

The Pros and Cons of “13 Reasons Why”



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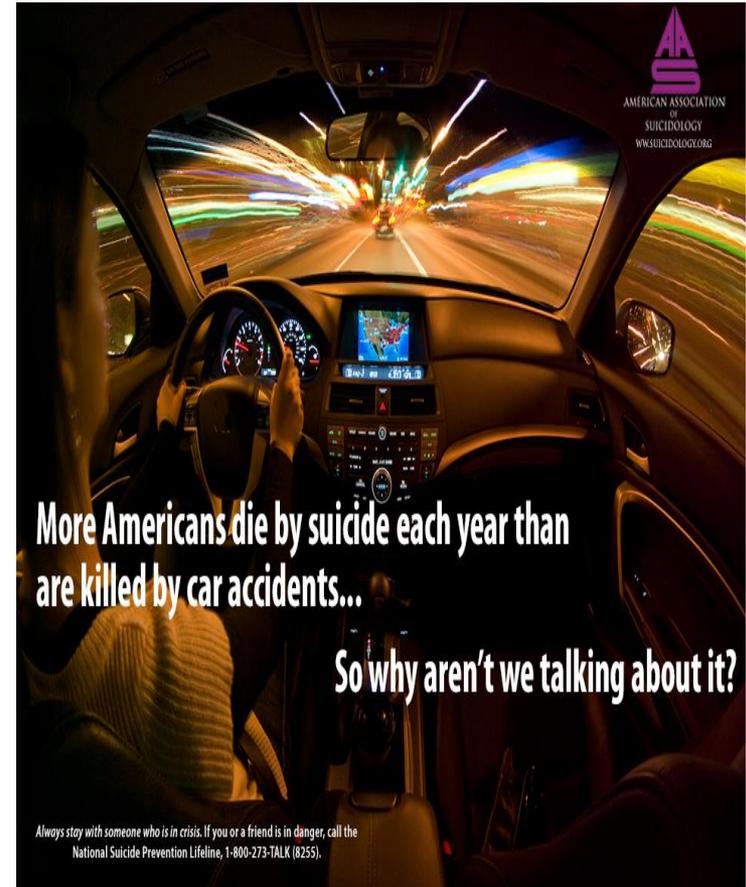
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What We Will Cover

- What is “13 Reasons Why”?
- What are the Cons?
- What are the Pros?
- How can you talk to your children about this?
- How can you talk to your peers about suicide?



Who Has Seen The Show?

- What are the positive and negative aspects of the show?
- Would you let your own children watch?
 - Why or why not?
- If they have already watched, what were their reactions?
 - Did it negatively affect anyone?
 - Did it positive affect anyone?

Netflix's “13 Reasons Why”

- Based on a young adult novel, the series revolves around a 17-year-old Hannah Baker.
- Hannah is bullied (online and in person), “slut shammed”, and raped by one her classmates. She also witnesses one of her best friends being raped.
- Hannah takes her own life and leaves behind audio recordings intended for 13 different people.
- Hannah places the responsibility for her suicide on all of these individuals.



Cons of “13 Reasons Why”

- **Suicide is glamorized.** Hannah’s tapes trick young viewers into believing suicide will help them “get even” or “get revenge.”
- **Suicide is romanticized.** Hannah’s love interest, Clay, hopelessly pines for her throughout the entire season. He is also traumatized by the tapes.
- **Suicide is sensationalized.** Hannah’s suicide garners the attention of entire community for months on end.



Cons Continued..

- **Discourages young individuals from seeking mental health treatment.** Hannah goes to high-school counselor about rape and depression and is completely dismissed. Told to forget that the rape occurred.
- **The show doesn't spend time portraying healthy coping mechanisms.**
- **Instead of offering hope, the show promotes suicide as the only logical way out.**
- **Simplifies Suicide.** Suicide is not commonly a direct result of sexual assault or bullying. There are many complex reasons someone takes their own life.

Cons Continued...

- **Promotes Revenge Fantasies.** Hannah gets revenge on her rapist and bullies. This promotes unrealistic revenge fantasies.
- **Triggering** for anyone with suicidal ideation, mental illness, or sexual assault survivors. There are extremely graphic, detailed scenes.
- **Mental Illness is not addressed.** There is no talk about depression, anxiety or other common mental health diagnoses in young people.

Main Issues:

- NO ONE is to blame for someone else's suicide.
- Hannah's failed attempt at talking with the school counselor is deterring individuals from talking to mental health professionals.
 - Talking to a counselor or therapist about suicidal ideation (and mental health issues) does help. Talking to a trusted adult is VITAL for youth with suicidal ideation.
- Graphic depictions of suicide attempts and rape are triggering audiences.

Pro's of "13 Reasons Why"

- The show is facilitating conversations about suicide that otherwise never would have occurred!
- Discusses bullying – online and in person.
- Talks about treating one another with kindness, rather than cruelty.

Pro's Continued...

- The more conversation there is about suicide and mental health issues, the less stigma there is about these topics.



Reactions to the Series

- Many felt that the series was irresponsible in how they handled the topic of suicide.
 - Suicide can be contagious, especially for teenage populations. Many copycats.
- The counseling offered on the show ignored suicidal thoughts and rape confession.
 - This will deter suffering individuals from reaching out for help.
- MCPS has distributed talking points created by the National Association of School Psychologists.

Should Parents Watch This?

- An ideal situation would involve a parent watching this series before their child does.
- As a parent you know your child best. You know whether or not your child can handle the content.
- If you cannot watch it before your child, watching it with them is another option.
- If your child has already watched it, watch the series yourself. Start a discussion about the show and what Hannah could have done differently. Who could she have reached out to?



Recommendations

- Vulnerable youth should not watch this series.
- Who is considered to be ‘vulnerable youth’?
 - Youth with suicidal ideation
 - Youth with past suicide attempts
 - Youth who have been sexually abused
 - Youth who are suicide survivors (have lost someone close to them to suicide)
 - Youth with mental health issues
 - Youth who have been bullied

Suicide Statistics

U.S.A. SUICIDE: 2015 OFFICIAL FINAL DATA

44,193 total deaths attributed to suicide *

5,491 15-24 years old

Suicide peaks in the Spring!

One person dies by suicide every 11.9 minutes

One young person dies every hour and 29 minutes.

Leading cause of death for ages 15-24

#1 Accidents

#2 Suicide

#3 Homicide

Data

According to the YRBS 2015

- 8.6% of students attempted suicide
- 14.6% made plans for suicide
- 17.7% had serious thoughts of suicide

In 2015 in Montgomery County there were more than 260 suicide attempt related ER visits for kids aged 6-18

* more than 30% of these were elementary / middle school aged

Suicide in young kids

- 100% of 3rd graders in a study had seen a suicide on TV
- Study looking at suicide deaths in children *14 and under* found that
 - Most were male
 - Most died at home
 - ADD/ADHD most common diagnosis of these children and other disruptive disorders (not mood disorders)

Suicide Methods

- 1. Firearms : 49.9%
 - A study of handgun sales in CA showed that in the first year after purchase, suicide was the leading cause of death
- 2. Suffocation/Hanging: 26.7% (and rising)*
 - Nearly 80% of kids under 14 chose this method
- 3. Poisoning: 15.9%



Suicidal State of Mind

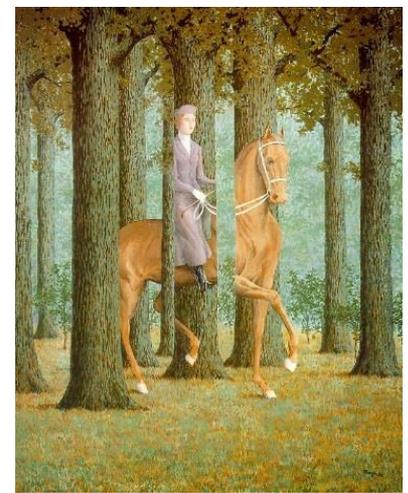
- Intense emotional pain
- A belief that one cannot tolerate or endure emotional pain
- A feeling of being isolated, that no one understands or cares very much
- Perceived burden on others
- A feeling that there is no way to escape the emotional pain except by dying

Warning Signs

- Talking about wanting to die or to kill themselves.
- Looking for a way to kill themselves, such as searching online or buying a gun
- Talking about feeling hopeless or having no reason to live.
- Talking about feeling trapped or in unbearable pain.
- Talking about being a burden to others.
- Increasing the use of alcohol or drugs.
- Acting anxious or agitated; behaving recklessly.
- Sleeping too little or too much.
- Withdrawing or isolating themselves.
- Showing rage or talking about seeking revenge.
- Displaying extreme mood swings.

Risk Factors

- Mental disorders, particularly mood disorders, schizophrenia, anxiety disorders and certain personality disorders
 - Alcohol and other substance use disorders
 - Impulsive and/or aggressive tendencies
 - Major physical illnesses
 - Family history of suicide
 - Loss of relationship
 - Local clusters of suicide
 - Lack of social support and sense of isolation
 - Stigma associated with asking for help
 - Lack of health care, especially mental health and substance abuse treatment
 - Cultural and religious beliefs, such as the belief that suicide is a noble resolution of a personal dilemma
 - Exposure to others who have died by suicide (in real life or via the media and Internet)
- * Hopelessness
 - * History of trauma or abuse
 - * Previous suicide attempt
 - * Job or financial loss
 - * Easy access to lethal means



Parents with mental health issues

- People whose parents had a history of mental health issues/suicide attempts were significantly more likely to attempt suicide.
- When both parents had mental health issues there was twice the attempt risk

Factors that increase risk in Youth

Brain Functions Differently!

- Impulsivity
- Lack of awareness of risk involved
- Lack of awareness of time
- Use of alcohol or other drugs
- Influence of peer groups



Protective Factors

- Healthy practices.
- High self-esteem.
- Good problem solving skills.
- Feeling of control in their own life .
- Spirituality.
- Avoiding alcohol, tobacco and other drugs
- Consistent home/family routine.
- Parental/familial support.
- Monitoring of youth's activities.
- Regular school attendance and academic performance.
- Having a good social support system.
- Economic security.
- Availability of constructive recreation.
- Community bonding.
- Feeling close to at least one adult.

How can you make a difference?

- When approaching an acting out teen/pre-teen assume they are overwhelmed emotionally
 - “You seem really upset. What is going on?”
 - They feel out of control so provide choices whenever possible.
 - “Do you want to sit down and talk?” “Do you want to go some place quieter to talk?”
 - Flash pass? Talk to a different staff member?
 - Touching/chasing may be triggering.

Talking to teens/ kids

- Using “I” statements, state nonjudgmentally what you have noticed.
- Ask questions, but don’t push.
- Realize it may be a relief for the young person to talk about how s/he feels.
- Remember it’s about **the young person** not **you**.
 - His/her experiences are not the same as yours.
 - His/her perspective is not the same as yours or necessarily of other youth in the family or peer group.
 - His/her culture may not be the same as yours.
 - S/he needs our empathy.
 - S/he may use language that makes you uncomfortable.

If you suspect Suicidality: Questions to Ask

Ask the person directly whether he or she is suicidal:

- “Are you having thoughts of suicide?”
- “Are you thinking about killing yourself?”

Ask the person whether he or she has a plan:

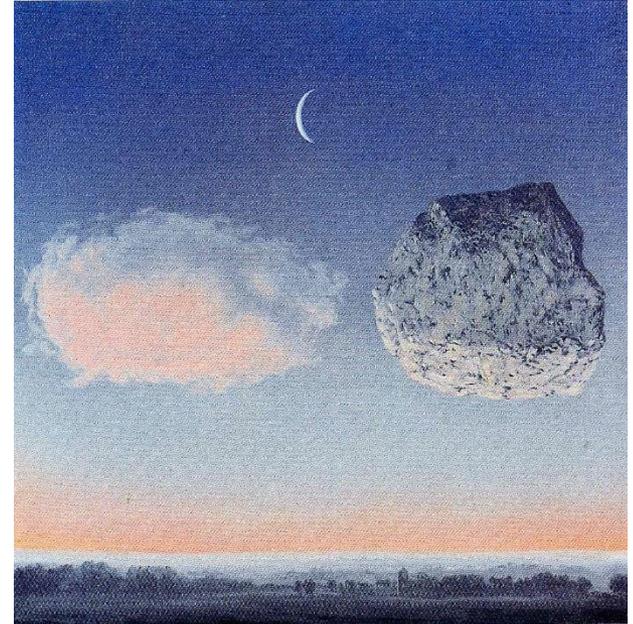
- “Have you decided how you are going to kill yourself?”
- “Have you decided when you would do it?”
- “Have you collected the things you need to carry out your plan?”

How to talk to the suicidal student

- Discuss your observations with the person
- Ask the question without dread
- Do not express a negative judgment
- Appear confident, as this can be reassuring

Check For Two Other Risks

- Has the person been using alcohol or other drugs?
- Has he or she made a suicide attempt in the past?



Season Two

- 13 Reasons has been renewed for a second season
- What can parents do to lessen the negative reactions/triggering provoked by this series?
 - Watch series before their children
 - Watch with their children
 - Do not let vulnerable children watch
 - **Discuss the series with your children. Talk about suicidal thoughts/healthy coping mechanisms.**

Who Can You Talk To?

- Trusted Adult (parent, family member, coach, guidance counselor, etc..)
- Hotline
- Text Line
- Support Groups
- Therapists and Counselors

Resources: FREE & CONFIDENTIAL

- Available:24/7 through the Montgomery County Hotline, a member of National Suicide Lifeline Network: 301.738.2255
- 24/7 through online chat at [CrisisChat.org](https://www.crisischat.org)
- Via text Monday through Thursday 4:00pm-9:00pm at 301.738.2255
- NAMI: National Alliance on Mental Illness
 - <https://www.nami.org/>
- Office of Student and Family Support and Engagement

Questions???

