

Responding to Students With Suicidal Ideation

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Youth Risk Behavior Survey

Results 2004

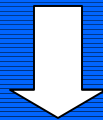
- Sarasota County Results: Sample of approximately 4000 middle school students and 1550 High School Students
- 26% of middle school students and 19% of high school students reported that they “Seriously thought about killing themselves.”
- 17% of middle school students reported they made a specific plan to kill themselves.
- 11% of middle school students and 17% of high school students surveyed had actually tried to kill themselves.

Understanding the Process of Suicidal Ideation

Risk Factors



Precipitating Events



Warning Signs
(Suicidal Ideation)

Risk Factors for Youth Suicide

- Psychiatric Disorders such as Depression, Conduct Disorder. Disorders of Impulsivity and Self-Mutilation (Cutting).
- Family Factors: Divorce, Modeling, Physical, Sexual, and/or Emotional Abuse.
- Substance Abuse
- Previous Suicidal Attempt
- Running Away From Home
- Availability of Firearms
- School Problems
- Sexual Orientation/Identity

Precipitating Events of Youth Suicidal Ideation

It is the adolescent's perception of the event that is important, not the adult's perception. (Brown, 1987).

- Family discourse, parental expectations
- Breakup with boyfriend or girlfriend
- Academic difficulty and/or disciplinary actions at school
- Change of school
- Loss of a close relationship with a friend
- Death of a peer or family member or anniversary of a death
- Sexual Abuse, Pregnancy, Miscarriage
- Humiliation, being bullied or teased by peers.

Warning Signs: What to Look For

- **Verbal Signs:** Verbal expression of hopelessness, wanting to die, or being with a deceased person.

“I wish I were dead.”

“You’ll be sorry when I’m gone.”

“No one cares whether I live or die.”

Warning Signs:

What to Look For (continued)

■ Physical and Behavioral Signs:

- Changes in physical appearance and/or personality.
 - Fascination with death through poems, journal entries, e-mails, websites, music, movies, artwork and ****Writing and Graffiti on Binders*****
- Suicide notes- may find these in classrooms, locker rooms, or bathrooms.
- Giving away possessions.
- Self-Mutilation-******Cuts on body ...usually on the arms******

Reasons For Suicide Ideation

- Solution to current circumstances.
- A cry for help....wanting to get attention.
- Manipulation of others.

Whatever judgment we make about why a student may be suicidal we have to act or the student may follow through.

What To Do

1) LISTEN AND PROVIDE SUPPORT:

- Do not be judgmental or minimize the student's feelings.
- Do not make any promises or bargains with the student about keeping the suicidal ideation a secret.
- Do not appear shocked or upset with the student.

What To Do

(continued)

2) PROVIDE CLOSE SUPERVISION OF THE STUDENT.

- Do not leave the suicidal student alone.
- Do not try to handle everything alone.

3) HAVE THE STUDENT ESCORTED TO THE GATEKEEPER.

- Communicate to the Gatekeeper any relevant information regarding the student precipitating events and warning signs).

What Will Happen Next

- The Gatekeeper will screen for suicidal risk and direct the student to the appropriate intervention(s), such as:
 - in-school counseling,
 - counseling outside the school,
 - speaking with the School Resource Officer
 - returning to class
 - releasing into parental/guardian care.

What Will Happen Next (continued)

In all cases in which a student is at risk for harming him/herself, parents will be notified by the gatekeeper.

-Feedback about the severity of the situation, as well as how you as a teacher can help, will be provided.

Helping the Student by Building Resiliency

Resiliency is the ability to positively adapt or recover from an aversive experience or “sustained life stress” (Werner, 1984).

Resilient students have the following characteristics:

Socially Competent

Good Problem Solvers

Autonomous

Sense of Purpose and Belonging

How Can Educators and School Personnel Strengthen Resiliency in Students

- Identify Existing Programs in the school that incorporate the above characteristics.
- Submit the student's name to the *Professional Learning Community/ Collaborative Student Intervention (PLC/CSI) Team(s)* for further discussion of potential interventions.

Intervention Ideas

- ✓ The student may be assigned a mentor.
- ✓ Provide the student with an opportunity to demonstrate his/her unique skills or knowledge to others.
 - ✓ Persuade the student to join a club or activity of his/her interest.
 - ✓ Give a special classroom or school project in which he/she is the leader.
 - ✓ Give special recognition for an accomplishment or for helping others.
 - ✓ Refer to specific counseling group(s).