

Media and Schools Glamorizing Suicide

Suicide among teens is an epidemic in America. It is the third leading cause of death among our teens. Adolescents today are stressful because they face more problems than their parents faced when they were young.

The media and schools are helping glamorize this condition. For example, when a teen sees the attention given his deceased friend who has died as result of suicide, he feels suicide is a hero's way to die. He wants to become a hero. Some schools even declare a holiday in the deceased student's honor so their schoolmates can attend the funeral.

Oftentimes a teen will do anything to receive attention and that need for attention sometimes leads to suicide.

Teens also tend to live in fantasy worlds as they are involved in music, drugs, and fantasy role games. They don't often re-enter the real world. So when the media makes suicide sound sensational, they want to experiment with it also... with eternal consequences.

Warning signs of your teen thinking suicide might be something to "check in to" are: a preoccupation with death, giving away of their prize possessions, withdrawal of those to whom they are closest, or the suicide death of someone close to them.

There is no doubt, teens are experiencing a whirlwind of changes in their bodies, both physical and emotional. We need to be discerning of how they are handling their stress and seek help if the situation even seems off-balance to us.

Ten Suicide Warning Signs

Suicide is out of control in America. More teens are killing themselves today than ever. Parents and friends need to know the warning signs.

1. **Preoccupation with themes of death or expressing suicidal thoughts**
2. **Giving away prized possessions, making a will or other "final arrangements"**
3. **Changes in sleeping patterns. . . too much or too little sleep**
4. **Sudden and extreme changes in eating habits, losing or gaining weight**
5. **Withdrawal from friends and family and major behavioral changes**
6. **Changes in school performance, lowered grades, cutting classes, dropping out of activities**
7. **Personality changes such as nervousness, outbursts of anger or apathy about appearance and health**
8. **Use of drugs and/or alcohol**
9. **Recent suicide of friend or relative**
10. **Previous suicide attempts**

If you know someone who is exemplifying any of these patterns, seek help immediately.

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A TEEN QUEST POWER SHEET

TEENS AND SUICIDE

Some Myths of Suicide

Jerry Johnston shares some myths we believe concerning suicide in his book, *Why Suicide*,

Myth #1

People who talk about suicide won't really commit suicide.

Myth #2

Suicides usually happen without warning.

Myth #3

Suicidal people can't be talked out of it if they are really intent on dying.

Myth #4

An individual's improvement following a suicidal crisis means the suicide risk is over.

Myth #5

Suicide strikes more often among rich

Myth #6

Only mentally ill people commit suicide

These are myths. People who talk of committing suicide will do it. Many suicides happen with no warning. We need to realize that although someone has been talked out of committing suicide, the root problem has to also be dealt with that caused them to fall to that level in the first place. Suicide is a problem among the rich, famous, poor, young and old. A person is not necessarily mentally ill when he has given in to suicidal thoughts.

If you know someone who is very depressed and threatening suicide, lead them to someone who can help. It's serious and should not be taken lightly.

We, at Teen Quest, can direct you to the help that is needed. Call us at 1.800.288.8336

Helping a Suicidal Teen

Teenagers are especially vulnerable in our pressure oriented society. They are experiencing more societal stress than ever recorded in history. The stakes are high to be accepted into the college of their choice. Other choices that teens should not even be thinking about come their way daily. The media scares them as reports of the bad shape our world is in with no hope that there is a Sovereign God who is in control. They often reach the "end of their rope" and don't know how to handle what is happening as well as an adult might be able.

What can we do to help a teen who is stressed and maybe contemplating suicide? First, understand that a depressed teenager does not want to act the way he acts. He cannot control his emotions anymore than someone can walk a straight line after twirling in a tight circle for five minutes.

Stress and depression lead to extreme behavior. When a teen is depressed, he will turn to suicide as an escape. Not too long ago a young man attempted suicide while he was in an extreme depression. After a few days in the hospital, he died. What a tragedy! If someone has been there to understand him and listen, he might still be alive today.

Be willing to communicate. Communication is not necessarily talking to the person so much as listening, really listening to what they have to share. You don't need a degree in psychology to be a good listener.

What Books is Your Teen Reading?

A best selling author, Shel Silverstein, has infiltrated our schools during the last decade. You can find any of his books in our school libraries. His articles promote homosexuality, hatred of parents, suicide, and disrespect for family.

One poem Mr. Silverstein wrote: "Little Abigail and the Beautiful Pony", promotes suicide and disrespect for parents. Little Abigail wants a pony Her parents tell her, "No". They tell her she can have an ice cream cone when they return home. Little Abigail tells her parents she will die without a pony and she goes straight to bed. When they check on her, she has committed suicide.

Along with this poem there is a drawing of Little Abigail, dead and her remorseful parents standing nearby, saying, "Oh, what fools we were!" A note pinned over Little Abigail's bed has a picture of a pony and says, "The pony that they wouldn't buy me! Too late!" A caption to the right says, "This is a good poem to read to your folks if they won't buy you something you want."

This book has been a best seller. This is an example of what our children are exposed to in our libraries. Mr. Silverstein has many other books and has been a regular contributor to Play-boy magazine.

Check out what your children are reading. They could be receiving lessons in why suicide is a good thing.

Why Are So Many Teens Committing Suicide?

According to the National Prevention of Injury and Control statistics, five students successfully commit suicide each day in America. Suicide is now the third leading cause of death among teenagers ages 15 - 24 years old. Persons under the age of 25 accounted for 15% of all suicides in America in 2000. The rate of suicide among persons ages 15-19 years increased by 11% from 1980-1997. Among children, ages 10-14 years old, it grew by 109%.

Males are four times more likely to die from suicide than females. However, females are more likely to attempt suicide.

WHY? Stress, societal pressure, lack of family presence are a few factors leading teens to commit suicide.

Dr. Robert Rector states, "When compared to teens who are not sexually active, teenage boys and girls who are sexually active are significantly more likely to attempt suicide. It's not the sexual activity that is causing teens to commit suicide, but a symptom. Teenage promiscuity is on the rise. Teens are looking for love in relationships that are not God-ordained due to there is no longer a strong family presence. Very few family eat at least one meal together each day.

Thus, teens are not peered by their parents' aged wisdom but are alone in making decisions. They turn to their age group peers for answers. . . Often, the wrong answers. When They totally are despaired, suicide seems like a great idea to escape.