

**PARENTING
RESOURCE**

AGE: 9–18

**TOPIC:
SUICIDE**

A PARENT'S GUIDE TO

13 Reasons Why

.....

Teens across the country are watching a television series that glamorizes suicide, bullying and rape. This guide will help you facilitate open, honest discussions around these issues from a Christian world view.





A PARENT'S GUIDE — TO — 13 REASONS WHY

“THE FACT OF THE MATTER IS THAT A WILLINGNESS TO ADDRESS DIFFICULT ISSUES AND LIVE WITH A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF TENSION IS CRITICAL TO POSITIVE, EFFECTIVE PARENTING.”

—Daniel Huerta

MSW, LCSW, LSSW, CCBT

Focus on the Family
Vice-President of Parenting & Youth

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INTRODUCTION

13 REASONS WHY

The first season of *13 Reasons Why* explored some dark, difficult topics that, unfortunately, are a reality in today's culture. And those topics spurred a great deal of conversation—in the media, social channels, schools, churches and, most importantly, at home.

If all the buzz has taught us anything, it's that kids want to talk about these issues. Yet most parents were caught off guard by the show's themes and didn't have the information they needed to lead healthy, productive conversations. This resource will help you do so.

This is not a guide to the show itself, nor is it an endorsement of it. Rather, this is a guide to the issues explored in each episode, such as rape, cutting, bullying, depression and suicide. Whether you and your teen watch the show or not, the following pages provide expert information to help you initiate and navigate discussions about these difficult topics. Each section will help you:

- **Become aware** of the issues featured in season one of *13 Reasons Why*
- **Talk with your teen** to identify potential problems with any of the issues
- **Understand how to help** if your child is facing any of these problems
- **Guide your teen** to offer compassion and care to peers dealing with these issues
- **Start a conversation** designed to help your teen become a **noticer**, **builder** and **connector**.

It will take intentionality and courage on your part to begin the conversations, but you'll be thankful you did. Your Biblical perspective will provide a message of hope and redemption in the midst of brokenness, chaos, confusion and darkness. May God guide you and strengthen you as you provide truth and clarity to potentially confusing and difficult topics.

Other things to note about *13 Reasons Why*

Despite being geared toward teens, *13 Reasons Why* is rated TV-MA (for mature audiences only). The language is often coarse and obscene. Sex, alcohol and drug abuse are constantly present.

Mental health professionals are especially concerned about the show's graphic depictions of sexual assault, self-harm and, in the end, suicide. The experts say the shocking content may do more harm than good to teens who've had suicidal thoughts.

Find a full review of *13 Reasons Why* at PluggedIn.ca.



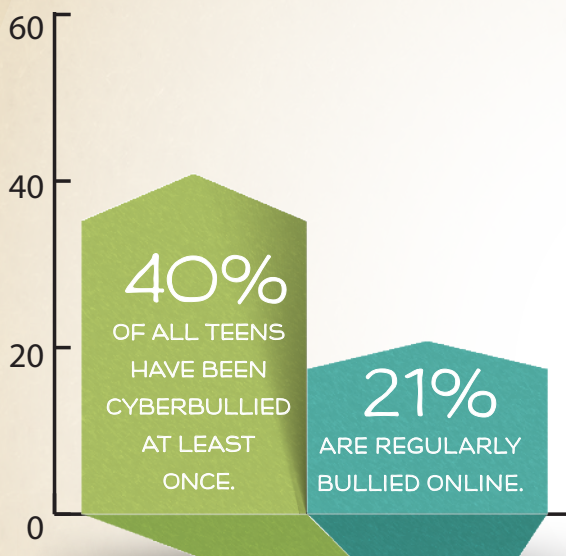
BEFORE
DISCUSSING
ANY OF
THESE ISSUES
WITH YOUR
CHILD, TAKE
TIME TO PRAY
AND LISTEN
FOR GOD'S
DIRECTION.

BULLYING & CYBERBULLYING

Stats are specific to the U.S.

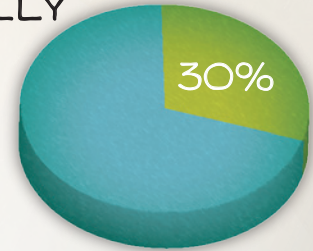
Girls are **2X** as likely to be bullied on a regular basis.

as likely to



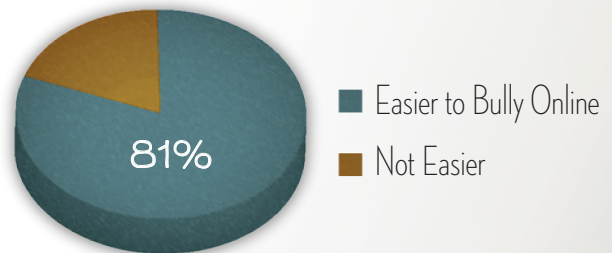
TEENS WHO ADMIT TO BEING A BULLY

- Admit to Bullying
- No Admission



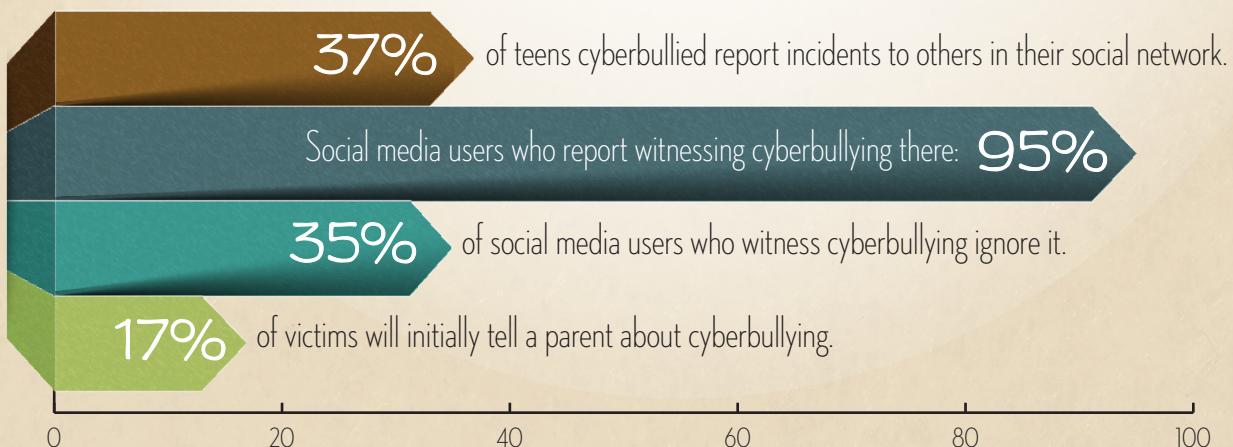
ONLY 1 IN 10 TEENS ADMIT TO TELLING AN ADULT WHEN THEY ARE BEING BULLIED.

TEENS WHO SAY IT IS EASIER TO BULLY ONLINE



Cyberbullied Victims are almost **2X** more likely to attempt suicide.

REPORTING OF CYBERBULLYING



BULLYING & CYBERBULLYING

BULLYING IN “13 REASONS WHY”

Hannah, a new girl at fictional Liberty High School, is attractive, smart and caring. But she almost immediately (and erroneously) garners a reputation at her school as someone who sleeps around. She’s called a “slut,” though she’s done little to earn the label. She becomes a figure of mockery in the halls, with schoolmates sometimes grabbing her backside. And the bullying isn’t just perpetrated in person: Smartphones and social networks form a ready conduit, too.

Tyler, another boy in the series, says: “I saw how guys treated her. I have pictures of it.” He admits to being bullied, too. “People trip me,” he says. “Push me into walls. Shove me into lockers.” And when we see him with weapons in his room, the show suggests that he may react quite differently to the abuse than Hannah does.

THE ISSUE

Bullying is repeated aggressive behaviour from one person (or group) toward another. It involves an imbalance of power (real or perceived) between two parties. This can take the form of physical confrontation, threats, intimidation, name-calling, spreading rumors or simply excluding someone from a group. While the aggressive behaviour typically needs to be recurring in order to qualify as bullying, the fear that a single incident of brutish behaviour might happen again can extend the impact on the victim.

Cyberbullying is a form of bullying that’s carried out via social media and smartphones. While not face to face, it can be just as harmful. It is very public, so word travels quickly. And once images and comments are posted, they can exist forever online. In addition, online bullies wreak havoc anonymously, often with little fear of being discovered or punished. Their harassing comments may even include recommendations that victims harm or kill themselves.

BEING PROACTIVE

Signs that might indicate your child is the victim of bullying or cyberbullying include but are not limited to:

- Marked changes in patterns of daily activities, such as overeating or eating much less than normal
- Plummeting grades, an unwillingness to attend school, or complaints of ailments in order to avoid having to go to school
- Changes in sleep patterns
- Depression
- Use of drugs and alcohol

If you see these signs, you need to talk with your child. One way to bring up a difficult topic is to depersonalize it. For example, you might mention that “some people” have encountered bullying. You can talk about the problem

WHERE BULLIES COME FROM

Permissive and harsh homes create bullies. Take inventory of your own home by asking two questions:

- ***Are we creating a bully by being overly permissive or extremely harsh?***
- ***Is bullying going on in our home?***

Children who are bullied, many times, end up bullying others. Some have learned the perception that they are beyond rules and boundaries.

“Cyberbullying ... while not face to face, can be just as harmful.”

BULLYING AND CYBERBULLYING

in generic terms, but then transition the conversation to direct it more personally:

“I’ve heard a lot of people talking about bullying lately. What does that mean to you? Have you ever felt bullied by someone?”

“On social media, do you see any of your friends getting picked on? If so, how have you responded?”

There are several steps you can take to help safeguard your child:

- **OPENNESS** - Check in often so you can be better able to spot signs of bullying. Some of the issues that lead to bullying could be embarrassing or involve wrongdoing. Don't be afraid to bring up concerns. Conflict can be helpful to the growth of your parent-child relationship.
- **CONFIDENCE** - Encourage your child's strengths and passions. Taking part in activities she loves or excels in will help your teen develop confidence, which can ward off the attention of bullies.
- **BOUNDARIES** - Set guidelines for technology use. You may wish to draft a contract stipulating the type of conduct you expect from your child—for example, which websites they can visit, how much time they will spend online, where their phone will be when they sleep. Talk with your teen about what they think some reasonable guidelines should be and why.
- **ACCOUNTABILITY** - Let your child know that part of your job as a responsible, loving parent is to be aware of her emails, texts and social media postings. You want to see that your child is being treated well, treating others well and being a good decision-maker.

Talk to your child about how bullying has been around since the beginning of history. It is not unique to this generation; it's a humanity issue that even Jesus faced.

HELPING YOUR CHILD

The effects of bullying and cyberbullying can be dramatic. They demolish self-esteem and lead to depression and anxiety that can last into adulthood. Neurobiological research confirms that social pain is equivalent to physical pain. In the most tragic cases, teens and preteens may feel driven to self-harm or suicide. If your teen is being bullied, she needs help *immediately*. Some things you can do include:

- ✓ Give her some tips about how to deal with a bullying incident such as using humour to defuse a tense situation, using straightforward language (“That’s enough!”) or, if possible, simply walking away.

FIGHTING BACK?

Many parents want to teach their child to respond to bullies with physical violence. While self-defence training is helpful, advising your child to answer violence with violence is not recommended. Physical aggression can escalate to a point where your child's safety—or even life—may be seriously threatened. Likewise, schools that have a zero-tolerance policy for violence may impose punishments on your child, even if he is not the instigator of a fight. Research in the *Preventing Bullying Through Science, Policy and Practice* report found that building social and emotional skills and learning coping skills are effective ways families can help children deal with the issue of bullying.

Hardships often prepare ordinary people for an extraordinary destiny.

—C.S. Lewis

BULLYING AND CYBERBULLYING

- ✓ Rehearse with your teen where she can go at school—a specific location or a person such as a school counsellor, a trusted teacher, or administrator—if she ever feels threatened.
- ✓ If your child is being bullied, you might be tempted to give free rein to strong emotions, especially in a meeting with school officials. Resist the urge. Yelling or reacting explosively may embarrass your child and cause her to NOT tell you about future episodes. Calm, measured action is more likely to lead her to want to tell you.
- ✓ Encourage your child to talk with you or another adult when they feel intimidated or afraid, so they can get help and perspective on the other person's behaviour to end the bullying. In situations where a child feels emotionally trapped in feelings of fear, talking can sometimes help teens break out of their "loop" of fearful emotions.
- ✓ Children who bully or have been bullied have an increased likelihood of developing a psychiatric disorder. It is helpful to consult a licensed counsellor who works with children.

TALK ABOUT IT

Be a Noticer

- Have you ever witnessed bullying or cyberbullying? If so, what did you see? What did you do?
- Who tends to bully? What do you think is going on in a bully's mind? What is going on in the mind of someone being bullied?
- What's being done about bullying in your school?

Be a Builder

- If a person were bullied, what would it be like for people to step in and help?
- What are some easy ways to authentically encourage others?
- Why do you think cyberbullying has become more common?
- How can we use technology in more positive ways?

Be a Connector

- What stops you from finding help for yourself or another person being bullied?
- What are some resources at your school for people who are being bullied? Who needs to know about the bullying to be able to help?

LOOKING IN

If your child has become a bully, this doesn't mean you're a bad parent. Some personalities are more vulnerable to becoming bullies. Talk with the school counsellor and a licensed counsellor to begin getting the necessary help for your family and your child. Pray diligently for God's softening of your child's heart.

REACHING OUT

How can you equip your child to be a help to someone else who is being bullied?

- **Teach him to be aware.**

What might he see in a friend or classmate who is afraid or hurting? If he can't think of any signs, provide some examples such as someone walking the halls with his head down; remaining quiet; being tearful; trying to stay out of sight.

- **Talk about kind phrases**

your child can offer that other person, or actions he can take. Isolation is one of the most painful results of bullying. Examples of compassionate phrases might include, "Would you like to eat lunch with me and my friends?" or "Can I walk you to the office so you can talk to someone about what's happening?"

CUTTING & SELF-INJURY

Stats are specific to the U.S.

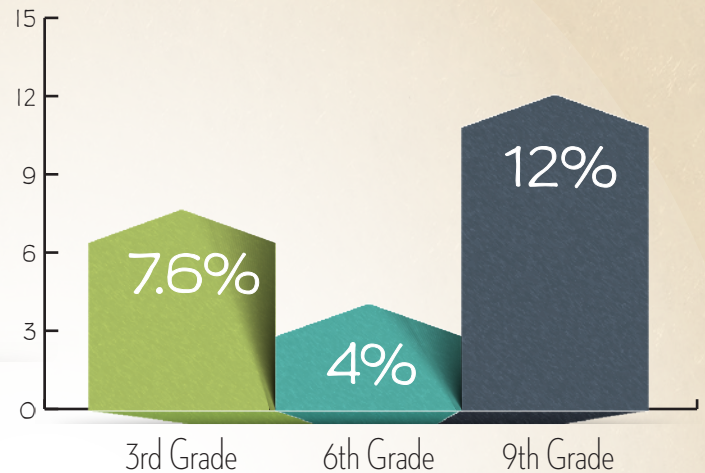


1 IN 5 FEMALES
WILL ENGAGE IN SELF-INJURY.



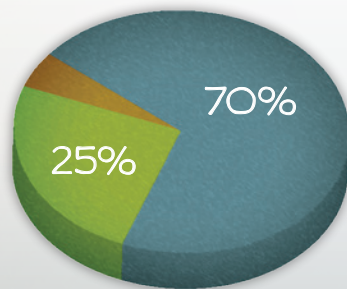
1 IN 7 MALES
WILL ENGAGE IN SELF-INJURY.

PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS WHO ENGAGE IN SELF-INJURY



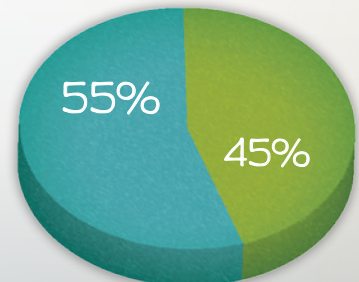
SUICIDE ATTEMPTS AMONG THOSE WHO SELF-INJURE

- At Least One
- Multiple Attempts
- No Attempt



REASONS FOR TEEN CUTTING & SELF-INJURY

- Get Mind Off Problems
- Release Tension or Stress



2,000,000
SELF-INJURY CASES
ARE REPORTED ANNUALLY IN THE U.S.



CUTTING & SELF-INJURY

CUTTING IN “13 REASONS WHY”

Hannah's already dead when the series begins, and her story is largely told in flashback. The “present” in each episode unfolds through the eyes of Clay, one of Hannah's friends struggling to come to terms with her death. But even as he seeks to make sense of what happened to Hannah, for several episodes he ignores Skye, a former friend who now dresses all in black and sports a number of tattoos.

“We can't all be nice girls like Hannah,” she tells Clay. “She didn't go through anything different than any of us. We all get through it.”

Clay grabs her wrist, revealing scars that look like evidence of cutting. “Then what's that?” he asks.

“It's what you do instead of killing yourself,” she says.

THE ISSUE

Cutting is a form of self-injury done in an attempt to relieve or cope with psychological and emotional pain. It usually involves making cuts on various parts of the body using razors, knives or shards of glass. (Other forms of self-harm include: hitting one's head against a wall, rubbing skin harshly with erasers or burning skin with matches or cigarettes.) The emotional relief obtained by harming oneself is short-lived; however, the feelings of relief can become addictive.

Many adults can't understand why teens would cut themselves, but it's generally about dealing with deep hurt, anger and feelings of isolation and self-hatred. Self-injury gives some teens a temporary feeling of being in control when their world seems out of control. The pain is a reminder that they are still alive and provides a break from the emotional hurt. In addition, the physical wounds show healing whereas emotional pain lingers.

People engaged in self-injury are typically not trying to commit suicide, but the physical harm that results can be serious. Wounds may become infected, deep cuts can require stitches, and self-inflicted blows to the head may cause concussions.

Cutting isn't a fringe phenomenon, unfortunately. About 2 million cases of cutting are reported each year, with many more cases unreported. Ask most high school students (and even many middle school kids) and they will tell you they know someone who is cutting. In fact, a subculture of cutting flourishes on the internet, with websites dedicated to providing guidance on how to cut “safely” or not get caught.

BEING PROACTIVE

Although cutting is a mechanism for handling emotional pain, it is also an indicator of communication problems. Unable to verbalize and

Although the world is full of suffering, it is also full of the overcoming of it.

—Helen Keller

“Self-injury gives some teens a temporary feeling of being in control when their world seems out of control.”

CUTTING & SELF-INJURY

appropriately deal with their emotions, cutters adopt unhealthy means to cope and then have to deal with feelings of shame from their actions. You can reduce the likelihood your child will engage in cutting by:

- **COMMUNICATING AND CONNECTING** - Let your teen know you care about what she's going through, and that you are available to talk about what she's feeling. Encourage her to verbalize her emotions. Ask: **What do certain emotions feel like in your body? What do you do when you feel a certain emotion?** Try to find an activity that just you and your teen can share to give you a special bond. Cooking, jogging, working in the garage, fishing—look for something fun you could do together.
- **STRESS WATCHING** - Keep an eye on your child's stress. What puts pressure on your child? Is her stress at a manageable level? What activities can you encourage her to give up in order to reduce stress? Is she sleeping enough or too much? (Each child needs different amounts of sleep.) How is her social world?
- **PROVIDING HEALTHY OPTIONS** - Give your teen healthy ways to deal with stress. In certain seasons of life, pressure is unavoidable. Help your child find ways to deal with stress, such as exercise or an enjoyable hobby. Expressive artwork, collage-making and journaling are great ideas for many teens. Talk together about activities they pursue or the things they create. Discuss what "fills their tank" or energizes them.

HELPING YOUR CHILD

Some signs that a child is cutting include:

- ✓ Scars on arms or legs (girls often cut on the stomach and breasts as well)
- ✓ Excusing wounds as a result of "accidents"
- ✓ Keeping sharp objects (razors, utility knives) on hand
- ✓ Bloodstained towels, washcloths and sheets
- ✓ Wearing long sleeves or long pants, even when the weather is hot
- ✓ Difficulties with relationships or being isolated for long periods of time
- ✓ Making statements about self-hatred or worthlessness

If you notice these signs in your child, start a conversation and remain calm—which is easier said than done. You could say something like, "I've noticed some scars on your arms. I love you, and I want to understand what you're going through. Can you help me understand?" You could also ask questions, such as: ***I've been hearing about cutting lately, and I was wondering if you know anyone who hurts themselves.*** or ***Have any of your friends at school been talking about cutting?***

"You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you. Trust in the LORD forever, for the LORD God is an everlasting rock."

—Isaiah 26:3-4

CUTTING & SELF-INJURY

Don't downplay the issue as "a phase" or a simple "cry for help." While those who cut typically do not intend suicide, research suggests that 70 percent of kids who engage in self-harm will make at least one suicide attempt.

Don't demand that your child stop under threat of punishment or rejection, as this may just make the problem worse. Let your child know that you genuinely care and assure her that she doesn't have to carry her emotional burdens alone. Do what you can to create an environment that encourages discussion.

This is a serious problem, and you should not try to address it alone. Seek help from a licensed mental health professional who has experience in this area. Some forms of counselling attempt to equip the teen with coping skills, the means to articulate her feelings, and the ability to tolerate stress more effectively. This may be the focus of therapy even before the actual cutting is addressed. The idea is that if you stop the cutting but your teen can't deal with her emotional pain in a healthy way, self-harm is likely to recur.

TALK ABOUT IT

Be a Noticer

- Why do you think people injure themselves through cutting? What do they want to achieve through their actions?
- What are people who cut trying to communicate? Have you wanted to hurt yourself intentionally?
- What are some healthy and unhealthy ways we handle stress in our home?

Be a Builder

- How can you encourage someone who is superstressed or in a lot of emotional pain?
- Do you know someone who is cutting or injuring themselves?
- Why is it so hard to explain emotional pain? How can you help others talk about their emotions?

Becoming a Connector

- Why is it best NOT to keep cutting and self-injury a secret?
- How does your willingness to listen help someone who is in severe emotional pain? How can a counsellor help?

LOOKING IN

Try to hold a glass of water with your arm extended for as long as you can. Does it get heavier the longer you hold it? Your muscles get tired and the glass feels heavier, even though the weight never changes. Emotional pain can feel the same way.

You can use this illustration to help your child understand the concept of letting things go. Identify trustworthy people in her life who can help her learn to release emotional pain in healthy ways. If your child doesn't struggle with cutting, he can use this illustration to help a friend see how emotional pain can become heavier over time and demonstrate the importance of finding healthy ways to release emotional pain.

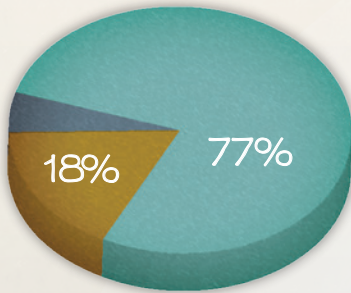
REACHING OUT

You can help your child reach out to a teen who is cutting by equipping her with the right words to say. Your teen can communicate to her friend that she is not alone, that someone cares about her and that your teen is a safe person to talk to. Your child should also encourage someone who's cutting to talk to a parent, a school counsellor or another trusted adult. Her friend may ask her to keep the cutting a secret, but some secrets keep others in danger. Let your teen know that to be a good friend, she needs to tell someone who can help.

SEXTING

Stats are specific to the U.S.

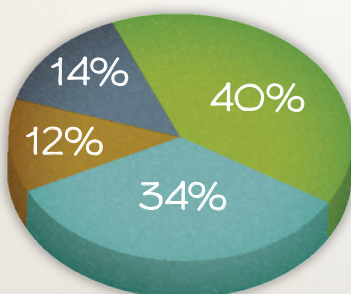
REASONS BOYS SEXT



- Nude Photos Sent to Girls to Get Them in the Mood for Sex
- Pressure from a Female Counterpart
- Other Reasons

WHEN A SEXTED MESSAGE GETS OUT, IT CAN CAUSE HUGE NEGATIVE CHANGES IN A TEEN'S BEHAVIOUR.

REASONS GIRLS SEXT



- As a Joke
- To "Feel" Sexy
- Pressured to Do It
- Other Reasons

SEXTING WAS THE 4TH MOST COMMONLY IDENTIFIED PROBLEM IN 2015 AMONG ADULTS REGARDING THEIR CHILDREN, UP FROM 8TH IN 2014.

11%
of teens admit they've sent pictures to strangers.

EARLY EXPOSURE TO SEXUAL BEHAVIOURS INCREASES THE POSSIBILITY OF STDs, TEEN PREGNANCY AND OTHER HARMFUL CONSEQUENCES.

51%
of adults in a national poll list sexting as a top concern for their children.

80%
of teens who have sexted are under the age of 19.

TEENS WHO ARE SEXTING ARE MORE LIKELY THAN THEIR PEERS TO ENGAGE IN SEXUAL INTERCOURSE.

39%
of teen boys say sexually suggestive messages that were originally meant for someone else.

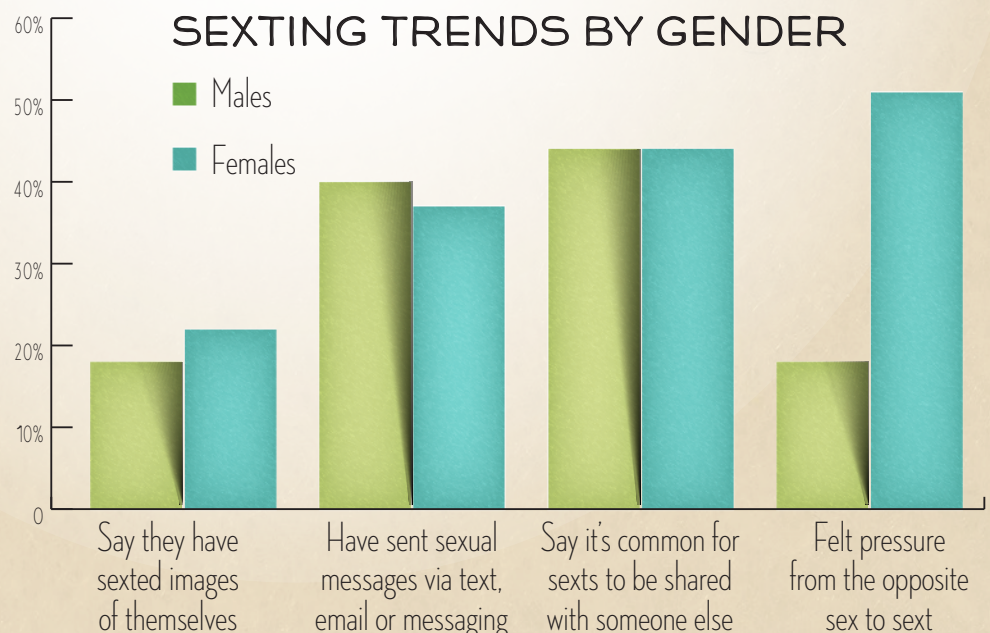
50+%
of teens have reported that they have been asked to send a sext.

38%
of teen girls say they've seen sexually suggestive messages that were originally meant for someone else.

THOSE RECEIVING SEXT MESSAGES ARE 6X MORE LIKELY TO ENGAGE IN SEXUAL ACTIVITIES THAN NON-SEXTING PEERS.

THOSE SENDING SEXT MESSAGES ARE 4X MORE LIKELY TO ENGAGE IN SEXUAL ACTIVITIES THAN NON-SEXTING PEERS.

SEXTING TRENDS BY GENDER



SEXTING IN “13 REASONS WHY”

In the series’ first episode, Hannah sneaks out to spend time with Justin, a guy she likes. The two hang out at a playground and kiss. “That’s all we did,” Hannah says later. But the kids at school see a different story. During the rendezvous, Justin took a picture of Hannah—a picture that revealed her underwear and suggested the two did more than kiss. Justin shows it to his friends, and one of them forwards the picture to everyone in school.

Another time, Hannah and her friend Courtney get carried away during a drunken “truth or dare” session, and the two make out. A boy spies on them through a window, takes photos and sends them around the school. Although the photos are too blurry for the girls to be identified, Courtney spreads a rumor that Hannah and an openly homosexual schoolmate are its subjects.

THE ISSUE

Many teens have gotten caught up in the troubling trend of sending sexually explicit text messages. These “sexts” may include racy messages or photos with full or partial nudity. Some teens don’t see it as a big deal. Sexting often occurs when a boy or girl asks someone else to send them nude or semi-nude photos. Many girls who have sent such pictures say they did so because a boy pressured them. Other times, a girl may volunteer to send sexual images of herself, or even ask a guy to send indecent snaps. The feeling of being wanted or the excitement of exploring sexual curiosities can be very enticing to some teens.

Sexting is damaging for girls *and* guys. Girls, who should be treated with honour and respect, are instead viewed as objects whose purpose is to provide gratification. They often begin to see themselves in that light. Guys quickly learn lessons about male-female relationships that are unrealistic. This can lead to pornography addiction and relationship failures.

Beyond that, transmitting naked pictures of a minor (a person under 18) may legally constitute distribution of child pornography. In the U.S., many adolescents have faced charges for sending nude pictures of themselves. Teen boys have even faced child pornography charges and been placed on sex offender registries for sharing pictures of girlfriends.

Sadly, many teens have been victimized by their boyfriends or girlfriends. A promise may have been made to keep nude pictures confidential, but after a breakup there’s no guarantee. Teens can seek revenge by posting these photos online (often called “revenge porn”). And once a photo gets posted electronically, there’s no controlling who else might see it. Cyberbullying can ensue. The results—violation of privacy, ruined reputation and repercussions from parents—can be devastating. The humiliation can be so overwhelming that some boys and girls have committed suicide.

The feeling of being wanted or the excitement of exploring sexual curiosities can be very enticing to some teens.



“...once a photo gets posted electronically, there’s no controlling who else might see it.”

BEING PROACTIVE

Parents have to be involved, aware and monitoring their kids' technology use. Your teen does not have a "right" to online privacy from you. While the eventual goal is to have your child learn self-control and self-monitoring, remember that your teen's brain is still developing and often not ready to handle technology's numerous dangers. The teen brain is primed for risk, sensation seeking and novelty—things that, when harnessed correctly and according to God's design, will enable them to leave home someday. But their brain is also ripe for addiction. Technology is addictive, but especially when it involves sexual imagery.

The best approach to sexting is to prevent it. Here are some things you can do to minimize the risk that your child will participate:

- **HAVE THE TALK** - Talk with your kids about sex—not just the one-time "birds and bees" chat, but ongoing conversations about the beauty of sex as God created it. Emphasize to your daughter that she is worthy of respect and that her body should be treated with respect. Teach your son the importance of treating girls as sisters in Christ who bear the image of God.
- **OPENNESS** - Discuss the topic of sexting. Ask your child if she knows if kids at school are sexting. Has anyone ever sent her an explicit photo or asked her to send one? Ask her thoughts on the topic and also how she *feels* about it. Make sure she understands the dangers and the headache that can come from what might seem like harmless sharing of photos.
- **LEGAL REALITIES** - Make sure your child knows there are legal ramifications and consequences for sharing sexually explicit photos of a minor.
- **SAFETY** - Let your child know that it's safe for her to confide in you if she ever has made a mistake in this area. Fear of an explosive reaction never inspires a child to be open.
- **TRUE FREEDOM** - Remind your child that freedom is found in being trustworthy, so all electronic devices are open to your eyes at any time. Consider adopting a "nothing to hide" policy for electronics in your family, making devices open and without rights to privacy. You may also consider installing software on your child's devices to help monitor and appropriately limit their activity.

HELPING YOUR CHILD

If you discover that your child has been involved in sexting:

- ✓ Calmly and compassionately review the potential spiritual, legal and personal consequences of this type of action. Your teen likely knows

The teen brain is primed for risk, sensation seeking and novelty—things that, when harnessed correctly and according to God's design, will enable them to leave home someday.

SEXTING ABBREVIATIONS YOU SHOULD KNOW

Remember these can change quickly. Keep up to date on what abbreviations are being used through research, counsellors or school staff:

NIFOC - Naked In Front of Computer

GNOC - Get Naked on Camera

NP4NP - Naked Pic 4 Naked Pic

POS - Parent Over Shoulder

she did something she shouldn't have. Our brains are primed to learn when we make mistakes. Strive for the end result of your conversation to be genuine remorse, learning, relationship building and maturing.

- ✓ On your child's phone, block the numbers of anyone who has shared explicit messages with him.
- ✓ Ask who your child has shared photos with. You may need to speak with the other teens' parents to prevent sensitive pictures from being spread and to keep a bad situation from getting worse. Keep calm instead of reacting aggressively toward other parties.
- ✓ Emphasize the need to rebuild trust. Your first thought may be to take away your child's phone forever and ground her until college. Regardless of whatever discipline you impose, she needs to understand that she broke your trust and that it needs to be re-established. Trust is on a continuum. It is not "you have it or you don't." There are different levels of trust. Provide measurable goals and verifiable actions she must take in order to move up the continuum of trust.

TALK ABOUT IT

Be a Noticer

- Despite pressures to participate in sexting, how could this be dangerous and hurt you far into your future?
- Do you think the person asking for nude selfies really cares about the sender of the images? Why or why not?
- Have you ever seen any sexting messages or know anybody who regularly sexts?

Be a Builder

- How can you be compassionate toward friends who have sent sexual texts? What advice would you give them if they would listen to you?
- How would you feel if other members of our family suddenly had naked pictures of themselves posted online or saved on someone else's phone?

Be a Connector

- What would you do if someone asked you to send them a naked selfie? What would you tell a friend who felt pressure to sext?
- Why is it important for us to have an "open for review" policy for technology in the home? How can you encourage your friends to do the same in their homes?

REACHING OUT

What can your child do if he discovers that a friend is involved in sexting? The personality of your child could greatly influence his response. You may have a natural-born leader or a follower. As a result, this next step could be easy for some kids and very difficult for others. Equip him to:

- **Respond with wisdom and not judgment.** If it's a girl who has been sexting, remind your child that many girls sext not because they think it's a great thing to do but because they've been pressured into it. If the "sexter" is a guy, it may be appropriate to remind him of the possible life-changing damage he could do to a girl if any pictures of her got around. Also let him know that the law might not deal kindly with him if photos of an underage girl were discovered on his phone.
- **Remind the person involved that he or she is a person created in the image of God**—and therefore of infinite worth. That person deserves to be treated with the utmost respect and should treat others likewise.
- **Encourage the person involved to speak with a parent or other trusted adult.**

RAPE & SEXUAL ASSAULT

Stats are specific to the U.S.

FEMALES
ages 16-19 are

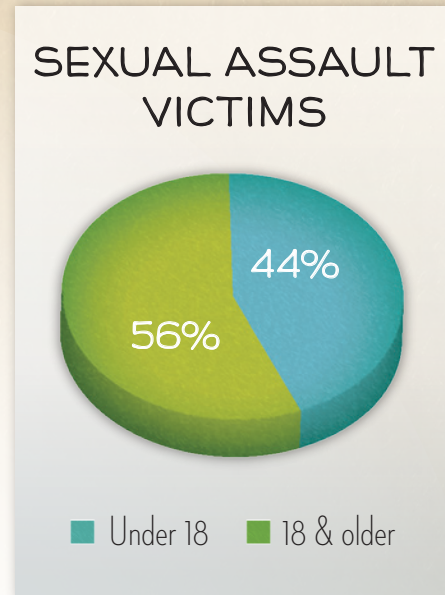
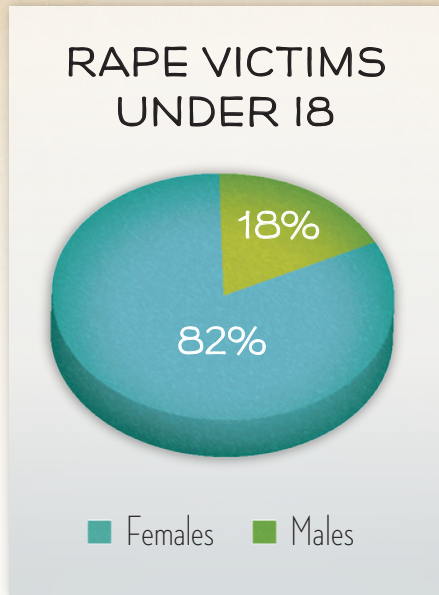
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more likely to be

X raped

or the victims of
sexual assault
than the general population.



86%

OF **FEMALE RAPE VICTIMS** KNOW THEIR ABUSER AS AN INTIMATE PARTNER, FAMILY MEMBER OR ACQUAINTANCE.

56%

OF **MALE RAPE VICTIMS** REPORT THEIR PERPETRATOR WAS AN ACQUAINTANCE.

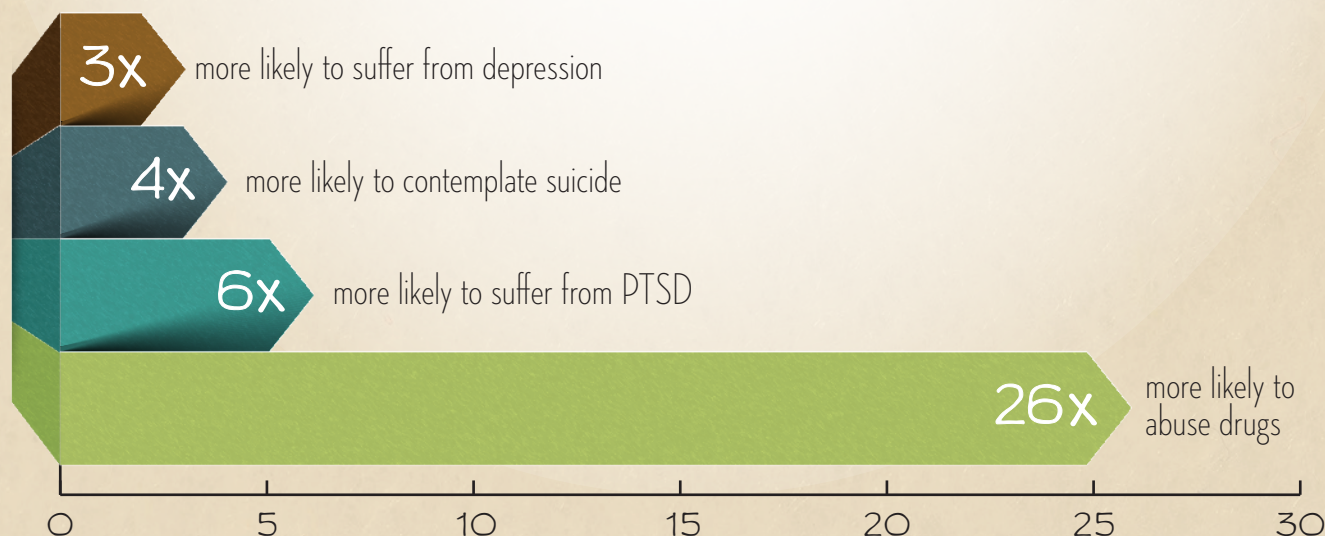


50%
OF YOUNG PEOPLE WHO EXPERIENCE RAPE OR PHYSICAL OR SEXUAL ABUSE WILL ATTEMPT SUICIDE.

TEEN GIRLS ABUSED THIS WAY ARE 6X MORE LIKELY TO BECOME PREGNANT OR CONTRACT AN STD.

25% OF HIGH SCHOOL GIRLS HAVE BEEN ABUSED PHYSICALLY OR SEXUALLY.

INCREASED RISKS FOR RAPE VICTIMS



RAPE & SEXUAL ASSAULT

RAPE IN "13 REASONS WHY"

While hiding in her friend Jessica's room during a party, Hannah sees Bryce, a popular athlete, rape Jessica, who is unconscious. Jessica doesn't remember the incident. When Jessica does learn about it, she struggles with whether to tell her father or the police, believing that girls can't get help after being attacked.

At another party, Hannah's in a hot tub with Bryce, who forces himself on her. "It felt like I was already dead," she later says. She tells a school counsellor what happened without naming names. But the counsellor says that his hands are tied unless Hannah's willing to publicly come clean. Hannah wipes tears away and says, "If things aren't going to change, I better just get on with it, right?"

THE ISSUE

Rape is sexual penetration without consent. *Sexual assault* refers to other sexual contact without consent, and may include attempted rape or unwanted fondling.

The effects of this abuse are profound and life altering. Victims may experience post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, sleep disorders and depression. They are more likely to have multiple sexual partners. They are also at a higher risk for suicide.

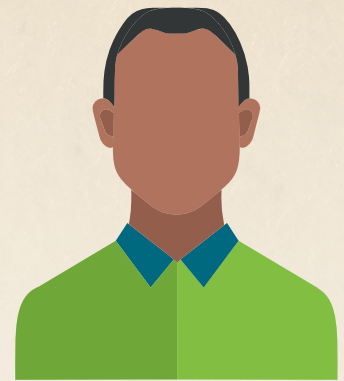
Rape is a violating act and causes many heartbreaking consequences, because it's not just an attack on the body, but on the victim's personhood. It demoralizes and dehumanizes, stripping away a sense of security. A victim often has to deal with a betrayal by someone she trusted. In three out of five cases involving a minor, the victim already knew the perpetrator. If she sees the person at school, she may always wonder who else knows about the attack.

BEING PROACTIVE

Teens need to know that rape is *never the victim's fault*. Nevertheless, you can encourage strategies to reduce the risk of becoming a victim of sexual assault:

- **LIVE SMART** - Explain the reasons for not using drugs or alcohol. Not only are these substances illegal for teens, they can also lead to risky behaviours. One study indicates that in about half of all sexual assaults, alcohol was consumed by the perpetrator, the victim or both.
- **DRESSING MODESTLY** is also a smart way to live. How we dress communicates something about ourselves. Ask your teen: **What do you want to communicate with the clothes you wear?**
- **CALL FOR HELP** - If your teen finds herself at a party or other situation where drugs or alcohol are being used, tell her she can text

In 2013, the Campus Sexual Violence Elimination (SaVE) Act was passed in the U.S. to address the fact that 20 to 25 percent of female college students are victims of sexual assault.



NOT JUST A GIRL'S ISSUE

Nearly one out of five rape victims under the age of 18 is a boy. **Don't forget to talk to your son about this issue.** Boys are less likely to report a rape. Let him know that if he is ever a victim, not to be embarrassed or afraid to get help.

(Stats are specific to the U.S.)

RAPE & SEXUAL ASSAULT

you any time for a ride home, without fear of a lecture. Let her know that the same escape clause applies for a date or any situation where she feels uncomfortable or threatened.

- **DATE WISELY** - Encourage and teach smart dating. Always ask to meet a potential date, so you can form an impression. Recommend group dates or outings with a youth group. No matter what, trustworthiness needs to be established before teens spend one-on-one time together. Remind your teens that anyone they plan to date is a person who bears the image of God and deserves to be treated the way God would want them to be treated.
- **CONFIDENCE** - Some guys think that if they buy a girl dinner they have the right to sexual favours in return. Give your daughter the confidence to say no. In fact, *rehearse it with her*. Remind her that she's worth infinitely more than a hamburger. Sexual perpetrators look for people who lack confidence, because they are less likely to report anything.
- **VALUES FIRST** - Counsel your teen about the importance of putting friendship before romance. Set standards about dating someone who shares your child's values and who values her as a person created in God's image. Teach your child to rely on godly reason and thought, instead of living out of pure emotion. Teens are usually heavily influenced by their feelings. They can greatly benefit from learning to "think about their thinking." This can be difficult for teens, so it requires patient and diligent teaching.

HELPING YOUR CHILD

A teen who has been raped needs her parents more than ever:

- ✓ Make compassion and concern a priority. Believe your teen if she says she has been raped. Parents risk minimizing the issue or making the victim feel responsible by questioning whether the rape actually occurred.
- ✓ Avoid focusing on the unsafe behaviour that possibly contributed to the unwanted sexual contact. Your daughter does not need a lecture. She needs love. Insights about risky situations and prevention should come in the recovery process, not at the point of disclosure. Your teen needs to feel grace and be treated with dignity. It's important to tell your teen that it's not her fault.
- ✓ If the rape occurred within the last 72 hours, get your child to a hospital. This is important as doctors will be able to treat any injuries, collect evidence of an assault and test for sexually transmitted infections. Even if the rape occurred more than 72 hours before you learn about it, a medical exam is still important to check for possible STIs.

SIGNS YOUR CHILD MAY HAVE BEEN THE VICTIM OF RAPE OR SEXUAL ASSAULT

- Bruises or other injuries, including possible cutting
- Sleeping fully clothed or wearing a bathing suit to shower
- New anxiety, depression, social fears or fatigue
- Withdrawing from normal activities or friends
- Changes in hygiene or attention to appearance, including sudden and significant weight gain
- Difficulty sleeping

"A teen who has been raped needs her parents more than ever."

RAPE & SEXUAL ASSAULT

- ✓ Contact the police. Many victims are reluctant to do this. They don't want to draw more attention to the violation or they may want to protect the perpetrator. It's important that your child see you providing safety and taking action in her defence.
- ✓ Encourage involvement in a rape recovery group. This can be an important step in healing. Victims need to hear from their peers that the crime committed against them was the fault of the perpetrator. This may also make them more willing to receive counselling or talk more openly to you about the experience.
- ✓ Once you've dealt with the incident appropriately, let your child know you are always available when she wants to talk. Then try to get her back into a routine. Your teen will likely struggle at first, but resuming her usual daily routine can help her learn to live normally again.

TALK ABOUT IT

Be a Noticer

- Do you know anyone who has been the victim of sexual assault or rape?
- How can you tell if someone is not a good person to date? What attracts you and why? What are other people attracted to in you?
- What do your friends at school think of drug and alcohol use? How does it impact them?

Be a Builder

- How can you encourage someone who has gone through something as difficult as rape? What can you do to support them?
- How are rape victims viewed? How can you help them regain the truth about who they are? How can you help them regain the perspective of being made in God's image?

Be a Connector

- Do you know of any resources that are available for people who have been raped? What are they?
- What kind of help would a perpetrator need?
- Why is it important to connect a rape victim with necessary resources? What if the victim says he or she will never be your friend again if you tell anyone?

REACHING OUT

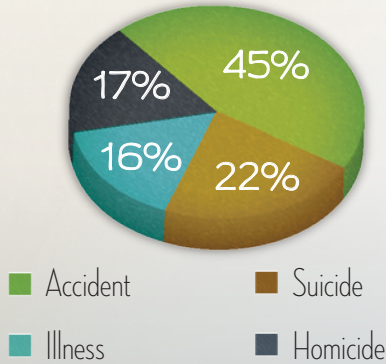
What should your child do if she discovers that a friend has been raped? Suggest that she:

- **Encourage her friend to talk with a parent, school counsellor or trusted adult.** By offering to go with her for help, your child can give her friend the strength to speak out. If she refuses, your child still needs to let an adult know what happened. Keeping a friend's confidence is important, but keeping a secret like this is damaging. Sometimes being a good friend means doing hard things.
- **Have her friend contact the Canadian Association of Sexual Assault Centres** at Casac.ca for support.
- **Listen without judging.** Her friend may want to talk about the incident if she knows your child really cares. Her friend doesn't need to hear condemning statements or questions like, "Why would you put yourself in that situation?"
- **Be supportive.** Check in with her friend now and then to see how she's doing. Let her know that nothing that's happened has changed the way your child thinks of her. Pray for her.

SUICIDE

Stats are specific to the U.S.

CAUSE OF DEATH AMONG KIDS AGES 15-19 IN 2016



AVERAGE NUMBER OF ATTEMPTED TEEN SUICIDES PER YEAR:

575,000

ANNUAL NUMBER OF TEEN/YOUTH SUICIDES EACH YEAR (AGES 10-24):

4,600

12 TEEN SUICIDES PER DAY, ON AVERAGE

19.3%

OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS HAVE **SERIOUSLY** CONSIDERED KILLING THEMSELVES.

81% OF SUICIDE VICTIMS ARE MALE.

MALES ARE MORE LIKELY TO SUCCEED ON THEIR FIRST ATTEMPT.

FIREARMS ARE USED IN 51% OF MALE SUICIDES.

RISE IN FEMALE SUICIDE RATES

Age Group	1999 (Deaths per 100,000)	2014 (Deaths per 100,000)
Ages 5-14	~0.5	~1.5
Ages 15-24	~3.0	~4.5

GIRLS ATTEMPT SUICIDE 3X AS OFTEN AS MALES.

SUICIDE RATES FOR YOUNG GIRLS HAVE RISEN FASTER THAN ANY OTHER GROUP—TRIPLING SINCE 1999.

TOP REASONS FOR SUICIDE

ONLY 1 IN 5 DEPRESSED TEENS ACTUALLY GETS HELP.

GET HELP!
NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION LIFELINE:
1-833-456-4566

- 01 DEPRESSION**
Always accompanied by a pervasive sense of suffering as well as the belief that escape from it is hopeless, severe depression often feels too much to bear and is the most common reason for suicide.
- 02 PSYCHOSIS**
Malevolent inner voices often command self-destruction for unintelligible reasons. Schizophrenics are just as likely to give honest answers about thoughts of suicide when asked directly.
- 03 IMPULSE**
Often related to drugs or alcohol, some people become maudlin and impulsively attempt to end their own lives. Once sobered and calmed, these people usually feel genuine remorse.
- 04 CRY FOR HELP**
Usually don't want to die, but do want to alert others that something is seriously wrong. They frequently try methods they believe won't kill, but often cause unintentional, irreversible damage.
- 05 PHILOSOPHY**
The decision to commit suicide for some is based on a reasoned decision, often motivated by the presence of a painful terminal illness from which little to no hope of reprieve exists.
- 06 MISTAKE**
The person has made a mistake. This is a recent, tragic phenomenon in which typically young people flirt with oxygen deprivation for the high it brings and simply go too far.

SUICIDE IN “13 REASONS WHY”

The afternoon after Hannah talks with her school counsellor, she goes home and kills herself. Many mental health experts have taken issue with the graphic suicide scene, some going so far as to call it “instructive.”

Hannah leaves behind a set of tapes, detailing all the things that people said and did to her—circumstances that led up to her tragic death—and orchestrates it so that everyone blamed on her tapes must listen to them. “Some of you cared,” she admits on the tapes. “None of you cared enough. And neither did I. And I’m sorry.”

After the suicide, some classmates, including Clay, admit to suicidal thoughts. One even shoots himself and is in the hospital when the season ends.

THE ISSUE

Even though it can feel like it, suicide isn’t something that just happens out of the blue. Many factors contribute to a person actually deciding to end her life. During adolescence, however, experts observe a higher level of suicidal thoughts.

Research indicates that 90 percent of teens who attempt suicide have some type of mental health issue such as depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder or schizophrenia. They may also be dealing with other issues that make them more prone to suicidal thoughts, such as bullying, trauma, emptiness, loneliness, rejection by peers or abuse (verbal, physical and/or sexual).

Suicide can be contagious. If a teen hears about a suicide, he may see it as a solution to his own problems. Family members, celebrities, friends or co-workers who attempt suicide can create feelings of permission in someone who has already been contemplating suicide. This is why open communication is essential and media exposure needs to be kept to a minimum.

Entertainment and social media provide messages or perceptions about suicide that can be positive but, in many cases, are very destructive. These media impact emotions, leaving kids vulnerable to their influences. Teens are highly influenced by their emotions, causing them to react to tough situations before their brains can catch up and think clearly.

BEING PROACTIVE

No single issue will cause your child to take his life, but there are several influences that can contribute to suicide risk. Mental health conditions and stressful life events—such as abuse or serious illness—are possible risk factors.

While having one of these risk factors doesn’t mean your child is thinking about killing himself, it does mean you should be looking for various warning signs including anxiety, hopelessness, emptiness, withdrawal, anger and significant mood or behaviour changes. Even if you don’t see these red flags,

HELP THROUGH THE FOG

Have you ever been surrounded by thick fog? It can feel disorienting. Depression can feel like this. You can lose sight of the rest of reality because you can’t see it. To get through the fog:

- Sometimes it’s good to find someone who knows the terrain to guide you through.
- Sometimes you can just wait for the fog to lift (because it eventually does).
- Sometimes walking slowly and finding familiar landmarks—seeing how God took you from despair to hope in the past (Psalm 77)—reminds you that He can get you to a safe place.
- Sometimes going to higher ground and standing on the Rock (Isaiah 26:4) gives you a bigger picture and helps you out of the fog.

Suicide is panicking in the middle of the thick fog. Other, much better, options exist to escape the fog. God is in every detail of our lives, including when life gets thick with fog.

there are still preventative measures you can take to reduce your child's risk.

- **BE THE COOL HOUSE** - Make your home the place where your teen and his friends hang out. That might mean you buy pizza and host movie night. You'll have extra messes and costs—but it'll allow you to keep a pulse on your teen's life. Additionally, get to know the families your child chooses to hang out with.
- **ACCOUNTABILITY** - Establish a clear written agreement that addresses openness, transparency and expectations of how technology, social media and text messaging will be used in your home. Actively monitor screen time so you can catch potentially troubling activities.
- **COMMUNICATION AND CONNECTION** - Have a weekly, bi-weekly or monthly date or one-on-one time with your child. Make sure you're listening, and avoid lecturing. Let them know you love them—that they're good enough—as they continue to grow and overcome difficult experiences and emotions that are a part of life. Ask questions, like: ***What is it like to be a __-year-old in our house? What is going well? What is not going well? What do you need from us to strengthen our relationship with you?***
- **HEALTHY MINDS** - If your teen struggles with depression, anxiety, perfectionist tendencies or a mental illness, diligently deal with the issues. Research supports that seeing a counsellor makes a significant difference in helping kids cope and manage a mental illness. Exercise, a good diet, time for reflection, rest, a positive support system (encouraging adults, positive environment) and a relationship with God are also essential contributors to a healthy mind.
- **LEARNING PROBLEMS** - Address learning disabilities, seeking professional help if necessary. These can play into how your child sees his worth and how others treat him. Help your child find her strengths.

HELPING YOUR CHILD

What should you do if your child says he has been thinking about suicide?

If your child's risk level is low enough that suicide does not seem imminent, you still need to address the issues. You may consider having your teen evaluated by a licensed mental health care provider. If medications are suggested, try to consult with a psychiatrist. Problems like clinical depression are the result of a chemical imbalance in the brain and the neurotransmitters in the body. Unless your child's brain chemistry is rebalanced, his depression may not improve. Psychiatrists have a better understanding of the benefits and risks of various medications and are best able to monitor and adjust them as needed. But remember, medication by itself is not enough support for kids struggling with a mental illness. Therapy has also proven helpful.

→ LOOKING IN

If your children exhibit warning signs, talk with them about what they are thinking and feeling, and use the word *suicide*. Some parents fear that by using that word they will plant a seed. That's not true. Instead, your child will get a greater sense that you care and want to protect them. A good rule of thumb is: If your teen is talking about suicide with awareness and respect, then they are safer than those who aren't talking about it.

“Exercise, a good diet, time for reflection, rest, a positive support system (encouraging adults, positive environment) and a relationship with God are also essential contributors to a healthy mind.”

The acrostic S-L-A-P can help you evaluate the level of danger:

S = Specific plan. Is your teen considering a specific course of action for taking his own life? The more specifically someone talks about the suicide and the more details they give, the greater the risk.

L = Lethality of the plan. Is this specific plan truly deadly? If so, he's now running a 50 percent risk.

A = Availability of plan. Can the plan be enacted? Does he have access to the means and/or materials needed to carry out his intentions? If so, he is in considerable danger: Remove the means and take immediate action.

P = Proximity of help. Are there people close enough to keep him from following through with his plan? He probably won't try anything while friends, family or others whom he respects are around. If you can't put a teen under family supervision, call 911 or take him directly to a local emergency room.

TALK ABOUT IT

Be a Noticer

- Has anyone told you they want to kill themselves? Have you ever had such thoughts?
- Why do you think people even consider suicide?

Be a Builder

- What do you think has been lost in a person's life if they want to skip to "game over"? How can you help someone feel a sense of worth?
- What are ways you can reach out to kids who seem isolated?
- How do you know you are cared about in our home? When do you feel loved in our home?

Be a Connector

- Who do you feel safe sharing your experiences and feelings with? Why do you feel they are the best to understand?
- What can you do if a friend starts talking about suicide? Do you trust your teachers, school counsellor or principal to handle this well?

REACHING OUT

If your child has a friend who talks about taking their own life, here are some things she can do to be of help:

- **Tell someone.** Saving a friend's life is more important than keeping secrets.
- **Tell her friend that she needs to talk with a parent or other trustworthy, caring adult.** If possible, she should go with her and not leave until she's sure the individual has her best interests at heart.
- **Connect her friend** with Canada's suicide prevention hotline at **1.833.456.4566** or by text at **45645**. See TalkSuicide.ca for more info.

Realize that your teen may have a variety of emotions surrounding her friend's problems. She may be worried or wondering if her friend's problems are somehow her fault. She may even feel that it is somehow up to her to save her friend's life. Give your teen a safe place to unload her feelings. Pray with her about her friend and remind her that she cannot control her friend's thoughts or actions. Your teen needs to direct her friend to adult helpers and professionals and not be burdened with unfounded responsibility and guilt. She can only do her best to point her friend in the right direction and continue to pray for God's healing.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

If your family is facing any of the problems discussed in this resource, please feel free to contact Focus on the Family Canada's counselling service. One of our caring Christian counsellors is available to discuss your family's situation with you. We can also provide you with a list of referrals to mental health professionals practicing in your area.



Call: 1 • 800 • 661 • 9800
Monday - Friday
8 a.m. to 4 p.m. (PT)

If your family needs specialized help in one of these areas, please contact the following resources or hotlines*:

KidsHelpPhone.ca - a Canada-wide crisis and counselling line for kids and youth at **1.800.668.6868**

TalkSuicide.ca - a Canada-wide suicide-prevention hotline available 24/7, toll free at **1.833.456.4566** or by texting **45645**

Casac.ca - a list of rape crisis hotlines for each region of Canada, provided by the **Canadian Association of Sexual Assault Centres**

Cybertip.ca/internet_safety - help for parents and teen victims of sexting and cyberbullying

NeedHelpNow.ca - help for teen victims of sexting and cyberbullying

TheProtectors.org - a faith-based anti-bullying program for schools and churches

Twloha.com/find-help - hotlines and support agencies for youth involved in cutting and self-injury, provided by the non-profit agency To Write Love on Her Arms

For further information on the topics in this resource, look for the following helpful articles at **Focusonthefamily.ca**

- [**Q&A: I'm a Victim of Cyber-Bullying. What Can I Do About It?**](#)
- [**Helping a Family Member or Friend Who Cuts**](#)
- [**Q&A: Helping Girls Prevent Date Rape**](#)
- [**What to Do If Someone You Know Is Raped**](#)
- [**13 Reasons Why Not: Talking to Teens About Suicide**](#)

For a more on these topics, we recommend these resources :

BULLYING & CYBERBULLYING

No More Bullies - by Frank Peretti
The Mean Girl Makeover series - by Nancy Rue
"Helping Your Child Deal with Bullies" - Focus on the Family® broadcast with Nancy Rue

CUTTING & SELF-INJURY

Inside a Cutter's Mind - by Jerusha Clark
Hope and Healing for Kids Who Cut - by Marv Penner

SEXTING

Plugged-In Parenting - by Bob Waliszewski
From Santa to Sexting: Keeping Kids Safe, Strong, and Secure in Middle School - by Brenda Hunter and Kristen Blair

RAPE & SEXUAL ASSAULT

Beyond Our Control: Restructuring Your Life After Sexual Assault - by Leila Rae Sommerfeld
"Finding Healing from Sexual Assault" - Focus on the Family broadcast with Leila Sommerfeld and Kathleen Terrill

SUICIDE

Life In Spite of Me - by Kristen Jane Anderson
A Relentless Hope: Surviving the Storms of Teen Depression - by Gary E. Nelson
The Reason: How I Discovered a Life Worth Living - by Lacey Sturm
"How God Saved Me From Suicide" - Focus on the Family broadcast with Lacey Sturm

**"Fear not,
for I am with you;
be not dismayed,
for I am your God;
I will strengthen
you, I will help
you, I will uphold
you with my
righteous right
hand."**

-Isaiah 41:10

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