



## **SPEAK UP, REACH OUT and A.C.T (Acknowledge, Care, Tell)**

### **TALK TO YOUR KIDS ABOUT DEPRESSION AND SUICIDE**

As responsible parents, we teach our children to look both ways before they cross the street. We advise them about what to say when a peer offers them alcohol. Like sitting down with our children and talking about the “birds and the bees” well before they are hooking up in a car, we need to have a proactive conversation with our children about depression and suicide. We want to instruct them about what to do and say when they or one of their friends are wrestling with these difficult issues.

We want to encourage our children to SPEAK UP AND REACH OUT. Share with your teen that if they or a friend are feeling overwhelmingly sad and hopeless, then they can come to you, a counselor at their school or another caring adult. Let your teen know that it is never “ratting someone out” to seek help for a friend. Privacy is very important to teens, but their friend’s life is even more important. Even if they lose the friendship, saving a life is the most important priority.

Many teens believe that talk about suicide is just that: “talk!” However, most people who die by suicide tell someone they plan to hurt themselves. When someone tells you they are thinking of suicide, they are giving you a precious opportunity to help before it’s too late. All mentions of suicide should be taken seriously.

Suggest to your children they download apps such as Circle of Six and A Friend Asks, which will help them if they, or someone they know, is suicidal. Encourage your children to help a depressed and/or suicidal person get the support he or she needs. Urge them to call a crisis line for advice and referrals (National Suicide Prevention Lifeline Text CONNECT to 741741 at 1-800-273-8255). Prevail upon your children to advise the struggling teen to see a mental health professional or actually take them to the school counselor. By opening a dialogue with your child, you are letting them know you are there as a supportive adult who can help them or their friends.

#### **Facts about suicide:**

- Suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death for our youth ages 10-24. (2016 CDC WISQARS)
- Four out of five teens who attempt suicide have given clear warning signs.
- In ages 10-14, there is an alarming 128% increase in suicides since 1980.

#### **Warning signs:**

- Talking about suicide
- Seeking out lethal means
- Preoccupation with death
- Self-loathing, self-hatred
- Getting affairs in order
- Saying goodbye
- Withdrawing from others
- No hope for the future
- Self-destructive behaviors
- Sudden sense of calm

#### **Websites that may help:**

<https://www.fcps.edu/resources/student-safety-and-wellness/mental-health-resources-and-emergency-services-information>

<http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/suicide/in-depth/suicide/art-20044707>

<http://psychcentral.com/lib/what-to-do-when-you-think-someone-is-suicidal/0007461>

<http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/compassion-matters/201309/how-can-you-stop-suicide>