



# SOS: Signs of Suicide®

## Middle School Student Newsletter



### Get Into the ACT®!

*Some Secrets Should Be Shared...*

Middle school can be both scary and exciting. With so many things changing around you, it might be hard to know why you are feeling different, who you want to be, and if the choices you make are really the best decisions.

Sometimes, the physical and emotional changes you are facing may overwhelm you. So, it's not surprising if you, or one of your friends, feels "down" from time to time. But what happens when your friend feels "down" all the time? Or when a friend has "the blues" for weeks? Should you keep it a secret? If you know someone like this, it's time to ACT - Acknowledge, Care and Tell. Your friend might be suffering from depression, and as a friend, you can help!



### ACT Against Self-Injury

Depression and anxiety may cause someone you know to injure their body. They hurt themselves to relieve emotional pain, or bad feelings. If you have a friend participating in this risky behavior, it is important to ACT - Acknowledge, Care and Tell a trusted adult!

### Know the Facts!

- ▶ Most people who self-injure do not want to die, it is simply a way to express feelings or relieve tension
- ▶ Signs of self-injury include hiding scars and cuts and wearing clothing to cover wounds
- ▶ If you have a friend who is self-injuring, ACT to get them help!

## Stop Bullying Now!

### What Can Students and Youth Do to Lend a Hand?

Bullying occurs when someone hurts or frightens another person on purpose. The person being bullied has a hard time defending themselves. Usually, bullying happens over and over. Sometimes bullying is easy to notice, such as with hitting or name-calling, and other times it's hard to see, such as leaving a person out or saying mean things behind someone's back. Both boys and girls bully, and both boys and girls get bullied. Bullying is not fair, and it hurts.

### What Do YOU Do When You See Someone Being Bullied at School?

Ask yourself, "Is it my job to help?" Think about how YOU might feel if the bullying was happening to you. Take action! You and other kids can lend a hand, even when you aren't close friends with the kids who are bullied. Your school will be a better place if you help stop bullying, and making your school a better place is EVERYONE'S job!

### What Can I Do?

Lots of things! Think about what may work for you:

- Don't just stand there...SAY SOMETHING!
- Kids who bully may think they're being funny or "cool." If you feel safe, tell the person to STOP the bullying behavior. Say you don't like it and that it isn't funny.
- DON'T BULLY BACK! It won't help if you use mean names or actions, and it could make things worse.

Adapted from: Olweus, D. (1993). *Bullying At School: What We Know and What We Can Do*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers, Inc. These and other materials are available online at: [www.StopBullyingNow.hrsa.gov](http://www.StopBullyingNow.hrsa.gov)

## Alcohol: Know the Facts

One warning sign of depression or suicide is when someone you know starts drinking alcohol. They may think that alcohol will help them feel better, or that it will solve their problems. But alcohol actually makes someone who is depressed feel worse, because it acts as a "downer," and takes away their energy.

- 84.1 % of people ages 12 to 17 DO NOT drink alcohol
- Alcohol takes away good judgment, safe behavior, and your ability to learn
- If you have a friend who is drinking, ACT and get them help!

For more facts and info. Go to: [www.toosmarttostart.samhsa.gov/tweens/facts/default.aspx](http://www.toosmarttostart.samhsa.gov/tweens/facts/default.aspx)



## Depression... Know the Warning Signs

Depression is more than the blues or the blahs; it's more than the normal, everyday ups and downs. It can be serious, and has been linked to poor grades, alcohol and drug abuse, running away, feelings of worthlessness and hopelessness, and even suicide. BUT, the good news is that depression is treatable! The first important step in prevention is to know the warning signs.



Check the following list to see if you, or a friend, has said or felt any of these things, especially if the feelings or actions have lasted for more than two weeks:

### Says things like:

- "I'm dumb"
- "Nobody likes me"
- "I'm the one they're gonna blame"
- "I can't do anything right"
- "I wish I were dead"

### Seems to be:

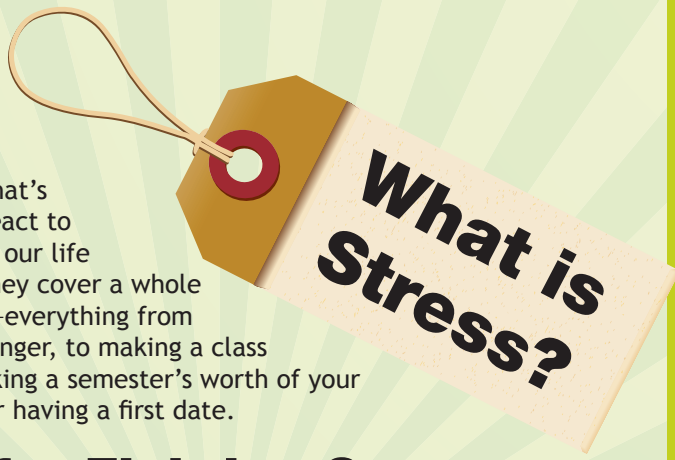
- Unable to remember things or concentrate
- Angry, yelling, and screaming at everyone
- No longer interested in doing things they used to enjoy
- Bored, sad, and mad - all the time and about every little thing

### Complains about:

- Lack of energy
- Trouble sleeping or waking up
- Losing or gaining weight
- Body aches in joints and muscles, stomach aches, back aches, and headaches

### Acts different:

- Blows off friends, skips practice
- Stays in bed all day
- Cuts classes or skips school
- Drinks or takes drugs



Stress is a feeling that's created when we react to particular events in our life called stressors. They cover a whole range of situations—everything from outright physical danger, to making a class presentation, to taking a semester's worth of your toughest subject, or having a first date.

## 5 Steps for Fighting Stress:

- 1. Get Support.** When you need help, reach out to the people who care about you. Talk to a trusted adult, such as a parent, relative, school counselor, or coach. And, don't forget about the help of your friends!
- 2. Don't freak out!** It's easy to let your feelings go wild when you're upset. Notice your feelings, and name them – for example, "I am so angry!" And say or think about why you feel that way.
- 3. Don't take it out on yourself.** Remember that there are always people to help you. Don't be so hard on yourself.
- 4. Try to solve the problem.** After you're calm and you have support from adults and friends, it's time to get down to business. You need to figure out what the solution to the problem is.
- 5. Be positive.** Most stress is temporary. It may not seem like this when you're in the middle of stressful situation, but stress does go away, often when you figure out the problem and start working on solving it.

These five steps aren't magic – and you might have to do some steps more than once, but they DO work. Ah... it feels so good when the stress is gone!

## KEY DECISION-MAKING SKILLS

**FORECASTING:** Thinking through a future situation in terms of risks and benefits, and then making the best possible decision.

**AVOIDANCE:** Staying away from situations that you know may be risky. You determine that the risks outweigh the benefits and decide to do something else instead.

**REFUSAL:** Choosing not to engage in risky behavior—by walking away, rolling your eyes, stating your opinion, or slowly but firmly shaking your head and saying "No way." You stick to your own ideas and beliefs.

**EXIT:** Removing yourself from a risky or dangerous situation. You have the power to leave a situation at any time.

Although forecasting is usually the first step in positive decision making, avoidance, refusal, and exit can be used together or individually, in any order, and in any circumstances.

**REMEMBER:** You can exit a risky situation at any time.



## Dear SOS,

I have been feeling very sad lately and want to ask for help, but someone told me I just have to pull myself together and move on. Is this true?

**Dear Ian,**

*-Ian*

Sadness and depression are NOT weaknesses. Depression is an illness that affects the whole body and can be treated with therapy and/or medication. You need to tell a trusted adult how you feel, so you can get help and start feeling better.

## Dear SOS,

My friend is talking about killing himself. I am scared. What do I need to do?

**Dear Dan,**

*-Dan*

If someone you know is showing signs of depression, suicide, or any other problem, tell them in a caring way that you recognize that they are having a problem. You can show you care by actively listening, putting aside anything else you are doing, making eye contact, sitting down, and asking questions.

Tell him or her that it's important that they speak with an adult, like a parent, teacher, counselor, school nurse or someone else you both trust so that the person can get the help they need. You can figure out together who that person may be. Offer to go with your friend to tell the adult.

## Remember to ACT:

**Acknowledge:** Listen to your friend

**Care:** Let your friend know you care

**Tell:** Tell a trusted adult that you are worried about your friend

## Help! I'm Being Bullied on Facebook!

What do you do if you are being bullied on social networks like Facebook or MySpace?

Sadly, some people use social networks like these, as well as Twitter and YouTube, to bully others. If you feel like you're being bullied on your personal profile, here are some things you can do:

- Block or delete bullies from your friend list.
- Reset your online privacy settings- most social networks let you control who can see different parts of your profile.
- You may see a profile that has been set up by someone pretending to be you. If you see a fake profile, report it to the social network's customer services department as soon as possible, and ask them to delete it.
- If someone is bullying you on your own social profile page, you should save any bullying emails or images you have been sent, take a screenshot of any comments that are threatening, make a note of the time and date that messages were sent, try changing your online user ID, and **do not** reply to any bullying messages or get into any online arguments.
- Tell a trusted adult, such as a parent, relative, school counselor, or coach.

**Don't Forget:** Anything you post online can be seen by anyone. Use your common sense and think before you publish anything on your profile.



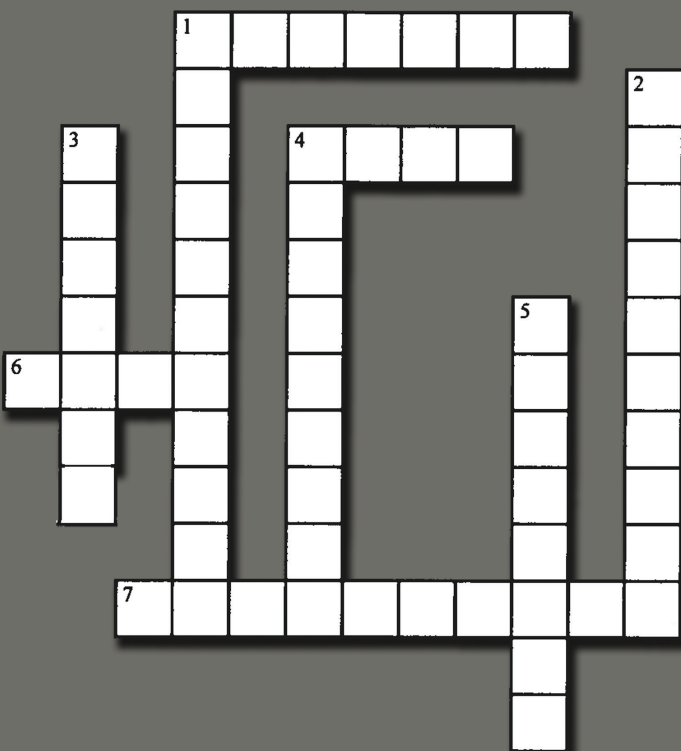
## The Trevor Project Is Here for You!

Have you ever heard of The Trevor Project? The Trevor Project operates The Trevor Helpline, a free and confidential phone service for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) youth, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

If you or someone you know needs to talk, whether it's about something that happened at school or home, a problem with a friend, or if you're thinking about hurting yourself, The Trevor Project is just one phone call away at:

### 866-4-U-TREVOR

Check out [TrevorSpace.org](http://TrevorSpace.org) online, the only social networking site for LGBTQ youth, friends, and allies! On TrevorSpace, you can create a personal profile and connect with other young people throughout the country, as well as find helpful resources in your community. For information about other programs of The Trevor Project, including its newly-formed Youth Advisory Council that submits recommendations to the organization on behalf of LGBTQ youth across the country, visit: [TheTrevorHelpline.org](http://TheTrevorHelpline.org).



## SOS CROSSWORD

### Across

1. A drug that takes away good judgement and acts as a downer
4. What the 'C' stands for in ACT
6. What the 'T' stands for in ACT
7. Negative thoughts or feelings of hopelessness

### Down

1. What the 'A' stands for in ACT
2. What some doctors may prescribe to someone who is depressed
3. Some of these should be shared
4. Someone you can speak to if you are depressed or sad
5. Teasing or making fun of another person

Across 1. Alcohol 4. Care 6. Tell 7. Depression  
Down 1. Acknowledge 2. Medication 3. Secrets 4. Counselor 5. Bullying