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Depressed Teens Take More Risks

Deaf teenagers can be confused and get into trouble when they are depressed. Sometimes they reach out to the kids who are having problems themselves. Some teens begin to use alcohol or drugs to make themselves feel better.

When a child or teenager is depressed, they begin to take more risks. Sometimes they get into dangerous things like:

- Drinking
- Smoking
- Drug use
- Unsafe sex
- Stealing
- Becoming a part of a gang
- Other things

While all teenagers take risks (it is part of growing up), when a teen is depressed, they begin to take risks that are more dangerous. This is a call for help.

How you can help

Sit with your teen 1-to-1. Talk about different choices they can make.
Talk about how to tell what will happen before you make a choice.

Tell your child about your experiences when you were his age.
Let your child know that making mistakes is a part of growing up.
Encourage him to make healthier choices.

When taking risks includes suicide

Sometimes taking risks includes suicide. Any child or teenager can think about suicide, especially after puberty. It's the biggest problem in the late teenage years, and when your child becomes a young adult.

Sometimes teens will try to hurt themselves after watching a TV show.
Or after reading about a suicide in the news. This is called a copycat suicide.

The Risks of Committing Suicide

- Depressed teens have a much higher risk of suicide than older people.
- Girls attempt suicide more than boys, but boys are more likely to die from their actions.
- Your child may be at a higher risk of suicide if someone in your family has been depressed, or has committed suicide.
- 1 out of every 3 teens who commits suicide has used drugs or alcohol.
 - Alcohol and many kinds of drugs can make teens more depressed. They can also make teens more likely to try suicide.

Even if teenagers aren't trying to commit suicide, if they're taking risks, they could have an accident.

What can you do to protect your child against suicide?

Most teens don't want to commit suicide. They look for help. Here's what you can do:

Show your love and listen to your child

- Let your child know you love him. Love and support will help your child get through a hard time. Deaf teens can feel very lonely and different from the other kids.
- Encourage your whole family to support your teen. Love and support from his family can help a young person who is experiencing this kind of pain.
- Let your child know that he is a strong, capable person.

Help your child become part of your community

Deaf children feel better when they're part of a bigger group, or a community. It's important to make your teen feel less lonely. Try these ideas:

- Help your child join a group, like a sports team. This will help them to meet others. Plus, caring adults will be there to help him.
- Give your teenager a place to express his feelings.
- Keep showing your child that you love him. Try not to judge your child. This will help your teen talk more with you. It will also help him feel more hopeful about the future.

What you can do if your child talks about suicide or hurting himself

- Take his threats or warning signs seriously.
- Don't be afraid to talk about suicide. This shows your child that you are taking him seriously. And it shows that you are really worried about him.
- Find a professional who can help. If your child uses sign language, try to get a therapist who signs. Or you may need to get an interpreter.
- If your child is threatening suicide, don't wait. Call 911 or take him to a hospital right away. Make sure the people you talk to know that your child is deaf or hard of hearing.

Last updated: June 21, 2004

You can find this page online at:

<http://www.raisingdeafkids.org/special/depression/risks.jsp>