

STRATEGIES for MINDFUL LIVING

Courtesy of UAB Employee Assistance & Counseling Center

Preventing Suicide in Teens

September is Suicide Prevention Month, and we want to take the time to focus on the prevention of suicide in our teenage population. In the past 10 years, completed suicides have increased to more than 70 percent amongst 10- to 17-year-olds. In the United States, suicide has become the second leading cause of death among ages 15-24 with 20 percent of high school students reporting that they have considered suicide and 9 percent having made attempts. Below is a list of risk factors and warning signs to be aware of, as well as preventive actions to help reduce suicide within teenagers:

RISK FACTORS

- Depression, anxiety, and other mental health disorders
- Family history of suicide
- History of substance abuse
- Exposure to violence, abuse or trauma
- Social isolation or bullying/cyber-bullying
- Losing a family member through death or divorce
- Conflict within relationships (romantic and/or friendships)
- Starting or changing psychotropic medications
- Lack of support
- Poverty
- Being a member of the LGBTQIA+ community



WARNING SIGNS

- Talking or posting on social media about death or suicide
- Statements of feeling hopeless or trapped.
- Increased use of substances
- Changes in weight, appearance or sleep habits.
- Isolating themselves, withdrawing from friends and family
- Searching online for methods to complete suicide.
- Visiting or calling people to say goodbye.
- Trouble concentrating and/or drop in academic performance.
- Risk taking or destructive behavior.
- Changes in mood or attitude (more irritable)

If you see any of these signs, do not leave the person alone and remove any item that could be utilized to self-harm such as knives, guns, and medications. Contact a prevention hotline, therapist and/or take the person to the emergency room. Remain calm, attentively listen and be empathetic.

PREVENTIVE ACTIONS

- Access to mental health services, physical health treatment and substance abuse treatment
- Family, friends and community support
- Cultural or religious beliefs
- Learning healthy tools for coping and emotional regulation
- Learning skills in problem solving and conflict resolution.

Visit uab.edu/uabcare for more suicide prevention resources.