

SUICIDE IN OUR COMMUNITIES

LEARNING SIGNS • ASKING QUESTIONS • GETTING HELP



BACKGROUND

כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל עֲרֻבִים זֶה בְּזֶה

ALL ISRAEL ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR ONE ANOTHER

BABYLONIAN TALMUD, TRACTATE SHEVUOT 39A

Why Talk about Suicide in Our Community?

*“Mishnah, Pirkei Avot 2:4 tells us
Do not separate yourself from the community,
and yet often families dealing with these challenges
isolate because they don't feel invited to engage with their
community over these issues.”**

As Jewish educators, teachers and leaders, we have a sacred obligation to create an environment where suicide and other mental health issues are openly discussed and individuals are embraced.

*Quote from Marla Kaufman in <https://www.replyall.me/jofas-cast/substance-abuse-and-mental-health-in-the-jewish-community/>

I Jumped Off the Golden Gate Bridge

Kevin Hines Shares his Story



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WcSUs9iZv-g&list=RDkQ4XCNZdKfl&index=2>

Understanding Terms

Suicide – death caused by self-directed injurious behavior with intent to die.

Suicidal ideation – thinking about, considering or planning suicide.

Suicide attempt – a non-fatal self-directed and potentially injurious behavior with intent to die.

Death by Suicide or Died by Suicide – preferred wording when talking about taking one's own life. *Committed suicide* implies a crime and perpetuates stigma.

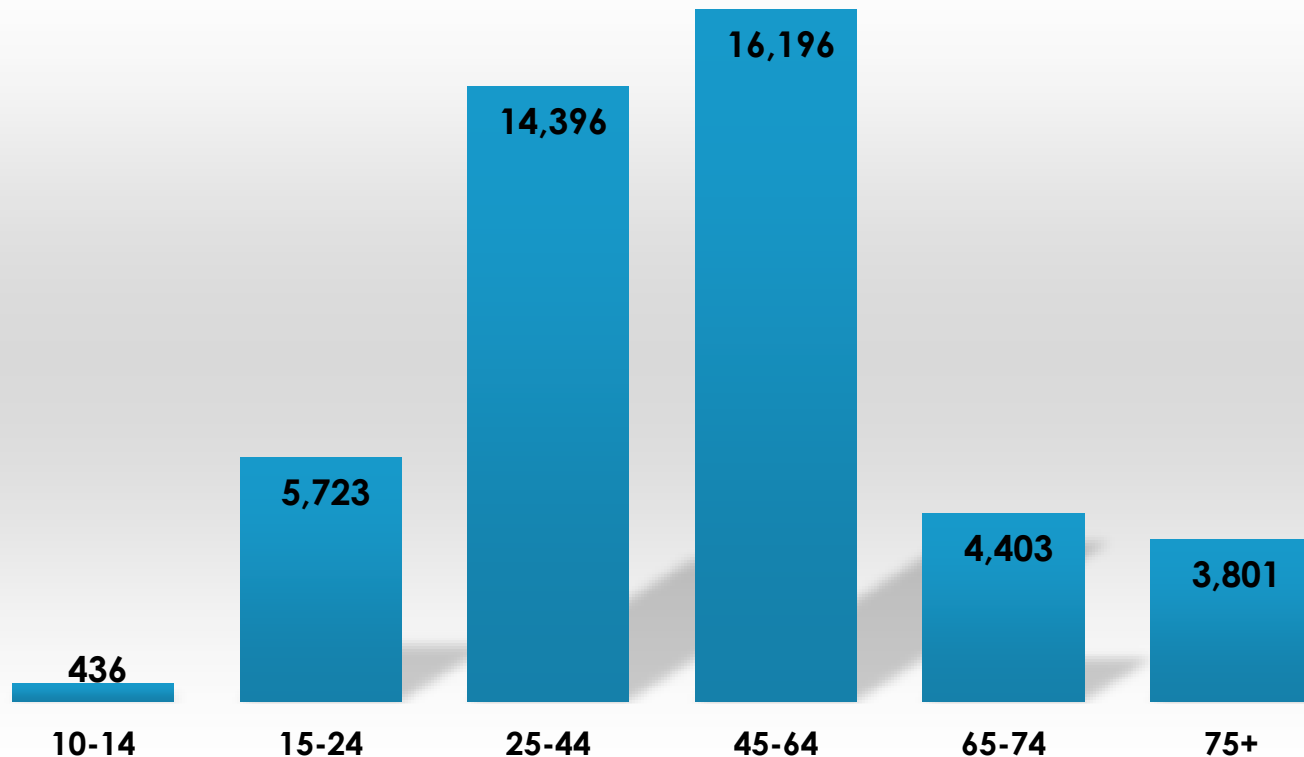
Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

Suicide: It's a Public Health Crisis

Statistics from 2016

There were more than twice as many suicides (44,955) in the United States as there were homicides (19,362).

Deaths by Suicide, Broken Down by Age Group



LEARNING THE SIGNS

**"AND YOU SHALL LIVE BY THEM" (VAYIKRA 18:5)
- AND NOT THAT YOU SHALL DIE BY THEM.**

BABYLONIAN TALMUD, AVODAH ZARAH 27B

Lean in...

As educators, we have windows into our students through their:
writings  drawings & doodles  conversations 

We have a responsibility to
...Pay Attention

Hear the Risks and Warnings



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3BByqa7bhto>

Possible Risk Factors for Children & Teens

The following factors may increase the risk of suicidal ideation or attempted suicide. However, these risk factors do not always lead to a suicide:

A family history of:

- mental health issues
- substance abuse
- violence
- suicide

Having:

- a feeling of hopelessness
- feelings of seclusion, loneliness and/or shame
- attempted suicide before
- a psychiatric disorder or mental illness
- disciplinary, social or school problems

Being:

- LGBTQ with no family or home support
- prone to reckless or impulsive behavior
- in trouble with the law
- under the influence of alcohol or drugs / having a problem with substance abuse

Additional factors:

- enduring intense bullying
- possessing a gun
- knowing, identifying, or being associated with someone who has died by suicide
- experiencing dramatic life changes

Warning Signs

There is no single indicator that someone is contemplating suicide

If a person talks about:

- Killing themselves
- Feeling hopeless
- Having no reason to live
- Being a burden to others
- Feeling trapped
- Unbearable pain



Warning Signs

Behaviors that may signal risk, especially if related to a painful event, loss or change:

- Increased use of alcohol or drugs
- Looking for a way to end their lives, such as searching online for methods
- Withdrawing from activities
- Isolating from family and friends
- Sleeping too much or too little
- Visiting or calling people to say goodbye
- Giving away prized possessions/money
- Aggression
- Fatigue

Warning Signs

People who are considering suicide often display one or more of the following:

- **Depression**
- **Anxiety**
- **Relief/Sudden Improvement**
- **Loss of interest**
- **Irritability**
- **Humiliation/Shame**
- **Agitation/Anger**

ASKING QUESTIONS

**“...HANNAH, WHY ARE YOU CRYING AND WHY AREN'T YOU EATING?
WHY ARE YOU SO SAD?”**

I SAMUEL 1:8

Be Brave - Ask the Question

It can be challenging to ask
a person if they are contemplating suicide.

Asking about suicide or self-harm
will not encourage someone to take action.

Experts suggest that not asking can do far more harm.

Building the Muscle

Turn to the person next to you and practice asking these questions as if they were a student, friend, or loved one.

- Are you okay?
- Are you thinking about suicide?
- If the answer is YES ask, Do you have a plan?
- Do you have access to those means?
- Review the next steps you might take to help them.

WHERE TO GO FOR HELP

**HE USED TO SAY: YOU ARE NOT REQUIRED TO COMPLETE THE TASK,
YET YOU ARE NOT FREE TO DESIST FROM IT.**

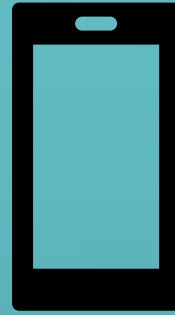
PIRKEI AVOT 2:21

Immediate Help

If you or someone you know is in crisis, free, confidential help is available now



1-800-273-TALK (8255)
24/7 crisis talk line



TEXT: 741741
24/7 crisis text line
a live, trained
crisis counselor receives the
text and responds quickly



www.imalive.org
24/7 crisis online chat

Take a moment to put these numbers in your phone now.

Understanding Your Limits

Remember, though the desire to help may be great, even with education and experience, lay people are not equipped to handle the depth of pain and range of emotions reported by many who have contemplated or attempted suicide.

**If you think someone is in trouble,
please speak confidentially to your supervisor or a
mental health professional at your congregation or agency.**

COMFORTING THE LIVING

**A MINOR, WHO KNOWINGLY COMMITS SUICIDE –
IS COUNTED AS IF IT WAS DONE UNKNOWINGLY.
SUCH IS ALSO THE CASE WITH AN ADULT WHO KNOWINGLY
COMMITS SUICIDE BUT DOES SO UNDER DISTRESS,
LIKE KING SAUL - WE DO NOT WITHHOLD ANYTHING FROM HIM.**

SHULCHAN ARUKH, YOREH DE'AH 345:3

Can a Jewish person who dies by suicide be buried in a Jewish cemetery?

Yes, in most cases.

It is widely – and mistakenly – thought that a Jewish funeral cannot be held for people who die by suicide and that they cannot be buried in a Jewish cemetery.*

Though rituals vary among traditions, the majority of clergy of all denominations do all that they can to ensure a respectful and loving funeral and burial.

*Source: <https://www.ou.org/torah/machshava/tzarich-iyun/tzarich-iyun-jews-with-tattoos/>

Following a Death by Suicide, Grief Ripples through the Community

Things to Say and Do

- Comfort the mourner
- Go to the funeral and/or *shiva*
- Talk about the person in a loving way
- Listen with an open heart
- Study in the person's honor
- Acknowledge that it was death by suicide
- Give Tzedakah

Things Not to Say or Do

- Do not pass judgement
- Do not ask for details
- Do not tell mourners that their loved one is “in a better place”
- Do not share mental health challenges or stories about suicide
- Do not talk about other things that could have been tried to help that person while still living

These Troubled Children

By Alden Solovy

Who will take these troubled children
By the hand and lead them
Back to joy and comfort?
You, who cut your own flesh,
There is no blade sharper
Than your own grief.
You, who drink to disappear,
There is no poison more deadly
Than your own doubts.
You, who drug your minds,
There is no potion more deadly
Than your own despair.
Beautiful child,
You are not yet lost.
You are not yet gone forever.
Come home.

Source and Shelter,
Lead these troubled children
To the arms of hope and help.
A loving parent.
A caring friend.
A big brother. A big sister.
An AA meeting.
A suicide prevention line.
A foster family.
A pastor, a priest, a rabbi, an imam.
A counselor.
A professional with resources
And an open heart.
Healer and Guide,
Bring these troubled children
Back to wholeness and peace.
Let love fall like warm rain
Into their hearts.

These Troubled Children

You can be a partner in bringing
a student “home.”

אם לא עכשיו, אימת?
If not now, when?





Visit JTeach.org
for additional resources on suicide prevention