

# BE AWARE THAT CHILDREN THINK ABOUT SUICIDE TOO!



It is frustrating to have a depressed young person because it is difficult to know what to do. Young people often hide their difficulties. Some of the behaviors seen in a possible hidden depression are rebellion, fighting, vandalism, stealing, hostility, promiscuity and alcohol/drug abuse. If you are seeing any of these signs, your child or adolescent may be depressed or suicidal.

We often become frustrated and angry with a youth exhibiting these behaviors because we think they are bad. However, a good chance exists that this young person is depressed. The important thing to remember is that a depressed young person is going to look and act differently than a depressed adult. For the young person, suicide is a way of solving problems, a way of escaping pain and a cry for help. Young people do not understand suicide is a permanent solution to a temporary problem.

## YOUR CHILD MAY BE FACING THESE PROBLEMS:

### At Home:

- Conflict with parents/siblings
- Separation/divorce
- Fighting between parents
- Death
- Drugs/Alcohol abuse

### With Friends:

- Boyfriends/girlfriends fights/breakups
- Fights with friends Drugs/Alcohol

### At School:

- Doesn't like classes/teachers
- Doesn't like work
- Pressure about grades
- Fear about failure

### Because of Losses (real or perceived)

- Death of friend, family member or pet
- Loss of or function of body part
- Loss of health
- Loss of role in family or society

## YOUR CHILD MAY BE SHOWING THESE SIGNS:

- Changes in eating or sleeping habits
- Accident prone
- Self-injurious behavior (cutting or burning themselves)
- Giving away possessions
- Low self image
- Withdrawing
- Loss of interest in activities
- Hostility/hyperactivity
- Substance abuse

- Written or art work centering on sad themes or death
- Running away from home
- Music with sad themes
- Decline in school performances
- Making final plans
- Sudden positive mood changes
- Talking about death or suicide
- No sense of future



## PARENTS HELP YOURSELVES FIRST! HERE ARE SOME SUGGESTIONS:

- Explore your own feelings about your child/ adolescent's behavior.
- Realize your child is a separate person experiencing life differently than you.
- Realize your child's perception of his/her life creates depressive or suicidal thoughts.
- What is it you fear for your child?
- Share your fears with your child. This gives him/her permission to find and to have their own feelings.
- Are you angry with your child? Does your anger relate to expectations or disappointments?
- Are you depressed?
- Admit there is a problem.



# CHILDREN AT RISK: SUICIDE AWARENESS

- Examine ways you have and have not contributed to the problem. Do not blame yourself, but look for changes you may make.
- Allow your child/adolescent to take an increasing amount of responsibility for dealing with problems that are properly his/hers.
- Communicate about your fears and concerns. Insist your child/adolescent try some type of professional help, perhaps for the entire family.
- Share your feelings with "I feel" statements not "you make me feel" statements.
- Express your anger in a constructive conversation, owning your feelings. Recognize the intensity of your anger because the anger may not be constructive. Involve yourself in physical activity.
- Maintain schedules and your own life as normally as possible.
- Develop and use a support system.
- Be good to yourself. Stay healthy mentally, emotionally, and physically.
- Take each day, one at a time.
- Get professional help when needed.
- Affirm your positives. Let go of the need to be perfect and your child will also.
- Be your own nurturing parent. Love yourself and you will communicate love and a safe environment for your child.

## WHAT YOU AS A PARENT CAN DO TO HELP YOUR CHILD:

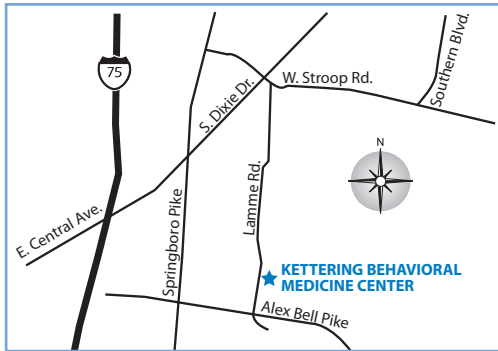
- Listen to your child. Listening says "You are important to me".
- Express "I love you" to your child often- in good and bad times. If your child knows you love is unconditional, trust, respect and communication are more likely to happen.
- If you think there is any risk, get help.

## PARENTS NEED TO:

- Take suicide threats seriously
- Provide role models of good coping skills
- Be aware of your child's coping skills and support them
- Be aware that depression may be masked in other behaviors
- Seek help

## WHERE TO GET HELP:

- Kettering Behavioral Medicine Center
- Kettering Behavioral Professional Group
- Clergy
- Teacher/School Counselor



## KETTERING BEHAVIORAL MEDICINE CENTER

KETTERING HEALTH NETWORK<sup>SM</sup>  
KHNETWORK.ORG/KBMC

5350 LAMME ROAD  
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