

TEEN SUICIDE

facts:

- taking of the gift of life
- final- robs person of chance to make changes
- sharp increase among teen age group-6000 a yr.- yet more old people do commit suicide
- far more females attempt, more males carry out-males-75% of suicides
- whites have twice as many as blacks

causes:

- 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 rel.

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",
- sudden interest in risk-taking & dangerous activity-wreckless 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
- active listen-show you care & are concerned
- emphasize temporary nature of most problems suicide is a permanent solution to a short-term problem
- to determine degree of risk ask direct questions - "do you have a plan?"
- 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- 75% of all 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
- get them to promise to not commit suicide
- stay calm & understanding
- avoid minimizing the situation
- encourage the sharing of feelings
- 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

