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Straight Talk About Teenage Suicide



Synopsis

Recognizing that the teen years are a time of growth, transition, and tough choices, the Straight Talk series provides young readers with the knowledge they need to understand difficult issues, come to terms with their feelings, and make decisions that will work in the context of their lives. Without attempting to dictate answers, the Straight Talk series reminds its readers that all choices carry consequences. Each book is thoroughly indexed and contains a directory of resources. Here is an honest, probing look at some immediate and underlying causes of suicide, how to cope with depression and destructive thoughts in oneself and others, and how to seek professional help when it is needed.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Grade 7-12-A well-researched, articulate, insightful treatment of "a rising epidemic" that offers composite case histories of teens at risk. Although readers are cautioned that each situation is different, suicide is portrayed as a choice made in order to solve problems rather than a wish to end one's life. Topics covered include "cluster" suicides, myths, danger signals, and appropriate responses by peers. Also discussed is the effect on teens of the communal rootlessness and personal isolation of contemporary society and of the "Happy All the Time" philosophy, which pressures them to repress feelings of unhappiness. The authors urge those with thoughts of suicide to seek professional help. This is an excellent contribution to the body of literature on the subject.

The measured tone, clear style, and plausible explanations and theories cut across the public atmosphere of hysteria and misconception. Another fine book that delves deeper into social history is Cynthia Lewis's *Teen Suicide* (Enslow, 1994). Stephen Flanders's *Suicide* (Facts on File, 1991) is primarily for reference. Two other useful titles are Margaret Hyde and Elizabeth Forsyth's *Suicide* (Watts, 1991) and Sandra Gardner and Gary Rosenberg's *Teenage Suicide* (Messner, 1986). Libby K. White, Schenectady County Public Library, NYC Copyright 1994 Reed Business Information, Inc.

This most helpful addition to the literature on teen suicide keeps calm, provides forthright information, and, more than earlier books, concentrates on loss as a precursor to suicidal feelings and acts. Cross-cultural examination is here, too; e.g., in Japan suicide is often felt to be preferable to living in shame. A particular strength is the repeated return to several teenagers' stories to make specific points. Other unusual inclusions are sexual secrets as a trigger, advice on overcoming isolation and depression, and a list of debunked myths. (It is true, however, that April is the month with the highest suicide rate -- if even the advent of spring doesn't help, people lose hope.) This smoothly written balance of statistics and psychology is also incisively expressive. State-by-state list of resources; bibliography; index. (Nonfiction. 12+) -- Copyright ©1994, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.

The title itself seemed to be a "trigger" for me, since I'm currently suffering from depression. As I read through the book, from cover to cover, I was left with mixed feelings. Certainly, the information presented is helpful and mainly accurate. The myth or reality section was particularly interesting, and even one who has experienced depression may not be able to get a perfect score. The various factors that may influence the development of teenage depression are well-covered, and the pre-emptive action against potential suicides would help save many lives. The suggestions as to what words to say or not say as well as warning signs and potential trigger events are covered thoroughly. There were a few detractors though. The three fictional "case histories" were not always helpful. Though they put the technical information into context, some portions of it may themselves trigger a bout of depression in readers that currently suffer it (and there's no disclaimer specifying that there are such triggers included in the book...something that is required when posting messages on the Internet depression support forums). Also, some portions are understandably out-dated. The authors did not provide enough current data concerning genetics and bio-chemistry and their potential for acting as catalysts for depression. Even in the early 90's, more information than given was available. Inclusion of all this research should have replaced the overwhelming

number of demographic statistics on suicide. Although the latter should be considered, the authors went too far and made the book difficult to read and understand. The cultural influences on suicide rates were given too much credit. In fact, suicide IS NOT considered "honorable" by the majority of Japanese society. It's a taboo that family secrets are made of, and the view of Japan as "death before dishonor" is quite out-dated. However, the structure of society, such as the national aptitude tests as well as the inconsistency in children's rights in Japan, definitely increase the number of teen suicides. The same can be said of the clash between the "American Dream" and real-life discrimination (especially those concerning family income) in the United States, which the book sufficiently addresses. The book could have been polished more, replacing some chapters with others, and editing some of the content or at least marking the book as a potential trigger for example. The book will likely become a greater success if these revisions are made. As a footnote, the number of resources for teens cited in the last chapter could have been expanded.

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