

IF YOUR FRIEND TALKS ABOUT SUICIDE

If your friend says something about feeling suicidal or that they want to end their life, you must take it seriously. **If you need help, call 1-800-LifeNet and talk to someone. All calls are strictly confidential.**

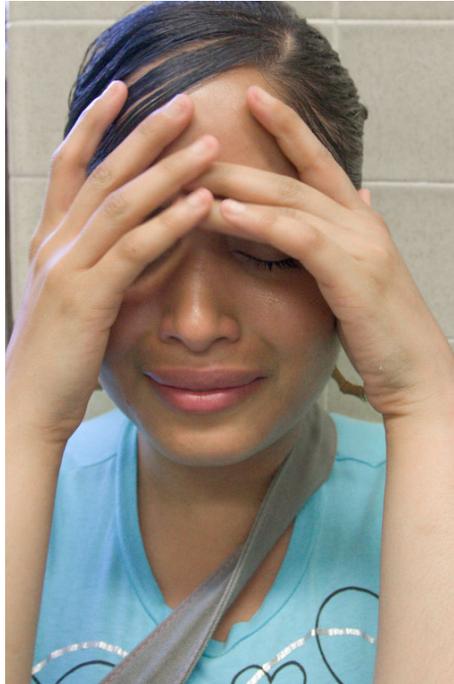
WHY DO SOME TEENS WANT TO END THEIR LIVES?

Sometimes life's problems seem too big to solve. A person may want to escape from difficult situations or get relief from bad feelings. They may think dying is the only way out. You might feel like that if, for example, someone close to you has died, you have family problems, you have been sexually abused, your relationship has broken up, you have a drug or alcohol problem or you have a mental health disorder like depression or Bipolar Disorder.

- Unfortunately, some people see suicide as the only way out when everything seems hopeless. Sometimes a person may even plan suicide in advance but then realize that their pain, while great, is temporary and suicide is permanent.
- Often suicide attempts are done impulsively, without planning. Even if the person wasn't sure they wanted to die, they may end up seriously injured – or worse.
- When people deliberately harm themselves by cutting or burning themselves, this is not the same as wanting to end their life. Self-harm or self-injury may be a way of trying to handle very painful feelings. Most people who do these things do not want to die. But still, it's a sign of deep distress. That person needs help too.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

If your friend says something about feeling suicidal or that they want to end their life, you **must** take it seriously. Even if you feel scared and unsure of what to do, you can help. You **can** make a difference in your friend's life.



Here are some ways you can support your friend:

- **DON'T KEEP A SECRET.** Your friend could get hurt or could die. This information is not something you should keep secret. You must tell an adult who can help keep your friend safe. Your friend's life could depend on it.
- **CALL 1-800-LIFENET.** Explain what your friend is going through. They will give you advice on what to do. These calls are confidential.
- **LISTEN TO YOUR FRIEND.** Be there to listen. Let your friend express feelings and show understanding and acceptance. Don't judge your friend.
- **TALK TO YOUR FRIEND.** It's better to talk to

your friend when they are calm and seem open to listening. It may be hard to think of what to say. You can say something like,

"I'm worried about you."

"You said you don't feel like carrying on, you wish you were gone, do you still feel like that?"

"Even if you're thinking about that, you don't have to do it."

"If you hurt yourself, you'll be hurting me too and all the people who care about you."

- **ENCOURAGE YOUR FRIEND TO GET HELP.** If you feel comfortable, suggest to your friend that you go with them to speak to a counselor, youth worker, teacher, or doctor. If your friend refuses to get help, keep encouraging your friend to speak to someone they trust about how they are feeling.
- **BE SUPPORTIVE.** Tell your friend you care about them. Spend time hanging out with them. Go to the movies. Go for a walk together. Listen to music together. This will help your friend feel less alone.
- **TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF.** If you're worried about your friend, you may feel stressed out. You may feel like it's your fault that your friend is not feeling better. Sometimes teens who make a suicide attempt, or who die as a result of suicide seem to have left no clues. This leaves friends and family feeling full of grief and guilt. But you should remember that you are not responsible for the actions of your friend. It's not your fault.

To learn more about issues facing NYC teens and how to deal with them visit www.nyc.gov/teen