

There are good reasons to be worried.

- Suicide is the second leading cause of death for youth ages 10-24 in Minnesota. More boys commit suicide than girls, but more girls attempt suicide than boys.
- 1 out of 6 students nationwide (grades 9-12) seriously considered suicide in the past year.
- The rate of suicide attempts is 4 times greater for LGBT youth and 2 times greater for questioning youth than that of straight youth.
- In a national study, 40% of transgender adults reported having made a suicide attempt. 92% of these individuals reported having attempted suicide before the age of 25.
- LGBTQ youth who come from highly rejecting families are 8.4 times as likely to have attempted suicide as LGBTQ peers who reported no or low levels of family rejection.
- Each episode of LGBTQ victimization, such as physical or verbal harassment or abuse, increases the likelihood of self-harming behavior by 2.5 times on average.
- Although most teens who consider suicide have struggled with depression at some point, nearly half of those under age 16 who commit suicide have no history of mental illness.

But there is hope

Just because there is a high rate of suicide among LGBTQ teens, that doesn't mean your friend is *destined* to commit suicide. But if he or she seems to be considering suicide, or stuck in a very dark place, it's important that you share your concerns with a caring adult as soon as possible.

The most important thing you can do is what you're doing right now —

Caring enough to seek help.

Your friend may have asked you to keep a secret. Maybe she's been cutting and you saw the marks. Or maybe he's been talking about killing himself. If you want to be a good friend, remember that **secrets can be deadly.**

If you're worried enough about your friend that you picked up this brochure, the most helpful thing you can do is **tell an adult you trust.** Today. Your friend might be mad at you tomorrow, but at least they'll still be here tomorrow. Friends don't let friends keep secrets that can hurt them.

Minnesotans OUT for Gun Safety is a caucus of Protect Minnesota, an independent, state-based non-profit that promotes the health and safety of all Minnesotans by preventing gun violence through effective laws, policies, and community education. Find out more at www.protectmn.org.

Many thanks to the Trevor Project, Suicide Prevention Lifeline, National Association of School Psychologists, and the Brady Center for the Prevention of Gun Violence, for providing data and suicide prevention information included in this brochure.

Protect Minnesota

Minnesotans OUT for Gun Safety

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I'm Worried about my Friend



A Guide for LGBT Teens and their friends about Suicide Prevention



Most youth who commit suicide tell someone about their feelings beforehand. Never ignore a "red flag" or call for help.

Suicide is an impulsive act

All teens are susceptible to suicide after experiencing a painful loss, disappointment, or break up, but lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual and questioning teens are particularly at risk.

Harassment, bullying and even physical abuse can be a daily reality for LGBTQ youth at school. Many LGBTQ youth also experience rejection at home by their parents and family. The cumulative effect of these painful and often frightening experiences can lead to impulsive suicidal actions when the situation seems hopeless.

Guns are the most common method of teen suicide. Access to a loaded gun can turn a momentary impulse into a permanent reality. 80% of teens who shoot themselves use a gun belonging to a parent or family member.

Is suicide "contagious"?

No, but teens who are exposed to a suicide among their friends or classmates may have an increased risk of suicide themselves. When a suicide happens, it's important to allow for immediate expressions of grief, but avoid "getting stuck" in mourning and sadness. Encourage your friends to turn their attention to happy, hopeful things and focus on life.

How You Can Help

If a friend expresses thoughts of suicide to you, or acts in a way that concerns you, let them know that there is help and hope.

Learning the warning signs of suicide is a huge part of preventing a crisis. **Although emotional ups and downs are normal, a person who is suicidal may give signs or hints that something is wrong.**

Knowing these warning signs can help you connect someone you care about to support if they need it - even if that person is yourself.

The Warning Signs

1. Feeling things like:

unimportant, trapped, hopeless, alone, angry, overwhelmed, unmotivated, depressed, sad, irritable, impulsive, or suicidal.

2. Saying things like:

"It won't matter soon anyway."
"I don't deserve to live. I suck."
"Things will never get better for me."
"You're the best friend I've ever had. I'll miss you."
"I've thought about how I'd kill myself."
"Life is so hard. Lately I've felt like ending it all."
"They'll be sorry when I'm gone."

3. Doing things like:

Using drugs or alcohol more than usual.
Engaging in unsafe sexual activity.
Cutting or burning themselves or engaging in other self-harming or risky behavior.
Choosing not to spend time with friends.
Talking about guns and killing.
Giving away their most valuable possessions.
Losing interest in their favorite activities.
Admiring people who have died by suicide.
Planning for death by writing a will or letter.
Eating or sleeping more or less than usual.
Feeling more sick, tired or achy than usual.

Don't Ignore the Warning Signs!

If you or anyone you know is having suicidal thoughts, talk to a trusted adult.

You can also call 1-800-273-TALK (8255) or text "START" to 741-741.

If YOU are feeling hopeless

Ask for help. Don't be afraid to let your friends, family, or teachers know that you need their help. You can also call or text the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, above, any time. This service is confidential.

Remember that this feeling can be overcome.

Suicide is a permanent solution to a temporary problem. Family conflict, bullying, sexual identity, rejection by those you love, and feeling all alone and different can seem impossible to deal with. But with support from others, you can.

Empower yourself. Studies have shown that LGBTQ teens who actively engage in activities, organizations and resources targeted at the LGBTQ community are happier, have better psychological adjustment and are more likely to graduate from high school than other LGBTQ teens. Find your people and your power!



Involvement in a supportive LGBTQ community can make all the difference when a teen is struggling.