

# Knowing Warning Signs Can Often Prevent Teenage Suicides From Occurring

Suicide is currently the third leading cause of death among young Americans. In fact 5,000 to 6,000 adolescents will kill themselves this year, according to recent estimates. Dr. Michael Zal, chairman of psychiatry at Metropolitan Hospital, Philadelphia, believes that if anything, these figures are under-reported. In the absence of a note, many teen suicides may be classified as accidents.

What is the reason for the high rate of suicide among young people? According to Dr. Zal, "The various reasons for teen suicide

attempts certainly include an increase in feelings of instability that arise from two-career families, parental separation and divorce, and frequent moves. Adolescents also face intense personal pressure to earn good grades, excel at sports and be popular."

Dr. Zal says that prior to a suicide attempt, a disturbed teenager may exhibit one or more warning signs. "These signs may include changes in social behavior," he explains, "such as increased consumption of alcohol or drugs, withdrawal from fami-

ly or close friends, neglect of personal appearance and decline in the quality of schoolwork. Changes in mental behavior are also important signs. These may include irritability, anxiety, extreme boredom and apathy.

"The most meaningful signals are those of hopelessness," continues Dr. Zal. "These include giving away prized personal possessions, making a will, or a preoccupation with death. A sudden cheerfulness following a deep depression may be a sign that the teen has made a resolution toward suicide."

Dr. Zal offers these four steps that a concerned parent should take:

- Know the warning signs of suicide and watch for them. Don't lull yourself into a false sense of security by thinking that it can't happen in your family.

- Encourage your child to talk by sharing your own feelings and experiences. It is not easy to communicate with a withdrawn teenager, but you must let your son or daughter know that you are concerned about any problems they may be facing.

- Be direct. Talking about suicide will not trigger someone to attempt it. Talking about it can, however, relieve the child's emotional pain.

- Get help from your family physician, a school counselor, or

a psychiatrist. Family therapy is often helpful because the teenager is not singled out as the one with the problem. If your child refuses therapy, go yourself. Your involvement may help alter family relationships in a positive way.

Remember that it is normal for a teen to have mood swings and to be depressed. It is when these emotions are prolonged or are

coupled with disruptive behavior that a closer look is warranted.

Dr. Zal recommends keeping open lines of communication as a preventive measure. "Some tips on good communication include listening attentively to your child, admitting when you're the one who is wrong, being honest in your discussions, and avoiding issuing ultimatums and commands."

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"And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

St. John, 8:32

### Worship Agenda

Wednesday - Bible Teaching Ministry - 7:30 p.m. - 9:30 p.m.  
Thursday - Bible Teaching Ministry - 7:30 p.m. - 9:30 p.m.  
Sunday - Sunday School - 9:30 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.  
- Morning Worship - 11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.  
- Evening Worship - 5:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

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Keep us, O God, from pettiness; let us be large in thought, in word, in deed.

Let us be done with faultfinding, and leave off self-seeking. May we put away all pretense and meet each other face to face — without self-pity and without prejudice.

May we never be hasty in judgment and always generous. Let us take time for all things; make us to grow calm, serene, gentle.

Teach us to put into action our better impulses, straightforward and unafraid.

Grant that we may realize it is the little things that create differences; that in the big things of life we are as one.

And may we strive to touch and to know the great, common human heart of us all, and

O Lord God, let us forget not to be kind.

— Mary Stuart



**EDENTON BPW CLUB OFFICERS- 1987-88:** (left to right) Legion Britton, First Vice-President; Marina Crummey, President; and Anna Goodwin, Treasurer. Not pictured is Recording Secretary, Nancy Smith, and Corresponding Secretary, Nancy Winslow.

## Objectives of the National BPW Clubs of America

- ★ To elevate the standards for women in business and in the professions.
- ★ To promote the interest of business and professional women.
- ★ To bring about a spirit of cooperation among business and professional women of the United States.
- ★ To extend opportunities to business and professional women through education along lines of industrial, scientific and vocational activities.

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