

**Psalm 34: 18**

THE LORD IS NEAR
TO THOSE WHO
HAVE A BROKEN
HEART, AND SAVES
SUCH AS HAVE A
CONTRITE SPIRIT.

He also brought me
out of a horrible pit,
out of the miry clay
and set my feet upon
a rock and
established my steps.

Psalm 40:2**Philippians 4:7**

And the peace of
God, which
surpasses all
understanding, will
guard your hearts
and minds through
Christ Jesus.

GROWING IN HIM COUNSELING

Suicide: A Hidden Struggle

**Fear not, for I am
with you; be not
dismayed for I am
your God. I will
strengthen you ,
Yes, I will help
you, I will uphold
you with my
righteous right
hand.**

-Isaiah 41: 10

Suicide is the #2 leading cause of death among teenagers in the United States and the rate continues to climb. Teenagers are under a great deal of stress due to social media, easy access to information, addictions to screens, fewer coping skills and a lack of knowledge on how to deal with disappointment or crisis.

On one hand, our society has trained our youth to utilize their technology over inter-personal relationships, as well as not giving them the tools to manage difficult situations. Additionally, youth frequently use suicide as a possible way to deal with any stress they feel. Peers will tell their friends that if something is going wrong, they should “just go kill themselves.” Some believe this to be a “joke” or just a “matter of speech,” however some have taken this advice seriously.

On the other hand, some of our teenagers are suffering from true depression and feel completely hopeless. Their emotional pain and anguish is so deep, they do not know how to escape. Lacking support and positive coping skills, they turn to anything to release the pain they feel and will sometimes end their lives.

What to do if someone you know is suicidal

The most important thing to do is to believe them. A threat of suicide is a cry for help, and it is important not to “blow it off” as simply attention seeking or not serious. If a person says they are suicidal, **ask them direct questions**. It used to be thought that asking direct questions would put ideas in a person’s head and was considered dangerous. After much research, it is now believed that if you ask a question and the other person was not thinking that way, they tend to simply tell you so. Instead, **ask if they have a plan to kill themselves, then ask if they have the means to carry out their plan**. If **both answers are “yes,” take them to the nearest emergency room or call 9-1-1**. Let them know you care about them and want them to be safe.

If the person is feeling suicidal but does not have a plan or the means to carry it out, then you can talk with them about what is causing their level of distress. Often times, people simply need someone to talk to and if they trust you and are willing to open up; listen without judgment or advice. Rarely is the situation one that can be “fixed,” thus you can just listen and try to understand where they are coming from. Finally, it may be necessary to access a professional for help. A therapist can work with this person around the root causes of the depression, teach them positive coping skills and other ways to look at the problem as well as other possible solutions to the situation other than suicide.

Causes of Suicidal Ideation?

If you are experiencing a life threatening or mental health emergency, call 9-1-1 or go to your closest emergency room.

1. **Depression:** This is more than feeling sad or even overwhelmed. Depression is a deep, hopeless anguish along with the feeling that you will never feel differently. It is often accompanied by a change in diet (over or under eating), a change in sleep (over or under), difficulty concentrating and a lack of motivation to do anything including things that you used to enjoy. It is an overwhelming sadness that lasts all day, every day for several weeks. It can be described as being in the middle of the ocean, all by yourself with no land/boat in sight. You have been keeping your head above water for what feels like forever, and you feel as though you can't do it any longer. You are exhausted, scared, desperate and hopeless.
2. **Trauma:** Growing up with childhood trauma (sexual, physical, emotional, neglect) can cause a person to be suicidal and believe the thoughts/flashbacks/emotions will never end and are too much to handle. Processing through the trauma can relieve the symptoms of depression and anxiety and ultimately remove the suicidal thoughts.
3. **Peer Pressure:** Unfortunately, children and adolescents are telling their friends/enemies to kill themselves as a solution to their problem. Rather than working on reasonable solutions, the "go-to" is suicide. Some may not realize the finality of their suggestion while others feel it is reasonable outcome. For those who are already struggling emotionally or feel they have little to no support they often accept this suggestion as reality.
4. **Social Media:** Additionally, our children have access to a world of information through social media and the internet. There are thousands of websites illustrating and explaining various ways one can hurt and/or kill themselves. These sites glorify this horrific act and wrongfully state perceived benefits. Children and teens who are either curious or struggling come upon this information and then begin obsessing about what they see.

What can you do?

Watch out for warning signs: a drastic change in behavior (more angry, isolated, quiet), withdrawal from normal activities, a change in sleep and/or eating habits. Talk with your kids about the dangers as well as the benefits of internet and social media. Work with them on solving their own problems so they learn they are capable and will be less likely to see suicide as the only option. If you are seeing concerning behaviors or know your child has experienced a difficult life event, seek professional help. Above all, DO NOT assume they are simply attention seeking. This can be a very dangerous assumption with dire consequences.

EMPATHETIC AND COMPASSIONATE GUIDANCE THROUGH THE HOPE FOUND IN JESUS

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Licensed Counselor (LCSW)

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Areas of Concern:

- Anxiety/Depression
- Trauma
- Grief and Loss
- Anger Management
- Marriage and Family
- Life Situations/Crisis
- Suicidal Ideation/Attempts
- Child (over 6) and Teens

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**VIRTUAL AND
IN-PERSON SESSIONS**