

Teen suicide prevention

Adolescence is a time of growth, discovery, and increasing independence — but it can also bring emotional ups and downs, pressure to fit in, and feelings of isolation. Suicide is currently the second leading cause of death among young people ages 10 to 24 in the U.S., and rates have been rising in recent years.

Yet suicide can be preventable. When we create environments that foster connection, emotional safety, and access to appropriate mental health support, we can help teens navigate challenges and strengthen their capacity to cope and thrive.

Why are teens at risk?

Teenagers today face a unique combination of developmental, social, and cultural pressures. Risk for suicide increases when emotional pain goes unrecognized, unsupported, or untreated. While no single factor causes suicide, a combination of the following may contribute to a young person's vulnerability:



Mental health challenges

- Depression, anxiety, trauma, and eating disorders (which often emerge during adolescence).
- LGBTQ+ youth and youth of color may face additional stressors that affect mental health, including discrimination and lack of affirming care



Social pressures and bullying

- Teens may struggle with self-esteem, academic stress, peer conflict, or social exclusion.
- Bullying — especially cyberbullying — can lead to feelings of shame, humiliation, or hopelessness.



Isolation and loneliness

- Teens who feel misunderstood, rejected, or disconnected from family or peers are at higher risk.
- Major life changes — such as divorce, moving, or the loss of a loved one — can increase emotional vulnerability.



Stigma and silence

- Many teens don't talk about what they're feeling because they fear being judged or misunderstood.
- Misconceptions such as "they're just being dramatic" can prevent adults from taking signs of distress seriously.



Access to lethal means

- Easy access to firearms, medications, or other lethal means increases the danger of impulsive suicide attempts, especially during moments of crisis.

What helps protect teen mental health?

Teens are remarkably resilient, especially when they feel supported, heard, and cared for. The following protective factors have been shown to reduce suicide risk:



Strong connections

- Close relationships with parents, caregivers, teachers, and peers act as powerful buffers against suicidal thoughts.
- Feeling loved, accepted, and seen helps teens weather emotional storms.



Open conversations

- Talking about suicide does not increase the risk — in fact, it can save lives.
- Encouraging honest, nonjudgmental dialogue makes it more likely that teens will reach out for help.



Early identification and support

- Recognizing the signs of mental health concerns — and connecting teens to the right care — can make all the difference.
- Schools, pediatricians, and families all play a role in recognizing and responding to emotional distress.



Coping skills and resilience

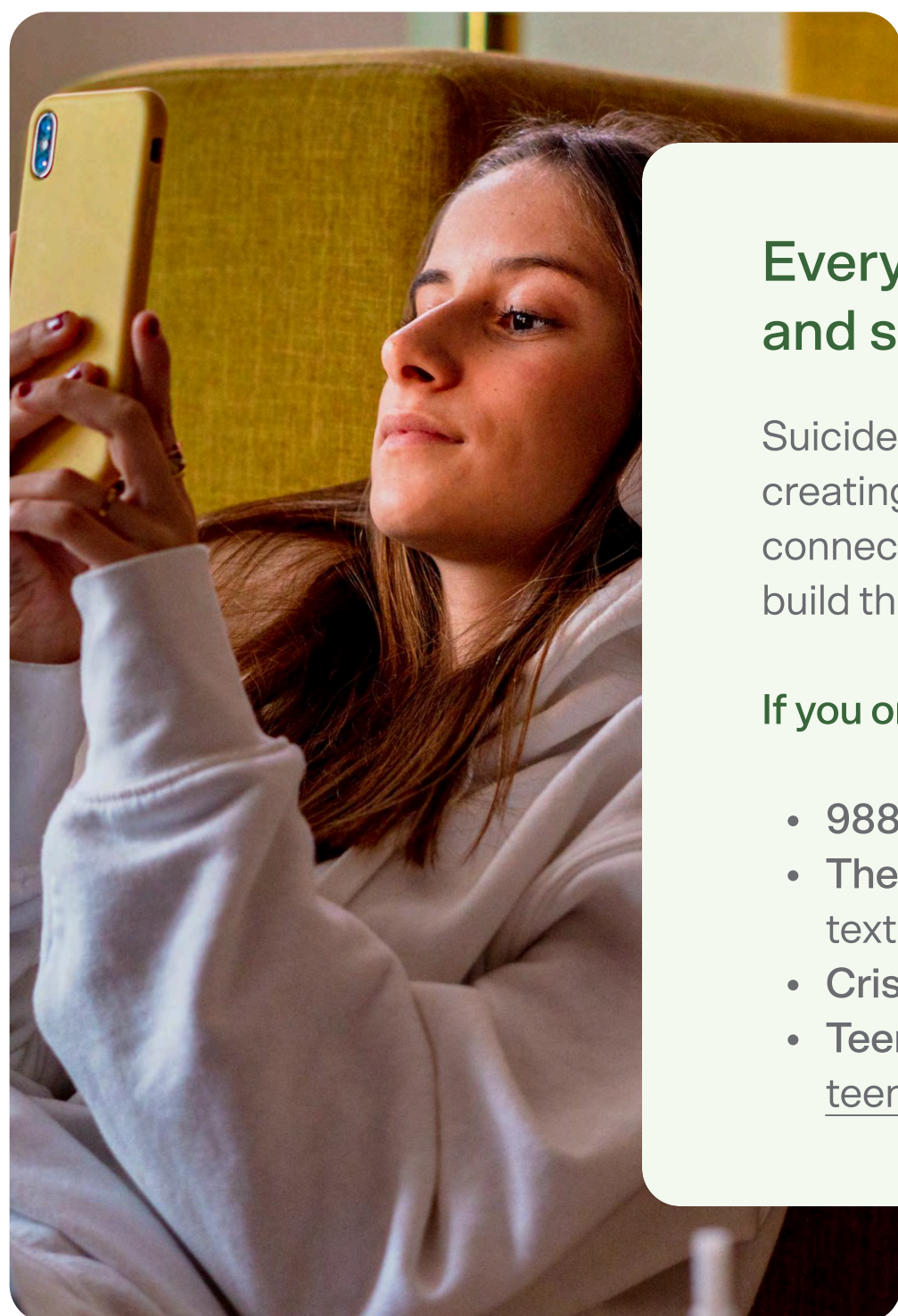
- Teaching teens how to manage stress, problem-solve, and regulate their emotions builds long-term wellbeing.
- Programs that teach mindfulness, emotional intelligence, and conflict resolution are valuable tools.

Warning signs to watch for

Suicidal thoughts don't always look the same, but warning signs may include:

- Talking about wanting to die, feeling hopeless, or feeling like a burden
- Withdrawal from friends, family, or activities they once enjoyed
- Sudden changes in mood, sleep, appetite, or school performance
- Increased risk-taking or reckless behavior
- Giving away belongings or saying goodbye

If you notice any of these signs, take them seriously. Trust your instincts and ask the teen directly how they're feeling.



Every teen deserves to feel safe, seen, and supported

Suicide prevention is not just about recognizing risk — it's about creating communities where teens know they matter. Through connection, compassion, and timely care, we can help young people build the foundation for a hopeful and healthy future.

If you or a young person you know is struggling, support is available:

- **988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline:** Call or text 988
- **The Trevor Project (LGBTQ+ youth):** 1-866-488-7386 or text START to 678678
- **Crisis Text Line:** Text HOME to 741741
- **Teen Line:** Call or text 310-855-4673 or use the chat at [teenlineonline.org](https://www.teenlineonline.org)

Sources: [Nami.org](https://www.nami.org) | [CDC.gov](https://www.cdc.gov)