



Tips on Being Vigilant

Youth At-Risk

It is important that you monitor those youth deemed to be most at-risk. Examples include:

- A teen with a personal or family history of suicide or mental illness, particularly during periods of stressful life events or the recurrence of a mental health crisis or substance use disorder
- A teen who appears isolated from other peers either intentionally (e.g., a "loner") or because they are not accepted (e.g., someone who lacks social skills)
- A teen who is using alcohol and/or drugs, particularly if in isolation and/or as a means of coping with difficult life events
- School problems (e.g., lack of interest or motivation; dramatic drop in grades; interpersonal difficulties)
- Family stressors such as a recent divorce, job loss, or death of a close family member
- Intolerable loss of face or status (e.g., bullying/cyberbullying)
- Identifying as LGBTQ+, particularly if not accepted by family and/or peers

What to Say

Here are some recommendations on how to talk to a teen you have concerns about:

- Listen, listen, listen. Allow the teen to vent about their frustrations, fears, and worries. Maintain good eye contact and convey you are genuinely interested in what they have to say. Give them the opportunity to "get it all out."
- Ask them to expand on their feelings.
- Work with the teen to brainstorm solutions.
- Reframe what they are saying. Summarize and repeat back to them what you heard. For example, if the teen is talking about having issues with friends, you can say, "You've been getting into quite a number of arguments with them over the past few weeks. It sounds like you're feeling lonely and frustrated."

Resources

If you are ever concerned that someone is in imminent danger of harming themselves, call 911 immediately or bring them to the nearest behavioral health hospital in order to obtain a FREE level-of-care assessment. Other important resources include:

- **988** - Text or Call the Suicide and Crisis Hotline, Available 24/7
- Know your teen's school administration and student services contact information
- Know your [local hospitals/psychiatric programs](#)
- Know your [local mental health/community agencies](#)

**For Parents**

If you're a parent, it's important for you to know how to talk to your teen if they are exhibiting warning signs of depression or suicide. For ideas on how to communicate with your teen as well as how to take action if they are suicidal, please read [this article](#) and/or check out the [parent training videos](#) on our website.

School Support

Elyssa's Mission fully funds and implements the evidence-based Signs of Suicide (SOS) program in middle and high schools throughout Illinois. If your teen's school does not partner with Elyssa's Mission, please call us or visit [our website](#) to get started.