

D meTalking with Preteens (Ages 11–14) About Suicide Loss

A Guide for Parents & Caregivers

Preteens are forming deeper questions about fairness, God, and death. Suicide loss can shake trust and stir anger, guilt, or fear. They need honesty without graphic detail — and adults who will not rush them past the pain.

Key Truths to Hold

Suicide is not simple. Many factors can be involved. It is not one person's full "fault."

Feelings can be mixed. Love, anger, and confusion can exist together.

God can handle hard questions (Job, the Psalms). Faith does not require fake smiles.

How to Talk (Ages 11–14)

Tell the truth clearly. "They died by suicide" is better than vague stories that create rumors.

Skip method details. How is not needed. Focus on care, safety, and support.

Invite questions. Including questions about God, fairness, and "why."

Watch social media and peer talk. Help them process rumors with a trusted adult.

Offer outlets. Writing, music, sports, youth group, art, or a counselor.

Check school. Let a counselor or trusted teacher know if support is needed.

What to Watch For

Withdrawal, sleep or grade changes, anger that scares them, risky behavior, or talk of hopelessness. Preteens sometimes hide pain to "not burden" adults. Stay available without forcing long talks.

If They Are Hurting Themselves or Hopeless

Take it seriously. Ask directly: "Are you thinking about suicide?" Stay with them and get help — call or text 988. Do not leave them alone in crisis.

If You Are in Crisis

Call or text 988 (Suicide & Crisis Lifeline). Veterans and service members: call 988, then press 1, or text 838255. Text HOME to 741741. In an emergency, call 911. Help is free, confidential, and available 24/7.

Steady presence beats perfect speeches. Walk with them through the questions — and point them toward help and hope.