

## **Suicide Prevention: A Workshop with Jude Platzer**

Reviewed by Joannell Clarke, BCSCA Past President

Jude Platzer is a mother whose son died of suicide at the age of fifteen. She does presentations in schools to students to hopefully prevent future suicides.

There are many myths and taboos surrounding suicide that need to be addressed in order to take suicidal ideation and completion seriously. Some of these include:

- You will “go to Hell” if you commit suicide
- Those who commit suicide will not be allowed to be buried on consecrated ground
- Suicide comes out of the blue without any warning.
- People who talk about suicide or commit suicide are looking for attention.

If a person talks about suicide, we need to pay attention.

Judy said that, “A person doesn’t really want to die, they just want to get rid of their pain.” Depression is a disease and needs to be treated like any other disease such as diabetes or cancer. There is no quick fix for depression.

Today’s youth are faced with so many issues that may lead to depression, thus triggering suicidal ideation. These issues include:

- Puberty
- Peer pressure
- Academic pressure
- Inability to cope with stress
- Blended families
- Divorce
- Sexual identity
- Illness in the family
- Poverty/financial pressures
- Physical and mental health
- Parental pressure
- Problems with the law or at school (bullying)
- Relationship breakups
- STD’s/pregnancy
- Loss of security when transitioning to Middle School or High School
- Stress due to new situations

Driving accidents are the number one cause of death for 15 to 24 year olds. The number two cause of death is suicide. The suicide rate is increasing in children under the age of 10 and there are more attempted suicides than completed ones. Girls tend to use less

lethal methods to attempt suicide such as taking an overdose of pills while boys use more lethal means such as hanging, the use of guns, jumping from a bridge or being on railway tracks. 60-80% of youth suicides sought help the month before the suicide. Two thirds of all high school students have considered suicide before graduation. Ten percent of high school students attempt suicide before graduating.

There is an increased risk of a completed suicide when there has been a previous attempt. Completed suicides are well planned and 80% of people who attempt suicide send out some warning sign ahead of time. 11 Canadians die every day by their own hand and more are seeing help online than through calls to Crisis Lines. Copycat suicides are only committed by someone who is already in trouble. To add to the concern is the fact that there seems to be information online about how to commit suicide, and it has become a spectator event with real-time suicides broadcast on the internet in the news recently.

#### **Warning Signs:**

Things to watch for that could indicate a person is contemplating suicide:

- Personality changes
- Giving away possessions
- Euphoric once the decision has been made
- Previous attempt
- Increased or initial use of alcohol and drugs
- Change in eating habits
- Significant weight change
- Change in appearance
- Unwillingness to communicate
- Isolation-dropping out of activities
- Depression
- Insomnia/oversleeping
- Taking chances
- Continual boredom
- Unusual sadness, loneliness or talk about wanting to die or not be here
- Neglect of school/work
- Chronic pain, panic or anxiety
- Joking about death

#### **What to do:**

Make contact; do a suicide check and determine how at risk the student may be; follow district protocols about reporting/referral. Keep them safe; transition to a crisis counsellor, EMS or family. Make sure family has a safety plan and a follow up plan. Document all conversations.