Suicide, Self-Harm, & Social Media: Helping Students Ask for Help

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Disclaimer

● This presentation is meant to be informal
● This is not a presentation about suicide, self-harm, or social media - it’s about how we respond as school counselors to situations involving these issues
● I want your input
● We will create an action plan...
ASCA Ethical Standards (2016)

A.9. Serious and Foreseeable Harm to Self and Others

School counselors:

a. Inform parents/guardians and/or appropriate authorities when a student poses a serious and foreseeable risk of harm to self or others. When feasible, this is to be done after careful deliberation and consultation with other appropriate professionals. School counselors inform students of the school counselor’s legal and ethical obligations to report the concern to the appropriate authorities unless it is appropriate to withhold this information to protect the student (e.g. student might run away if he/she knows parents are being called). The consequence of the risk of not giving parents/guardians a chance to intervene on behalf of their child is too great. Even if the danger appears relatively remote, parents should be notified.
In the News...

Teen’s Instagram Suicide Note Stayed Online for 24 Hours

Penn-Harris-Madison officials face a social media storm after teen's suicide

Wisconsin trans teen posts note to Tumblr before committing suicide

Inside Tumblr’s teen suicide epidemic

Is Social Media Making Self-Harm Worse for Teens?

Social media to blame for self-harm as it enables bullies and projects impossible body image

Suicide on Campus and the Pressure of Perfection
Suicide Death Rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Deaths by Suicide</th>
<th>Rate per 100,000 Population</th>
<th>State Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Idaho</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>20.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nationally</td>
<td>42,773</td>
<td>12.93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Suicide is the 10th leading cause of death overall in Idaho.

On average, one person dies by suicide every 27 hours in the state.

Suicide cost Idaho a total of $329,244,000 of combined lifetime medical and work loss cost in 2010, or an average of $1,135,325 per suicide death.

In Idaho, suicide is the...

- 2nd leading cause of death for ages 10-44
- 4th leading cause of death for ages 45-54
- 7th leading cause of death for ages 55-64
- 15th leading cause of death for ages 65 & older

Almost nine times as many people die by suicide in Idaho annually than by homicide; the total deaths to suicide reflect a total of 6,831 years of potential life lost (YPLL) before age 65.

Based on most recent 2014 data from CDC
Youth/Teen Suicide

- Suicide is the second leading cause of death for ages 10-24.
- More teenagers and young adults die from suicide than from cancer, heart disease, AIDS, birth defects, stroke, pneumonia, influenza, and chronic lung disease, combined.
- Each day over 5,400 suicide attempts are made by teens.
- Four out of five teens who attempt suicide have given clear warning signs.

Source: The Jason Foundation
Non-Suicidal Self-Directed Violence (SDV)

- Cutting is most common form of SDV; it is often done repeatedly
- Other methods: pencil erasers, deep scratching, pinching, burning, punching, biting
- Average age of onset is 12
- Visible and non-visible injury sites
- Spring path (rise in tension) and switch path (uncontrollable urge)
- Self-harm is generally not associated with suicidality, but risk increases after a SDV episode
- More common in females
- Contagion factor
- Confidentiality
Social Media

Contagion or a place to reach out?

Graphic images ahead...
_blood.and.cigarettes_ seriously thinking about drowning myself. no one wants me here anyway. im just a fuckup. a weirdo. fat pig

emo_forever_bae, deardepressionbr,
paranoidandroid96
I told my mom that I wanted to use black lipstick. She replied with "why? So it could match the cuts on your arms?" It broke my heart that she would even joke about my sufferings - especially after I told her about my daily suicidal thoughts. Sometimes I think it would have been better if I didn't reach out.

paranoidandroid96
#selfharmmm #selfinjury #triggerwarning

bloody.regrets
Stay strong 😊 DM me if you need to vent or talk to anyone.

ha.tred
This is literally what I feel like would happen if I died and it's scary af to me. I'm sorry I want to die so bad and I'm sorry it's so hard for me to be happy and I don't even want to reach out to anyone because I feel like I bother anyone and I've been clean for a while now but the days are getting harder and harder and the words play through my head of what I would say in my goodbye letters because no one

ha.tred #Suicidal #suicide #depressed #killme #selfharmmm #secret_society123 #ana #bulimic #blithe #selfinjuryyy #hatemymself #anxiety #broken #scars #lonely #selfinjury #eatingdisorder #cutting #cutters #scars #blood #broken #hurt #sad #ugly #worthless #stupid #mistake #sfs #f4f
When I Die:

Doctor: She is dead
Parents: At least we have more money now
School: The fat one? Oh yeah. She deserved it.
Boyfriend: I didn’t even like her
Friend: At least now I don’t have to pretend like I care about her all the time
Counselor: I have too much clients I have to deal with. She made my job easier
Why? What is Happening?
(it’s a tough topic for school counselors...)
Barriers to Asking for Help

- Feelings of hopelessness and isolation make it difficult to reach out
- Many don’t know what’s wrong; feel like it’s their fault.
- Fear of not being able to be helped
- Stigma attached to mental illness
- Previous negative experience with reaching out
- Fear of not being believed
- Worried about not be taken seriously by parents and/or professionals.
- Reluctance to admit that they have a problem.
- Worried about confidentiality and lack trust in adults
- Fear of consequences and/or formality of intervention
- Fear of making the situation worse
- Embarrassment
Action - What are you going to do?

Teacher/Parent Education

Awareness campaign - how to ask for help?

Student campaigns: “If you see something...say something!”

- Start with why...
- Who
- What
- When
- Where
Resources

- Active Minds
- American Association of Suicidology
- Josh Anderson Foundation
- The Jason Foundation
- MentalHealth.gov
- OK2TALK.org
Resources

- **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control

