

Pacific Beach Middle School
Counseling Center



It is hard being a teenager. There are so many changes with school, friends, family, your body, your feelings it is almost impossible to think how one can deal with all these changes at one time. For some teenagers all of these things in addition to their own issues they are going through can just be too overwhelming.

Statistics:

- For every two homicides in the U.S. there are three suicides
- Every hour and forty five minutes another young person commits suicide
- Suicide is the second leading cause of death among college students and the third leading cause of death among youth overall (ages 15-24).
- Teen/Youth suicide rates have tripled since 1970.
- Evidence indicates that for every suicide, there are 50 to 100 attempts at suicide.

Warning Signs:

- The person actually talks about suicide
- Talks about feeling hopeless and/or worthless
- The person gives away important possessions
- The person seems to be getting his/her affairs in order
- Seems preoccupied with death
- No longer shows an interest in favorite things or activities
- Although the person has seemed sad, suddenly he/she is calm and happy
- The person is reckless, endangering his/her life and/or those of others
- The person has suffered a recent loss: employment, death, divorce, money, status

Risk Factors:

The person suffers from symptoms of **depression**: angry/sullen for continuous amount of time, changes in appetite, activity level, sleep pattern, loss of interest in fun activities, social withdrawal, and thoughts of death or punishment.

Substance Abuse: Some teens try to self-medicate with drugs and/or alcohol. These substances usually have more of a depressive effect, and can lower inhibitions.

Behavioral Problems: Those students who are getting into fights or are taking part in self-destructive behavior are also at risk for suicide.

Availability of a Gun: When the teen is having these impulsive thoughts, having a weapon to harm them available makes the thought more likely to actually become reality.

If the student has **previously attempted suicide** the chances they will try again are high.

If the student has experienced: **traumatic event, or has a family history of substance abuse, and depression**, the risk of suicide increases for the teen.

If the student does not have a support network, has poor relationships with parents or peers, and has feelings of social isolation

If the student is dealing with homosexuality in an unsupportive family or community, or hostile school environment

What can Parents do?

Suicide is preventable. If you are concerned that your child may be at risk of suicide:

- Ask your child if they are thinking about suicide
- Listen openly-without judgment
- Don't fear addressing the issue
- Believe what they say and take all threats seriously
- Never keep their feelings a secret-GET HELP
- Support your child; let them know you are there for them and that you love them and you will work through this together
- Remove all lethal weapons from your home: guns, pills, kitchen utensils, ropes

Who can help?

National Suicide Hotline: 1-800-SUICIDE (1-800-784-2433)

Covenant House: 1-800-999-9999

Crisis Hotline: 1-800-479-3339

Resources:

Focus Adolescent Services

<http://www.focusas.com/Suicide.html>

Yellow Ribbon Prevention Program

<http://www.yellowribbon.org/>

Kids Health

<http://kidshealth.org/parent/emotions/behavior/suicide.html>

Books:

One in Thirteen: The silent Epidemic of Teen Suicide. by Jessica Portner

The Hurried Child: Growing Up Too Fast Too Soon. by David Elkind

Red Flags and Permissive Parenting. By Dr.O'Connor