



A Quick Look at Depression and Teen Suicide

Teenage suicide is an alarming factor in the US and the statistics are increasing. Suicide is the third leading cause of death among teens and adolescents. It is reported that one of the major causes of teenage suicide is depression. Depression affects a person's thoughts in such a way that the person does not see that he or she can overcome a present problem. It is as if the depression puts a filter on the person's thinking that distorts things. It is very important to take suicide attempts seriously. Understanding that a teen suicide attempt is a call for help is essential in preventing a completed attempt later.

An alarming truth: teen girls and boys are both at risk for suicide. Though many do not recognize suicide as a serious threat to a teenager's wellbeing, teen suicide is a major cause of death among American teenagers. Experts estimate that for every teen suicide death, there are 10 other teen suicide attempts. They also found out that almost one in five teens had thought about suicide. About one in six teens made plans on committing suicide and that one in twelve teens had attempted suicide in the last year. As many as eight out of ten teenagers who commit suicide try to ask for help in some way before committing suicide, usually by seeing a doctor or psychiatrist shortly before the suicide attempt.

Teenage girls are more likely to attempt suicide, but teenage boys are four to five times more likely to die by suicide. Even though teenage girls make more attempts on their own lives than teenage boys, the boys are more likely to actually complete a suicide attempt. They do not allow for intervention, and are less likely to "call for help" through a suicide attempt, since there is often little opportunity to get males into treatment since their suicide completion rate is higher than that of females.

What are the major factors that influence or cause teenage suicide? It is said that depression is the most common cause of teenage suicide in the United States. It is depression that leads people to focus mostly on failures and disappointments, to emphasize the negative side of their situations, and to downplay their own capabilities or self-worth.

Depression or depressive disorders (unipolar depression) are mental illnesses characterized by a profound and persistent feelings of sadness or despair. Depressed persons are not interested

anymore in things that were once pleasurable. The symptoms of depression include having difficulty with sleeping, loss of appetite, significant weight loss, and loss of rationality in making decisions.

Depression affects a person's thoughts in such a way that the person doesn't see that he or she can overcome a present problem. It's as if the depression puts a filter on the person's thinking and totally distorts reality. For this reason, depressed people don't realize the gravity of pondering suicide as a means to "resolve" or escape a particular problem. A teenager with depression may feel like there is no other way out of problems; no other escape from emotional pain, or no other way to communicate their desperate sadness. Some teenagers actually think that attempting suicide is the only way to get their message across to their family or friends. Depression is a very serious condition that can ruin a teenager's young life. Young people with problems such as living in a violent or abusive environment, an unintended pregnancy, problems with parents, or a recent break-up with a boyfriend or girlfriend can suffer from emotional and psychological distress.

Further, teenagers who feel suicidal may not even realize that they are depressed. They may even be unaware of their depression. At times, they can be so emotionally disturbed and see death as the only way out of their troubles.

We must realize that it is common for teenagers to have some thoughts about death. These thoughts can stem from a variety of causes, and can result in actual attempts on their own lives. Thus, it is very important to take suicide attempts seriously. Understanding that a teen suicide attempt is a call for help is essential to suicide prevention.

Counselors and therapists can provide emotional support and can help teens develop coping skills for dealing with problems. Constant communication, guidance, and abundant love from immediate family and friends is of major importance in dealing with a teenager's with suicidal tendencies. Teens with severe emotional and psychological problems will also benefit by joining a support network for young people who are going through the same problems. When depression lifts because a teenager gets the proper therapy or treatment, the distorted thinking is cleared. Depression need not take the life out of a teenager. With proper help and guidance, young people with problems can recover and find pleasure, energy, and hope again.