

## WARNING SIGNS OF SUICIDE

- Threats; may be direct ("I want to die.") or, unfortunately, indirect ("Nobody will miss me anyway").
- Final arrangements; giving away prized possessions such as jewelry, clothing, journals or pictures.
- Death or suicidal themes appearing in classroom drawings, work samples, journals, art work or homework.
- Withdrawing from friends, family and normal activities.
- Increase of risk-taking behaviors such as aggression, gunplay, and alcohol/substance use.
- Efforts to hurt oneself. Self-mutilating behaviors include running into traffic, jumping from heights, and scratching/cutting/markings the body.

## WARNING SIGNS OF A MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS

- Rapid mood swings.
- Extreme energy or lack of it, sleeping all the time, or being unable to sleep.
- Severe agitation, pacing.
- Talking very rapidly or non-stop.
- Confused thinking or irrational thoughts.
- Isolating themselves from friends and family, not coming out of their room.
- Not eating or eating all the time, rapid weight loss or gain.

## WHAT TO DO IF YOU SUSPECT SOMEONE IS THINKING ABOUT SUICIDE

**Start the conversation** by sharing specific signs you've noticed, like:

**"I've noticed lately that you [haven't been sleeping, aren't interested in soccer anymore, are posting a lot of sad song lyrics online, etc.] ..."**

Then say

- Are you thinking about suicide?
- Are you thinking about killing yourself?

Using the word "suicide" in a direct way says, "We can talk about this here." It's important to use the direct language of "suicide" rather than "hurting yourself," because these are different questions.

If the answer is yes continue asking:

- Do you have a plan?
- Do you know how you would do it?
- If the answer is no and you are still unsure consult with 988 or a professional for guidance.



**If the answer to any of these questions is "yes," seek help immediately!**

- ◆ Don't leave the youth alone.
- ◆ Remain calm and non-judgemental.
- ◆ Call their therapist or other health care professional.
- ◆ Remove potential means, such as weapons and medications.
- ◆ Call the Suicide and Crisis lifeline at **988**; or call **911** if the situation is life threatening.

# MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT FOR YOUTH



**Contact Regional Community Health and Wellness Coordinator**  
**Brittany Nash**  
**[bnash@westfordma.gov](mailto:bnash@westfordma.gov)**  
**978-692-5509**



## Tips for Talking to Youth about Mental Health

- **Don't be afraid to say the word "suicide."** Getting the word out in the open may help the individual feel relieved and safe to open up to you.
- **Be Genuine.** Young people are good at recognizing when adults are "faking it."
- **Listen non-judgmentally.** Be aware of your facial expressions and demeanor. Remain neutral even if what you are hearing makes you feel uneasy.
- **Don't Compare.** Focus on the youth; Avoid comparing the young person's life and yours at that age. The world changes, and new opportunities mean new challenges.

Keep the door open if they won't talk to you. If they are not comfortable talking to you, ask them if there is someone else they would feel comfortable talking to. If you're not worried for their immediate safety, you can let them know you will always be available to talk and ask if it's OK for you to check in again.

Consult with a professional or someone you trust—a family member, teacher, professor, therapist, or counselor, for example—about next steps.

## Scan For Youth Specific Resources



### Helpful Phrases

"I may not understand exactly how you feel, but I care about you and want to help."

"I'm concerned about you and I want to help get you through this."

"You are not alone."

"How long have you been feeling like this?"

"Have you spoken to anyone about this before?"

"I'm so glad you told me this. Let's keep talking."

"What you're feeling sounds really painful and difficult. I don't have all the answers, but I am here to listen."



### Unhelpful Phrases

"Pull yourself together"

"That happened to me when I was your age"

"You have so much to be thankful for; how can you feel so sad?"

"You'll get over it"

"Things could be worse"

## HOW TO HELP DURING A MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS

These signs require immediate attention:

- Attempts or threats to harm or kill
- Verbal or physical abuse
- Excessive withdrawal
- Not sleeping or eating for several days
- Delusions, hallucinations
- If the situation is not life-threatening, call or text the Behavioral Health Helpline 833-773-2445 available for all residents of Massachusetts 24/7, 365 days per year. If the person is in danger, call 911 and ask if they have a co-response clinician.

### **Remember:**

- Do not leave the youth alone. stay with them until they are connected to help
- Do not threaten hospitalization
- Validate their feelings
- Keep your voice calm
- Avoid overreacting
- Ask how you can help
- Offer options instead of trying to take control
- Be patient

