

Transcript of Understanding Suicide & Self Injury prepared by: McKay Esplin, LCSW

Why Should Schools Address Suicide?

1. Maintaining a safe environment is part of the mission of our schools

Most people contemplating suicide give warning signs

The Don'ts

The Do's

Understanding Suicide & Self Injury & what educators can do to help

2. Student's mental health affects their academic performance

3. A student suicide would significantly impact other students

4. Schools have been sued for negligence

Things People Say:

unbearable pain

feeling trapped

i can't take it anymore

i have no reason to live

i'm a burden to others

themes

Things People Do:

looking for a way to kill themselves

gathering weapons

withdrawing from activities

isolating from family & friends

giving away prized possessions

acting recklessly

unusual neglect of personal appearance

visiting or calling people to say goodbye

frequent complaints of stomachaches, headaches, fatigue, etc.

sleeping too much or too little

aggression

increased use of

alcohol or drugs

Things People Feel:

irritability

depression

anxiety

rage

loss of interest

hopelessness

humiliation

Talking openly about suicide can save a life

Are you having thoughts of suicide?

will show your concern, seriousness and that it's okay for them to share their pain with you
it

WON'T

put the idea in their mind

Talk Openly

Asking:

"Are you thinking of killing yourself?"

"Do you have a plan for hurting yourself?"

Can bring tremendous relief to someone considering suicide.

Be Yourself

Let the person know you care and that he/she is not alone

The right words aren't as important as saying something

If you are concerned you will show it through your manner and voice

Listen

let the suicidal person unload despair & ventilate anger

no matter how negative the conversation seems, the fact that it exists is a positive sign

Be Sympathetic

Be non-judgemental, calm, patient & accepting

Offer Hope

Reassure the person that help is available

let them know that their life is important to you

Don't Argue

Avoid saying things like:

"You have so much to live for."

"Your suicide will hurt your family."

"Look on the bright side."

Don't Act Shocked

Don't lecture them on the value of life

Although suicide is not the answer, telling them that it's wrong or a sin won't help

Don't Promise Confidentiality

Don't Give Solutions

Don't offer ways to fix their problems, give advice or make them feel like they need to justify their feelings

It's not about how bad the problem is, but how badly it's hurting your student

Most importantly, take action immediately

Non-Suicidal Self Injury

on set most often between 12-15

elementary school = balanced between male/female

jr. high/high school = predominantly female

12-24% of youth have self injured

1/4 of those only do it once

6-8% repetitive (high prevalence of trauma history)

Contributing Factors

abuse or trauma

eating disorder

mental illness (borderline, anxiety, depression, PTSD)

issues of control (thought or emotions are out of control)

opioid system senses crisis and dumps endorphins (relief/release, resistance over time)

Kids Report

feel concrete pain when psychological pain is overwhelming

decreases "numbness"

keeps trauma from intruding- "I cut so I won't kill myself."

discharges tension

gets control of emotions

gets attention

way to punish myself

self-injury continuum

NSSI can become suicide attempt

40% of self injuring youth are suicidal

Self injury can be working up to suicide

suicide

end feeling

NSSI

feel better

Contagion

"right of togetherness"

often looking for ways to connect with others

NSSI Statistics

(7)

(a) If a school employee, agent, or school resource officer believes a student is at-risk of attempting suicide, physical self-harm, or harming others, the school employee, agent, or school resource officer may intervene and ask a student questions regarding the student's suicidal thoughts, physically self-harming behavior, or thoughts of harming others for the purposes of:

(i) referring the student to appropriate prevention services; and

(ii) informing the student's parent or legal guardian.

Utah Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act

Utah Code 53A-13-302

suicide rates increase in spring
&
risk of suicide increases immediately after anti-depressants are started

Risk Factors

Depression, other mental disorders, or substance abuse disorder
Certain medical conditions
Chronic pain
A prior suicide attempt
Family history of a mental disorder or substance abuse
Family history of suicide
Family violence, including physical or sexual abuse
Having guns or other firearms in the home
Having recently been released from prison or jail
Being exposed to others' suicidal behavior, such as that of family members, peers, or celebrities

National Institute of Mental Health
NIMH

Situations That Increase

Suicide Risk
feeling embarrassed/humiliated in front of peers
losing a friend/family member, especially if by suicide
being a victim of bullying or assault
losing a major relationship
family problems/alienation
sudden loss of freedom
fear of punishment
financial problems
being expelled from school
if you fear a student is at risk for suicide

Contact McKay (counselor) immediately

If McKay (counselor) doesn't answer the phone, call the office and tell them it's an emergency
Do not leave the student alone or allow them to leave your presence (even to go to the bathroom)

What if I become aware of a student at risk of suicide after school hours or on the weekend?

IMMEDIATELY

call 911 or

central dispatch (789-4222)

Provide all known details as well as the child's home address & parent/guardian information