

## TEEN SUICIDE

### Facts:

- taking of the gift of life
- final- robs person of chance to make changes
- sharp increase among teen age group
- far more females attempt, more males carry out-males-75% of suicides

### Causes:

- bullying, peer cruelty
- breakup & instability of the family
- failure in eyes of parents
- drug & alcohol abuse
- mental disorders
- sexual abuse
- friends or family attempted or committed suicide
- society's glamorization of death
- recent painful life changes
- ongoing problems-parents,opposite sex,siblings,peers
- quick fix mentality
- breakdown of values especially respect for life
- LOSS-death,pride,opportunity, special relationship

### Myths & Facts:

- myth-those who talk about it never do it
- fact-nearly every suicide victim attempts to communicate their pain-80% give signs
- myth-those who commit suicide are mentally ill
- fact-vast majority are not, they are depressed
- myth-suicidal people are intent on dying
- fact-most are undecided, gamble on others saving them
- myth-once a person attempts suicide,shame&pain prevent further attempts
- fact-4 out of 5 suicides were preceded by earlier attempts
- myth-if a person looks happier, the danger is past
- fact-most suicides occur within 3 months of improvement
- myth-it's only a certain type of person who does it
- fact-suicide crosses all economic & social groups
- myth-once a person is suicidal, they'll always be
- fact-suicide is a time-limited state of mind
- myth-suicide runs in the family, it's unpreventable
- fact-it's individual, yet prior ones give permission
- myth-suicide happens with no warning
- fact-many clues are usually given

### Warning signs:

- suicide note
- depression & deep sense of hopelessness
- running away from home
- persistent boredom, passive apathetic behavior

- complaint about physical symptoms emotionally related-headaches, stomach aches,fatigue
- decline in school performance
- preoccupation with death themes
- radical personality & mood changes
- verbal expression of own death
- increased drug & alcohol abuse
- history of physical,emotional, mental or sexual abuse
- verbal clues & revealing statements-"I won't be a problem for you much longer". "it's no use", "nothing matters anymore"
- sudden interest in risk-taking & dangerous activity, reckless driving, owning, using weapons
- self mutilation
- anniversaries of traumatic events
- giving away or throwing out valued possessions
- making out a will
- increased irritability & behavior problems
- depression resulting from loss of important person or thing
- history of previous suicide attempts
- inattention to physical hygiene
- frequent sleeping disorders or complaints
- recent withdrawal from therapeutic treatment
- sudden lifting of severe depression
- rebelliousness, belligerence, violent aggressive activity
- excessive guilt
- loss of pleasure in life
- excessive fantasy life
- compulsive behaviors
- loss of interest in previously enjoyed activities
- noticeable changes in sleep & appetite patterns
- increased social withdrawal
- less interest in,loss of, or lack of friends
- history of disabilities & failure
- fear of separation
- inability to concentrate

#### How to help:

- don't act as though it isn't serious
- don't promise to not tell anybody. Confidentiality is sacred, except for when someone's life is in danger. They do not have the right to ask you to promise not to reveal their suicide plan
- active listen-show you care & are concerned
- emphasize temporary nature of most problems suicide is a permanent solution to a temporary problem
- to determine degree of risk ask direct questions "do you have a plan?"

- do not leave them without a promise from them that they will not take their life before speaking with you or someone else. if they will not promise- get help immediately
- if you feel their life is at stake don't promise to keep the conversation a secret
- reassure them that suicidal thoughts are not abnormal, merely unhelpful- many teens think about it
- define & clarify problems & solutions
- remember you don't have to have all the answers
- avoid provoking further guilt
- contact police, professional assistance or responsible adult if immediate danger & remove all lethal objects
- help them arrive at plan of action to solve problem
- stay calm & understanding
- avoid minimizing the situation
- encourage the sharing of feelings
- do not promise
- emphasize better alternatives to suicide
- make sure the problem will truly be solved
- set up a future meeting to evaluate progress
- call nat. teen suicide hot line 800-621-4000 or a local support person
- pray for & with your friend