If a young person you know seems depressed or gloomy and has been spending a lot of time questioning why life is worth the bother, it’s time to pay attention.

Anonymous Parent,
(son lost to suicide)

The Facts:

+ Between 2005 and 2007, 559 Washington State youths completed suicide — an average of 2 youth suicides each week.
+ Youth suicides outnumber youth homicides in Washington State.
+ Between 2005 and 2007, 4,269 Washington State youths were admitted to the hospital for non-fatal suicidal behavior — an average of 16 admissions per week.
+ Boys and young men are significantly more likely to complete suicide — this is partly a result of using more lethal means — while girls and young women are more likely to make suicide attempts that result in hospitalization.

30% of Washington State 10th graders reported feeling so sad or hopeless in the past year that they stopped doing their usual activities.
+ 26% of all 10th graders indicated that it was unlikely that they would seek adult help if they were feeling depressed or suicidal. More than 90% indicated that they did not have adults they could turn to if they were feeling sad or depressed.

Watch for Signs
Stop Youth Suicide
**WARNING SIGNS:**

Most suicidal young people don’t really want to die – they just want their pain to end. There are several signs to watch for that may indicate someone is thinking about suicide. The more signs, the greater the risk.

- A previous suicide attempt.
- Current talk of suicide, or making a plan.
- Strong wish to die, preoccupation with death, giving away prized possessions.
- Signs of serious depression, such as moodiness, hopelessness, withdrawal.
- Increased alcohol and/or other drug use.
- Recent suicide attempted by a friend or family member.

There are other key “risk factors” to keep in mind that increase the likelihood of suicide attempts by young people. Again, the more signs observed, the greater the risk.

- Readily accessible firearms.
- Impulsiveness and taking unnecessary risks.
- Lack of connection to family and friends (no one to talk to).

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**PREVENTION STEPS:**

If you’re worried about a young person and suicide has crossed your mind as a concern, trust your judgment. Do something now! Here’s what you might say to a young person who is thinking about suicide:

1) **SHOW YOU CARE:** Let the person know you really care. Talk about your feelings and ask about his or hers. Listen carefully to what they have to say.

   “I’m concerned about you... about how you feel.”
   “Tell me about your pain.”
   “You mean a lot to me and I want to help.”
   “I care about you, about how you’re holding up.”
   “I don’t want you to kill yourself.”
   “I’m on your side... we’ll get through this.”

   “Do you have _______?” (Insert the lethal means they have mentioned.)
   “Do you really want to die? Or do you want the pain to go away?”

2) **ASK THE QUESTION:** Don’t hesitate to raise the subject. Talking with young people about suicide won’t put the idea in their heads. Chances are, if you’ve observed any of the warning signs, they are already thinking about it. Be direct in a caring, non-confrontational way. Get the conversation started.

   “Are you thinking about suicide?”
   “Are you thinking about harming yourself, ending your life?”
   “What thoughts or plans do you have?”
   “How long have you been thinking about suicide?”
   “Have you thought about how you would do it?”

   “Together I know we can figure something out to make you feel better.”
   “I know where we can get some help.”
   “Let’s talk to someone who can help... let’s call the crisis line, now.”
   “I can go with you to where we can get help.”
   “You’re not alone. Let me help you.”

If the young person has expressed an immediate plan, or has access to a gun or other potentially deadly means, do not leave him or her alone: GET HELP IMMEDIATELY!