Need help?

Important contacts for specialized support.

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

24/7 confidential and free support from Lifeline counselors for anyone in suicidal crisis or emotional distress

- Call: 988
- Online chat: 988lifeline.org
- Text: send any message to 988 to start a conversation
- TTY users: use your preferred relay service, or dial 711 then 988
- Deaf and Hard of Hearing ASL users: call 988 Videophone with a VP number or connect through the web portal found at 988lifeline.org

The Trevor Project Lifeline

24/7 confidential and free helpline for LGBTQ+ youth

- Call: 866-488-7386
- Text: send 'START' to 678-678
- Online chat: thetrevorproject.org/get-help

National Sexual Assault Hotline

24/7 free, confidential and anonymous connection to a trained support specialist in your area

- Call: 800-656-HOPE (4673)
- Text: send 'HOPE' to 64673
- Online chat: rainn.org/help-and-healing/hotline

NYS Domestic & Sexual Violence Hotline

24/7 confidential and secure support and information from advocates

- Call: 800-942-6906
- Text: 844-997-2121
- Online chat: opdv.ny.gov/survivors-victims

Updated 7/26

With HELP there is HOPE

Preventing teen suicide

An important message from
Speaker of the Assembly Carl E. Heastie

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Dear Friend,

The tragedy of suicide is even more shocking and disturbing when a young person takes their own life. According to the National Institute of Mental Health, suicide is one of the leading causes of death for young people ages 10-24.

Sometimes we forget that adolescence is a time of great changes: physical, emotional and social. During this transitional period, teens and young adults can sometimes feel overwhelmed.

I've prepared this brochure to share information and resources for supporting your loved ones. If I can be of further assistance in this or any other matter, please call my office.

Carl E. Heastie
Speaker of the Assembly

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Risk factors for teen suicide

There is no single cause for suicide, but experts suggest certain risk factors could increase the chance that a young person may try to take their life, such as:

- A previous suicide attempt
- Stress from external sources
- Problems with handling, or a fear of, change
- Unrealistically high expectations
- Low self-esteem
- The loss of something important, such as a relationship or family stability
- A history of depression, other mental health issues or a substance abuse disorder
- Family violence, including physical or sexual abuse
- Access to a weapon at home
- Knowing someone with suicidal behavior
- Coping with being gay or transgender in a hostile environment at home, school or in the community
- A serious physical illness
- Being the target of cyberbullying (posting text or images on the internet or sharing to cellphones or other devices to hurt or embarrass another person)

Suicide danger signals

A person having suicidal thoughts may give verbal or behavioral warning signs:

- Having a preoccupation with death and dying
- Losing interest in favorite activities
- Becoming isolated
- Displaying reckless behavior
- Sudden increase or decrease in appetite
- Changing sleeping patterns, sleeping too much or too little
- Showing deep feelings of uncontrolled anger, grief, shame, hopelessness, guilt or anxiety
- Difficulty concentrating, lethargy or tiredness
- Talking about feeling concerned about being a burden to others
- Talking about having no reason to live, feeling hopeless or feeling trapped
- Giving away possessions or other signs of making final arrangements
- Writing suicide notes or having a plan for an attempt

It can be challenging to detect these signals in teens because mood swings are a normal part of going through puberty. Take note when multiple concerning behaviors happen simultaneously, if new or changing behavior occurs suddenly or if the behavior is extreme.

Please remember: this information should not be considered a substitute for seeking professional treatment and guidance. **Get professional help!** A person considering suicide needs professional care. You can call a hotline or contact a counselor.

Learning how to cope

Coping with stress and depression can help people of all ages avoid suicidal thoughts. Some positive ways of coping include:

- Exercising
- Eating a healthy diet
- Reading
- Spending time with trusted people
- Writing about what's bothering you
- Listening to music
- Discussing problems with a professional counselor

Ineffective ways of coping, which may often make the situation worse, include:

- Using drugs and alcohol
- Binge eating or starving oneself
- Isolating

Sources: New York State Department of Health (health.ny.gov), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (cdc.gov), National Institutes of Health (nih.gov)

How you can help

Ask the person if they are considering suicide. You will not be giving the person any new ideas.

- Listen and accept their feelings
- Do not give advice, but show interest and support
- Do not say "everything will be all right"
- Do not back off or try to delay dealing with the person
- Communicate your concern for the well-being of the person and be nonjudgmental
- Encourage the person to seek help from people or agencies that specialize in crisis intervention and suicide prevention
- If the situation is immediately life-threatening, call 911 or take the person to a hospital emergency room
- Do not leave the person alone if you believe the risk of suicide is imminent
- Remove access to firearms and medication

Suicide threats should always be taken seriously. They are a cry for help. People who have survived a previous attempt to end their life are likely to try again.