



Teens Who Struggle With Suicidal Thoughts

Struggling with suicidal thoughts is something that often happens when people have mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, and bipolar disorder. Sometimes people act on those thoughts and have a suicide attempt. Other times, people just continue to struggle with the suicidal thoughts but never act on them. With teenagers you have to worry about the issue of impulsivity when they are having these thoughts. Teenagers who are in an emotional state of mind and will not be looking at the "bigger picture" of what is making them upset and therefore tend to act on their emotion and possibly do something to harm themselves. When teenagers have a suicide attempt, they often do not actually mean for it to be successful but unfortunately sometimes it is.

In my career I have worked with several people who have had suicide attempts but were unsuccessful in completing those attempts. When they spoke about their attempt, they all said that they had not really wanted it to be successful but that they just wanted the pain and suffering they felt with their depression to end. One particular patient of mine struggled with suicidal thoughts daily. In order to deal with those thoughts this particular patient would journal about wanting to die. This was the only way they could effectively cope with their thoughts. On the outside, this person was able to be successful with a steady job and owning their own home but on the inside, they struggled greatly with their thoughts about suicide. But once this person figured out healthy coping skills, these thoughts were manageable. This is something I teach the teenagers who attend the adolescent IOP that I direct.

Having suicidal thoughts is difficult but manageable. It is different but there can be a light at the end of the tunnel. For teenagers, the concern as I stated earlier, is impulsivity combined with suicidal thoughts. The adolescent IOP that I direct focuses a lot on impulsivity and ways to handle it. DBT is a great form of therapy that is known to help teenagers. This is the main form of therapeutic approach that I use in

the adolescent IOP. The teens that I work with frequently report having suicidal thoughts but we are able to create a safety plan where they use their skills to help themselves through those thoughts. This is a way for them to get in control of their thoughts instead of their thoughts controlling themselves. This also keeps hospitalization down and allows the teen to gain control over themselves.

The purpose of writing this article to reach out to any parents of a teen who may be struggling with this exact topic. I can't even imagine how scary it would be for a parent to hear or learn that their child is thinking about suicide. But I want you to know that there is hope and that your child can be given the proper skills and education to help themselves.

Erin Pawlak, MS, LPCC
Therapist and Adolescent IOP Director
The Behavioral Wellness Group
8224 Mentor Ave #208 Mentor OH 44060
P: 440 392 2222 #307 F: 440 565 2349

epawlak@behavioralwellnessgroup.com
www.behavioralwellnessgroup.com