

Letter to Youth

Dear (name of school) students,

Having a parent, friend or peer die by suicide can be a very difficult thing for anyone to process. Many teens are reluctant to reach out for help when they are dealing with difficult emotional issues including grief, and they try to get through it alone. This is not always the best or safest way. We want to remind teens that in addition to turning to friends for support, there are caring, trusted adults who can also help them cope during difficult times.

Since teens and young adults use social media for information and communication, we would like to suggest that you and your friends post the following on your Facebook wall or other social media sites such as Twitter or Snapchat

Death by suicide is so sad and such a shock to us all. Suicide can best be prevented through treatment and support. We can best honor loved ones who have died by suicide by making sure that people who are struggling seek help. If you're feeling lost, desperate, or alone, please contact one of the lines listed below. You are not alone, you matter to us. Please reach out!

Toll-free, 24/7 Access Line for information, referrals and crisis response – 1-888-868-1649

Santa Barbara Response Network 24/7 Line – 805-699-5608. www.sbresponsenetwork.org

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline – 1-800-273-TALK. www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Information about suicide

- Suicide can be confusing. It is hard to understand why someone would take their own life
- Suicide is not the result of stress or getting a bad grade, having a fight with your family or breaking up with someone. It is much more complicated. While these things may be the last thing that happened, they don't tell the whole story
- The majority of people who have even lots of bad things happen or have lots of stress don't go on to take their lives, so we know something else is happening in the brain of someone who kills themselves
- Research tells us that over 90% of people that die by suicide have a mental health disorder at the time of their death, usually something like depression or even a drug or alcohol problem. Sometimes people who have depression or other problems use drugs and alcohol to feel better and help them cope. What often happens is the drugs and alcohol become another problem
- These disorders can cause symptoms that can make a person feel very sad, and hopeless. The symptoms kind of hijack the brain and make the person believe they will never feel better again
- Sometimes a person can do a good job of hiding their symptoms and even their family and closest friends don't know how much they are struggling
- Depression and other mental health problems can trick the brain into believing that there is no other way out of this deep emotional pain, or no other way to solve a problem
- It is important for you to know there are very good treatments for these mental health problems. Counseling and even medicine can help relieve the symptoms and the person can recover and be well again
- We want you to be very clear that suicide is not a way to solve a mental health or other problem. Suicide is a forever decision that cannot be reversed.
- It is important to reach out to a trusted adult if you or a friend is experiencing some of the thoughts and feelings we have described because there is help available
- Think for a moment "Who are the trusted adults in your life; who are the trusted adults in this school or community that you would go to if you or a friend were having a really difficult time and maybe even having thoughts of suicide?"
- The next few days and weeks may be difficult for some of you. What are some things that help people get through difficult times?
- When people are going through hard times, it is important to get good sleep, eat healthy foods even if you don't feel like eating, drink lots of water to pee out the built up stress chemicals in your body, and engage in healthy activities
- The most important thing is to always reach out if you or a friend is struggling. There is help! Your life matters.