

TEENAGE CRISIS AND INTERVENTION

Teenagers are in a state of flux. They are trying to free the mould from childhood to adulthood. This transition period is exciting but also scary at times. New friends, new things to experiment and new emotions with a surge of hormones come in.

Teenagers often face various stressful issues and one of the most disturbing ones is suicidal thoughts. The most **common warning signs are:**

- Threatening to hurt or kill oneself or talking about wanting to hurt or kill oneself
- Change in sleep and appetite
- Talking or writing about death, dying, or suicide when these actions are out of the ordinary for the person
- Feeling hopeless, helpless and worthless
- Feeling rage or uncontrolled anger or seeking revenge
- Acting reckless or engaging in risky activities—seemingly without thinking
- slipping grades or marks with loss of concentration
- Increasing alcohol or drug use
- Withdrawing from friends, family, and society
- Feeling anxious or agitated
- Experiencing dramatic mood changes

Prevention steps:

- Be aware. Listen to them and learn the warning signs.
- Get involved. Become available. Show interest and support.
- Be willing to listen. Allow them to talk openly about their feelings.
- Be non-judgmental. Don't debate whether suicide is right or wrong, or feelings are good or bad. Don't lecture on the value of life.
- Don't dare him/her to do it.
- Don't give advice by making decisions for someone else to tell them to behave differently.
- Offer empathy and hope
- Don't be sworn to secrecy. Secrets can be deadly.
- **Get help** from individuals or agencies specializing in crisis intervention and suicide prevention.

Show you care

- We all go through tough times. Sometimes people see asking for help as a sign of weakness so you can comfort them by giving them an example of a time you or someone you know struggled and needed support.
- You can feel better. They may feel hopeless or like no one can understand or help them, so it's important to make them see that reaching out for support is the first step to feeling better.
- Mental health problems are treatable and manageable once identified, so sometimes we need a mental check-up in the same way we get other medical exams.
- It's OK to ask for help.

What NOT to do

- Enable them by covering up for missed obligations
- Continue to participate with them in behaviors (like drinking) that are agitating their mental health
- Withdraw when they seek professional help
- Not informing their loved ones or family because they have sworn you to secrecy

Taking on the burden of a loved one in emotional distress can be extremely stressful and draining so remember to recognize your limits and take care of your own emotional health.

TALK TO SOMEONE – YOU ARE NOT ALONE

There are more than 30000 suicides in India and thousands of attempts by helpless teenagers. A young life is a terrible thing to lose. Know the signs and you could save a life or seek help yourself.

Remember, it's acceptable to seek professional help to aid you in coping better for the future.

People to contact:

- *School counsellor*
- *Psychiatrist*
- *Psychologist/therapist*

For further guidance and appointments, contact:

Dr Parul Tank – Consultant psychiatrist and therapist