

7 More Important Ways to Talk to Your Daughter About Suicide

Note: This is Part 2 of a two-part article. For Part 1, [click here](#).

There's one more important aspect to this topic that merits addressing.

If we read the accounts from friends and family after they've lost a loved one, rarely, if ever, did any of them know the situation was dire prior to the catastrophic event. This has been repeatedly confirmed by those who interacted with Kate Spade and Anthony Bourdain, as well as with those who knew Robin Williams four years ago and 28-year old Avicii recently. The pattern with all of them appears to be consistent: The pain is easy to hide and "putting on a good face" is an act, not their reality. This tells me that it's wisdom to know what to look for so there is greater symptom awareness to reveal if someone may be sinking into despair.

Here are signs that could signal a deeper intensity than meets the eye (be sure to look and listen for these things in groupings, not individually):

- Withdrawal/more isolation (When someone feels desperate and alone, it's easy to push people away because they don't have the energy or capacity to engage and talk.)
- Changes in sleeping patterns (a lot more or a lot less)
- Lack of enjoyment in activities that used to bring joy
- Depression (especially when the chronic sadness has lasted for more than two months)
- Feelings of hopelessness (listen for anything that sounds like they're giving up or saying that life isn't worth living anymore)

- Self-injurious behaviors (which, in and of themselves, aren't always a cry for help, but when paired with other symptoms, are worth noting—whether cutting, reckless sexual activity, excessive spending or anything where caution is thrown to the wind)
- Increases in substance use/addictive behaviors (use of drugs, alcohol, gaming or eating disorders, to name a few, can be used to numb pain, particularly if other coping strategies aren't working well or haven't yet been learned)
- Cancelling appointments/not keeping commitments (this could be a sign of disconnection from people or from causes that used to have value)
- Lack of motivation (particularly in areas that once brought a sense of purpose and meaning)
- Friends or public figures recently committing suicide (when someone is battling with suicidal thoughts, there is power in suggestion when there was a “successful” end to someone's pain)

Take a big deep breath. (I'm serious.)

Dad, I realize that this topic is heavy and intense. And I know this is a lot to take in. I acknowledge that it may be something you don't want to talk about or look at. But you have to meet your daughter where she is, because the world she lives in is impacted all too often by suicide. Out of love for your daughter, you need to delve into these depths with her so she's not left to tread these waters alone.

Please believe me when I say that talking with her about what she's feeling and fearing will go a long way to helping her release questions and emotions inside herself while being able to gain perspective from you in the process.

If you want to initiate a conversation with your daughter about the topic of suicide, here are some suggestions to get you started:

1. Let her read this blog and ask if anything resonates with her, whether experiences or thoughts she's having now or has had in the past.
2. Gently, yet boldly, ask, "Are you suicidal or have you ever been suicidal?" If she's not struggling in this area, she most likely won't be reactive. If she has a strong negative reaction, it could suggest that she's hiding something from you ... and even from herself.
3. Watch together Anderson Cooper's town hall on suicide that recently aired (June 24, 2018).
4. Let her know your story if you or someone you know has ever struggled with being suicidal or had suicidal thoughts. Though you may think you're protecting her by not sharing about your past, the reality is that you are modeling that pain can be worked through, and there is life on the other side. Let her know what you did to cope and what you wish you'd done differently. I assure you that your story will give her hope. She'll also entrust you with more of hers, because she'll trust that you won't judge her since you've been through it yourself.
5. Never get angry with her for disclosing that she's feeling suicidal or struggling in this area. Never let your fear or sadness be expressed as frustration or anger. Never tell her she's being stupid or foolish to want to end her life. Only show compassion and empathy. Listen hard and listen well.
6. Put your money where your heart (treasure) is. Offer to pay for counseling. Tell her that you will do everything possible to find her a good counselor (by calling her insurance company for her, asking for referrals from friends, offering to drive her to appointments or to pay for Uber or Lyft to transport her if she's unable to drive herself).
7. Assure her that if she ever has suicidal thoughts, urges or a plan that you want her to call you 24/7. Let her know you will find a way to connect with her or get her

help at any time, day or night, if she is at that point of intensity, feeling hopeless and all alone.

Though this was a lot to take in, the truth is that there's still a lot more I could say. But at the same time, it feels like there are not enough words to truly capture all I want to say. So I'll close with one my favorite acronyms for HOPE: Hold On, Pain Ends.

Wait, I do have one more thing to add.

The truest truth I can leave you with is this: Jesus and Abba Father God will hold your daughter when you can't hold on to her yourself. And they promise to take the pain and sadness away bit by bit, exchanging beauty for ashes—and that is ultimately how pain ends. {eo}

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255) is available 24/7 across the United States.

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