

BUILDING CONNECTION TO SAFELY SUPPORT YOUR CHILD

As a parent or caregiver of a child struggling with emotional pain, it can feel overwhelming. Knowing how to respond and support your child might be confusing, leading to feelings of fear and guilt. Know that you're not alone, and you're not to blame.



Talking about suicide saves lives

When your child is in distress, it can be daunting to find the "right" moment to ask the difficult questions, and listen to the hard to hear real answers. This is especially true when it comes to talking about suicide. Just as we teach our kids lock down drills or fire drills. It's important to teach them that it is okay to talk their mental health, including self-harm, and ask for help.

Research shows that talking openly about suicide doesn't increase the risk; in fact, it can decrease it.

Asking someone directly about suicidal intent lowers anxiety, opens communication, and reduces the risk of an impulsive act.

Seize opportune moments to reinforce trust and empathy

Be attentive to moments when your teenager may be more open to bonding, like when they're home from school due to illness or experiencing challenges with friends or a breakup. Use these opportunities to provide care and understanding, whether it's through a small gesture like bringing them a treat, sharing an activity, or just being there to lend an ear.

Find places for communication in your daily routine.

Write to your teen.

If talking is a bit tough for you and/or your child, try using texts or e-mails to communicate occasionally.

Engage in shared activities

Find common interests or hobbies that you can enjoy together. Whether it's going to a craft store with an artsy teen, visiting a used bookstore with a book lover, or collaborating on a DIY project like painting a wall in their room, shared activities provide an opportunity for quality time and opportunities to connect meaningfully.

By expressing genuine interest in their interests and initiatives, you strengthen your bond, which helps to make difficult conversations a little bit easier when the time comes.



If you sense that your child is in immediate danger, it's crucial to approach the conversation directly and promptly.

If in doubt, don't wait, call 911.

Connecting with music



Use music as a tool to connect with teens and understand their emotions:

- **Ask about favorite songs:** Inquire about the music they enjoy and if any songs resonate with them emotionally.
- **Listen and discuss:** Take time to listen to their favorite songs together, then discuss the lyrics, melody, and how the music makes them feel.
- **Create Spotify playlists:** Help them create playlists reflecting different emotions or life events, providing a creative outlet for expression.
- **Use music to access emotions:** Recognize music as a powerful tool for processing emotions that teens might find difficult to verbalize.

EXAMPLE