



## Q & A

**Q: What does the Orthodox Church say about committing suicide?**

A: The Orthodox Church believes that we are called as Christians to preserve life, and that we do not have the right to take away anyone's life, including our own. Suicide is very serious in the eyes of the Church because it doesn't give a person the opportunity for repentance and confession. As suicide and its consequences is such a complex issue, the church addresses it pastorally on a case by case basis.

**Q: What should I do if a friend seems suicidal?**

A: Show your friend that you care by listening—sometimes this is enough to lighten the load just enough for them to carry on. Allow them to experience God's love through you by showing sympathy, staying calm, and remaining non-judgemental. Don't try to carry the burden by yourself. Urge them to get help as soon as possible and get other friends, parents, and adults involved. If your friend is in immediate danger, get help right away and call 911. Remember, if all of your attempts fail, don't blame yourself. If you were close to the person, it might be helpful to reach out to a suicide survivor support group.

• *Grieving a Suicide: A Loved One's Search for Comfort, Answers and Hope* by Albert Y. Hsu, InterVarsity Press, 2002.

### Books:

- American Foundation for Suicide Prevention: <http://www.afsp.org/>
- Adolescent Suicide Statistics and Prevention: <http://www.teensuicide.us/>

### Online Resources:

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If your feelings become so overwhelming that you can't see any solution besides harming yourself or others, you need to get help right away. Asking for help can be really tough, but talking to someone who can help you deal with your feelings is the best solution. Call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255) or visit [www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org).

## GET THE FACTS

**There's ALWAYS another solution.** Many teens who have attempted suicide say that they didn't really want to die, but they couldn't see any other way out. Remember that no matter how horrible you feel, these emotions will pass.

**Being depressed or having suicidal thoughts doesn't make you a bad person!** Depression can make you think and feel things that are out of character. Even though depression is completely treatable, it's estimated that only 20% of teenagers ever receive help. It's important to tell someone how you are feeling!

**Wait 24 hours before taking action.** This can give you time to think things through and distance yourself from those strong emotions.

**Make sure you are never alone.** If you are afraid you can't control yourself, stay in public places or hang out with family and friends. Even if you can't verbalize your feelings, anything to keep from being alone and in danger will help.

# NAVIGATING THROUGH YOUR TEEN YEARS: SUICIDE

## KNOW THE SIGNS

Sometimes it is hard to know what your friends are going through, especially if they are hurting or suffering from depression. Remember that suicide is a permanent solution to a temporary problem, so it is important to recognize warning signs:

- Thinking, talking or wishing about suicide.
- Taking risks like abusing drugs and alcohol.
- Feeling hopeless, like there is nothing to live for.
- Getting upset about insignificant things.
- Giving or throwing away personal belongings.
- Withdrawing from family, friends, or hobbies.
- Feeling anxious or agitated all of the time and having dramatic mood swings.

## THE CHURCH SPEAKS

**God has a plan.**

God created you in His image and has a unique purpose for your life. "For I know the plans I have for you, says the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope" (Jer. 29:11). While things may not seem to work out the way *you* want them to, remember that God's plan may not be running on your time table!

**Christ wants us to have life.**

Life isn't always easy. At some point, every one of us faces something (whether it's depression, grief, stress, etc.) that may challenge our will to live. We should look at Christ's message to give us strength: "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly" (John 10:10). In other words, Christ *wants* us to have life. He came to this world to free us from death itself!

**You are His Holy Temple.**

We have no right to take away life, whether it's our own or someone else's. In fact, we have been created for a very special purpose. We find out in 1 Corinthians 3:16 that our lives and bodies don't belong to us, but rather to God: "Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?" Since we have been given this great responsibility, it's important that we take care and respect ourselves and others.

**Return like the Prodigal Son.**

God is always patiently waiting for us to return to him with open arms like the father who received the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32). Suicide takes away our opportunity to repent, since we can't "undo it" or ask for forgiveness later. No matter how desperate or hopeless we feel, God is ready to accept, forgive, and embrace us.

**Christ is our hope.**

God comforts us not only through the Sacraments of the Church, but also our community, friends, and families. Christ emphasizes that we are never alone: "I will not leave you desolate; I will come to you" (John 14:18). Just remember that Christ is always by your side, even if you are feeling hopeless or isolated.