

# 13 REASONS WHY TALKING POINTS

- 13 Reasons Why is a fictional story based on a widely known novel and is meant to be a cautionary tale.
- You may have similar experiences and thoughts as some of the characters in 13RW. People often identify with characters they see on TV or in movies. However, it is important to remember that there are healthy ways to cope with the topics covered in 13RW and acting on suicidal thoughts is not one of them.
- If you have watched the show and feel like you need support or someone to talk to reach out. Talk with a friend, family member, a counselor, or therapist. There is always someone who will listen.
- Suicide is not a common response to life's challenges or adversity. The vast majority of people who experience bullying, the death of a friend, or any other adversity described in 13RW do not die by suicide. In fact, most reach out, talk to others and seek help or find other productive ways of coping. They go on to lead healthy, normal lives.
- Suicide is never a heroic or romantic act. Hannah's suicide (although fictional) is a cautionary tale, not meant to appear heroic and should be viewed as a tragedy.
- It is important to know that, in spite of the portrayal of a serious treatment failure in 13RW, there are many treatment options for life challenges, distress and mental illness. Treatment works.
- Suicide affects everyone and everyone can do something to help if they see or hear warning signs that someone is at risk of suicide.
- Talking openly and honestly about emotional distress and suicide is ok. It will not make someone more suicidal or put the idea of suicide in their mind. If you are concerned about someone, ask them about it.
- Knowing how to acknowledge and respond to someone who shares their thoughts of emotional distress or suicide with you is important. Don't judge them or their thoughts. Listen. Be caring and kind. Offer to stay with them. Offer to go with them to get help or to contact a crisis line.
- How the guidance counselor in 13RW responds to Hannah's thoughts of suicide is not appropriate and not typical of most counselors. School counselors are professionals and a trustworthy source for help. If your experience with a school counselor is unhelpful, seek other sources of support such as a crisis line.
- While not everyone will know what to say or have a helpful reaction, there are people who do, so keep trying to find someone who will help you. If someone tells you they are suicidal, take them seriously and get help.
- When you die you do not get to make a movie or talk to people any more. Leaving messages from beyond the grave is a dramatization produced in Hollywood and is not possible in real life.
- Memorializing someone who died by suicide is not a recommended practice. Decorating someone's locker who died by suicide and/or taking selfies in front of such a memorial is not appropriate and does not honor the life of the person who died by suicide.
- Hannah's tapes blame others for her suicide. Suicide is never the fault of survivors of suicide loss. There are resources and support groups for suicide loss survivors.

## If you're struggling with thoughts of suicide...

- Text "START" to 741741
- Call 1-800-273-TALK (8255)

Talking points by:



## Talking Points

## What to Say

### Give accurate information about suicide.

Suicide is a complicated behavior. Help students understand the complexities.

"Suicide is not caused by a single event such as fighting with parents, or a bad grade, or the breakup of a relationship."

"In most cases, suicide is caused by mental health disorders like depression or substance abuse problems. Mental health disorders affect the way people feel and prevent them from thinking clearly and rationally. Having a mental health disorder is nothing to be ashamed of."

"There are effective treatments to help people who have mental health disorders or substance abuse problems. Suicide is never an answer."

### Address blaming and scapegoating.

It is common to try to answer the question "why" by blaming others for the suicide.

"Blaming others for the suicide is wrong, and it's not fair. Doing that can hurt another person deeply."

### Do not talk about the method.

Talking about the method can create images that are upsetting, and it may increase the risk of imitative behavior by vulnerable youth.

"Let's focus on talking about the feelings we are left with after \_\_\_\_\_'s death and figure out the best way to manage them."

### Address anger.

Accept expressions of anger at the deceased. Help students know these feelings are normal.

"It is okay to feel angry. These feelings are normal, and it doesn't mean that you didn't care about \_\_\_\_\_. You can be angry at someone's behavior and still care deeply about that person."

### Address feelings of responsibility.

Help students understand that the only person responsible for the suicide is the deceased.

Reassure those who have exaggerated feelings of responsibility, such as thinking they should have done something to save the deceased or seen the signs.

"This death is not your fault. We cannot always see the signs because a suicidal person may hide them well."

"We cannot always predict someone's behavior."

### Encourage help-seeking.

Encourage students to seek help from a trusted adult if they or a friend are feeling depressed or suicidal.

"We are always here to help you through any problem, no matter what. Who are the people you would go to if you or a friend were feeling worried, depressed, or had thoughts of suicide?"