
Some things you need to know about young people

- Myth:** If a suicidal youth tells a friend, the friend will tell an adult.
Fact: Most suicidal young people do not tell an adult.

Good Friends Don't Keep Deadly Secrets

Warning signs to look for in young people:

- Change in interaction with family and friends
- Recent disappointment or rejection
- Sudden decline or improvement in academic performance
- Physical symptoms: eating disturbances, changes in sleep patterns, chronic headaches, stomach problems, menstrual irregularities
- Increased apathy
- Being expelled from school /fired from job
- Family problems/alienation
- Feeling embarrassed or humiliated in front of peers
- Victim of assault or bullying

Some things you need to know about suicidal young people:

1. Many young people are reluctant to seek or accept help for any problem, including suicide. This seems to be especially true for males. Part of this may be due to the fact that males often feel less comfortable than females in talking about their problems or feelings. Therefore, if you are at all suspicious that a teenaged boy or young man may be suicidal, be bold and persistent in your efforts to be helpful.
2. In general, boys and young men are less likely to recognize their own symptoms of depression or to seek treatment when they feel bad. Instead, they often drink heavily or use drugs to try to feel better. Boys also tend to use firearms or other highly lethal means to kill themselves.
3. While girls and young women are almost twice as likely to suffer from depression, their depressive illness may be less impulsive and violent than depression in boys. Perhaps as a result, boys complete suicide much more frequently than girls.
4. Lastly, adolescent boys and young men are more likely than girls to have experienced a crisis sometime in the 24 hours prior to a suicide attempt (especially in relation to break-ups with girlfriends, disciplinary problems, legal crises or humiliating events).

Because young people of both sexes may not be getting treatment for depression, and may abuse drugs and alcohol and act impulsively on suicidal thoughts and feelings, it

is critical that QPR be applied *quickly* when suicide warning signs are seen or suicidal communications intercepted. Remember, if you can't ask the suicide question, find someone who can.

Sources:

Centers for Disease Control, Atlanta, Georgia, USA

Dr. Silvia Sara Canetto, "*Meanings of gender and suicidal behavior during adolescence*", *Journal of Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior*, Winter, 1997, 27(4):339-351

Dr. Kay Redfield-Jamison in her book, *Night Falls Fast*, 1999

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