

Lost: Depression & Suicide Prevention

Laura N. Farrar, Author/Speaker, *Dancing In The Rain Foundation*

falling darkness...

- at least 1 in 5 youth suffers from a developmental, emotional, or behavioral problem
- 1 in 8 teens struggle with depression
- 17% have seriously considered suicide, 16.5% have planned, and 8.5% have attempted
- in the U.S. someone dies by suicide every 16 minutes, but an attempt is made every minute
- suicide is the 3rd leading cause of death for ages 15-24 and the 5th for ages 5-14 years
- in 10-14 year olds, the suicide rate has doubled in the last two decades
- 90% of people who die by suicide have a diagnosable psychiatric disorder at the time of death

levels of depression...

- blue**: sadness due to a passing circumstance
- depressed mood**: deep sadness & grief in a specific situation (i.e. a breakup) that will pass
- clinical depression**: persistent, severe depression that doesn't have to have a specific cause
- major depressive disorder**: two or more weeks of 5 or more severe symptoms like: irritable or sad all day long, lose of interest in activities, weight loss or gain/loss or gain of appetite, sleep disturbances, fatigue, worthless feelings, difficulty concentrating, thoughts of death/suicide
- dysthymic disorder**: milder grade of symptoms, but chronic—lasting at least a year: cranky, negative, tired, sleep disturbance, low self-esteem, hopeless, unable to concentrate.
- bipolar disorder**: extreme mood swings from mania to deep depression

“You don’t know what goes on in anyone’s life but your own. And when you mess with one part of a person’s life, you’re not messing with just that part. Unfortunately, you can’t be that precise and selective. When you mess with one part of a person’s life, you’re messing with their entire life. Everything...affects everything.”

–Jay Asher, *Thirteen Reasons Why* p. 201

causes...

- chemical imbalance
- genetics/family history
- past events: abuse, neglect, divorce, rejection, loss
- turbulent teen years, societal pressure & expectations

“I’m falling...drowning...locked in an emotionless closet. I can’t let it out but I can’t keep it in. I can’t deal with the worry and stress and it’s tearing my heart out.” -Laura’s journal, March 7, 2006

feelings...

- guilt: everything is their fault (blame themselves) [irrational thoughts]
- hopeless: see no way out of their current situation & doubt change can occur
- alone/isolation: no one understands how they feel or recognizes their pain
- loneliness: symptoms often cause them to be excluded from activities (withdrawal)
- worthless: no value, no one cares, I might as well be dead (downward spiral of thoughts)

suicide--the final escape...

- teens that attempt suicide may not really want to die—they just want a way out of the pain
- warning signs... (80% show signs before attempting suicide)
- prior suicide attempts, making a plan, giving away possessions, hopelessness, behavioral changes, anxiety, withdrawal, changes in eating or sleeping patterns, slipping grades, increased drug & alcohol use [self-medicating], history of psychiatric disorders
- crisis: attempts, hospitals, psychiatric hospitals, suicide watch, psychiatric evaluation

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five ways to save a life...

- Stay with them, tell them you care, and listen (in person or on the phone)
- Ask: Are you thinking about attempting suicide? Do you have a plan? When, where & how?
- Evaluate: How lethal their method is, how available is it to them, if help is near to them or if they've had previous attempts
- Get extra help from counselor, hospital or mental health agency
- Call the National Suicide Prevention Hotline together: 1-800-SUICIDE

surfacing... (it takes time!)

- psychotherapy (Cognitive Behavioral, EMDR, etc.)
- medication
- Biblical insight: John 17:15, Phil. 4:13, Psalm 18:28-29, Psalm 91:4, Psalm 56:8, Micah 7:8-9
- Psalm 119:77 "Let Your tender mercies come to me, that I may live"
- 10 reasons not to attempt suicide; 10 things to do instead
- shifting from negative to positive coping mechanisms

tools...

- To Save A Life (movie) www.tosavealifemovie.com or www.tosavealifeleaders.com
-suicide, self-injury, substance abuse & depression all with a Christian perspective
- Encounter Digital Bible Lesson "Conquering Crisis", www.standardpub.com

For more resources and discussion visit

www.laurafarrar.com

www.dancingintherainfoundation.org

CRISIS

- **Help! My Kids are Hurting: a survival guide to working with students in pain* by Marv Penner
- **The Youth Worker's Guide to Helping Teenagers in Crisis* by Rich Van Pelt & Jim Hancock

SUICIDE

- **Eight Stories Up: an adolescent chooses hope over suicide* by Dequincy A. Lezine
- **What Do I Do When Teenagers are Depressed & Contemplate Suicide?* by Steve Gerali
- Fiction... *Pitch Black* by Melody Carlson *Thirteen Reasons Why* by Jay Asher
- www.yspp.org - Youth Suicide Prevention Program www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org
- www.span-california.org - suicide prevention advocacy network

DEPRESSION

- The Disappearing Girl: learning the language of teenage depression* by Lisa Machoian
- Silver Linings: breaking through the clouds of depression* by Florence Littauer
- Monochrome Days: a firsthand account of one teenager's experience with depression* by Cait Irwin
- "Manic" written and recorded by Plumb
- Fiction... *Dark Blue* by Melody Carlson *Speak* by Laurie Halse Anderson

COUNSELING

- Christian Counseling: A Comprehensive Guide, 3rd Ed.* by Gary Collins, Ph.D
www.cypu.org (Center for Parent/Youth Understanding)