

Guidance For Youth

Suicide is the second leading cause of death for young people between the ages of 10 and 24. If you're worried about yourself, or worried about a friend or loved one, we hear you. You matter, and there is help. First, a few things to know about suicide and self-harm or self-injurious behaviors.

We know that the majority of people who struggle with thoughts of suicide and even suicide attempts survive. People can get through these crisis moments and get better. They can go on to live a normal, happy life. The outcome of suicide from season 1 when Hannah has died by suicide does not have to be your outcome.

We know that sometimes a family history of mental illness and/or suicide, combined with life's stressors and our normal coping skills breaking down can lead to a tragedy. Too much of any or all of this without help or a break from the pain can lead some people to feel beyond sad, they can become seriously depressed, hopeless and at times suicidal. Sometimes there are other illnesses that contribute to someone becoming suicidal, such as bipolar disorder, anxiety, schizophrenia and/or substance abuse. The good news is that if we can see the symptoms of these illnesses early and get someone to help, we can often prevent a suicide.



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Following are some tips that will help you or that can help a friend who might be dealing with the issues some of the cast in 13 Reasons Why were dealing with.

Talking About Suicide

It all starts though with a conversation. Talking about mental health, mental illness, and suicide are not a bad thing. In fact, we want you to know that it is ok and good to do it, especially if you are suffering or if you are worried about someone who might be struggling. Asking them "Are you doing ok? I am worried about you" can make all the difference in the world to them. And if you are hurting, tell someone you trust "I'm not sure what is going on for me, but something isn't right. I don't feel like myself. I am hurting."

How to Take Care of Yourself

Anyone can feel like they're struggling and we all go through crises in our lives. You are not weak, and you are not alone. If you're feeling hopeless, trapped, or in pain, there are ways to help you cope, survive and recover!

Speak to an adult you trust. You don't have to deal with crisis on your own. Whether by going to a teacher, counselor, family member, faith leader, or mental health professional, speaking to someone about what you're going through can help you feel better and help you find new ways to cope. Be honest and tell them everything. Even though that can be scary and hard at times, it is really important that you are totally honest with them about what's been going on for you.

Make a safety plan. During moments of crisis it can be difficult to think clearly. A safety plan gives you clear steps to follow that will guide you through a crisis, get help, and feel safer. You can [write a plan by hand using this template](#), or [download the MY3 app](#). A safety plan is a good tool that can be shared with others so that they too can help you when things are really difficult.

Contact a crisis line. If you would like immediate emotional support or have questions about how to find resources, there are national hotlines and support lines that you can call for help. You can connect with a trained crisis worker who will listen to your problems, understand how your problems are affecting you, provide support, and provide resources.

- [Befrienders.org](#)
- [International list of crisis centers](#)

How to Help Others

It can be frightening when a friend or loved one is in crisis or thinking about suicide. If someone you know is struggling emotionally or having a hard time, you can be the difference in getting them the help they need. You can be their lifeline.

It's hard to know how a suicidal crisis feels and how to act. Some warning signs may help you determine if a loved one or friend is at risk for suicide, especially if the behavior is new, has increased, or seems related to a painful event, loss or change. Not everyone shows warning signs. Youth warning signs include:

1. Talking about or making plans for suicide.
2. Expressing hopelessness about the future.
3. Displaying severe/overwhelming emotional pain or distress.
4. Showing worrisome behavioral cues or marked changes in behavior, particularly in the presence of the warning signs above. Specifically, this includes significant:
 - Withdrawal from or changing in social connections/situations, pulling away from peers and typical activities
 - Changes in sleep (increased or decreased)
 - Anger or hostility that seems out of character or out of context
 - Recent increased agitation or irritability
5. Engaging in self-harm behaviors such as cutting, burning, head-banging, etc. While some might say that they are hurting themselves and they are not trying to die, we know that when you are feeling well, really good, you aren't hurting yourself.
6. Some youth will remove their social media accounts or stop using them when before they did frequently. If you see this, check in with them and make sure they are doing ok.

Always take warning signs seriously, and never promise to a loved one's crisis a secret.

There are steps you can take to communicate with a friend or loved one that may be suicidal. If you're concerned about someone, call a suicide hotline or speak to a teacher or counselor. In addition to reaching out for help, there are ways you can support your loved one. These [#BeThe1To](#) steps can provide a guide for you if you are worried about someone.

1. **Ask "Are you thinking about suicide?"** Ask in a direct manner, and be open to a conversation. Be ready to take the answer seriously. Asking if someone is suicidal does not increase suicides or give someone the idea of suicide, in fact it can help save their life!
2. **Be There.** Take your friend or loved one's feelings seriously. Stay calm, listen without judgement, and accept their feelings without debating whether those feelings are right or wrong. Listen to any and all reasons your friend or loved one shares for being in pain, as well as reasons they want to stay alive. Help them focus on their reasons for living. Do not promise to keep their feelings a secret, you can't, because it could be a life threatening emergency for your friend. It is better to lose a friendship than to go to their funeral. Be there and tell them you want to help get them to the help they need.
3. **Help Them Connect.** Help your friend or loved one connect with additional support like a teacher, counselor, family member, mental health professional, or a hotline. This can help create a safety net for a suicidal person and ensures you are not their only source of support. Help them develop a list of people they can contact when they are in crisis, other friends and people in your area.
4. **Follow Up.** After you have had your conversation, listened without judgement, and helped them connect to resources and trusted adults, make sure to follow up with your friend to see how they're doing in the days and weeks following a crisis. We know that continually checking in with someone who has been through a recent crisis can make a big difference in their recovery. You can leave them a message, send a text, or give them a call. You can also check in with them using social media to see how they are doing and letting them know that you care. Keep checking in with them to see how they're doing, and if there's anything else they might need, for at least a few weeks after the crisis has passed.
5. **Practice self-care.** It's important to take care of yourself when you are supporting someone through a difficult time, as this may stir up difficult emotions for you. If it does, please reach out for support yourself. Reach out and talk to someone that you trust; get the support that you need and make sure to take time for yourself!

School Shootings and Violence

Although school shootings can and do happen, it's important to remember that they are extremely rare and schools are safe places. Fortunately, most youth will never have to experience the horror of being at a school where a shooting takes place. That doesn't mean, however, that youth are not exposed to school shootings or school violence, because through the news and social media, most youth do hear about these tragic incidents and for some they end up feeling very afraid that it could occur at their school too.

If you think a classmate or someone you know through social media may have plans to carry out a violent act at your school or another school, talk to a trusted adult right away. Do not think twice about it and if you see something, say something! You could save many lives.

It's important to share concerns with teachers or your parents about anything that makes you feel unsafe at school. Whatever the issue is, they can help you figure out a solution because all students have a right to feel safe at school. You can have a role in preventing a disaster from happening in your school. Here are a few things to remember:

- Do your part for school safety by not giving access to a school to strangers.
- Reporting strangers on your school campus to adults.
- Reporting all threats that you know about made by students or community members in person, through friends or that you see on social media, and communicate any personal safety concerns to school administrators right away.

If any form of violence is occurring at your school, be sure to talk about it with your parents or a trusted adult. Other violence that happens, as was seen in 13RW includes bullying, harassment, physical violence and rape. All of these are serious issues that must be handled by adults, so you should not feel obligated to try and resolve these on your own. If you have been a victim of any forms of violence or are afraid that you might be, or if you know someone else that has been a victim, the time to do something about it is right now. You need to get the help and protection that you deserve, and you can be part of helping protect others from also becoming victims of violence.

Be a role model and let others know that you will stand up to violence in your school and community. When you hear other kids, even if they are your friends, joking about being violent or making a joke out of what happened at other schools:

- Let them know that you don't think violence is funny or a joke
- Remind them that people were hurt and killed because of school violence and mass shootings, people died and you want no part of that.
- Tell them that you are sure their parents would be devastated if something tragic happened to them, and the families that lost their child(ren) to school shootings have live without them forever.
- Walk away and tell them that you don't want to have anything to do with someone who has thoughts about being violent or makes fun of situations where people died.
- Make sure you tell an adult (parent, teacher, school safety officer) if someone is planning a violent act.

Substance Abuse

Drugs and alcohol are bad for you, and most are also against the law completely or illegal to use for anyone under the legal age of consumption. Be smart and just say no if someone offers you drugs or alcohol. Even experimenting can be risky, so walk away and tell them that you don't want to be part of that crowd. Say "My life and my future are too important to me. I don't want to ruin it for a few minutes of an artificial high." Even if you are at a party where everyone else might be drinking alcohol, be smart and avoid the temptation. It could save your life.

Drugs and alcohol will not solve your problems. If you are struggling and need help, don't be afraid to reach out to a friend or trusted adult. There are negative consequences of using drugs including losing your friends, getting kicked out of your favorite sport or activity, getting in serious trouble with the law, possibly hurting someone else, disappointing your parents, and even the possibility of death. If you are worried about your own substance use or that of a friend, reach out to a counselor to begin the process of recovery.

Addiction is a real disease. Young people can become addicted to alcohol, illegal drugs, prescription drugs and even over-the-counter medications. Most people do not see the slide that is happening to them after they begin using drugs. It is often not until negative consequences start happening that others realize there is a problem and the person that is using sees it. Negative consequences can include (but aren't limited to) academic problems, work problems, relationship problems, financial or legal problems. Without intervention and professional help, addiction can become life threatening to the person using and it can become dangerous to others – think drunk driving, sexually assaulting someone when you are high, etc.

A note on opioid medications: just because a drug is legally prescribed does not mean that they are not dangerous! Many of you have probably heard about opioids which are prescription painkillers. They are highly addictive and when abused can be life threatening. It is illegal to use someone else's prescribed medications and it is illegal to sell, give away or distribute someone else's medications.

What to watch for: Most youth know if their friends are using drugs or alcohol and often you know if they are doing it too much. Ask yourself: are they lying about their use? Are they hiding their use even from friends? Are they taking risks to get drugs or get high? Have they changed from the way they used to be, the way that you once knew them? Are they hanging around a new group or a group that gets into trouble with authority or the law? Are they stealing? If yes to any of these, talk to someone you trust about your friend and do whatever you can to stay away from the negative behaviors. You can still remain their friend, you can still care about them, but stay away from getting involved in the things that they are doing around drugs and alcohol.

Resources

<https://kidshealth.org/en/kids/know-drugs.html>

<https://www.drinkaware.co.uk/advice/underage-drinking/understand-why-children-drink-alcohol/>

<https://talklife.co/>

[I'm concerned about someone who may have an alcohol or substance use problem](#)

Sexual Violence

Sexual violence refers to a sexual act committed against someone without that person's consent. This includes crimes like sexual assault, rape, and sexual abuse. It also includes sexual harassment and coercion. None of these are legal or appropriate behaviors for anyone to engage in and if this is your experience, we want you to know that there is help available to you and that it was not your fault!

Some instances of sexual violence appeared in 13 RW season 1 and we think it is important for you to know a little more about them so that you can protect yourself. This too is a difficult topic, and we want to be clear about what we are talking about, so we want to give you the best information possible about it. Let's start with some definitions according to Womenshealth.gov:

1. **Sexual assault** is any type of sexual activity or contact that you do not consent to. Sexual assault can happen through physical force or threats of force or if the attacker gave the victim drugs or alcohol as part of the assault. Sexual assault includes rape and sexual coercion
2. **Rape** is a type of sexual assault that includes sexual penetration, no matter how slight, without consent and whether or not you are under the influence of a mood altering drug.
3. **Sexual coercion** is unwanted sexual activity that happens when you are pressured, tricked, threatened, or forced in a nonphysical way. Coercion can make you think you owe sex to someone. No person is ever required to have sex with someone else. Sexual coercion is unwanted sexual activity that happens after being pressured in nonphysical ways that include:
 - Being worn down by someone who repeatedly asks for sex
 - Being lied to or being promised things that weren't true to trick you into having sex
 - Having someone threaten to end a relationship or spread rumors about you if you don't have sex with them
 - Having an authority figure pressure you into having sex

Consent

Giving your consent to one thing (for example kissing) does not mean that you give consent to anything else sexually or behaviorally. Giving consent is allowed differently depending on where you live and the ages set for allowing consent, as law vary on this issue. This video is a fun way to learn about consent: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fGoWlWS4-kU>.

In a [healthy relationship](#) you never have to have sexual contact when you don't want to. Sexual contact without your consent is assault. Sexual assault can happen with a stranger or with someone you know (for instance, a boyfriend or girlfriend). It can happen regardless of attraction or sexual orientation (LGBTQ or straight). It can occur in the context of other violence (physical assault or bullying), but also in the context of seemingly friendly or romantic interactions. Sexual coercion means feeling forced to have sexual contact with someone. If you are in any situation that includes any of these behaviors, getting away from that person as soon as possible is best. It is also important that you seek medical care as soon as possible. You can contact a national hotline, for example in the US you can call the National Sexual Assault Hotline (800-656-4673). You can also contact Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network ([RAINN](#)) or your local police can also tell you where to find a clinic in your area."

Bullying

Bullying is unwanted and aggressive behavior between one or more people that is repeated, occurs over time and causes physical and/or emotional harm. Bullying happens too frequently and to too many young people in the world. Bullying can cause short and long term effects on people and can result in serious consequences for the bully.

According to www.StopBullying.gov, the technical definition of bullying is: unwanted, aggressive behavior among school aged children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behavior is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, and can occur over time. Both kids who are bullied and who bully others may have serious, lasting problems.

In order to be considered bullying, the behavior must be aggressive and include:

- **An Imbalance of Power:** Kids who bully use their power—such as physical strength, access to embarrassing information, or popularity—to control or harm others. Power imbalances can change over time and in different situations, even if they involve the same people.
- **Repetition:** Bullying behaviors happen more than once or have the potential to happen more than once.

In 13 RW there were a number of people involved in bullying behaviors (physically, threatening, intimidating, etc.) and many hurt by them. Our goal here is to let you know that if you are being bullied, talk to someone about it. Find an adult that you trust, in or outside of your school, and tell them what has happened to you. It might be scary to do so, and you might feel like you are "telling on them," but the reality is that you are standing up for yourself against someone who needs an authority figure to hold them accountable and responsible for their actions. Tell them who did it, when it happened and what happened to you. Let someone else take it from there and then you can begin healing and taking care of yourself.

Cyberbullying is also a problem today that can cause short and long-term effects on people. Cyberbullying can include any type of threats of physical, emotional harm or verbal (in written words), sexting and sextortion, harassment and intimidation. To protect yourself, be careful about who you accept in your networks, who you share contact information with, and very cautious about what you send on your phone. A great resource for learning about cyberbullying and how to protect yourself can be found at: <https://cyberbullying.org>.

Get Help

- National Suicide Prevention Hotline, 1-800-273-TALK (8255) or chat at suicidepreventionlifeline.org (USA)
- [Crisis Text Line](#): text "START" to 741741 (USA)
- [SAMHSA Behavioral Health Treatment Services Locator](#)
- [SAMHSA Prevention Suicide: A Toolkit for High Schools](#)

- [Suicide Prevention Resource Center, After a Suicide: Toolkit for Schools](#)
- [School Violence Prevention](#)
- ["13 Reasons Why" Netflix Series\(Season 1\): Considerations for Educators and Families](#)
- [bethe1to.com](#) for five steps you can take to help someone in your life that might be in crisis
- [www.jedfoundation.org/help](#)
- [The Samaritans \(UK and Ireland\)](#) 116 123

Additional Resources

- <https://parents.au.reachout.com/>
- National Association of School Psychologists, [www.nasponline.org](#)
- Suicide Awareness Voices of Education, [www.save.org](#)
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, [suicidepreventionlifeline.org](#)
- American Association of Suicidology, [www.suicidology.org](#)
- [Stopbullying.gov](#)
- Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network, [www.rainn.org](#)
- Take 5 to Save Lives, [www.take5tosavelives.org](#)
- [13reasonswhy.info/](#)
- [The Trevor Project](#)
- [www.yourmentalhealth.ie](#)