

STEP 3: Connect to Resources

To find mental health help in your local area, caregivers can turn to a number of sources for assistance, including:

- Local crisis and information hotlines
- NY State's mental health program directory <https://my.omh.ny.gov/bi/pd/saw.dll?PortalPages>
- Community mental health organizations
- The Behavioral Health Treatment Services Locator, <https://findtreatment.samhsa.gov/> an online directory of mental health services across the U.S.
- Your health insurance provider
- In emergency situations, call 988 or take the youth to an emergency room or walk-in clinic.

Resources

Youth Suicide Warning Signs:

<https://www.youthsuicidewarningsigns.org/>

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration:

<https://www.samhsa.gov/tribal-ttac/resources/suicide-prevention>

National Alliance on Mental Illness:

<https://nami.org/your-journey/kids-teens-and-young-adults>

National Institute of Mental Health:

<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/child-and-adolescent-mental-health>

Suicide Prevention Resource Center:

<https://sprc.org/>

The Child Mind Institute

<https://childmind.org/article/youre-worried-suicide-prevention-institute>

Prevention Institute

<https://www.preventioninstitute.org/publications/preventing-trauma-and-youth-suicide-during-covid-19-beyond>

Jed Foundation

<https://jedfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Parent-Conversation-Guide-JED-2018.pdf>

Use this space to write down how you want to prepare for your conversation with a young person, contact information for resources, or any other information that will be helpful to have written down.

Use this space to identify a support person for yourself:



POWERED BY NYU MCSILVER

Community Technical Assistance Center of New York (CTAC)

Founded in 2011, CTAC is a part of New York University's McSilver Institute for Poverty Policy and Research.

CTAC is supported by the New York State Office of Mental Health.

Learn more at ctacny.org

Supporting a young person who may be considering suicide



Information for Parents & Caregivers



Children, adolescents and young adults face many transitions, like new responsibilities and independence, exploration of their identity, and changing social situations and relationships.

At the same time, a young person's brain has not fully developed the areas responsible for impulse control, decision making, and emotional regulation. **This set of stressors puts youth at greater risk for attempting suicide.**

These steps may help support you and a young person considering suicide:

STEP 1: Know the Signs

Some behaviors may indicate that a young person is at increased risk. Warning signs to watch for include:

- Talking about wanting to die or kill oneself
- Researching suicide methods, such as searching online or obtaining a gun
- Talking about feeling hopeless or having no reason to live
- Talking about feeling trapped or in unbearable pain
- Sudden changes in mood
- Behaving recklessly / acting out
- Withdrawing or feeling isolated
- Talking about being a burden to others
- Increasing the use of alcohol or drugs
- Changes in sleep (too little or too much)
- Increased anger or hostility
- Suicide notes, plans, or online postings
- Giving away prized possessions



Young people constantly grow and change, so it can be hard to tell the difference between typical behaviors and something to worry about.

Always talk to your young person about what is going on in their life. **Opening the door for conversations about mental health builds trust and shows a youth that you are a safe person to talk to, whether or not they are in a crisis.**

STEP 2: Have the Conversation

Learning that a young person we love is suicidal is upsetting and requires communication!

DO...

Take threats seriously.

Be sure to follow through with getting support for the young person, even after they calm down or says they "didn't mean it."

Remain calm in the discussion.

A conversation will work best when you use a soft, calm voice and talk with intention. Find a space where you can talk openly and easily, without interruptions or time limits. Do this when both you and the youth are calm and present.

Share with the young person what you've observed and that you are concerned.

Try to start by sharing what has you concerned, without giving a long list of issues. For example:

- ▶ *"I've noticed that you've been in your room alone a lot lately. Is everything okay?"*

Ask explicitly about suicide.

Though some caregivers are afraid to ask directly about suicide, asking does not increase a young person's risk. Youth may even feel relief knowing that it is okay to talk about their feelings. Direct questions might include:

- ▶ *"Do you ever wish you could go to sleep and never wake up?"*
- ▶ *"Are you thinking about killing yourself?"*
- ▶ *"Are you thinking about harming yourself?"*

Let the young person know what they're feeling is okay and express empathy.

Let the young person know that many people think about suicide, and it's ok to share their feelings. If you don't know what to say, acknowledge their emotions and express empathy. For example:

- ▶ *"It sounds like you are feeling really confused. I'm so sorry you are going through this."*

DO...

Find out if they've made a plan.

People who have made a plan are at greater risk of attempting suicide. Ask the young person directly:

- ▶ *"Have you thought about how or when you would kill yourself?"*
- ▶ *"Have you taken any steps to get the things you would need to carry out your plan?"*

DON'T...

Jump to giving advice or fixing problems.

Jumping to solutions may unintentionally communicate that you aren't able to be there for a youth, or may invalidate their experience by trying to make their problems seem manageable.

Be judgemental or react by being shocked, angry, or disappointed.

It is important to keep your own reactions and judgements in check, even if the youth shares feelings, thoughts or experiences that you may not agree with.

Minimize or dismiss their feelings or experiences.

Some things a youth may be upset by may not feel like a big deal to you. Feeling socially or romantically rejected, conflict with friends, or school worries may seem trivial to an adult, but to a young person these issues are often very distressing.

Whatever the circumstances, validate their emotions. Avoid saying things like *"It's not that big of a deal,"* or *"Don't be upset."* These will make the youth feel like you don't understand and can shut them down.

Give up after one try.

Communication between caregivers and youth can be hard, and it's common for young people to isolate from the adults in their lives. Even if a youth says they don't want to talk, or that nothing is wrong, keep checking in, if only to show them that you are there, and are concerned for their welfare.

Wait to get help.

If you suspect that a youth is in imminent danger, get help immediately. Do not wait until things "blow over."