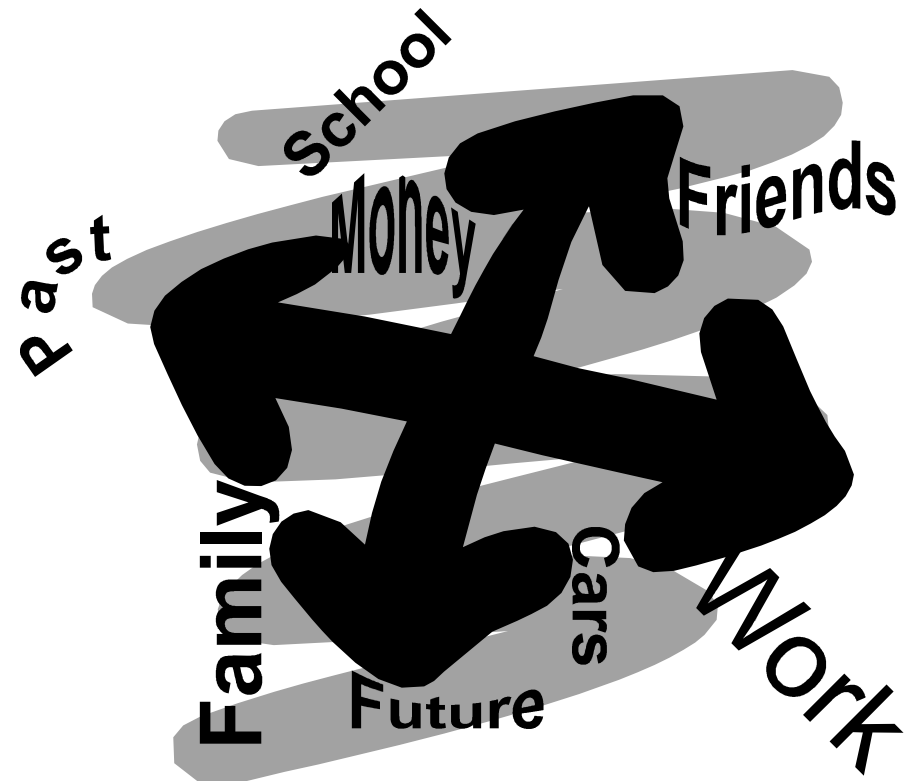


# Depression and Suicide

## A Teenager's Guide

### For More Information Contact:

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[www.namiofmc.org](http://www.namiofmc.org)



### Sources

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention Website: [www.afsp.org](http://www.afsp.org)  
National Alliance for the Mentally Ill Website: [www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org)  
National Institute of Mental Health Website: [www.nimh.nih.gov](http://www.nimh.nih.gov)  
National Mental Health Association Website: [www.nmha.org](http://www.nmha.org)

**NAMI Marathon County**  
**The County's Voice on Mental Illness**  
**Grant Provided by Clyde F. Schlueter Foundation**

# So these are the 'best years of your life'...

How many times have you heard this statement and thought the person **MUST** be joking? Being a teen is hard. It can be even harder if you are experiencing a mental illness, including depression. Research shows that 90 percent of people who kill themselves have a diagnosable mental or substance abuse disorder or both, and that majority of these people have some form of depressive disorder.

**Studies indicate that the most promising way to prevent suicide and suicidal behavior is through the early recognition and treatment of depression and other mental illness.**

Suicide is real, it happens every day. It is the third leading cause of death among young people between the ages of 15 and 24 in the United States.

**When suicidal thoughts occur, they should always be taken seriously and promptly evaluated by a qualified professional.**

Suicidal symptoms typically respond to proper treatment and often can be avoided with early intervention for depressive disorders or other related illnesses.

This booklet is intended to be a prevention tool. It will help you recognize the warning signs of suicide, how to help someone who may be suicidal, common myths and how major depression plays a part.



The Nation's Voice on Mental Illness

## ***Our Mission...***

***The mission of the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill Marathon County (NAMI) is to develop community educational services and supportive programs that will improve the quality of life of those whose lives are affected by mental illness.***

NAMI Marathon County has been a part of the community for over 20 years. We are a non-profit, grassroots organization. We are affiliated with the State of Wisconsin NAMI as well as the National NAMI organization. The values that we support are:

- Developing and implementing school educational services and supportive programs.
- Serving as an information and referral source for individuals requesting help or information in coping with concerns of mental illness.
- Cooperating, encouraging and assisting other organizations in the implementation of programs that support our mission.
- Establishing support programs and services for individuals and family members.
- Advocating on behalf of those with mental illness at all levels of government.



## Common Misconceptions About Depression and Suicide

### **“Someone that is depressed should be able to ‘pick themselves up’ on their own.”**

A depressed individual is no more capable of treating his own disorder than is a person with heart disease or diabetes. Major depression is an illness that needs to be treated and is the most treatable of mental illnesses.

### **“People who talk about suicide won’t really do it.”**

Almost everyone who commits suicide has given some clue or warning. Do not ignore suicide threats. Statements like “You’ll be sorry when I’m dead,” or “I can’t see any way out”- no matter how casually or jokingly said-may indicate serious suicidal feelings.

### **“If people are determined to kill themselves, nothing is going to stop them.”**

Even the most severely depressed person has mixed feelings about death, wavering until the very last moment between wanting to live and wanting to die. Most suicidal people do not want to die; they want the pain to stop. The impulse to end it all, however overpowering, does not last forever.

### **“Talking about suicide may give someone the idea.”**

You don’t give a suicidal person morbid ideas by talking about suicide. The opposite is true—bringing up the subject of suicide and discussing it openly is one of the most helpful things you can do.

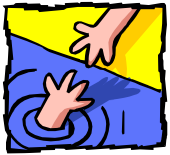


## SUICIDE WARNING SIGNS

There are many behaviors that can help friends or family members recognize the threat of suicide of a loved one. Since mental and substance-related disorders so frequently accompany suicidal behavior, many of the clues to be looked for are symptoms associated with mental illnesses, including major depression (see page 4).

- Change in personality—becoming sad, withdrawn, irritable, anxious, fatigue or loss of energy, indecisive, apathetic, aggressive, destructive or defiant behavior
- Change in behavior—can’t concentrate on school, work, routine tasks
- Change in sleep pattern—oversleeping or insomnia, sometimes with early waking
- Change in eating habits—loss of appetite and weight or overeating
- Loss of interest in friends, hobbies, activities previously enjoyed
- Worry about money, illness (real or imaginary)
- Fear of losing control, “going crazy”, harming self or others
- Feelings of overwhelming guilt, shame, self-hatred
- No hope for the future—“It will never get better, I will always feel this way.”
- Drug or alcohol abuse
- Recent loss of a loved one through death, divorce, separation, broken relationship; or loss of job, money, status, self-confidence, self-esteem
- Loss of religious faith
- Nightmares
- Suicidal impulses, statements, plans; giving away favorite things; previous suicide attempts or gestures
- Agitation, hyperactivity and restlessness may indicate masked depression

While suffering from one of these symptoms certainly does not necessarily mean that one is suicidal, it’s always best to communicate openly with a friend or loved one who has one or more of these behaviors, especially if they are unusual for that person.



## How To Help

- **Offer help and listen**
- **Trust your instincts**
- **Pay attention to talk about suicide**
- **Seek professional help**

If someone tells you they are thinking about suicide, you should take their distress seriously, listen non-judgmentally and help them get to a professional for evaluation and treatment. If someone is in imminent danger of harming himself or herself, do not leave the person alone. You may need to take emergency steps to get help, such as calling 911. When someone is in a suicidal crisis, it is important to limit access to firearms or other lethal means of committing suicide.



## What If It's You?

Don't be ashamed. Seek help. There are many people who share your feelings and can help. Talk to someone you trust like a friend, a family member, a teacher or call a suicide crisis line. Understand that suicidal thoughts are symptoms of a treatable illness. There is help!

If you or someone you care about is thinking about suicide, the Crisis Center at North Central Health Care can help.

**CALL 1-800-SUICIDE,  
24 HOURS A DAY**



## Major Depression and Suicide

Everyone goes through occasional periods of sadness as a normal response to unfortunate circumstances in life—major depression, however, is not just a worse case of the blues and may not have a basis in the circumstances of that individual's life. Not everyone who is clinically depressed will appear “sad” or “down” to those around them. Although most depressed people are not suicidal, most people who take their own lives (60%) suffer from a depressive illness.

### Symptoms of Major Depression:

- Changes in sleep (sleeping more or less)
- Changes in appetite (eating more or less)
- Inability to concentrate or make decisions
- Loss of energy
- Loss of interest in your usual activities
- Low self-esteem
- Feelings of hopelessness

Often when these symptoms coexist at a severe level for a long time, individuals become so discouraged and hopeless that death seems preferable to life. These feelings can lead to passive suicidal wishes, suicidal plans and even attempted and completed suicide.

All age groups and all racial, ethnic and socioeconomic groups suffer from depression. Some symptoms of adolescent depression are similar to those in other age groups, but depressed adolescents may also “act out” by showing anger, becoming aggressive or delinquent, abusing drugs or alcohol, doing poorly in school or running away. They may feel socially isolated, empty and hopeless. During the past three decades, suicides among adolescents has increased 300 percent, so severe symptoms or symptoms lasting for weeks should be evaluated by a doctor.

When several symptoms of depression occur or last longer than two weeks—or interfere with ordinary functioning—professional treatment is needed. **Depression is one of the most common and treatable of mental illnesses and 80-90% of those suffering from depression can be effectively treated.**