

- They have a chronic illness
- They have a learning disability or a mental or physical disability
- There is family fights; or a poor parent/child relationship.
- There has been a recent loss, family or relationship break up, or death.
- There has been a disruption in their life like a change in friends, surroundings, or activities.
- They have been exposed to violence

Suicide is a permanent solution to a temporary problem. The more you know about depression and suicide, the more you can help.

Warning signs of suicide

You may have heard that people who talk about suicide won't actually go through with it. That's not true. People who talk about suicide may be likely to try it. In fact 75% of people who commit suicide give some warning. This means all suicide threats should be taken seriously – and you can do something to stop a friend taking their life.

- **Talking or joking about suicide:** your friend may talk about dying, threaten to kill him or herself, or say things like "Nothing matters", or "I wish I was dead" or "I won't be around much longer"
- **Depression:** your friend may feel hopeless, lose interest in doing anything, and withdraw from friends and family.
- **Preparing for death:** many teens that are planning suicide will give favourite things away, or even say goodbye.
- **Self-criticism:** listen to things your friend says – things like "I can't do anything right", "I'm hideous and pathetic" – may mean they are feeling suicidal.
- **Changes in personality:** someone who is usually sociable, may not want to go out, may become negative, aggressive or irritable, lose their friendships.
- **Loss of interest in appearance, drop in hygiene:** if your friend stops caring what they look like, getting dressed or even bathing or washing.

- **Risk-taking behaviour:** often people who are feeling suicidal do risky, dangerous things like drink and drive, have unprotected sex, or take drugs.
- **Excessive feelings of guilt, self-blame, failure:** if someone is depressed, they often feel guilty and blame themselves, and it can be very difficult to talk to them, be as patient as you can.
- **Suddenly feel better:** if you know a friend, who has been very depressed and hasn't been for treatment, suddenly is 'back to normal' this could be dangerous. It may mean they have set a date for their suicide and know the pain will soon end.
- **Writing poems, essays about death, sms's or painting images of death:** this is a cry for help, listen to it, and get help.

Helping a friend or family member

Ask: If you have a friend who is talking about suicide or showing other warning signs, don't wait to see if he or she starts to feel better - talk about it. Talking helps in many ways: it allows you to get help for the person; and just talking about it may help the person to feel less alone, less isolated, and more cared about and understood. Talking may also help them see another solution. Asking someone if he or she is having thoughts about suicide can be difficult. Try: "I've noticed that you've been talking a lot about wanting to be dead. Have you been having thoughts about hurting or killing yourself?"



Listen: Listen to your friend without judging and offer reassurance that you're there and you care. Stay close and don't leave them alone.

Tell: Even if you're sworn to secrecy and you feel like you'll be betraying your friend if you tell, you should still seek help as soon as possible. It's always safest to get help.

"Suicide Shouldn't be a Secret"

Self help

"Two years ago I tried to kill myself. My mom found me and took me to hospital. I was so angry with her! I wanted to die and she stopped me! But now, after working on my depression, I'm glad she found me. I have a lot more I want to do now."

Suicidal feelings and thoughts are part of depression; they are real and not a sign of weakness. Many of us have felt the same way at some time in our life so don't be afraid to talk about how you feel.

Here are some things you can do if you are thinking about suicide:

- Tell someone right away – a friend, a parent, a teacher, or call SADAG on 0800 567 567 or SMS 31393 Seven days a week. 8am to 8 pm.
- Make sure you are not alone
- Don't use alcohol or drugs
- Ask your family to lock knives, ropes, pills, and guns away
- Keep pictures of your favourite people with you
- Spend time with family and friends. Even though you probably want to be alone, withdrawing and isolating yourself is not a good idea.

Depression doesn't mean a person is "crazy." Depression is a real medical illness. Just like things can go wrong in your body, things can go wrong in your brain. Luckily, most teens who get help for their depression go on to enjoy life and feel better about themselves.

Don't keep suicide a secret – talk about it, get help, and remember that you can fight depression – and win!



Suicide Crisis Toll-free 0800 12 13 14

**SMS 31393 or www.sadag.co.za
Open 7 days a week from 8am to 8pm**

TEEN SUICIDE
prevention

Suicide Shouldn't be a Secret



011 262 6396
0800 567 567
SMS 31393

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Teen Depression

"I don't want to go to school, or soccer, or see my friends, or anything. I just hate everyone right now. Life sucks."

Being a teenager often means having lots of emotional ups and downs. School, parents, friends, relationships can be confusing and frustrating – things can be great one minute and horrible the next. Many people believe that sadness is just a normal part of growing up, but teens who feel really down and unhappy for two weeks or more at a time may have depression – in fact about 1 in every 5 teens get depression. So, if you or a friend feels down, you're not alone, and this brochure is here to help.

Depression is a "whole-body" illness that involves your body, mood and thoughts. It affects the way you feel about yourself, and the way you think about things. Depression is not a sign of weakness, it can't be wished away, and people with depression cannot just pull themselves together. Without treatment depression can last for weeks, months, or even years. But the good news is: 80% of people, who suffer from depression, get better with treatment so there is no need to feel this way.

The key signs and symptoms of depression are:

- Loss of interest in things you like to do
- Sadness that won't go away
- Irritability or feeling angry a lot

Other signs include:

- Feeling guilty or hopeless
- Feeling tense or worrying a lot
- Crying a lot
- Spending lots of time alone
- Eating too much or too little
- Sleeping too much or too little
- Having low energy or restless feelings
- Feeling tired a lot
- Missing school, daydreaming a lot, or doing badly in school



- Not being able to make decisions or concentrate
- Thinking a lot of dying or killing yourself

Take a look at the list and mark the things that describe your thoughts, feelings, or actions today or in the last two weeks.

Getting help

Depression is common but it's also very treatable. Treatment for depression can include talk therapy, medication, or a combination of both. Talk therapy with a psychologist, social worker or counsellor can help you understand more about why you feel depressed, and ways to cope. Just talking about how you feel can make you feel better.

Medication is sometimes prescribed by a doctor to help you feel better. It can take a few weeks before you feel the medicine working. Because every person's brain is different, what works well for one person might not be good for another? But we can all benefit from mood-boosting activities like exercise, dance, music, writing in a diary, even hanging out with friends.

If you or someone you know feels depressed, don't wait for it to go away on its own – get help. Friends need to step in if someone seems depressed and isn't getting help.

Self help

Depression can make you feel exhausted, worthless, helpless, and hopeless. Remember this is part of the depression.

1. Understand what depression is so you know what you are dealing with.
2. Do things to keep your mind busy and things that make you feel better, like exercise, going to a movie or a sports match, or being with friends you trust?
3. Set realistic goals and take a reasonable amount of responsibility.



4. Break large tasks into small ones, and do what you can. Be realistic and take one step at a time.

5. Try to be with other people and to confide in someone; it is usually better than being alone and secretive.

6. Keep a diary or journal. It's a great way to get your feelings and thoughts out.

7. Let your family and friends help you.

Helping a friend or family member

"My best friend has been acting so strange lately. Now she's really scaring me because yesterday she said the world would be better off without her."

As a friend, you may also know if they are going through a tough time. Sometimes, a specific event, stress, or crisis — like a relationship breaking up or a death in the family — can cause depression. If you are worried about someone you care about, encourage them to tell their parents, see a doctor or counsellor, or teacher — you can even go with them so you know they get there, and they know you are there for support.

Suicide

Did you know that almost 1 in 10 teen deaths in South Africa are suicide? That's scary but we can stop it if we know what to look for and what to do.

What causes suicide?

There are many reasons why a teen may feel like they want to end their life.

Depression - is the leading cause of suicide. Depression makes people feel hopeless, helpless and often they see no reason to live.

Alcohol and Drug Use - This is often connected to suicide. Alcohol and drugs can actually add to depression, and make it worse in depressed people. Also they affect your judgment, and lessen self-control.

Bullying - is a common problem in schools and many children and teens who are bullied feel worthless and hopeless. Being bullied can make people feel depressed and sadly many teens who are targets of physical or cyber bullying attempt suicide or become very depressed.

Self-injury - Many people believe that teens who cut or hurt themselves are suicidal. This isn't always true. People hurt themselves as a way to cope with problems. This isn't a healthy way and there is help!



Why do people commit suicide?

Remember that people who are thinking about suicide feel alone and isolated, and often feel like no-one understands how they feel. Changes in life may be upsetting and they may want to escape a difficult problem or situation, or get relief from terrible stress.

Many teens who are suicidal feel out of control and they see suicide as a way to get back a sense of control in their lives. Sadly many teens feel like they are a burden on their family, and suicide is seen as a way to relieve that burden or punish themselves for something they think they have done wrong.

Remember that teens may feel depressed after the death of a loved one – a family member, a friend, even a pet. Suicide may be their way to reunite with dead loved ones.

Risk factors

Some teens are more at risk for suicide if:

- They have tried before
- There is a history of depression and/or suicide in the family
- They use alcohol or drugs
- They have been sexually or physically abused

