

# Teen Suicide Prevention Program



Presented by Steve Christenberry  
schristenberry@fsgctopeka.com  
Shawnee County Suicide Prevention Coalition

# About Yellow Ribbon


- \* Our Mission
- \* The Light for Life Foundation Int'l/Yellow Ribbon Suicide Prevention Program® is dedicated to preventing suicide and attempts by Making Suicide Prevention Accessible to Everyone and Removing Barriers to Help by:
  - \* • Empowering individuals and communities through leadership, awareness and education; and
  - \* • By collaborating and partnering with support networks to reduce stigma and help save lives.


# Legacy of the Yellow Mustang



# The Story

- \* The Yellow Ribbon program was founded in 1994 by the parents and friends of a bright, funny, loving teen, Mike Emme, who took his life when he did not know the words to say, or how to let someone know he was in trouble and needed help.

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- \* “Don’t blame yourselves, Mom and Dad, I love you.” It was signed, “Love, Mike 11:45pm”. In a move that totally stunned all who knew him, Mike died-by-suicide at the time of his deepest despair. At 11:52pm his parents pulled into the driveway behind that bright yellow Mustang, – seven minutes too late!

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- \* Words of help and hope said by the teen's family were put on bright yellow paper and shared at the services, 500 of those messages and at the end, all were gone. Teens shared the messages locally and began to mail them to friends and loved ones – mailed them 'everywhere'. Within three weeks came word of a girl who got help when she gave the hallmark of the program – the Ask 4 Help!® Card (that bright yellow message) to her teacher – and received help.

# Yellow Ribbon Program

- Presented to middle and high school age youth, preferably in classroom settings
- Presented to parents
- Presented to school personnel
- Consists of power point presentations and videos
- Can be presented in approximately one hour for youth, 15-30 minutes longer for adults

# Awareness and Training Readiness and Preparation

- \* YOU can make a difference as a Suicide Prevention Gatekeeper, the trusted adult or helper.
- \* Natural disasters like Katrina and man-made disasters like 9/11 have taught us that it is vital to be prepared.



# Who Can Be Trained?



You don't have  
to be a trained mental  
health expert to help  
someone!

Just be willing to take  
action!



# Goals of the YR Training

- Learn your role ~ How to Be A Link!® not a therapist
- Learn about Warning Signs, Stats, Risk Factors
- Learn about Depression/Brain Disorders and their link to suicide
- 
- Learn How to Respond to a Cry for Help

# National Suicide Statistics



Suicide is the 3rd leading cause of death of young people aged 10-24 in the United States.



One in 5 teens report that they think about suicide

128% increase in suicide deaths in ages 10-14 since 1980

25% of teachers have been approached by a teen thinking of suicide

# National Suicide Statistics

39,000 (at least) Americans die of suicide each year.

For every 2 homicide deaths in the USA, there are 3 suicides

Each day in the US, there are an average of over 5,400 attempts by young people grades 7-12.

Four out of Five teens who attempt suicide have given clear warning signs (Jason Foundation)

# Myths about Suicide

The idea that talking about suicide causes or encourages people to do it.



**FACT:** Talking about suicide concerns directly saves lives.

**FACT:** *Not* talking about suicide concerns may leave the false impression that you don't care!

**FACT:** Talking about suicide openly encourages people to get help/reduces stigma

# Myths about Suicide

Suicidal people *want* to die.

**FACT:** Suicide is not about death/it is about ending pain.

People often call for help after an attempt. Suicide occurs when pain overwhelms resources.





# The Tragic Fact...

Suicide is a

**PERMANENT**

‘solution’

to a

**TEMPORARY**

problem!

# Myths about Suicide

Alcohol and/or drugs are not an important factor in suicide deaths.

**FACT:** Over 50% of youth who die by suicide are under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

Alcohol use increases depression and impulsivity





# 'Self Medicating' with Alcohol or Drugs



When a person feels depressed and unhappy it is not uncommon for them to use drugs and alcohol as a way to escape the issues and the pain.

- \* This behavior is called 'Self Medicating' and is extremely dangerous because it makes the person's brain get'sicker'!



# Understanding Suicide

\* There is a Very Strong Relationship Between Depression and other brain disorders\* and Suicide

- \* Schizophrenia, Mood Disorders like Bi-Polar,
- \* Anxiety Disorders, Eating Disorders, etc.

# Serotonin: Oil for the Brain

- \* When the brain runs low on serotonin the mental 'engine' starts to have problems!

- \* Irritability

- \* Concentration and Attention

- \* Symptoms of Depression

- \* Sleep Disturbance

- \* Appetite Disturbance



# Severe Shortage of Serotonin



- \* **Loss of Personality and Humor**
- \* **Chronic Sense of Fatigue**
- \* **Social Withdrawal**
- \* **Emotional Numbness**
- \* **Irritability**
- \* **Racing Thoughts**
- \* **Thoughts of Escape**

# Depression



- \* The 'Common Cold' of Brain Disorders/Mental Health
- \* Almost 10% of the United States population suffer from clinical depression
- \* Depression is much easier to treat than ever before!

# Black Dog Video



# Enhancing Good Brain Chemicals

- \* **Exercise!** When the heart reaches an aerobic exercise level, 'feel-good' chemicals (endorphins) are released.  
'The Runner's High'



- \* **Good nutrition and adequate rest**

- \* **Chocolate!**



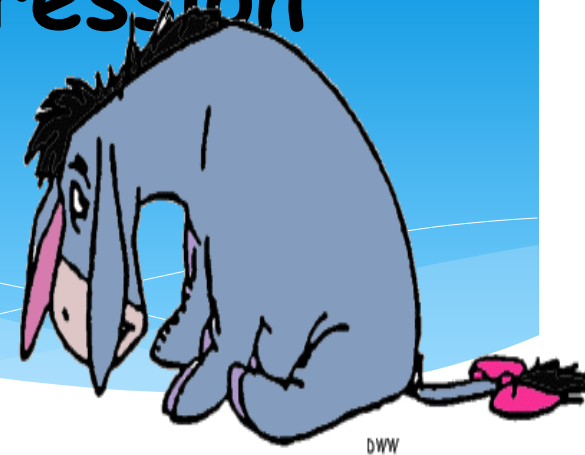


# Teen Depression

- \* Teen Depression often looks different from adult depression in these ways:
- \* Greater acting out behavior
- \* More impulsivity and risky behavior
- \* More 'in your face' anger and confrontation



# Manifestations of Depression



- \* Sad Depression
- \* Sadness, anxiety or a feeling of hopelessness
- \* Seeing no reason to live, no sense of purpose
- \* Loss of interest in food or compulsive over-eating leading to rapid weight loss or gain
- \* Anxiety, agitation, unable to sleep or sleeping all the time
- \* Withdrawing from friends, family, and the world
- \* Feeling trapped, no way out
- \* Increasing use of alcohol/drugs
- \* Dramatic mood swings

# Angry Depression



- \* Rage, uncontrolled anger, wanting revenge
- \* Reckless, risky behavior without thinking
- \* Feeling trapped, no way out
- \* Doing dangerous things that can cause death
- \* Increasing use of alcohol/drugs
- \* Seeing no reason to live, no sense or purpose
- \* Withdrawing from friends, family, and the world
- \* Anxiety, agitation, unable to sleep or sleeping all the time



# Treating Depression

There are many ways to treat depression. A physician and/or a mental healthcare professional will determine the best course of treatment. Involve them immediately!

**Depression  
is  
treatable**





This is one of  
the best ways  
to prevent  
suicide! "Means  
Reduction"

It is CRUCIAL  
To Limit a Very  
Depressed/Suicidal  
Person's Access to Things  
That Could Harm Them.

(Lock up drugs, guns,  
weapons)

# Factors in Suicide



'Risk Factors' are markers; events and situations that can impact a person's ability to cope with life



'Warning Signs' are observable clues, changes in behavior



'Protective Factors' buffer individuals from suicidal thoughts and behaviors.

# Teenage Risk Factors

- \* Breaking up with girlfriend/boyfriend
- \* Teenage Stressors (drugs/alcohol, breakup, being excluded)
- \* School Related Issues
- \* Being Bullied
- \* Family Pressures
- \* Sexual orientation and Gender identity

A previous attempt is a  
PRIMARY risk factor



# Bullying can affect everyone!

Can cause higher risk.



- \* **Bullied:** Can experience depression and anxiety, sadness, loneliness, health complaints, decreased academic achievements. Also skip/drop out of school.
- \* **Bullys:** Likely to abuse alcohol/drugs, fight, vandalize, and drop out of school. As adults, can be abusive to romantic partners, spouses, or children.
- \* **Witnesses:** Can have increased mental health issues—depression, anxiety and may miss or skip school.

# **Bullying:** *Connection with suicide attempts/ deaths*

- \* Bully victims are between 2 to 9 times more likely to consider suicide than non-victims. (Studies by Yale University)
- \* Nearly 160,000 kids stay home from school every day because of fear of bullying (Statistics reported by ABC News)
- \* Bully-related suicide can be connected to any type of bullying, including physical, emotional, cyber bullying, and sexting, or circulating suggestive or nude photos or messages about a person. ([bullyingstatistics.org](http://bullyingstatistics.org))



# Warning Signs - *Get Help Immediately*

*Someone threatening to hurt or kill him or herself or talking of wanting to hurt or kill themselves.*



*Someone seeking access to firearms, , .  
lethal means.*

*Someone talking/writing/drawing about death, dying or suicide.*

*>85% of suicidal people have given warning signs*

# Warning Signs – Seek Help ASAP



- \* Withdrawing from friends, family & society
- \* Acting reckless or engaging in risky activities
- \* Giving way prized/special possessions. Increasing alcohol/drug use
- \* Anxiety, unable to sleep or sleep all the time
- \* Dramatic mood change (*low to high or high to low*)
- \* Rage, uncontrolled anger (*girls get sad, boys get mad*)



# Verbal Warning Signs



- \* “I wish I were dead”
- \* If such and such happens, I am going to kill myself
- \* I’m just a burden to everyone
- \* I don’t want to live
- \* You won’t have to be around me much longer
- \* I’m going to kill myself
- \* My family would be better off without me
- \* Nobody needs me
- \* “I should never have been born”



# 'Stacking'

- \* Often, what appears to be a singular, external pressure or occurrence is merely "the last straw" when added to ongoing stressors, depression and/or hopelessness.
- \* Suicide is the result of long-term 'wearing-away', an 'erosion' of a person's ability to cope.



# Protective Factors

## What Can We Do?

A sense of social connectedness to others.

Successes - things that increase self esteem.

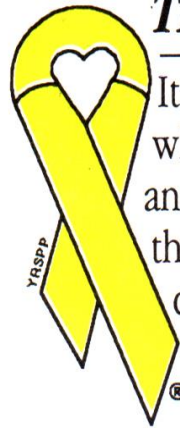
Access to resources - know how to use them.

Learn the Lifeskill - train in suicide prevention.

\*(World health Organization, National Strategy for Suicide Prevention)



# Yellow Ribbon *Ask for Help!* Card



## ***THIS RIBBON IS A LIFELINE!®***

It carries the message that there are those who care and will help! If you are in need and don't know how to ask for help, take this card to a counselor, teacher, clergy, doctor, parent or friend and say:

***"I NEED TO USE MY YELLOW RIBBON"***

® The Yellow Ribbon Program is in loving memory of Michael Emme

## **BE-A-LINK!-SAVE A LIFE!**

If you have received this Card, it is a Cry for Help:

- **Stay** with the person - you are their *lifeline!*
- **Listen**, *really listen*. Take them seriously!
- **Get**, or **call**, **help immediately!**

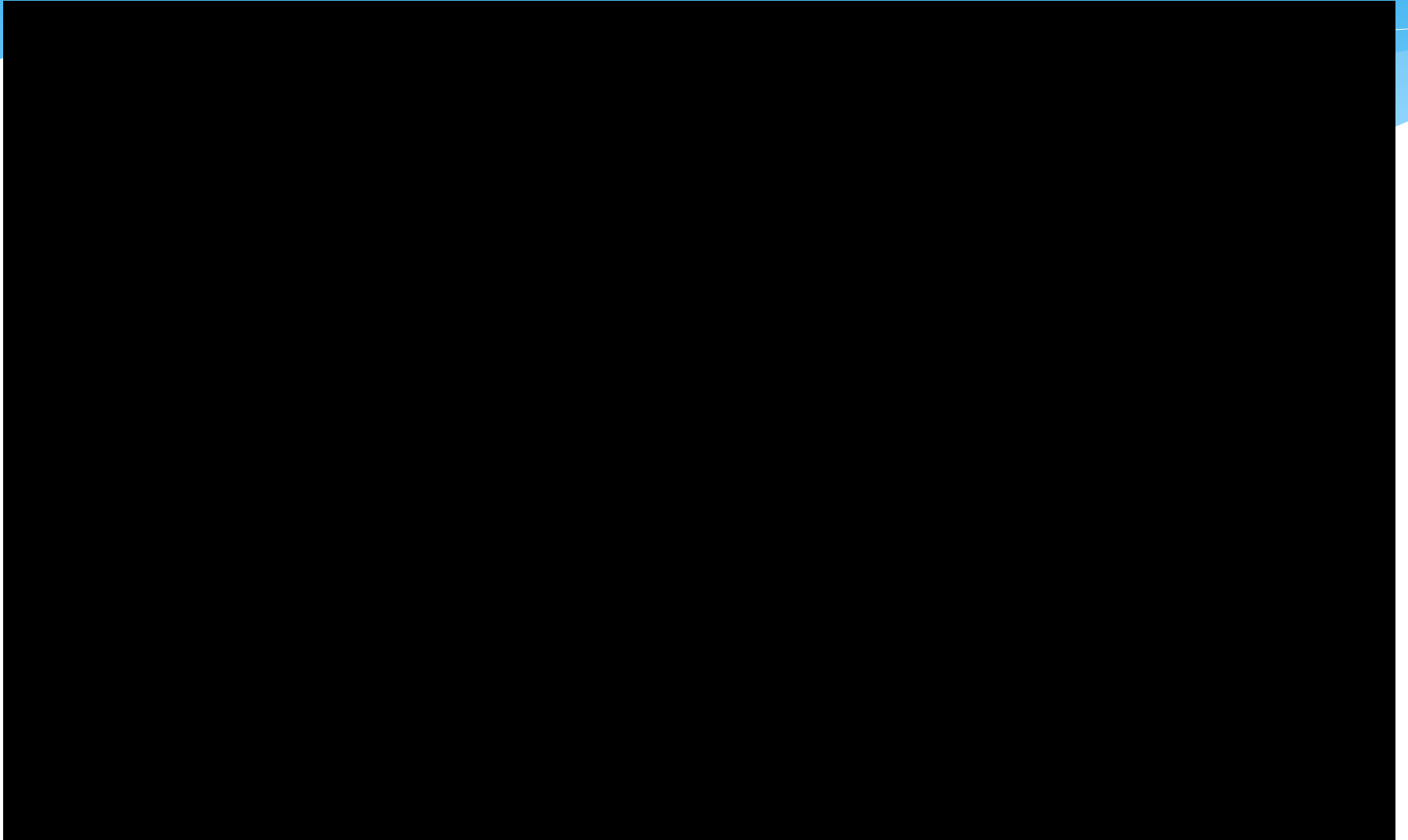
***It's OK to Ask 4 help!***

**1-800-SUICIDE • (1-800-784-2433)**

*Hope Line Network*

YELLOW RIBBON SUICIDE PREVENTION PROGRAM • 303.429.3530 • [www.yellowribbon.org](http://www.yellowribbon.org)

# Yellow Ribbon Intro Video





## Yellow Ribbon *Ask for Help!* Card

- 1 - **STAY** with the person
  - \* Unless there is risk of harm for yourself.  
You are that person's lifeline
  
- \* 2 - **LISTEN**, really listen Take them seriously.
  
- \* 3 - **GET**, or call, **HELP** immediately Don't keep the secret





# Why The Ask 4 Help Card?

- 91% of teenagers surveyed indicated they would first tell a friend of their suicidal thoughts (Ross, 1985).

*Starts the conversation to Get Help and to Give Help*

>85% of suicidal individuals give verbal or behavioral clues of their intentions. (Poland, 1989).

# Steps for Help Protocol

Teen or  
person goes  
to a friend

Peer/friend  
goes to:

Who goes to  
Trusted Helper:

- Trusted Adult
- Parent
- Grandparent
- Clergy
- Teacher
- Bus Driver
- Counselor
- Friend
  
- Family Doctor

- Your trusted friend
- clergy / counselor
- Support persons @ work
- Community Mental Health
- Family Doctor
- Contact in the School
  - Counselor, Psychologist
  - Crisis Team

MY FRIEND IS  
Talking About  
**Suicide**



# How to Respond to a Cry for Help

Have a *caring conversation*, not a clinical assessment!

- \* Breathe, be genuine and caring.
- \* Don't lie or make promises you can't keep
- \* Tell them:
  - \* "I am glad you called/came/talked to me".
  - \* "I do care, Tell me what's happening in your life".
  - \* "How can I help".
  - \* "Let's find someone who can help you get through this".



# Good Starter Questions for someone who may be thinking of suicide:

- \* I have been feeling concerned about you lately.
- \* Recently, I have noticed some differences in you and wondered how you are doing.
- \* I wanted to check in with you because you haven't seemed yourself lately.
- \* How are you coping with what's been happening in your life?



# Next: Talk about Hope

- \*You are not alone in this. I'm here for you.
- \*You may not believe it now, but the way you're feeling will change.
- \*I may not be able to understand exactly how you feel, but I care about you and want to help.
- \*When you want to give up, tell yourself you will hold off for just one more day, hour, minute—whatever you can manage.

# How to Respond to a Cry for Help

## "What Ifs"

- \* A friend gives me a card/says goodbye as they leave?
- \* *Don't wait, use school protocol to contact someone to follow up with the student immediately.*
- \* They are "just looking for attention"?
- \* *Don't analyze! You don't have to determine the level of risk.*





# Coping Strategies / Protective Factors

- ◆
- ◆ Spend time with family and friends, and openly share issues in your life
- ◆ Some people find comfort in religion or a spiritual belief system
- ◆ Get involved with after-school activities
- ◆ Believe in yourself-work your strengths
- ◆ Keeping perspective and a sense of humor. “This Too Shall Pass”

Volunteer, you are needed!





# How to Respond to a Cry For Help

## Do

- ◆ Be aware. Learn the warning signs. Be supportive and positive
- ◆ Listen!
- ◆ Take action
- ◆ Be non-judgmental/reassuring
  
- ◆ Offer empathy, “I care and will help”
- ◆ Offer hope that alternatives are available
  
- ◆ GET HELP from professionals through the hotline numbers or other health care professionals


## Don't

- ◆ Leave the person
- ◆ Be sworn to secrecy
- ◆ Be glib or dismissing of the problem
  
- ◆ Counsel - your role is to Be-A-Link





# Continued Prevention is Protective/Proactive

- \* Talk about suicide and suicide prevention
- \* Wear, use and display Yellow Ribbon symbol (the  heart is for survivors)
- \* Participate in Yellow Ribbon prevention activities
- \* Keep a supply of cards and other materials available
- \* Be an education resource-teach and train suicide prevention



# *Please Remember*

- ◆ Threats about suicide must be taken seriously!
- ◆ You will not cause someone to kill himself / herself by asking him/her about suicide!
- ◆ If you suspect that the person is suicidal, ask about it **DIRECTLY!**
- ◆ Dealing with a suicide crisis can be extremely upsetting! Talk to someone afterwards to help reduce your own stress.

# It takes just one person to make a difference!

- \* ONE girl-sent ONE card-to ONE friend-who asked one teacher for help. A life saved...



# How to get Yellow Ribbon Training in your Agency

- \* Look on the Suicide Prevention Resource Center website for a registry of trainers: [www.sprc.org](http://www.sprc.org)
- \* Contact Barb Nelson, the Statewide Coordinator of Suicide Prevention Training: [barb@kssprc.org](mailto:barb@kssprc.org)