Zeeland Public Schools

be nice. Newsletter

December 2019

Our Chix and Dux fly together to create a school community like ours where our vision is to see all people, SAFE, VALUED, LOVED AND LEARNING FOR LIFE.

Myth: People with mental illness are violent and dangerous.

Fact: Within the last few years, the U.S. has had an increase in mass violence. Whenever these tragedies take place, the media is quick to judge the suspects and label them as "mentally disturbed" or "mentally ill." In reality, hate is not a mental illness. Only 5% of violent crimes in the U.S. are committed by people with serious mental illness.

The unfortunate truth is that individuals with mental illness are more likely to be victims of violence than perpetrators. There is no reason to fear a person with a mental illness just because of their diagnosis.

National Alliance on Mental Health

An open letter to the community.

This is an open letter to the youth, parents and adults in our school community and our community at large.

As a community, we need your help!

When it comes to depression and suicide we need to understand the worst thing we can do is nothing. Depression is often times one of the more easily treated mental health conditions. Suicide is a preventable death.

One common myth suggests that talking about suicide or asking someone if they are thinking about death by suicide will encourage attempts. In reality, we know talking about suicide increases communication, understanding and offers a greater opportunity to get help and most importantly hope.

Depression is the number one cause of death by suicide.

Indicators of depression:

- **Feeling sad for more than two weeks**
- **Feeling lethargic, feeling like you have no energy**
- **Unable to concentrate**
- **Sleeping too much or sleeping too little**
- **Feeling worthless**
- **Feeling hopeless**
- **Feeling helpless**
- **Feeling negative or pessimistic**
- **Losing interest in activities that you previously enjoyed**
- **Having thoughts and talking about suicide**

Indicators of depression:

- **Crying frequently**
- **Withdrawing from others**
- **Neglecting personal appearance**
- **Feeling angry**
- **Feeling guilty**
- **Unable to think clearly**
- **Unable to make decisions**
- **Physical pain that does not have a diagnosis or explanation**

It can be difficult to separate the psychological from the physical. It is important to recognize depression will sometimes be accompanied by physical symptoms and pain that can mask the depression.

It is also important to note some people, especially males, may mask indications they are struggling. Some people known as the life of the party can be suffering in silence.

Death by suicide is the second leading cause of death for young people ages 10-24.

We need to respond to the hint of a hint of a rumor. If you are concerned ask the question or get to someone who can.

A person thinking or talking about death by suicide may act on those thoughts if there is not intervention.

Verbal warnings:

- **“I wish I were never born”**
- **“I wish I were dead”**
- **“I won’t need this anymore”**
- **“My parents wouldn’t have to worry about me anymore”**
- **“Everyone would be better off if I were dead”**
- **“Nobody cares if I live or die”**

Behavioral warnings:

- **Change in appetite**
- **Giving away prized possessions or throwing things away**
- **Sudden change in mood**
- **Aggressive behavior**
- **Impulsive or risk taking behavior**
- **Deterioration of school performance**
- **Social isolation or withdraw**

Precipitating issues or events:

- **Alcohol or other drugs**
- **Divorce**
- **Unemployment**
- **Financial problems**
- **Isolation from family and friends**
- **Breakup with boyfriend or girlfriend**
- **Domestic violence**
- **School difficulties**
- **Depression**

If there are concerns about suicidal ideation or depression, it is important to remove firearms. Depressed mood, alcohol or other drugs and firearms are a lethal combination, means restriction is key.

How to help:

- **Be direct-ask the question "are you thinking about death by suicide?", talk matter-of-factly about your concern.**
- **Be willing to listen**
- **Allow for expression of feelings**
- **Accept feelings**
- **Get involved, be available, show interest and support**
- **Offer hope that alternatives are available**
- **Take action-get help from persons or agencies that are trained in crisis intervention**

If you or someone you know is in crisis or emotional distress and need immediate help call 911, go to your local emergency room or call the National Suicide Lifeline 1-800-273-TALK (8255) For support in Spanish call: 1-888-628-9454

If you have a health and safety concern for someone you can call 911. Your local law enforcement agency will do a wellness check for you.

Web links:
www.sprc.org Suicide Prevention Resource Center
www.afsp.org The American Foundation of Suicide Prevention

It will take a collaborative effort to make Zeeland Public Schools and the greater community of Zeeland a suicide safe place to live. Death by suicide has no economic, ethnic, religious, cultural or peer group boundaries. People from all walks of life are affected.

No one needs to go it alone, reach out if in need, accept help if offered.

Suicide prevention is everyone's business, it's what people do.

This quote is for any parent, educator or anyone who works with our youth.

Every time you think of calling a kid "attention seeking," consider changing it to "connection seeking" and see how your perspective changes.

Dr. Jody Carrington

Learn the be nice. action plan!

be nice. is the STOP, DROP AND ROLL of mental health!

By investing 12 minutes of your time you can learn the be N-I-C-E action plan and how you can make a difference in how someone THINKS, ACTS and FEELS.

Click HERE to learn the be nice. action plan.

Local Counseling Resources

Mosaic Counseling	616-842-9160
Encourage Counseling	616-396-6285
Winning At Home	616-772-1733
Holland Behavioral Health Services	616-355-3926
Pine Rest	1-800-678-5500
Forest View	1-800-949-8439
24 Hour Helpline	1-866-512-4357

In an emergency call 911 or go to your local emergency room.

Our Mental Health is just as important as our physical health.

Let's not just talk about it, let's be about it!

Here is the game changer:

N-NOTICE...signs of depression or other changes in someone's behavior.

I-INVITE...yourself to initiate a conversation.

C-CHALLENGE...the stigma; communicate important resources.

E-EMPOWER...yourself with the knowledge that you can have an effect on how someone thinks, acts and feels.