

NOT WORTH LIVING

1. What do you think of when you hear the word **suicide**?

2. What do you think makes life worth living?

3. Below are five things that might cause someone your age to take his or her life. **Circle** the one that you think is the most common. What is one way to handle each of these problems other than suicide?

- a. Going through parents' divorce
- b. Thinking no one cares
- c. Breaking up with someone
- d. Being abused by a parent
- e. Feeling worthless and unimportant
- f. Failing their classes
- g. Not knowing what to do after high school



4. Jason's parents got divorced when he was nine—now he's 16. He feels unloved and unwanted by both parents. He sent you an e-mail saying he "just can't take it" and wants to die. You've known Jason for two years, but had no idea he felt this depressed. What can you do?

- ☐ Take the e-mail to a school counselor.
- ☐ Talk to my parents or guardians about it.
- ☐ Talk to my youth pastor about it.
- ☐ Laugh it off.
- ☐ Tell myself he didn't mean it—he only wanted attention.
- ☐ Delete it and forget about it.
- ☐ Tell Jason's parents.
- ☐ Call the police.
- ☐ Talk to Jason about his feelings.
- ☐ Pray for someone else to help him.
- ☐ Other—

5. Read each of the Bible verses below, and complete the statements in your own words.

Psalm 23:4-6

When I feel down, **God can—**

Galatians 6:2

I have a **responsibility to—**

Hebrews 4:15-16

Christ understands how I feel because—

NOT WORTH LIVING [s u i c i d e]

THIS WEEK

Suicide is a real and serious issue in the lives of teenagers today. Suicide is one of the top five causes of death among teenagers and young adults. Now more than ever, we must address the issues that lead to suicide, such as depression and loneliness.

Be sure to monitor this discussion carefully—this is a heavy issue in the lives of some teenagers. Be sensitive to your group members and their responses to the discussion.

OPEN

Start by having your kids make a list, either as a group or individually, of issues that teenagers deal with that get them down. Prompt them by asking questions like—what stresses them out, what pressures they face, or what makes them want to give up. List these issues and talk about which ones are the most difficult to deal with. Why might some people want to end their lives for these issues? How would your kids deal with these issues? What makes their age feel that theirs no way out?

THE DISCUSSION, BY NUMBERS

1. Have your kids list their thoughts on the word suicide. You may want to list these on a whiteboard or poster board. Be extra sensitive to the fact that some of them may have known and loved a person who has committed suicide. Your kids may have many emotional responses—from guilt and self-blame, to anger and resentment. Take the time to talk about each of these reactions to suicide.
2. You'll be able to learn a great deal about each of your kids and their beliefs from their response. You may want to make another list of what makes life worth living. What makes their lives exciting? What do they think the purpose of life is?
3. Discuss these reasons for suicide and ask your kids share some alternatives for dealing with them. Have them evaluate if the alternatives are effective or practical. Why or why not? Point out that there are alternatives—wanting out or escaping a problem doesn't fix it. Challenge your kids to stop and think about the problem. Is it worth ending their life over?
4. Use this tension-getter to talk about ways Christians should respond to a hurting person. Some of your kids might have different reactions. You may want to have them share them. Emphasize that even Christians deal with thoughts of suicide—they are not above feeling helpless, out of control, and depressed.

5. Ask your kids to share their sentences. Stress that our responsibility as Christians is to support and encourage others—even those who aren't in our group of friends.

THE CLOSE

In your wrap-up, be careful not to gloss over any problems or issues that your kids are facing. Their problems, like your problems, bring worry and concern. Using Hebrews 4:15-16, point out that Christ understands our every problem. He was human and he felt the same emotions we feel—he knows how we feel. Challenge your kids to lay out their problems and ask Christ for peace and strength.

Point out again that everyone has feelings of worthlessness and frustration. Encourage them to find someone to vent to—either a parent, teacher, counselor, pastor, or you.

Close with some suggestions about recognizing someone who is seriously in danger of taking his or her own life. What are some signs that your kids can look for? Visit a few online organizations for more information—Suicide Voices Awareness of Education (www.save.org) and the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (www.afsp.org).

Finally, point out that depression and feelings of helplessness are not sinful. Depression is a clinically diagnosed disease that affects millions of adults and teenagers each year. Encourage them to talk with a trusted adult to find help. Visit the National Foundation For Depressive Illness, Inc. (www.depression.org) or find more information at www.depression.com.

MORE

- Ask your kids do some on-line research on suicide and depression. What can they find about teenage suicide, including causes and casualty rates among men and women? What are the types of depression, the causes of depression, and ways to cure depression?
- What do your kids hear or see in the media on depression and suicide? Maybe show a short clip of a TV show of a teenage problem and discuss ways to handle the problem. How does the media portray suicide and depression? What TV shows or movies have they seen that addresses these issues? What have they read or seen on the issues of suicide and how teenagers handle their struggles?