



IT'S OK TO TALK ABOUT SUICIDE

a guide for trusted adults to safely talk about suicide with
children & young adults

PRESCHOOL-KINDERGARTEN

Keep it simple.

Children at this age don't fully understand the concept of death, and cognitively are not ready for such a deep conversation like suicide.

Try saying...

"The person died and that is really sad".

7-10 YEAR OLDS

Give short but truthful answers.

Help them understand that death is sad. Be short and follow the child's lead. Allow them to steer the conversation with any follow-up questions.

Say something like...

"Death is sad and that person may have died from a mental health condition called depression. I wish they were able to get help."

11-14 YEAR OLDS

Be clear and concrete.

By this age, parenting experts say one in three children have had difficulty controlling their emotions in a way that scares them.

Start by asking...

"What have you heard about suicide?"
Gather the information they have so you can correct any misinformation. It is also important to ask your child if they have thought about suicide.



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HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

Reassure them, mental health conditions are normal.

Mental health conditions are very common in this age group. Have the same conversation as the middle school-aged kids, but use "when" statements instead of "if".

Try asking...

"What are you going to do when you see your friend struggling?"

Encourage your child to reach out for help if they need it.

COLLEGE STUDENTS

Check in with them.

If your child tells you that they are fine encourage them to expand on that a little more.

Try asking...

"What can I do to support you in this moment?"

Reassure them that they are not alone.