

What Every Parent Needs to Know About Suicide

Note: This is Part 1 of a series. Find Part 2 [here](#).

“It’s a miracle she’s still alive”. The psychiatrist’s words hung in the air between my daughter, my husband and me. We had no idea she was in that much danger of becoming another suicide statistic. The moment is freeze-framed in my mind.

September is Suicide Awareness Month. Over the last several years, I’ve written a series on the topic, because we at Hope for Hurting Parents believe this is important. The series will continue into October.

Your child may struggle with mental health issues, an addiction or an overall feeling of hopelessness. They’re miserable and you’re tormented by not knowing if they’re safe—from themselves.

I’ve been in your shoes. I understand the stress and strain of carrying a sense of fear and dread on your heart day in and day out.

When you’re faced with this kind of situation, do you know what to do or what to look for?

The information in this blog could be crucial for you and your child.

My source is The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline website.

The following behaviors *may* mean your child is in danger of ending their life. The risk is greater if a behavior is new, has increased or is related to a painful event, a loss or significant change.

Warning Signs to Watch For:

- Talking about wanting to die or kill themselves. Pay attention. Don't ignore those comments. You never know when they're a genuine plea for help.
- Looking for a way to kill themselves: searching online, hiding pills, obtaining a weapon or the key to your gun case (if you have guns in your home always keep them in a locked place with the key in a different location).
- Talking about feeling hopeless or having no reason to live.
- Talking about feeling trapped or in unbearable pain.
- Talking about being a burden to others. Repeatedly apologizing.
- Increasing the use of alcohol or drugs. (Parents may only see hints of this.)
- Acting anxious or agitated; behaving recklessly.
- Sleeping too little or too much.
- Withdrawing or isolating.
- Showing rage or talking about seeking revenge.
- Displaying extreme mood swings.
- A friend whose child died by suicide asked me to add the following points to the list:
 - A sudden, unexplained change in typical behavior.
 - Undecorating their bedroom; taking down favorite posters or pictures for no apparent reason.
 - Giving away personal belongings, especially if it's something you know is special or important to them.
 - Being more loving to friends or family members than usual, out of character for them. A little too nice to a sibling they typically argue with.

Nagging Doubts

If you have nagging doubts or your child exhibits any of

these, call a counselor immediately.

If you don't know who to ask for help, call the Suicide Prevention Lifeline 800-273-TALK (8255).

A trained individual is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, including holidays.

NAMI (), the National Alliance on Mental Illness, is another reliable resource for information and support.

No Regrets

Please don't delay. You don't want any regrets.

What's the worst thing that could happen?

Finding out you're wrong. Your child isn't suicidal and they're mad at you for thinking they were.

But it's not the first time they've been angry with you and it won't be the last.

Dear parent, when you see these warning signs, they call for courageous love. This means you need to be willing to risk being the enemy for now.

Are You Willing?

One day your child may understand. They might even forgive you and thank you. But if not, you must be strong—strong enough to bear the brunt of their anger because your love for them is big enough. Therefore, you can do whatever is necessary to try and save them.

Sadly, when a suicide occurs, family members and closest friends often say they were blind-sided. They never saw it coming. Now that you know these things to look for, you can be proactive and lessen the chance of that happening to you.

Receive encouragement from this Bible verse:

“Trust God from the bottom of your heart; don’t try to figure out everything on your own. Listen for God’s voice in everything you do, everywhere you go; he’s the one who will keep you on track. Don’t assume that you know it all. Run to God” (Prov. 3:5-6, MSG).

Author of Life,

Please comfort and strengthen us. Reinforce our courage to do hard things, whatever it takes, to save our child. Open our eyes to see the warning signs. Guide us to our next step. Divinely connect us with the right person who can speak to our situation. Show us how to trust You in this life-threatening struggle. Thank You for caring. Thank You that we are not alone.

Reflection:

How can you become stronger so you can do hard things if you discover your child is suicidal?

Save the toll-free Suicide Prevention Lifeline number in your cell phone. Share the number with your child.

Recommended Book:

Finding Your Way After the Suicide of Someone You Love by Biebel and Foster {[eo](#)}

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