

# Counseling youth in times of crisis

[Life](#), [Adolescence](#)



Counseling Youth in Times of Crisis " Teenagers can be like elephants. If you've spent any time around them, this thought has probably crossed your mind, but hopefully wasn't said out loud. " We sometimes think teenagers aren't able to go far in life, or be anything but a problem. Living a carefree life not worried about anything or one around them. Some adults have no idea of all the struggles teenagers have to deal with. Just like adults they deal with stress, death, peer pressure, and lots more.

It is sometimes hard to see past the shield these youth have put up around them. They will test you until they trust you, but only once they trust you will the real test come. Youth struggle with crisis just like everyone else, and need a counselor or caregiver to help them through it. Eating Disorder " Eight million people in the United States suffer from an eating disorder, the most common of which is bulimia nervosa. Eighty six percent of sufferers report the onset of the disorder before the age of twenty; only half report being cured.

Six percent of serious cases die of the disorder. " This is very serious and should never be taken lightly. It is getting harder and harder to be a youth in our culture. They have to deal with constant scrutiny of their peers and coaches; often comparing themselves to the airbrushed, photoshopped models in today's magazines. They try to be perfect while knowing they never can be. Some feel extremely guilty about what they are doing but the stress and guilt only leads to them doing it more.

Here are some characteristics that are hints of Anorexia Nervosa: Looks not just lean, but abnormally thin Extreme attraction/avoidance language and

behavior regarding food Obsessive weighing Baggy clothes to hide shape Now here are some characteristics that are hints of Bulimia Nervosa: Abnormally frequent trips to the bathroom abnormal fixation on exercise, no matter what Cuts and calluses on knuckles and backs of hands Car or closet smells of vomit When dealing with this in teenagers the first thing you need to do is make sure they are going to get proper treatment and counseling for their disorder.

They need help and telling you was probably very hard, so don't make them get other help by themselves and also help them inform their parents.

Suicide If you are going to work with youth there is a chance that you will work with someone that has attempted suicide, contemplated suicide or had a friend commit suicide. " Suicide is the 3rd leading cause of death for 15- to 24-year-old Americans. An average of one person dies by suicide every 16. 2 minutes. " A very good friend of mine from high school committed suicide; although no one knows why he did it the last thing posted on his Facebook wall by a friend was the comment 'you're gay'.

His friend who posted this goes to the school counselor once a week now; he blames himself for his friend's death; thinking it was just an innocent joke. Some of the signs that may alert a parent, teacher, youth leader, pastor or friend to a possible suicide attempt include: Previous suicide attempts Threats of suicide Talking about death Preparation of death (cleaning out locker, giving away possessions, etc. ) Depression Sudden change in behavior (acting out, violent behavior etc. Moodiness Withdrawal Somatic complaints (sleeplessness, sleeping all the time) Fatigue Increased risk-taking Drafting a

suicide note We need to watch for these signs when dealing with youth and remember it is better to be safe in checking on a youth's life, than sorry if they take their life. If you ask a teenager about an issue like this, I think, they are more likely to be thankful than to think you upset. And if they are upset about you asking those questions about their feelings and life the chances are they are trying to hide something from you or their parents.

When someone comes to us about suicide it is vital that we listen to them and not throw the bible in their face. " Be nonjudgmental. Statements such as "you can't be thinking of suicide, it is against the teaching of your church" or " I had a similar problem when I was your age and I didn't consider suicide" are totally inappropriate during a crisis situation. " We as caregivers should never make the receiver feel unworthy of your time or lower their self-esteem. There are a few different reasons that youth attempt suicide: for attention, depression, loss, manipulation, and lots more.

In saying that my sister has attempted suicide three times; she has done it for attention and she has also threatened suicide for the purpose of manipulation. But we should always remember that while the person attempting suicide may be your first concern the family and friends are suffering just as much if not more. One of the times she was threatening to commit suicide she grabbed a kitchen knife and tried to run to her room. Her boyfriend saw her grab it and was attempting to take it from her when my then 9 year old brother walked into the house.

He could not see the knife and didn't know what was going on; he only knew that his sister looked like she was being beaten up by her boyfriend.

Naturally the first thing he did was try to get her boyfriend off of her. This led to the boyfriend yelling at my brother, " Go away! She is trying to kill herself. " When my brother heard this he ran to his room in tears. It was his snapping point after losing two of his grandparents and his Dad moving away. Now he is taking three medications and sees a counselor once a week. He has been diagnosed with depression, bipolar, and schizophrenic tendencies.

He has never tried to attempt suicide but we are constantly watching for signs and praying for his health. I believe that he will never attempt suicide because we saw the signs as soon as they started to appear. But I believe that way too many times the siblings of the suicide attempter are overlooked and not given the help that they may need. Always remember that suicide affects everyone around that person. Death I have never met someone who hasn't dealt with death in some way; whether that is a friend, a parent, a grandparent, a significant other, a sibling, or they themselves are dying.

The five stages of grief are: Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression, and Acceptance. These steps may come in order, they may jump around, or experience more than one at a time. There is no correct way to grieve it is a process that is different for everyone involved. Some youth may begin to act out when dealing with grief because; they don't know what else to do. For some students this may be their first experience with death. When dealing with death we must explain to the youth who is dealing with it that grief is a process. " Listen.

When a teenager is grieving, this isn't the time to view the conversation as a teachable moment. You don't need to correct his perceptions or theology,

nor do you need to give advice. You need to quietly and attentively listen to him. " When a teenager losses a parent or parents, make sure they don't just jump into their new adult responsibilities before they are ready. Help them to realize the changes that have to be made in their daily life with the death of this person. Let them see what has to be changed and what kind of help they need to do that.

Always make sure to be available to youth after a death. Be the one to text or call them they won't always take the initiative to ask for help. Some common mistakes youth workers make when helping a teenager deal with grief are: Being overbearing, looking for teachable moments, hiding their own grief, etc. We want to help but we need to still be aware that the youth has a whole lot to deal with and needs some space to process everything. One of the worse things you can do is try to teach a grieving youth theology; they have enough to worry about and don't need to have your opinions shoved at them too.