

Caregivers

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) lists suicide as a leading cause of death for children and young adults ages 10 to 24 years.

Suicidal behavior may start after:

- Family issues, such as divorce or stress between parents
- Relationship problems with a love interest, such as a girlfriend or boyfriend
- Problems at school, such as bullying

While this information may seem grim, there is hope. Suicidal behavior is often a result of an underlying issue(s), such as:

- Depression
- Traumatic stress
- Anxiety
- Substance use

As with other chronic illness, the right treatment can help.

One way to help is making their protective factors stronger. Protective factors refer to a person's internal or external resources. There are many ways to strengthen protective factors, such as:

- Getting quality care for your child's mental health or substance use issue
- Using local support (such as school or a Big Brothers Big Sisters® program) to help your child learn healthy coping and problem-solving skills
- Talking to your loved one and giving support

How do I take care of myself?

As a caregiver, you need to do things to take care of yourself. It is not selfish. Some ways you can take care of yourself are:

- Eating healthy
- Taking a nap
- Talking to a trusted friend
- Taking a hot bath
- Going to yoga or a mindfulness class

This models healthy behavior for your loved ones **and** gives you a needed break from the stresses of caring for someone who suffers from a mental illness or substance use.

It is normal to have a range of emotions when your loved one has attempted to cause self-harm. You may feel:

- Sadness
- Anger
- Fear
- Shock or disbelief
- Anxiety
- Unsure
- Self-blame

Remember you are not to blame for what has happened. Many people find counseling or therapy helpful when learning to come to terms with what has happened.

What do we tell others?

What you tell others is up to each person and family. Some people and families want to limit how much information they share with the outside world. Other people find that sharing their experience is helpful.

Think about your loved one's comfort level. Mental illness is still very misunderstood. So, your loved one may not feel safe having this information shared. Listen and support your loved one, even if you do not understand their decision.

- Learn more about how to help someone who has attempted suicide by going to samhsa.gov/mental-health/suicidal-behavior/resources.
- Learn more about bullying and tips to stop it by going to stopbullying.gov/media/facts/index.html.

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“Hope is important because it can make the present moment less difficult to bear. If we believe that tomorrow will be better, we can bear a hardship today.”

-Thich Nhat Hahn

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