

Youth Suicide Prevention

Start Early When it Comes to Mental Health

According to the National Alliance for Mental Illness, one in five teens and young adults live with a mental health condition, like anxiety, panic attacks or depression, and 50% of all lifetime mental illness begins by age 14.

Make discussions about emotions and mental health normal. Asking how your kids feel about different events helps them see you as someone they can talk to. Listen more than you speak. Offer small encouraging responses, such as “That sounds difficult,” or “It sounds like you’re feeling sad, are you?” These will help them more than offering advice or dismissing emotions.

Understanding Mental Health Signs and Symptoms

Signs are what you can see: withdrawal from friends, family, activities they used to like, poor appetite or overeating, or poor or disrupted sleep. Symptoms are what’s inside: feeling hopeless, unhappy, depressed, anxious or angry.



TEXAS
Health and Human
Services

How to Talk to Your Youth About Mental Health

Stay calm. Take a deep breath before knocking on their door.

Choose a good time. Pick a time when both of you can let the conversation last for as long as needed.

Choose a good space. Minimize distractions.

Lead with love. Start with, “I love you,” and then tell them about the signs you have seen or changes you have noticed.

Check your own feelings. Keep your own emotions in control. Remember, this is how they are feeling and thinking.

Be patient. If they are not ready to talk, let them know you are always there, that asking for help is okay, and that you love and support them.

Thank them. Listen carefully and thank them for telling you how they are feeling and what they are thinking. It takes a lot of strength.

Look for help together. Say, “Let’s look for help together.” It is a great way to show that you care and allows them to be a part of the solution.

When it’s a Crisis

You may need to ask your youth, “Are you having thoughts of suicide?” It is a very difficult question, but do not worry about asking it. The question does not put the thought into their head. Rather, it shows them how much you love and care for them.

Reassure your child by saying things like, “I love you and I am here for you. We will get through this together.”

If your youth is safe and needs support, call the **988** Suicide and Crisis Lifeline. You will be connected to a trained person who can help you find resources in your area.

If your youth is in imminent danger, if they are trying to harm themselves or have already made a suicide attempt, it is time to get help. Don’t wait. Call **9-1-1**.

Resources

- **988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline**, 24/7/365. Press “1” for Veterans, Press “2” for Spanish
- **Crisis Text Line:** Text TX to 741-741
- **The Trevor Project:** 866-488-7386, 24/7/365
- **County Services Search Page:** texashhs.org/countyservicessearchpage
- **The Suicide Prevention** wallet card:
English: texashhs.org/preventionwalletcard
Spanish: texashhs.org/prevenciondelsuicidio

Remember these quick tips:

- Mental health is just like physical health – your youth deserves both.
- Make it normal for your family to talk about your feelings.
- Keep an eye out for signs of problems with your youth’s mental and emotional health.
- Be calm when you talk to your youth about what you see.
- Listen to their answers.
- Never stop checking in with your youth.
- Thank them for talking to you.
- Find help together.
- Call the **988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline** or 911 if the danger is imminent.
- Keep crisis hotline numbers, suicide hotline numbers and mental health services numbers in your phone for your own family and others.

