



A Message from The Centre of Excellence for Mental Health, Student Services Department, Lester B. Pearson School Board:

September 10, 2016 is World Suicide Prevention Day. Sadly, suicide is one of the leading causes of death among youth between the ages of 10 to 19 years. Suicide is a multi-determined phenomenon that involves a complex interaction of biological, social, psychological, environmental risk and protective factors. The theme for this year is '**Connect. Communicate. Care.**' These three words are at the heart of suicide prevention. (<https://www.iasp.info/wspd/>)

A Focus on Prevention: Within schools, effective suicide prevention begins by engaging the whole school community in creating a safe and positive school climate that promotes trusting student-adult relationships and environments where students have a voice and a place to turn. Raising awareness among the school community that suicide is preventable and reducing the stigma and silence that still surrounds it can go a long way in encouraging young people to reach out when they need to.

Increasing Protective Factors: In order to be most effective in preventing suicide, it is suggested that we to direct our efforts not only at reducing risk factors but also toward strengthening protective factors, with the aim of preventing vulnerability to suicide and strengthening people's resilience. Despite the wide experience of risk factors, the fact that completed suicide is a relatively rare event indicates that there are a range of protective factors that act to mitigate the effects of exposure to risk factors. Among psychological factors, resilience (the ability to cope with adverse life events and adjust to them), a sense of personal self-worth and self-confidence, effective coping and problem-solving skills, and adaptive help-seeking behaviour are often considered to be protective. Social and cultural factors such as religious and social integration, social connectedness and maintenance of good relationships with friends, and access to support from others are associated with a reduced risk of suicide. In addition, a healthy lifestyle, with maintenance of good diet and sleep habits, regular physical activity, abstinence from smoking and illicit drug use, is also associated with a reduced risk. All efforts to reinforce these positive protective factors can have considerable impact in suicide prevention.

Knowing the warning signs:

- Threatening to hurt or kill themselves
- Depression(helplessness/hopelessness)
- Reckless behavior
- Making final arrangements
- Death and suicidal themes
- Preoccupation with means
- Sudden and dramatic changes in mood and personality

How to respond when we are concerned: When a youth who is thinking of suicide comes to you or comes to your attention from peers or other school personnel take immediate action to **keep the student safe**. Under no circumstances should the student be left alone (even in the washroom).

- Be aware of who can help
- Collaborate with colleagues
- Mobilize a support system

For Further Information: The Centre of Excellence for Mental Health (CEMH) can serve as a resource to school staff by providing information on mental health. For more information on this resource, please contact Dr. Gerry Weintraub, Psychologist, LBPSB, gweintraub@lbpsb.qc.ca.

For more information on suicide prevention and what schools can do, click on the following links:

<http://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources/school-safety-and-crisis/preventing-youth-suicide>
<http://suicideprevention.ca/>