemical use
- Preoccupation with death
- Gathering of weapons

(Keep Scrolling Down)

Depression: On The Edge

Red Alert: Knowing the difference between the daily turmoil of growing up and the darkness of diagnosable depression may mean the difference between life and death. Left untreated, depression can lead to and be the underlying cause of eating disorders, substance abuse, sleep disorders, headaches, and even result in suicide – which is now approaching the second leading cause of adolescent death. Did you know that approximately 14 teens die at their own hands daily, adding up to 5,000 reported teen suicides annually? It's estimated that the correct statistic is actually three to four times that number when unreported and "suicide equivalent" deaths are added. Between 250,000 and 500,000 teens attempt suicide every year. [\[Current stats about teen depression and suicide\]](#)



"Depression: On the Edge" is co-hosted by Third Eye Blind and funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. It addresses teen angst-from normal "blues" to clinical depression to suicide-and shows how and where you can get help if you need it. [\[Get and give advice\]](#)

In "On the Edge," the members of Third Eye Blind reveal the meaning behind their hit song "Jumper" and openly discuss how they individually handle depression. Then, **In the Mix** meets three teens who are battling depression, and learns about the painful feelings they experience, plus some tactics that have helped them win the battle. Dr. Belisa Lazano-Vranich, from the National Mental Health Association, shows us how to identify symptoms of depression in ourselves and others, outlining the important distinction between natural "blues" and diagnosable depression. She also clarifies the most common causes of the illness and provides practical, concrete ways to fight it. [\[More from Dr. Vranich\]](#)



In the Mix also visits small town life in Pierre, South Dakota-a city of only 13,000 but a place with the highest per capita rate of teen suicide in the United States. In the past three years, Pierre has been bombarded with a series of teen suicides. Why, in such a safe, sheltered community, are teens taking their own lives? Teens in Pierre talk frankly about living in a small town and speculate on the reasons for such shocking statistics. [\[Take our poll on suicide\]](#) We then take an intimate look into the life on one Pierre teen who is coping with the loss of her brother to suicide.



Through the Yellow Ribbon Campaign, a grassroots intervention program, teen activists in Pierre use theater as a method of prevention in their community. Through tragedy, this one town has pulled together to confront and deal with teen depression and suicide to prevent more teens from taking their lives. The teens of Pierre also give voice to universal pressures and issues teen face, which can lead to depression, and offer solutions for preventing an escalating problem. [\[How do you feel about depression and suicide?\]](#)



"On the Edge" stresses early identification and treatment as your best weapon in the fight against the national epidemic of teen depression and suicide. We also aim to break down the social stigma of depression that leads many teens to deny and hide the problem. By speaking candidly and personally, "On the Edge" shows young people that the sooner they learn the facts, the sooner they can help themselves and their peers. [\[Great resources\]](#) [\[Get help 24/7\]](#)

"Depression: On the Edge" is regularly re-broadcast on PBS affiliates across the country. Please check our [schedule](#) and [station list](#) for airtimes.