

# LeaderCare Resource

## Episode 15: Talking About Suicide (Pt 2)

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### How Do We Talk To Our Children?

Remember kids develop at different rates, not one rule applies to everyone.

Source - Dr. Kristin Francis

#### **Age 7 and under**

- Keep it simple - talk about it in relation to an illness death

#### **7-10 Years**

- Be honest
- Death is sad, illness & disease are sad
- Begin talking about depression
- Begin to introduce the idea that help is available when feelings start to feel too big and that you are safe to have hard conversations with

#### **11+**

- Emotions are a bit bigger (healthy and normal), make space for that
- This age group has likely already heard about depression and suicide (if not from you, than from somewhere)
- Allow the conversation to deepen:
  - What have you heard about depression?
  - What have you heard about suicide?
  - How do you feel about that? What are your thoughts on this? What meaning have you attached to those things?
  - What do you believe to be true about the causes of suicide?
  - Have you felt depressed? Do you sometimes feel hopeless? Have you ever had any thoughts about harming or killing yourself?
- We need to be direct, even when it is uncomfortable. We are modeling that difficult conversations & difficult feelings etc. can be safe.

- **Begin to talk about a PLAN if these feelings arise in the future. Be Proactive!**

- “If you start to feel hopeless or depressed, what do/will you do with that?”
- “Who will you talk to?” - Have them name the people!
- Our kids will feel down and hopeless at times, we can help them begin to think about problem solving proactively.

## **What do we do if your child speaks to a sense of depression and hopelessness or communicates they have experienced suicidal ideation?**

### Communication Tips:

- Enter into their world **where they are**, not where we want them to be!
- **STAY CALM and regulated.** If we respond with anger or judgment, it will shut down communication and a sense of safety.
  - Enter back into questions and **listen**. What was that like? What was your experience? Etc.
  - Listening does two things:
    - Communicates to the person that they are being heard
    - Gives us space to not react, but to regulate our own emotions in the conversation
    - Don't react to their answers, **STAY CALM**

**Always stress your love, availability, willingness to help and get additional help, and leave the door to difficult conversations.**

**TEXT OR CALL 988 - Crisis & Suicide Lifeline**

<https://988lifeline.org/>