



TCHATT

Texas Child Health Access
Through Telemedicine



UT Southwestern
Medical Center™

Suicide Prevention & Support

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tcmhcc

Texas Child Mental Health Care Consortium

Funded and administrated by the Texas Child Mental Health Care Consortium

About Us

- Melina Acosta, LCSW



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CONTENT WARNING

Objectives

- To understand prevalence of suicide and common signs
- To discuss preventative measures and how to support your child
- To learn about suicide prevention resources



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What should parents look out for?

Suicide

- Death by suicide is when people direct violence at themselves with the intent to end their lives, and they die because of their actions.
- Suicide attempt is when people harm themselves with the intent to end their lives, but they do not die because of their actions.
- It's best to avoid the use of terms like "committing suicide" or a "successful suicide" when referring to a death by suicide, as these terms often carry negative connotations.

Suicide Statistics in Kids and Teens

- Suicide is the second leading cause of death for youth and young adults ages 10-24¹
- Rates of suicide in this age group increased 52% from 2000 to 2021¹
- In 2021, 1 in 5 high school students seriously thought about suicide²
- In 2021, nearly 1 in 10 high school students had attempted suicide in the last year¹

¹Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics. National Vital Statistics System, Mortality 2018-2021 on CDC WONDER Online Database, released in 2023. Data are from the Multiple Cause of Death Files, 2018-2021, as compiled from data provided by the 57 vital statistics jurisdictions through the Vital Statistics Cooperative Program. Accessed at <http://wonder.cdc.gov/mcd-icd10-expanded.html>

²Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics. Youth Risk Behavior Survey Data Summary & Trends Report 2011-2021, released in 2023. Accessed at www.cdc.gov/healthyouth/data/yrbs/yrbs_data_summary_and_trends.htm

Suicide Warning Signs

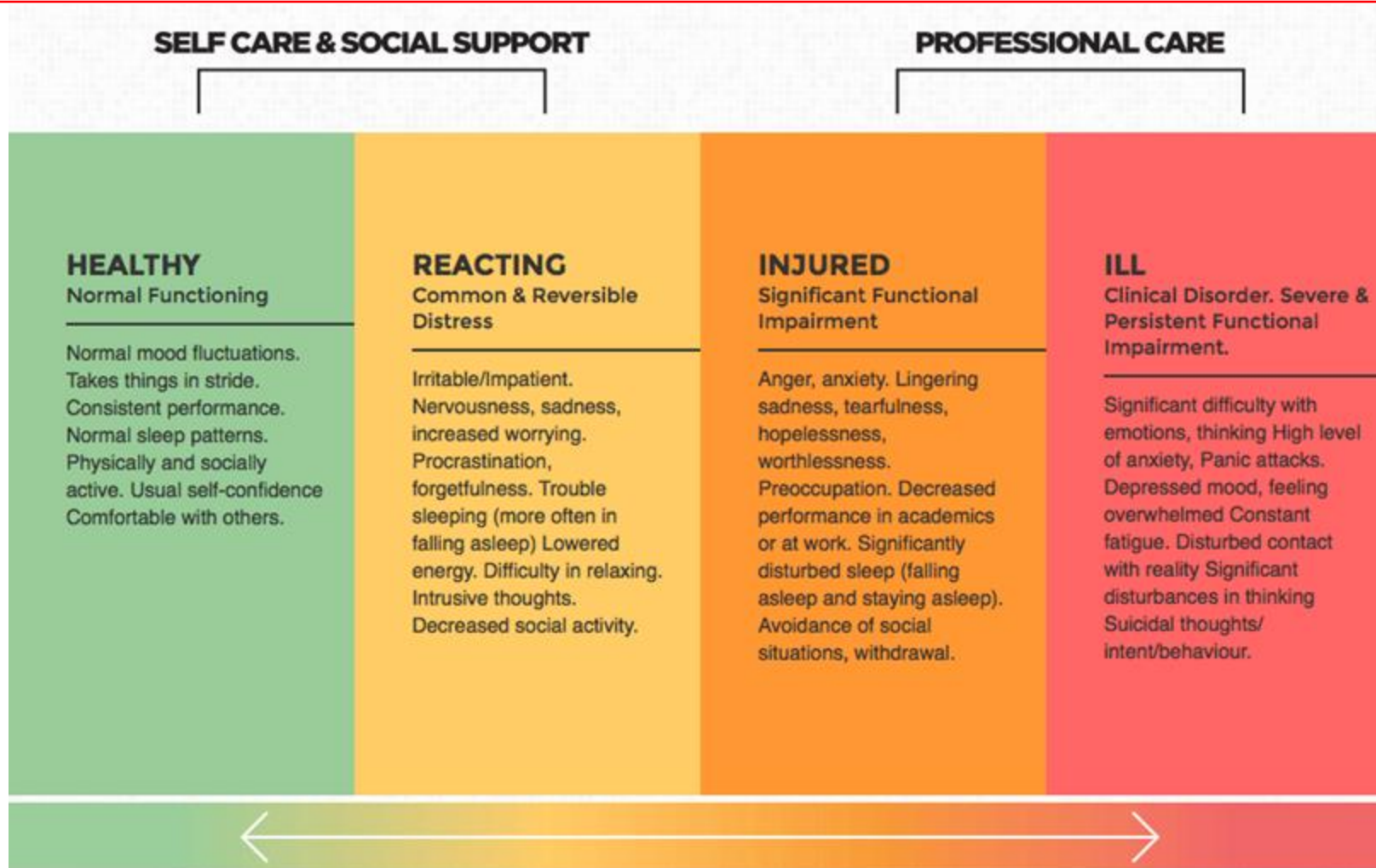
- Talking about wanting to die or wanting to kill themselves
- Talking about feeling empty, hopeless, or having no reason to live
- Planning or looking for a way to kill themselves, such as searching for lethal methods online, stockpiling pills, or buying a gun
- Talking about feelings of great guilt or shame
- Talking about feeling trapped or feeling that there are no solutions
- Feeling unbearable pain (emotional pain or physical pain)
- Talking about being a burden to others
- Using alcohol or drugs more often
- Acting increasingly anxious or agitated

Suicide Warning Signs Continued

- Withdrawing from family and friends
- Changing eating and/or sleeping habits
- Showing rage or talking about seeking revenge
- Taking great risks that could lead to death, such as driving extremely fast
- Talking or thinking about death often
- Displaying extreme mood swings, suddenly changing from very sad to very calm or happy
- Giving away important possessions
- Saying goodbye to friends and family
- Putting affairs in order, making a will

This list is not exhaustive!

Mental Health Continuum





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How can parents help?

Make a Connection

- Spend time together as a family
- Be aware of any changes
- Talk about feelings and the behaviors you have seen that cause you to feel concerned.
- Be direct and use the word “suicide”. Avoiding a direct conversation may make your teen feel alone or invalidated.
- Assure they have a safe place at home or someone to call if needed
- Early intervention and protective factors

Protective Factors

- Individual
 - Effective coping and problem-solving skills
 - Reasons for living (ex., family, friends, pets, etc.)
 - Strong sense of cultural identity
- Relationship
 - Support from friends, family, partners, etc.
 - Feeling connected to others
- Community
 - Feeling connected to school, community, other social institutions
 - Consistent, quality healthcare
- Societal
 - Reduced access to lethal means of suicide

Offer Support

1

Normalize it:

Validating that it is okay to feel their feelings is the first step in coping.

2

Remain calm: Your actions influence others, so it's important to remain calm. You want your teen to see you as a safe place – someone who is consistent and calm.

3

Don't tell teens what to do or feel: Take deep breaths; as you slow your breathing, they will likely follow

Communication Traps and Tips

- Things to watch out for:
 - Silver Lining
 - Focusing only on the positive
 - Problem Solving
 - Closed Body Language
- Helpful statements:
 - Thank you sharing this with us
 - That sounds like a lot
 - I hear that you're *upset/frustrated/overwhelmed*
 - It sounds like you have a lot going on. Would you prefer that I listen, help problem solve, or distract?
 - *not for crisis*



End the Stigma

“You’re crazy”

“This will be on your permanent record”

“You’ll have to take medications forever”

“You’ll never be successful”

“You’re weak”

“But your life is perfect”

Stigma can make it difficult for someone struggling to seek help and support

Debunking Myths about Suicide

Myth #1: Talking about suicide will increase the chances of my child acting on it

FACT: Asking directly about suicide will increase the chances of your child getting the help they need.

Myth #2: People who are suicidal are selfish, weak, or cowardly

FACT: People who are suicidal are often dealing with significant emotional distress and/or mental health conditions that alter their ability to think clearly and have hope for the future.

Myth #3: People who say they are suicidal just want attention

FACT: Talking about suicide is one of the biggest warning signs for suicide. Take seriously any mentions of suicide and ask follow up questions in a compassionate way to get your child the help they need.

General Home Safety Tips

- One way to support your child is to lock up any potentially dangerous items – sharp objects, medications, ropes and cables
- It is important to support your child by increasing the level of supervision and spending time together
- Public Privacy
- Take the same precautions in the homes of close friends and family, as needed



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What would a conversation with my child sound like?



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What resources should parents keep in mind?

Professional Support

- Crisis response
 - Call 911 or go to the emergency room for a mental health assessment
 - 988 for national crisis hotline
- For non-emergency mental health concerns
 - School Counselor
 - Community Counseling
 - School-based tele-behavioral health program – TCHATT
 - Short-term virtual therapy
 - Case management support in locating long term/specialized treatment

Support for Parents

- Importance of self-care
- Leaning on support system
- Seeking own counseling if needed

Thank you!

- Additional Resources:
 - Podcast
 - The Science of Self Injury: Exploring Self-Harm and Mental Health –Nicolas Westers, PhD
 - Eating Disorders and Self Harm with Dr. Katie Gordan
 - Books
 - Stop Walking on Eggshells for Parents by Randi Kreger, Christine Adamec, and Daniel Lobel
 - How to Talk So Teens Will Listen & Listen So Teens Will Talk by Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish.
 - Websites:
 - [Youth Suicide Warning Signs](https://www.youthsuicidewarningsigns.org/) <https://www.youthsuicidewarningsigns.org/>
 - [Mental Health | Nami North Texas | Dallas](https://www.naminorthtexas.org/) <https://www.naminorthtexas.org/>
 - [Grant Halliburton Foundation](https://www.granthalliburton.org/) <https://www.granthalliburton.org/>