



# WARE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

239 West Street, P.O. Box 240  
Ware, MA 01082-0240

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Dear Ware Families,

An important aspect of the work of the Ware learning community is supporting the social and emotional health of our students. At times it may be necessary to reach out to families to make them aware of concerns that are brought to our attention. With this in mind, we are reaching out to make you aware of a Netflix series titled *13 Reasons Why* that has suicide prevention experts concerns about the sensationalized treatment of youth suicide.

The focus of the series is about thirteen tapes left behind that describes the reasons why a high school student commits suicide. The issues this series touch upon are bullying, cyberbullying, depression, abuse, sexual assault, rape, and suicide. All extremely difficult topics to understand as we, as adults, try to guide our children/students through the processing of these tough discussions.

## Strategies for parents/caregivers to help address suicide with their kids.

- Timing is everything! Pick a time when you have the best chance of getting your child's attention. Sometimes a car ride, for example, assures you of a captive, attentive audience. Or a suicide that has received media attention can provide the perfect opportunity to bring up the topic.
- Think about what you want to say ahead of time and rehearse a script if necessary. It always helps to have a reference point
- Be honest. If this is a hard subject for you to talk about, admit it! By acknowledging your discomfort, you give your child permission to acknowledge his/her discomfort, too.
- Ask for your child's response. Be direct! ("What do you think about suicide?"; "Is it something that any of your friends talk about?"; "The statistics make it sound pretty common. Have you ever thought about it? What about your friends?")
- Listen to what your child has to say. You've asked the questions, so simply consider your child's answers. If you hear something that worries you, be honest about that, too.
- Don't overreact or under react. Overreaction will close off any future communication on the subject. Under reacting, especially in relation to suicide, is often just a way to make ourselves feel better. ANY thoughts or talk of suicide ("I felt that way a while ago but don't any more") should ALWAYS be revisited. Remember that suicide is an attempt to solve a problem that seems impossible to solve in any other way. Ask about the problem that created the suicidal thoughts. This can make it easier to bring up again in the future.



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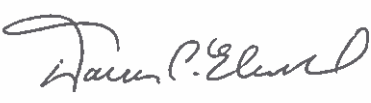

### Here are some possible warning signs that should get our attention:

- STATEMENTS that convey a sense of hopelessness, worthlessness, or preoccupation with death ("Life doesn't seem worth it sometimes"; "I wish I were dead"; "Heaven's got to be better than this").
- BEHAVIORS that are different from the way your child acted in the past, especially things like talking about death or suicide, taking dangerous risks, withdrawing from activities or sports, or using alcohol or drugs.
- FEELINGS that, again, seem different from the past like irritability, anxiety, sadness, hopelessness, loss of interest.
- SITUATIONS that can serve as 'trigger points' for suicidal behaviors. These include things like loss or death, getting in trouble at home, in school, or with the law, or impending changes for which your child feels scared or unprepared.

If you notice any of these things in kids who have always been impulsive, made previous suicide attempts or threats, or seem vulnerable in any way, you really should get consultation from a mental health professional.

Any questions or guidance on this subject matter can be directed to any of our Adjustment Counselors or Guidance Counselors in each of our school buildings.

Please look for other sources of information by checking the links listed at the bottom of this page.

Sincerely,  
    
Dr. Marlene A. DiLeo      Mr. Darren Elwell      Ms. Antonia Cardaropoli  
Superintendent      Principal, WJSHS      Adjustment Counselor

### National Association of School Psychologists

<https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources/school-safety-and-crisis/preventing-youth-suicide/13-reasons-why-netflix-series-considerations-for-educators>

### Jed Foundation

<https://www.jedfoundation.org/13-reasons-jed-point-view/>

### Suicide Awareness Voices of Education (talking points)

<https://www.save.org/13-reasons-why/>

### Preventing Teen Suicide: Parents' Guide for Talking to Kids

<https://www.teachervision.com/counseling-students/preventing-teen-suicide-parents-guide-talking-kids>