

Suicide and Kids, Tweens, and Teens

A Guide for Educators

Now the second leading cause of death for youth ages 10 - 24, suicide has become a nationwide epidemic. But there is hope – suicide is preventable. Four out of five young people who attempt suicide will give clear warning signs. Teachers, parents, and friends can play a critical role in picking up on these distress signals and getting help.

RISK FACTORS

- Mental illness such as depression or behavior disorders
- Family dysfunction, crisis (like the death of a loved one), abuse, or violence
- History of previous suicide attempt or familial suicide attempts
- Alcohol and drug abuse
- If they're gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender
- Bullying by peers or having a peer group that engages in suicidal or self-harming behaviors

WARNING SIGNS

- Suicidal threats, notes, and plans, including online posts
- Acting out of character or giving away prized possessions
- Making statements about feeling hopeless, helpless, or worthless
- Talking about suicide and being preoccupied with death
- Behavior changes like risk-taking, making self-destructive choices, or withdrawing from friends and family

WHAT EDUCATORS CAN DO

- Focus on the student's well-being, listen intently, and don't judge
- Reassure them that help is available and the feelings they're having are temporary
- Ask directly if they're thinking about suicide if you suspect they're in danger
- Promote community and peer support, self-care, and open communication

Kids who feel suicidal aren't likely to ask for help directly, so it's critical to watch for the warning signs and reach out to students who might be struggling. Unfortunately, the warning signs are increasingly occurring where kids spend a majority of their time – online (*often hidden from adults*). Bark helps administrators and parents monitor connected devices and school accounts for indications of depression, self-harm, suicidal ideation, and more. Bark for Schools is free (*forever!*) and available for all K-12 schools in the U.S.

More information can be found at nasponline.org, sprc.org, and youth.gov.

Visit bark.us/beyondthescreen to learn more.

