



SUICIDE PREVENTION  
FOUNDATION

# BRIDGES TO HOPE

PROVIDING HELP AND HOPE IN TROUBLED TIMES FOR CHILDREN & TEENS

**You've been given this brochure because your child's school counselor is concerned about your son or daughter. Your child is showing signs of suicide, which may include:**

- Sadness, anxious or "empty" mood
- Recurring thoughts or talk about death, suicide, or self-destructive behavior
- Declining school performance
- Increase in school absence
- Loss of pleasure or interest in activities
- Lack of enthusiasm, energy or motivation
- Feelings of worthlessness or excessive guilt

There is a chance that your child is not exhibiting any of these behaviors. Children and teens are very good at hiding or denying their feelings of worthlessness or emptiness. Instead, he/she could be showing these signs:

- Irritability or anger; a "screw you" attitude
- Engaging in risky behavior beyond what is "normal" for teens like high speed driving, car surfing or other behavior that is life threatening
- Withdrawal from peers and/or isolating themselves

Either way, your child's counselor is concerned. This brochure provides tips about how to help your child and outlines the steps to take to see a Bridges to Hope therapist.



**Take these warning signs seriously.** If your child had a broken arm, you'd go to the emergency room. Mental health is equally important and can also be treated. Your child is struggling mentally for some reason and needs help. Here are some suggestions.

## 1. Get your child help

This may be the hardest thing to do because of our own discomfort. It's hard to admit that our children may be struggling with deep sadness. You may blame yourself or feel ashamed or feel helpless. Remember that there are a number of people available in the community to help both you and your child. They may include your family doctor, social worker, clergy, school counselor, mental health counselors, or agencies. They all can help guide you, if you ask.

## 2. Support your child

The best way to do this is to listen to your child. Here are some guidelines:

- Put yourself in your child's place; respect their feelings
- Allow your child to talk more than you do
- Avoid interruptions or distractions
- Avoid unkind words that ridicule, shame, or label your child: "You get everything you want; what do you have to be depressed about?"
- Ask your child one question at a time and then wait for the answer; be comfortable with silence.

**Most of all, communicate love and acceptance of your child's feelings and acknowledge the courage that it takes to talk about "hard things."**



"SOME PEOPLE CARE TOO MUCH,  
I THINK IT'S CALLED LOVE"

— WINNIE THE POOH



### 3. Remove instruments of self-harm

Survey your home and remove anything that a child or teen could use in an impulsive moment. Guns are the primary method used for suicide. Be sure to move those to a safe location, preferably away from the family home. Others to remove:

- Razors
- Prescription drugs
- Alcohol (to eliminate binge drinking)
- Ropes



**Alcohol or drug use increases the risk of impulsive actions that could lead to self-harm or suicide.**

**Remember: The earlier depression is treated, the better the chances for both recovery and preventing its return.**



### 4. Take your child to see a counselor or using the Bridges to Hope fund.

Bridges to Hope is a resource for students who would likely benefit from therapy for suicide-related issues, and who also have financial need.

Since 2004, the Western Colorado Suicide Prevention Foundation has made funding available to children and adolescents in Mesa County who have been identified by their school counselors as being at risk for suicide. In order to receive support, students must either have no insurance or have inadequate insurance to address this mental health emergency.

**Your child meets the criteria** and we hope you will take advantage of this important resource. Through this referral your son or daughter will be provided with up to 8 therapy sessions with a licensed mental health therapist with clinical expertise with young people who are at risk for self-harm.

#### What to do next:

- Call a Bridges to Hope therapist to set up an appointment using the list provided by your school counselor. When you call, identify your child as being eligible for Bridges funding, and give them the referral number provided by your school counselor.
- Get your son or daughter to the scheduled appointment.
- Follow through with the treatment plan developed for your child.

**How depression is treated:** There are a number of approaches that can help your child with sad hopeless feelings. They could include:

- Individual Therapy
- Family Therapy
- Medication

Often it takes a combination of treatment options to help a child regain balance in his/her life. It also takes time and patience. Depression does not happen overnight and it will take some time before your child will feel normal again.

Never ignore or downplay depression. Always take steps to ensure your child's well-being.

Presented by: **The Western Colorado Suicide Prevention Foundation**

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