

## **SUICIDE WARNING SIGNS**

The following signs may mean someone is at risk for suicide. Risk is greater if a behavior is new, has increased in frequency or intensity, and if it seems related to a painful event, loss or change.

- Talking about death or wanting to die
- Looking for ways to die, such as searching online
- Feelings of “falling apart”
- Impatient, impulsive or reckless behavior
- Changes in sleeping or eating habits
- Having a hard time concentrating or having trouble at school
- Feeling depressed, sad or hopeless for more than two weeks
- Feeling like there is no reason to live
- Experiencing extreme mood swings
- Isolating or withdrawing from family, friends or usual social activities
- Increasing use of alcohol or drugs
- Giving away favorite things
- Leaving poems, diaries, drawings or letters to be found that deal with death, dying or overwhelming problems

## **What Can Parents Do?**

Many times, a teen who is having thoughts of suicide will give some type of warning ahead of time. So, it's important for parents to know what to do if you suspect your teen is struggling.

### **Watch and Listen**

Keep a close eye on a teen who seems depressed and withdrawn. It's important to keep the lines of communication open and express your concern, support and love. If your teen confides in you, show that you take their worries seriously. A fight with a friend might not seem like a big deal to you in the larger scheme of things, but for a teen it can feel immense and consuming. It's important not to minimize or discount what your teen is going through, as this can increase his or her sense of hopelessness. If your teen doesn't feel comfortable talking with you, suggest a more neutral person, such as another relative, a clergy member, a coach, a school counselor or their doctor.

### **Ask Questions**

Some parents are reluctant to ask teens if they have been thinking about suicide or hurting themselves. Some fear that by asking, they will plant the idea of suicide in their teen's head. It's always a good idea to ask, even though doing so can be difficult. Sometimes it helps to explain why you're asking. For instance, you might say: “I've noticed that you've been talking a lot about wanting to give up. Have you been having thoughts of suicide?”

### **Get Help**

If you learn that your child is thinking about suicide, get help immediately. Your doctor can refer you to a psychologist, psychiatrist or counselor. If you need to talk to someone about how to get help for your teen or if your teen is in a crisis situation, please call **Teen Lifeline – 602.248.8336**.