

*How to Talk  
to your  
Teen about*

# Suicide

**To prevent suicide you need to recognize it,  
talk about it & effectively respond.**

## **DO**

- Accept that your teen may be at risk of suicide.
- Be calm – your teen may say things that are tough to hear.
- Talk in a private, comfortable place with no distractions. Ensure you won't be interrupted.
- Listen without judgment & with an open mind. Eye contact & open body language show support.
- Encourage sharing with statements such as: "Tell me more".
- Give permission to talk about feelings.
- Be sincere in validating feelings. Feelings aren't wrong; they need to be heard & acknowledged.
- Look at it from your teen's perspective & let them know their problems are important.
- Mention changes you've noticed, such as: "I've noticed you're spending a lot of time alone lately; is something bothering you?"
- Use "I" statements such as: "I heard you say you don't want to be here, everyone would be better off without you. I'm really concerned & want to talk."
- Take threats seriously.

**Talking about it will not make your teen suicidal.**



## ***DO***

- Be direct. Ask: “Are you thinking about suicide/killing yourself? Do you have a plan? Do you have a way to do it?” If yes, get help immediately. Don’t leave them alone.
- Tell them you have hope that things will get better. Maintain a positive outlook.
- Identify positives they share & use these to explore solutions to problems.
- Remind your teen you care & will support them.
- Tell them services are available & you will support them to get help.

## ***DON'T***

- Be afraid to show affection.
- Interrupt or provide unwanted advice.
- React with anger, shock or frustration.
- Judge or express disappointment.
- Dismiss or minimize a teen’s stress or feelings by saying things like “This won’t be a big deal when you’re older” or “When I was your age...”
- Take over & try to ‘fix’ things.
- Agree to keep thoughts of suicide a secret.

<b>Mental Health Crisis Line</b>	<b>1-888-737-4668</b>
<b>Kids Help Phone</b>	<b>1-800-668-6868</b>
<b>HEALTHLINE</b>	<b>811</b>

Developed by Western Health in partnership with the Suicide Prevention & Awareness Committee, CMHI

**811 is for non-emergency situations only.  
For immediate assistance, call 911 or your  
local Police or Emergency Department.**