

**About 70% of those who committed suicide
had a type of depression called “Major Depression”**

**A person has Major Depression if the following five (or more) symptoms
have been present during the same two-week period:**

(1) Feeling really unhappy or irritable most of the day, nearly every day

Or:

**(2) A loss of interest in all friends and favorite activities most of the day,
nearly every day**

Plus 4 or more of the following:

(3) Weight loss (when not dieting) or weight gain of over 5% in a month

(4) Trouble sleeping or sleeping too much nearly every day

**(5) Slowness of thought, speech and activity or else extreme
restlessness, agitation or excessive crying**

(6) Feelings of low energy or fatigue nearly every day

**(7) Thinking errors (feeling helpless, hopeless, worthless, too much
shame or guilt nearly every day)**

**(8) Difficulty concentrating, making basic decisions and doing
school work nearly every day**

(9) Frequent thoughts of death or suicide

**Individually some of these behaviors are fairly common. But if you
think you or a friend may be suffering from Major Depression talk about
it with your parents, a trusted adult or a professional counselor!**

Adapted the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual for Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition, Text Revision*.
American Psychiatric Association © 2000. J Ciffone, SEHS, SD U-46, Elgin, IL 12/07

A Friend in Crisis?

A. BEHAVIORS:

Changes in personality or attitude. Something is seriously wrong if a person becomes careless about their own safety or a normally outgoing person becomes withdrawn and unfriendly to everyone for weeks or longer. Other changes include a very hopeless attitude about the future or signs of Major Depression.

Suicide threats. Most teens reveal their suicide thoughts by writing notes or making statements. Such actions are a sign that something is wrong even if it seems obvious that the person just wants attention. Don't ignore that person and don't assume someone else will help your friend! A study showed that about 40% of the time, a friend was the only one who knew about the suicidal thoughts of a person who later died by suicide.

B. SITUATIONS:

Traumatic conflicts or events. An intense conflict with parents, a major conflict with a friend, or some other event that a person thinks is really bad may create overwhelming shame, loneliness, embarrassment, hurt, or angry feelings. Actions taken or things that were said to the person involved could make matters worse.

Major losses. A death of a family member or friend, divorce of parents, the break up of an important relationship or friendship, or the failure to achieve something strongly desired can lead to a seriously depressed state.

But almost everyone can adequately cope with **traumatic conflict or events** and **major losses** adjust and get on with their life. However, a very small number who have certain thinking errors may seriously think of and act out a plan to harm themselves.

Helping a Friend in a Crisis

Sometimes we don't know how to reach out to friends. If you think your friend is depressed or suicidal there are certain things that you can do to be helpful. Below is a simple list of Do's and Don'ts which will guide you on how to deal with a friend in crisis.

Do:

Pay attention to your friend's words
and behavior

Ask questions

Show that you care

Encourage your friend to talk

Remain calm

Listen carefully and acknowledge
the bad feelings that accompany
the problem

Give an honest reaction

Be positive

Know your limits

Suggest people you can both turn to

Get help from an adult if you think
your friend is in danger and
refuses to cooperate with you

Call a telephone hot-line if an adult is
not available 1-800-273-TALK

Don't:

Rush to judgment, categorize or dismiss
the problem your friend is reporting

Joke about it or make your friend's
problem sound unimportant

Stop being a good friend

Keep your friend's suicide plans secret

Assume that your friend is simply having
a bad day or hope that the problem
will go away without doing something

Take on the responsibility of your
friend's safety by yourself

Stop being involved, lose interest or
patience if your friend is obviously
unhappy and denies having a problem
or has tried to reject your help

Something to Think About

This message is for every young person who is considering ending his or her life.

You haven't seen much of the world that exists outside your family. Soon, you will be on your own, and then, you will understand what is important and what is not.

What you don't know is that 15 minutes after you decided to kill yourself, you might have felt better. Or two hours later, or two days.

What you don't know is that you are stronger than you think. You can find another girlfriend (or boyfriend), you can stand being embarrassed or shamed more than you realize. Failing in school or getting into trouble with the law maybe painful, but you can get over it. You can fix it. Don't be killing yourself over events that you may barely remember 10 years from now.

What you don't know is that there is nothing romantic or cool about killing yourself. It is a god-awful mess for your family that you can never understand until you have kids of your own.

What you don't know is that suicide is sneaky and spiteful and filled with anger. If you are thinking about suicide, you are furious with somebody. You can be furious without killing yourself or thinking you need the punishment of death.

What you also don't realize is that suicide is forever, and nobody, not your parents or your doctor, can fix it. You won't be around for the funeral. And you won't be coming back.

Excerpts of a letter submitted to the editor of the Arkansas Gazette by Dr. Thomas Heisler of Wynne, Arkansas.

Top Ten things to know about Teen Suicide

1. The teen suicide rate is decreasing. This is probably because more teens are aware of depression and more teens are getting help for depression.
2. Studies show that at least 90% of those who killed themselves were judged to be suffering from Major Depression or some other mental illness in the weeks prior to their death.
3. If a person is depressed they should talk about it with a friend and get help from a professional counselor because most teens that have depression can be helped by a professional counselor.
4. Suicide is mainly the result of thinking errors. Common thinking errors are: "If I feel this bad, I must be in a very bad situation and if I feel like killing myself I should kill myself" "I am the only one who has it this bad" "I can't do anything about this problem" "I'll never feel good again" "I can't live without her" and "My family would be happier if I were dead and gone."
5. Most teens have a satisfactory relationship with their parents. Those who are unhappy about the relationship they have with their parents should do whatever they can to make it better.
6. Feelings of loneliness are very common around age 16. This is true for even those who are really busy or are really popular. Feeling lonely doesn't mean the person is a loser. Those who are not afraid of their feelings of loneliness are more likely to have healthy peer relationships than are those who have trouble coping with loneliness.
7. If a person is talking of suicide, and it seems they are trying to get attention or are trying to see if people care about them, they should still be taken seriously and should be encouraged to get attention from a professional counselor.
8. If a friend admits to having thoughts of suicide it is best to tell an adult about this even if the friend asks that it be kept a secret because it's better to have your friend be temporarily mad at you than it is to take the chance that your friend could be permanently gone.
9. If a friend has attempted suicide it is best to be there for them and show them your still friends, but help them understand that there are better ways to handle bad thoughts and feelings.
10. Every student is able to do something to reduce the chance that someone in this school will commit suicide. They can be nice to each other, take all threats of suicide seriously, and they should get an adult involved as soon as possible.