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Talking regularly with youth about the dangers of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs reduces their risk of using in the first place.

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Know! The Warning Signs of Suicide

As discussed in the previous Know! Tip, "[Know! To Gain Understanding About Suicide](#)," suicide among adolescents and young adults has steadily increased and is now the second leading cause of death among 10 to 24-year-olds.

The tragic and unnecessary death of a child leaves families searching for answers as to why such a thing would happen and what, if anything, could have been done to prevent it. Unfortunately, there are some situations where a child takes his/her own life and the parents and other family members are completely taken by surprise. Many other times, families are able to look back and see that certain behaviors were likely warning signs.

It is those red flags that parents and other caregivers need to be aware of and ready to take action upon. According to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, the most common warning signs include:

- Feeling like a burden to others
- Sleeping too little or too much
- Acting anxious or agitated and behaving recklessly
- Increasing the use of alcohol or drugs
- Talking about feelings of hopelessness
- Searching for methods online
- Talking about wanting to die
- Withdrawing or feeling isolated
- Talking about feeling trapped or in unbearable pain

If your child (or someone else you care about) is exhibiting any of the warning signs above, it is important to seek support and take action without delay, including removing all lethal means from your home, such as guns or stockpiled pills.

You'll need to get in the right mind frame. Depression, a main cause for suicidal thoughts and behaviors, is a mental illness – with the key word

being “illness.” Mental illness should be thought of like any other illness. Just as you would have your child seen by a doctor if they were showing signs of the flu, you should have your child evaluated and potentially treated by a physician and/or therapist, if you are concerned or questioning your child’s mental health.

If red flags have been raised, ask your child directly about how they’re feeling and if suicide is on their mind. Then listen carefully and accept what they have to say. Do not judge, debate or lecture, and do not act shocked, as this may cause your child to shut down and stop talking.

Get or remain actively engaged in your child’s daily life. Be available, show interest and provide support for your child, and check in on how they’re feeling regularly.

Offer hope of better days. Talk to your child about the many resources available to help them with the way they are feeling.

One of those resources is called a Crisis Coping Plan, meant to always be kept within reach and designed to gear one’s thoughts away from suicide in the heat of the moment. Ideally, the plan is filled out by the child and their counselor or therapist. [Click here to download the Safety Plan Template from the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline.](#)

For a multitude of additional resources, please visit the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at <http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/> or call (800) 273- TALK (8255).

Sources: [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#). [CDC: National Center for Health Statistics – Increase in Suicide in the United States 1999 – 2014](#). [CDC: National Center for Health Statistics – Adolescent Health](#).

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