

Researchers outline effective strategies to prevent teen depression and suicide

15 November 2012, by Dawn Fuller

(Medical Xpress)—Untreated depression is one of the leading causes of teen suicide, and signs of depression can also be a warning that a teen is contemplating suicide. In an article published this week in the quarterly journal, *The Prevention Researcher*, University of Cincinnati researchers are describing how positive connections can help offset these tragedies.

In the current issue, titled, "Teen Depression," UC researchers Keith King, a professor of health promotion, and Rebecca Vidourek, an assistant professor of health promotion, report that depression and [suicide](#) are "intricately intertwined among [teens](#)" in their article, "Teen Depression and Suicide: Effective Prevention and Intervention Strategies."

The authors reveal that teen suicidal warning signs encompass three specific categories:

Behavioral [warning signs](#) – Traits that teens may display when contemplating suicide include difficulty sleeping or excessive sleeping; changes in school performance; loss of interest in once pleasurable activities; giving away cherished possessions; expressing thoughts of death or suicide.

Verbal warning signs – Verbal statements include, "I want to die;" "I don't want to be a burden anymore;" "My family would be better off without me."

[Stressful life events](#) – A traumatic event for the teen, such as a breakup, [parental divorce](#) or loss of a loved one.

King and Vidourek also highlight national research that finds that gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgendered teenagers are at an elevated risk for depression and suicide, possibly because of lack of support systems and [social acceptance](#), as well as greater isolation among peers.

The UC researchers say building strong connections with family, schools and the community are key to protection against depression and teen suicide.

"Research clearly indicates family connectedness helps to prevent teen suicide, even if teens are socially isolated from peers," write the authors. They add that because teens spend such a large amount of time in school, the authors recommend that schools adopt prevention and intervention programs that include education, early detection and follow-up programs to address teen depression and suicide.

"As research indicates, the key component to effective depression/suicide prevention is the development of positive social and emotional connections among teens and supportive adults," the authors conclude in the article. "Thus, getting teens positively connected to positive people and positive situations should remain the goal."

More information: www.tponline.org/index.cfm

Provided by University of Cincinnati

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