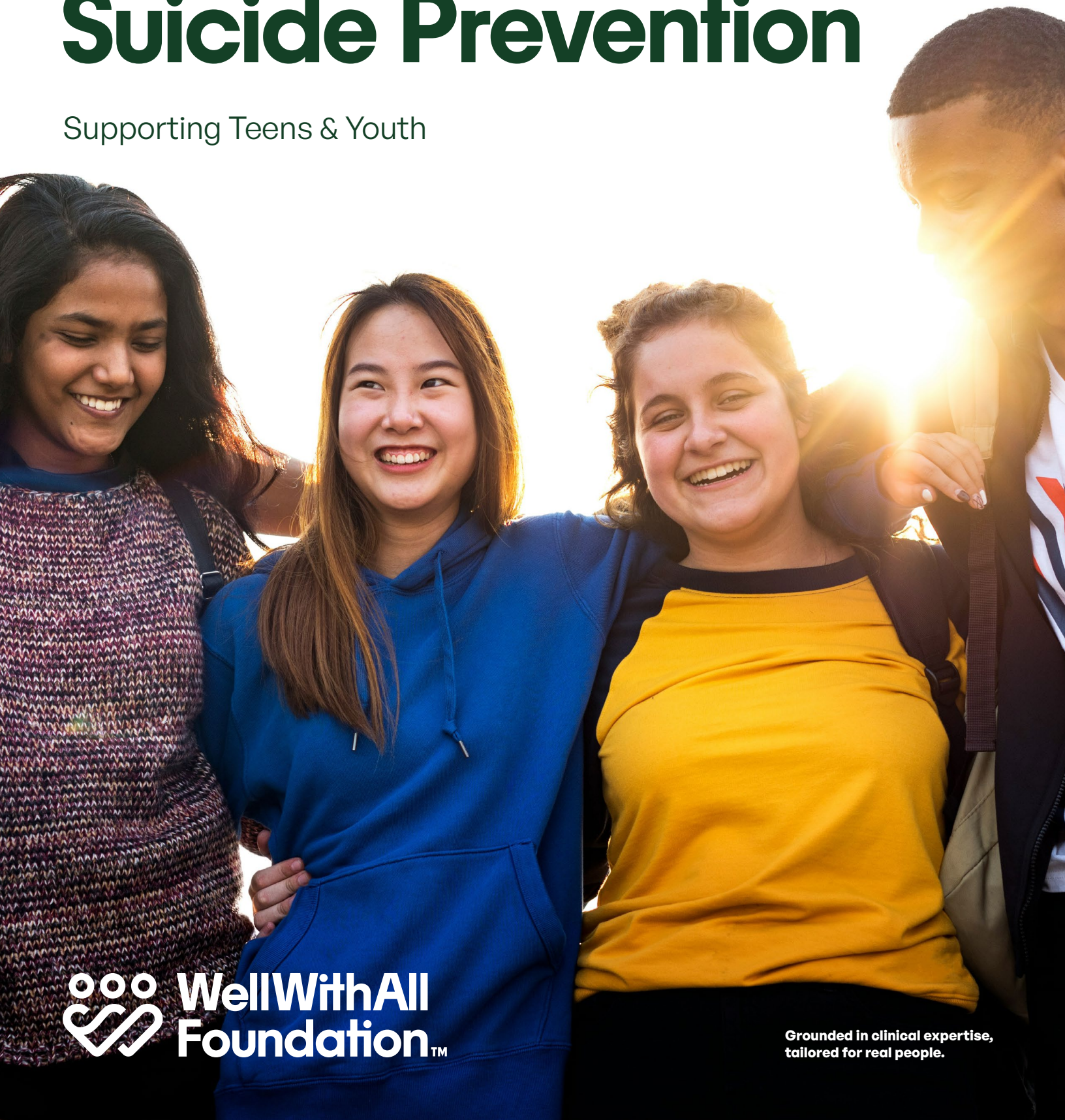


Wellness Quick Guide

Warning Signs & Suicide Prevention

Supporting Teens & Youth



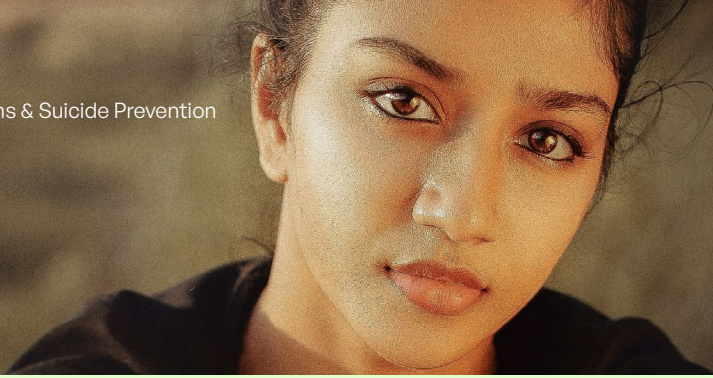
Why This Guide Matters

Talking about suicide can feel scary, especially when it involves a child you love. But avoiding the conversation doesn't make the risk go away.

Many young people struggle silently with feelings of sadness, hopelessness, or emotional pain. Knowing the warning signs and how to respond can help you start important conversations, connect your child to support, and remind them they don't have to face difficult moments alone.

Disclaimer: Your health is unique, and the information in this guide is for educational purposes only and is not a substitute for personal medical advice. Consult with a healthcare provider to create a plan that is right for your specific health needs and goals.





How to support a child thinking about suicide

As a parent or caregiver, seeing your child struggle with their mental health and wellbeing can feel overwhelming. If they mention suicide — or you suspect they're thinking about it — it can create panic quickly. Knowing the warning signs and how to respond in a crisis can help protect the people you love.

Crisis Resources



Like all emergency plans, you and your child should know where to turn in a crisis. Keep these numbers handy.

+ **Call or text 988.**

The [988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline](#) offers free, confidential support for anyone experiencing a mental health crisis and connects texters with trained, real-life Crisis Counselors.

+ **Call 911.**

You can call for mental health emergencies too.

+ **Text HOME to 741741** from anywhere in the U.S.

For more information on crisis resources, visit the [Center for Suicide Research and Prevention](#).



1 person dies by suicide every 11 minutes

in the U.S. [source](#)

20%

of high school students

report suicidal thoughts and 9% report they've made a suicide attempt [source](#)

2nd Cause of death

among youth ages 10-14 in the U.S. and the third leading cause among young people ages 15-24

Female & LGBTQ+ students report worse mental health

including more violence and suicidal thoughts and behaviors than male, cisgender and heterosexual peers

71% Growth in Black girls

attempting suicide between 2009 and 2021

3rd Cause of death globally

suicide is the third leading cause of death among 15-29 year olds around the world [source](#)



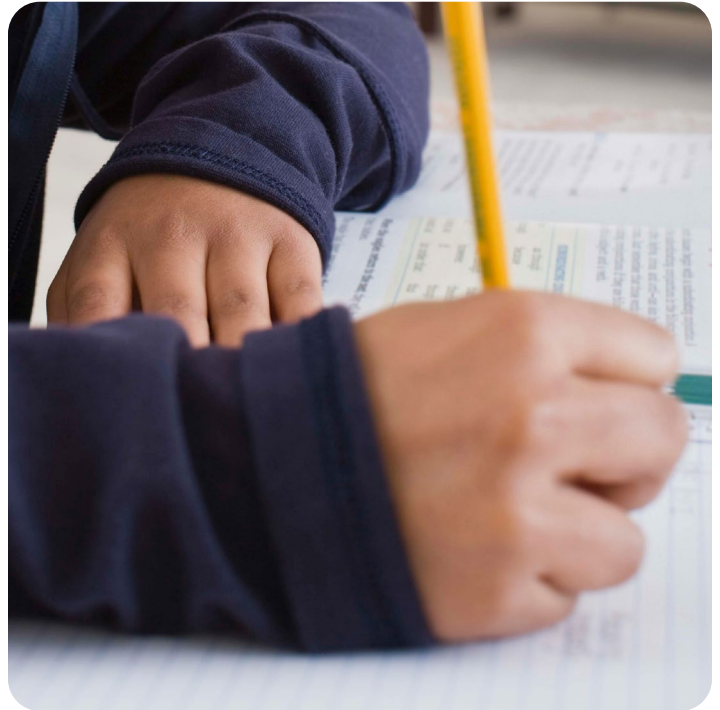
What are the warning signs of suicide?

Many factors contribute to suicide risk. With children who are thinking about suicide, you might notice the following:

- + Major changes in how they're doing at school
- + Talking about being worthless, helpless, or hopeless
- + Spending much more time alone than before
- + Being very irritable and grumpy much of the time

Remember - You are not alone.

There's a lot you can do and many ways to get real support. It starts with honoring your child's feelings, letting them speak, and seeking the professional help they need.



I’m worried that my child is thinking about suicide. What can I do?

It may not be easy, but try to slow down. Take a breath. This is going to be a process, not a quick fix. Your goal is to make sure your child feels seen, heard, and supported every step of the way.



Here are some ways to do that.

Manage Your Mindset 	Know What to Say 
1. Trust yourself. You know your child. If you’re worried, there’s a reason. 2. Be direct. You can ask your child if they think about death, suicide, or wanting to die. Using the word “suicide” does not make it more likely to happen. It helps your child feel heard.	+ “You seem distant lately. I’m wondering how you’re doing.” + Sometimes, when people feel that way, they think about harming or killing themselves. Do you ever feel that way?”
3. Believe your kid. If they often talk about feeling sad, hopeless, or worthless — or if they talk about suicide — believe them. It isn’t a routine mood swing, phase, or way to get attention. Thank them for telling you and trusting you with this. 4. Listen, don’t solve. Avoid pep talks or trying to change their mood. Your one goal is to build trust and safety so your teen knows you’re there for them. That means listening. 5. Ask open-ended, non-judgmental questions. When you do speak, be curious. Instead of yes or no questions, invite your child to open up. Put aside your own ideas so your child feels seen.	+ “I’m not sure I understand. What’s an example?” + “Please tell me more so I really get what you’re saying.”
6. Accept your child’s feelings. It may be hard to hear, but you don’t want to downplay their feelings. If you don’t take their feelings seriously, it tells your child you don’t take them seriously. 7. Make a safety plan. Who can your child call in a crisis? What do they need from you? Where can they go until the feelings start to go away? Be specific and have backup plans.	+ “These are important feelings you’re having. When people have these kinds of feelings and thoughts, they often get support from someone like a therapist. Would you be open to that?”



How can I validate my child's feelings?

Say This:



To make sure your child feels heard, use phrases like these:

- + "I'm here to help you, but I also know I don't have all the answers."
- + "Right now, I just want to listen so I can make sure I do what's really helpful for you."
- + "I don't know the best way to help yet. I'm here to listen because I want to know your experience and what you're feeling."
- + "These are really important things you're sharing. It means a lot to me that you told me."
- + "Thank you for trusting me to tell me these things. It's really important."
- + "It's hard to hear you're feeling this way, but I'm really glad you told me."

Not That:



Avoid language that suggests your child's feelings are not real or important, like:

- + "When I was your age ..."
- + "You just need to shake yourself out of it."
- + "Just pull yourself up by your bootstraps."
- + "You'll grow out of it."
- + "Everyone feels down sometimes. You'll be fine."
- + "You just need to focus on the positive and be cheerful like me!"
- + "You can't feel like this. You have so many good things around you."
- + "What do you have to be sad or depressed about?"

Do some children face higher risks for suicide?

While suicide can affect any family, we see higher rates among Black and Brown children and teens. That makes it even more important for families to understand risk factors and look for early warning signs.

We also know that children are attempting suicide at much younger ages. Even though you think your grade school child doesn't understand suicide or death, they do. Talking about those types of feelings is important.

We still need more data to learn why rates are higher for Black and Brown children, and we can't predict who will commit suicide.



Leading Suicide Risk Factors for Kids

- + **Family history** of suicide or suicide attempt
- + **Previous suicide attempt** The more planning, the higher the risk. Examples may include saving up medications, making sure others aren't around, and writing a suicide note.
- + **Existing mental illness**, like depression, anxiety, psychosis, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), or oppositional defiant disorder (ODD)
- + **Drug and alcohol use**
- + **History of being abused**, treated very poorly, or neglected
- + **Conflict or event** that causes a lot of shame or guilt
- + **Difficult life events**, like a break-up, family trauma, school challenges or the death of a loved one

How do we find professional support?

Remember, the most important thing you can do is build a sense of openness, safety, and trust with your kids. If it feels hard to decide where to turn, start with the person you're most comfortable with.



Professional Support for Your Child & Family

- + Mental health professional at school
- + Mental health counselor
- + Your child's doctor
- + Social worker
- + Psychologist
- + Child psychiatrist

Let your child know it could take some time to find the right help. Providers all work together and can connect you to someone who can best support your child's individual needs.

Additional Suicide Prevention Resources

- + **BlackLine:** A hotline open to all and geared towards the Black, Brown, Native, Muslim and LGBTQIA+ community. No one will be turned away from the Hotline.
- + **Trevor Project:** Explore suicide prevention guides as well as educational articles covering warning signs and suicide awareness.
- + **988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline:** Life's challenges can sometimes be difficult and caring counselors are available everyday, around the clock to provide free, confidential help.
- + **Project Extreme:** Non-profit providing innovative programs and solutions for at-risk Jewish teens, families and communities
- + **Centers for Disease Control:** Suicide is rarely caused by a single circumstance or event. Learn more about risks and protective factors.