Parenting Young Adults: 9 Vital Answers About Depression and Suicide

Warning Signs & Causes

1. What signs can parents look for to determine if their emerging adult is at risk for suicide?
   Studies show there is no reliable indicator of impending suicide.
   Indicators of possible risk are:
   - Keeping secrets
   - Isolation
   - Depression
   - Explosions of Denial

2. Do specific mental illnesses carry a higher risk of suicide?
   - All psychiatric illnesses have a higher rate of suicide and early death from poor health care.
   - Depression, especially bipolar depression.
   - Anorexia nervosa has a high rate of death and suicide due to the effects of starvation on mood and judgment.

3. How do substance abuse and addiction play a role in suicide among emerging adults?
   Substance abuse accelerates the risk of suicide from other mental illness while also carrying a 3x higher rate of death than suicide from accidental overdose.

4. Is suicide genetic?
   - Suicide as a choice itself is not genetic though genetic vulnerability plays a role in many mental illnesses and addictions.
   - Familial and even peer influences may increase the risk of suicide.

Impact on Health

5. How does a suicide attempt affect brain health?
   - Brain health effect depends on the method of attempt and whether there was any direct impact on the structure and functioning of the brain.
   - There is a gateway effect in the risk-reward center of the brain from lowering the threshold of making an attempt on one’s life that makes it easier to make a repeat attempt.

6. What are the emotional and social health concerns following a young adult’s suicide attempt?
   - This will vary by individual.
   - Risk of shame and guilt may increase actual or perceived social isolation and personal failure, which can heighten pre-existing emotional tensions.
   - Feelings of irreparable isolation and/or loss are a key driver of suicide.

Seek Help & Provide Support

7. Emerging Adults: What steps can you take to recover from a suicide attempt?
   1. Seek professional assistance to understand the emotional and neurological contributors to the experience resulting in the attempt.
   2. Repair and sustain connections with others.
   3. Return to activities which offer a sense of meaning and competence.

8. Parents: How can you support an emerging adult after a suicide attempt?
   Shame is a prominent experience for many individuals after a failed attempt.
   1. Demonstrate acceptance.
   2. Express lack of judgment.
   3. Offer support.
   4. Empathize with your child if angry they survived the attempt this is common, rather than those feelings into hiding.
   5. Establish safe, honest, and open communication to allow your child to come forward for help rather than you feeling responsible for “reading their mind”.

What suicide prevention methods work for emerging adults?
Communication, connections, competence to support them in building and maintaining emotional resilience.

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Presented by: