



New episodes of *13 Reasons Why* spark warnings

Mental health professionals recommend parents, educators be aware of possible impact to kids



On campuses across the United States, kids are talking about social trends that heavily focus on suicide in the youth culture. While these conversations are creating opportunities for teachers, counselors and school psychologists to talk to students about suicide prevention, we recognize that the most powerful conversations can occur in the home.

To empower families with information about these potentially harmful social trends, this Parent Bulletin is being shared districtwide and provides resources from the National Association of School Psychologists for parents and educators.

Education is a partnership, and our team is ready to work together to create a healthy community. If you have any questions, please reach out to your neighborhood school, or visit the Clovis Unified School District Emotional Wellness website for additional resources: <http://www.cusd.com/homepage-articles/wellness/>.

Resources for this Parent Bulletin came from the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) and "Tech Talk Tuesdays," a weekly parenting resource authored by Dr. Delaney Ruston, creator of *Screenagers: Raising Kids in the Digital Age* shown in Clovis Unified this year.

13 Reasons Why

This Netflix series, released in March 2017 and launching its second season on May 18, is based on the 2007 novel by Jay Asher. The series contains graphically visual scenes depicting suicide and adult content such as sexual assault, drunk driving, bullying, extreme violence and self-harm. Psychologists and members of the medical community are warning of the series' content increasing suicide ideation and behaviors among school-aged students.

The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) has created a resource for families that includes conversation starters for parents.

Continued...

National Suicide Prevention Hotline: 1-888-506-5991



FAMILIES PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE: 5 TIPS FOR YOU

More Resources

- National Association of School Psychologists, www.nasponline.org
- Suicide Awareness Voices of Education, www.save.org
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, suicidepreventionlifeline.org
- American Association of Suicidology, www.suicidology.org
- American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, <https://afsp.org/>
- Stopbullying.gov
- Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network, www.rainn.org
- Netflix 13reasonswhy.info/

"Here is one essential thing that I want every parent to know. When we bring up hard topics with our kids and teens, even if you muddle your way through them, you are giving them direct evidence that you can handle challenging subjects.

"The result then is that they are more likely to come to you in the future when they face challenges. If we don't bring up issues related to all sorts of topics that come up in sexual lives, relationships in general, mental health, etc., then our kids are much more likely to look for answers on the internet or from peers—or no one at all—rather than sharing their concerns with us."

Delaney Ruston, M.D.
Creator of "Screenagers" documentary shown in CUSD this year.

1. We strongly recommend that vulnerable children and youth (such as those struggling with depression, previous suicidal behavior, or trauma) not watch this series, and most certainly not watch alone. The same is true for the first season, which some youth are watching or rewatching in preparation for the second season. Netflix has created additional safeguards for both seasons (warning cards, [discussion guides](#), and helping resources), but **these are not a substitute for adult support and engagement.**
2. **We encourage parents to watch the series with their children.** The difficult issues portrayed by the series do occur in schools and communities, and it is important for adults to listen, take adolescents' concerns seriously, and be willing to offer support. We also caution against binge watching, as doing so with intense content, particularly in isolation, can be associated with increased mental health concerns.
3. **Reinforce help-seeking behavior and that adults care and are available for support and guidance.** The adult characters in the series again are portrayed as either incompetent or uncaring. It is vital to counter this false narrative with clear messages that parents are available for discussion and support, and regarding school staff connecting with students, creating a trusting school climate, and the accessibility and of and behavioral norms for school mental health professionals.
4. **Reinforce that suicide deaths are permanent.** The continued presence of Hannah in season 2 (even in flashback and imaginary mode) continues to give the impression that somehow she is present or able to participate in the experiences of the other characters after her death. It is important to reinforce to students that suicide is never a solution. It is an irreversible choice regarding problems for which there is help. If students are struggling with thoughts of suicide or know someone who is, help them talk to a trusted adult. Adults and students should know risk factors and warning signs of suicide risk. **Always take warning signs seriously, and never promise to keep them secret.** See [Save a Friend: Tips for Teens to Prevent Suicide](#), [Communicating With Potentially Suicidal Students](#), and [Safe Messaging for Students](#) for additional information.
5. **Reinforce resiliency for all students.** Resiliency gives students the ability to deal with challenges and adapt to new or difficult circumstances in a positive, productive manner. The positive influence that even one caring adult can have in helping youth overcome challenges has been documented by decades of careful study. Resilience can be built through trusting relationships, linking youth with positive role models, and offering encouragement and reassurance. Engaging in open and supportive conversations with youth about the issues in the series can contribute to this important sense of trust and connectedness. In addition, adults can help to empower youth to increase confidence in their own personal strengths and abilities, effectively manage strong feelings and impulses, and effectively solve problems. For more guidance on promoting resiliency and coping in youth, see [Resiliency Building in Youth](#).