



CONNECTION IS SUICIDE PREVENTION.

1. RECOGNIZE

Notice when something feels different.

Struggling doesn't always look like a crisis. Technology isn't always the problem, in fact for many teens it is their main place of community and connection. Pay attention to changes in their words, mood, school or routines like:

- Not spending time with friends or not doing things they find fun or care about.
- Big changes in eating, sleeping, grades, attendance, anger or risk-taking.
- Being overwhelmed, feeling rejected over little things, where minor mistakes cause personal judgment of themselves as a person.
- Expressions of disconnection and alienation like: "Why even try?" or "I don't belong." or "Nobody would even notice if I disappeared."

3. LISTEN

Be a friend, not a fixer.

Your job is to stay calm and kind no matter what they say, help them feel heard and take what they say seriously, not offer solutions. They may be scared to share, so you have to be a safe place for them.

- Thank them for trusting you and validate their experience. "That sounds really hard. I am glad you told me."
- Avoid judgmental comments like: "Calm down," "It could be worse," or "You will get over it."
- Never promise to keep suicidal thoughts a secret. Their safety is most important, and explain to them the next steps for them to get care.

A Guide to Talking to STRUGGLING TEENS

You don't have to be a counselor to help a teenager struggling with their mental health. Whether you're a parent, family member, friend, coach, teacher or another trusted adult, connection starts with noticing a change, asking a real question, listening without judgment or anger, then helping them reach someone who can support them.

2. ASK

Start the conversation, even if it feels awkward.

Find a private moment or quiet place. Maybe take a walk, or do something familiar together. No phones. You don't need perfect words, just say what you have noticed.

- Say things like: "You haven't seemed like yourself lately. Want to talk and try to figure it out, or would it be better if I just listen?"
- If they don't want to be asked questions or talk, be understanding and just sit quietly with them. The point here is to build connection first.
- Ask open-ended questions instead of yes or no, and let all emotions be valid. Don't connect their feelings to "hormones" or "teenagehood." That can be diminishing.
- Don't be afraid to ask the hard question: "Are you thinking about hurting yourself or suicide?" If you don't ask, they may never share an answer.

4. CONNECT

Bring in support and keep checking in.

You should not have to carry this alone. Bring in a trusted adult or professional support right away if they are considering suicide.

- Check in with them tomorrow after the first conversation. Keep inviting them along. Keep showing up.
- Tell a parent/guardian, school counselor, coach, teacher or another trusted adult.
- Here Tomorrow's Youth Program supports young people in grades 6-12 with guidance from suicide prevention specialists.

Confidential, no cost, no wait peer support
904.371.2900 | heretomorrow.org

If there is immediate danger or someone may act on suicidal thoughts now, call or text 988.
Stay with them and get additional help.