

## RESOURCES THAT MAYBE USEFUL FOR Discussion with Teens/Tweens AS A RESULT OF NETFLIX'S "13 REASONS"

*From; Fr. Tom Konopka, Diocesan Consultation Center - Director*

The main resource for faith formation personal and parents is honest and open discussion about the reality of teen suicide. Not talking about it, teen depression, teen substance abuse or other teen issues can create an environment in which the information our teens will receive will be from unhealthy sources. The adults involved need to confront their own fears about suicide and develop a comfort level to have honest discussions with the teens. Our refusal to talk about it will teach the lesson that issues like suicide and other mental health issues are not to be openly and honestly discussed.

Here are resources that are available. The best way to educate faith formation people (and parishes) and parents is to have a workshop having good information passed on and good dialogue. This needs to an ongoing formation piece on mental health issues and other important issues that parish families are facing.

**Prevent Suicide New York** <http://www.preventsuicideny.org/>  
(Have speakers who do workshops)

**Suicide Prevention Resource Center** <http://www.sprc.org/>

**SAVE Suicide Awareness Voices of Education**  
Tips for Watching "13 reasons why"  
<https://www.save.org/blog/tips-watching-new-netflix-series-13-reasons/>

**American Foundation for Suicide Prevention** <https://afsp.org/>

**National Suicide Prevention Lifeline**

We can all help prevent suicide. The Lifeline provides 24/7, free and confidential support for people in distress, prevention and crisis resources for you or your loved ones, and best practices for professionals. **1-800-273-8255**

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Some additional info. –

Below are links to resources that provide assistance in discussing the show with your child.

- <https://www.jedfoundation.org/13-reasons-jed-point-view/>
- <https://www.save.org/blog/tips-watching-new-netflix-series-13-reasons/>

More video resources for adults & teens....

- **Video Blog for Adults on 13RW by Roy Petifils** (highly recommend watching this video): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ngD3PtPt3ac&t=2s>
- **Video Blog for teens on 13RW by Roy Petifils** (recommend this video, but parents should watch it first, so that you know what he is talking about): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vWZZqxjLm0Q>
- Live presentation from Roy Petifils on May 9<sup>th</sup>:  
<https://www.facebook.com/roypetifils/videos/10158769727405554/>

### **Suggested Action Steps for Faith Formation Ministry Leaders;**

1. Education for leadership regarding suicide
2. Develop a referral list of mental health emergency numbers
  - a. Suicide prevention hot lines
  - b. Local resources: for example Crisis Intervention in Albany County
3. Develop a protocol if suicidal ideation or crisis occurs
  - a. Who will you call
  - b. Action steps to keep a person safe
4. Develop a working relationship with local school districts.....shared resources
5. Develop some discussion about “13 steps” beginning with the parents

# Why Talk to Kids About '13 Reasons Why'

Peter Faustino, PsyD

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As a parent and a school psychologist, I pride myself on staying up to date. So when I asked my teenage daughters if they had heard about the newly released Netflix series 13 Reasons Why, I was shocked by their reply: "Dad, we just finished watching the last episode!" Spoiler alert: The last episode is the graphic depiction of a suicide.

So I binge watched all 13 episodes. What I saw was an authentic and uncensored account of high school. Every topic I have dealt with in my career as a school psychologist (bullying, cliques, drugs, drunk driving, slut shaming, guns, sexual assault, and suicide) was covered in heart-wrenching detail.

The Netflix series, co-produced by Selena Gomez and based on a 2007 book by the same name, is a hit with adolescents. It's the story of Hannah, a teenage girl who commits suicide and leaves behind 13 tapes telling different parts of the story behind her motive. As the mystery unfolds, the series ensures that no subject is off-limits or glossed over.

Parents and professionals should know that our children and students are not only watching this show — there is a good chance they are living it. Teens immediately identify with how various individual choices and actions can combine to have outsized effects on people in high school. It made me think about whether impressionable viewers might romanticize the series. In the social media landscape of Facebook Live and Snapchat Streaks, creating "tapes for friends" that play out like a mystery to uncover your secret pain feels all too possible.

Shows like 13 Reason Why connect with young people because they see themselves and their classmates in those stories. This can be a good thing: it offers a real opportunity for youth to process the pressures of adolescence and consequences of certain choices. It also presents real risk. Research shows that exposure to suicide or to graphic accounts of death are triggers for suicidal thoughts and attempts among youth struggling with mental health disorders. It is critical that as parents and educators we are aware of what are children are watching, reading and talking about, and are available to discuss what they are thinking and feeling. If we aren't, we can't prevent a potential tragedy or address underlying factors such as bullying

**What 13 Reasons Why** gets right, which can be as valuable to adults as it is to teens, is that there is no single cause of suicide. It most often occurs when multiple stressors exceed the current coping abilities of someone suffering from a mental health condition. The show does an impressive job of helping viewers see the missteps that people make every day. This is not to say that anyone is at fault for Hannah's suicide, or that anyone can be at fault for the desperate decision of another person. But we can all help prevent it. Unlike exposure to dramatized violence or self-harm, **asking someone if they are contemplating suicide** does not put them at increased risk of suicide. Quite the opposite; it gives us the opportunity to offer hope.

Every adult needs to recognize signs of a young person struggling and be ready to offer support. We must listen to our children's stories without judgment and actively listen: understand, respond, and remember what they have said, putting our own agendas aside. We must give teenagers the tools they need to help a friend or themselves get support. And we can tell them, while watching 13 Reasons Why, that though it may seem like it sometimes, there are actually zero reasons to take your own life and many more to live.

*Peter Faustino, PsyD, is a school psychologist in the Bedford (NY) Central School District and a member of the Board of Directors of the National Association of School Psychologists. The National Association of School Psychologists offers [guidance for educators on concerns raised by the series.](#)*

# 13 REASONS WHY TALKING POINTS

- 13 Reasons Why is a fictional story based on a widely known novel and is meant to be a cautionary tale.
- You may have similar experiences and thoughts as some of the characters in 13RW. People often identify with characters they see on TV or in movies. However, it is important to remember that there are healthy ways to cope with the topics covered in 13RW and acting on suicidal thoughts is not one of them.
- If you have watched the show and feel like you need support or someone to talk to, reach out. Talk with a friend, family member, a counselor, or therapist. There is always someone who will listen.
- Suicide is not a common response to life's challenges or adversity. The vast majority of people who experience bullying, the death of a friend, or any other adversity described in 13RW do not die by suicide. In fact, most reach out, talk to others and seek help or find other productive ways of coping. They go on to lead healthy, normal lives.
- Suicide is never a heroic or romantic act. Hannah's suicide (although fictional) is a cautionary tale, not meant to appear heroic and should be viewed as a tragedy.
- It is important to know that, in spite of the portrayal of a serious treatment failure in 13RW, there are many treatment options for life challenges, distress and mental illness. Treatment works.
- Suicide affects everyone and everyone can do something to help if they see or hear warning signs that someone is at risk of suicide.
- Talking openly and honestly about emotional distress and suicide is ok. It will not make someone more suicidal or put the idea of suicide in their mind. If you are concerned about someone, ask them about it.
- Knowing how to acknowledge and respond to someone who shares their thoughts of emotional distress or suicide with you is important. Don't judge them or their thoughts. Listen. Be caring and kind. Offer to stay with them. Offer to go with them to get help or to contact a crisis line.
- How the guidance counselor in 13RW responds to Hannah's thoughts of suicide is not appropriate and not typical of most counselors. School counselors are professionals and a trustworthy source for help. If your experience with a school counselor is unhelpful, seek other sources of support such as a crisis line.
- While not everyone will know what to say or have a helpful reaction, there are people who do, so keep trying to find someone who will help you. If someone tells you they are suicidal, take them seriously and get help.
- When you die you do not get to make a movie or talk to people any more. Leaving messages from beyond the grave is a dramatization produced in Hollywood and is not possible in real life.

- Memorializing someone who died by suicide is not a recommended practice. Decorating someone's locker who died by suicide and/or taking selfies in front of such a memorial is not appropriate and does not honor the life of the person who died by suicide.
- Hannah's tapes blame others for her suicide. Suicide is never the fault of survivors of suicide loss. There are resources and support groups for suicide loss survivors.

If you're struggling with thoughts of suicide... a ing  
points by:

Text START to 741-741

Call 1-800-273-TALK (8255)

W [www.save.org](http://www.save.org)

[www.jedfoundation.org](http://www.jedfoundation.org)