

TEENAGE SUICIDE

THEME: The Alarming Increase of Teenage Suicide

OPENERS:

1. Every year about 400,000 young people from age 15 to 24 attempt to commit suicide, and over 7,000 actually complete the act.
2. Since 1950 suicides from 10-19 has tripled, among the 15-19 year olds the rate has doubled since the late 1960's.
3. "To run away from trouble is a form of cowardice and, while it is true that suicide braves death, he does it not for some noble object but to escape some ill." -Aristotle
4. Nine out of ten teenage suicides take place in their own home.
5. "The man who, in a fit of melancholy, kills himself today, would have wished to live had he waited a week." -Voltaire
6. God has reserved to himself the right to determine the end of life, because He alone knows the goal to which it is His will to lead it. It is for Him alone to justify a life or to cast it away." -Dietrich Bonhoeffer
7. "Since adolescents are undergoing a critical growth and developmental period, characteristically turbulent, they are at great risk of suicide." -Dr. Felix Heald, Director of Adolescent Medicine, University of Maryland
8. Teenagers who survive suicide attempts often report that they cannot talk to their parents or that parents belittle the problem.

DISCUSSION PROBES:

1. Why has there been such an alarming increase in teenage suicide in the past 20 years?
2. What kinds of problems drive teenagers to contemplate suicide? What preventative measures would you use to thwart a person so inclined?
3. A 16 year old high school girl is terminally ill. The pain and distress is great. She feels she is a drag on her family, and has lost purpose in living. Does she have the right to commit suicide? Is it morally defensible?
4. Is life sacred? What does that mean to you?
5. When, if ever, would teenage suicide be justifiable?
6. My friend has talked to me about committing suicide. What should I do? When a person speaks of suicide, does that mean he is not serious about it?
7. Few poor people kill themselves. Suicide is far more prevalent in the upper and middle income families. Why is this so?
8. Why do most religions condemn suicide? Is suicide always a form of murder?

CONCLUSIONS:

1. Some experts believe that the greater incidence of drug and alcohol abuse and promiscuity in schools have added to the confusion and chaos of young people and is a factor in teenage suicide.
2. Among suicide victims, three-quarters stated their intentions in advance, and two-thirds of those who commit suicide attempted it before.
3. Loneliness is a serious factor in teenage suicide. This undoubtedly explains the high rate among college students who are away from home for the first time.

4. Warning signals in adolescents: suicidal talk, moodiness, turning excessively to a diary, failure in school, giving away treasured items.
5. Causes of suicide: loss of a friend or family member, physical appearance, failure in school, domestic problems children think they caused, abused children, violence on T.V., low self-esteem, pressures of growing up too fast.
6. The family seems to be a key element in preventing suicide.

BRINGING IT HOME:

1. The best protection for suicide prone children may be a close, caring, considerate family. Parents should talk with their children. It is not true that if you talk to your child about suicide you will be adding to the problem.
2. Experts believe that the majority of teenage suicides can be prevented if those close to teenagers heed the warning signs.
3. If one of your friends seems to be withdrawing, or is depressed, speak to her. Ask her what is troubling her, even to the point of asking: "Have you been thinking of killing yourself?" Be sure to obtain professional help.
4. The person who is making a suicide attempt, is to the last minute ambivalent. That's why friends are so important, and parents. And, that's why you must listen closely to the signals.
5. Want help? Look under Crisis Intervention Centers, CONTACT, or suicide Prevention Centers in the telephone book.