Suicide: Talking to Adolescents (ages 9 to 13)
When talking to adolescents from ages 9 to 13:
What to Say and Do

• Be aware of depression and its symptoms in adolescent children. Depression often does not go away on its own and is linked to risk of suicide when it lasts for periods of two weeks or more. Talk with individuals who have knowledge of depression in children to further understand the symptoms and how to intervene.

• Adolescents have many stressors in their lives and sometimes consider suicide as an escape from their worries or feelings. Be aware of your adolescent's stressors and talk with him or her about them. Let your child know you care and emphasize that "suicide is not an option; help is always available." Suicide is a permanent choice.

• Assist adolescents so they don't become overwhelmed with negative thoughts, which can lead to thoughts of suicide. Help them learn to manage negative thinking and challenge thoughts of hopelessness. If needed, treatment or therapy can help an adolescent deal with negative thoughts.

• Emphasize that alcohol and drugs are not a helpful source of escape from the stressors of an adolescent's life. An adolescent who is suffering from depression and also turns to alcohol and drugs is at a greater risk of attempting suicide.

• Be attentive to risk factors in an adolescent's life, as suicide is not always planned at younger ages. Recognizing the warning signs that might be leading to suicide is important.

• Encourage adolescents to talk about and express their feelings. Provide a listening ear and be a support so they can visit with you about how they feel. Adolescents deal much better with tough circumstances when they have at least one person who believes in them.

Recommended Resources

❖ Suicide Hotlines - Central phone number is 1-800-SUICIDE, and also lists state and local hotline numbers to call for help, including advice for those contemplating suicide. Web site: http://suicidehotlines.com
❖ American Association of Suicidology - Web site: www.suicidology.org
❖ American Foundation for Suicide Prevention - Web site: www.afsp.org
❖ National Institute of Mental Health - Web site: www.nimh.nih.gov
❖ National Mental Health Association - Web site: www.nmha.org
❖ Suicide Prevention Resource Center - Web site: www.sprc.org
❖ National Strategy for Suicide Prevention - Web site: www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/suicideprevention

Books

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