

Parent Forum

May 17, 2017

BERNARDS TOWNSHIP PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**UNDERSTANDING LOSS AND
UNDERSTANDING YOUTH SUICIDE**

TONIGHT'S GOALS

1. Increase understanding of:
 - Youth reactions to loss
 - Problem of youth suicide
 - Suicide risk factors
 - Suicide Warning Signs
 - Treatment and prevention of suicidal behavior in adolescents
2. Increase knowledge of warning signs of youth suicide so those who work with teens are better prepared to identify and refer at-risk students

CORE PRINCIPLES

- ✘ Suicide is a **public health** problem.
- ✘ Helping survivors **deal with the loss and grief in an appropriate way** is important for everyone.
- ✘ Taking **the right action** after a suicide can be prevention for future suicides.

CORE PRINCIPLES

- ✘ **Suicide prevention extends far beyond youth, into the entire lifespan.**
- ✘ **Education and linkage** between individuals and systems will help in post-vention and prevention efforts.

THE IMPLICATIONS OF NOT ADDRESSING SUICIDE



- ✘ Survivors of suicide loss feel isolated, blamed.
- ✘ People who were impacted may not seek help and counseling that would be beneficial.
- ✘ People who are vulnerable may be at greater risk.
- ✘ Facts may be replaced by rumor and speculation.
- ✘ The stigma of suicide reinforces the silence around suicide.

Positive Action: Acknowledging that the death is a suicide promotes healing and minimizes risk.

RISK FACTORS FOR SUICIDE

- ❖ **Mental health problems**, including depression, bipolar disorder, and anxiety disorders
- ❖ **Alcohol and other substance use problems**
- ❖ **Loss**
- ❖ **Poor impulse control**
- ❖ **Feelings of hopelessness, helplessness, powerlessness, or desperation**
- ❖ **History of trauma or abuse** (e.g. physical, mental, or sexual)
- ❖ **Prior suicide attempt** (significantly increases risk)

PROTECTIVE FACTORS THAT MINIMIZE RISK

- ✘ Access to care for mental and physical health needs;
- ✘ Social integration and connections to social groups;
- ✘ Help seeking behavior/ advice seeking;
- ✘ Family cohesion;
- ✘ Lack of access to means (firearms, drugs, alcohol);
- ✘ Stability in home and personal life;
- ✘ Effective coping skills/self-care;
- ✘ Achievement and sense of accomplishment (academic, sports, clubs)

SUICIDE WARNING SIGNS

- Suicide **risk factors** endure over some period of time, while **warning signs** signal **imminent suicide risk**
- Clearest warning signs for suicide are behaviors that indicate the person is thinking about or planning for suicide, or is preoccupied or obsessed with death

WARNING SIGNS FOR SUICIDE:

- ❖ Feeling **hopeless**
- ❖ Feeling rage or **uncontrollable anger** or seeking revenge
- ❖ **Feeling trapped** – like there's no way out
- ❖ **Dramatic mood changes**
- ❖ **Seeing no reason for living** or having no sense of purpose in life

WARNING SIGNS FOR 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 firearms, available pills, or other means**
- ❖ **Talking or writing about death, dying, or suicide**
- ❖ **Increasing alcohol or drug use**
- ❖ **Feeling anxious or irritated; sleep disruptions**

TREATMENT

No single approach or medication works for all teens with a mental disorder; sometimes different ones need to be tried

- But, studies show that **80%** of depressed people can be effectively treated
- Mental disorders can recur, even if effectively treated at one point in time
- On-going monitoring by a mental health professional is advised

SCHOOL RESOURCES

When you are feeling concern for the wellbeing of your child, reach out to your school.

A partnership with the School Counselor/SAC, School Nurse, School Social Worker or School Psychologist can be very beneficial, and can help you address the concerns you are experiencing.

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

- 9-1-1 is always available in times of emergency
- Use of help lines can give youth an outlet to talk:
 - × **2nd Floor** **1-888-222-2228 (Talk and text)**
 - × **NJ Hopeline** **1-855-654-6735**
 - × **National Lifeline** **1-800-273-8255**

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

www.AFSP.org

You are not alone. There is always help available for you and for your family.