



May 15, 2017

Dear Parent or Caregiver,

The recent release of the Netflix series *Thirteen Reasons Why* has created a discussion among educators and many professionals who work with young people and care for their mental health and wellness. The show tells a fictional story about a highschool girl who takes her own life, but before doing so, makes video tapes that explain 13 reasons why she killed herself, including blaming people that influenced her in some way to do so. The series is rated MA for mature audiences and touches upon many intense topics such as suicide, rape, bullying, underage drinking and other topics and is also at times graphic.

While many youth are resilient and are able to differentiate between fiction and real-life, concern has been expressed about the sensitivity of this issue and how young people are interpreting suicide as a way to cope with stressors in their life. Young people who are vulnerable to mental health concerns may especially struggle with this series.

We would like to encourage you to ask your child about this series or if you know they have been watching it, engage in a conversation to help them process what they have seen. This is a great opportunity to demonstrate your concern for their well being as well as an understanding for some of the challenges they may face. Being informed about suicide and suicide prevention is crucial to educating youth on the subject and also in the ability to notice if a young person is having these thoughts. We have included “Guidance for Parents” below from the National Association of School Psychologists and also some sample talking points.

Since the majority of young people today use social media as their primary means of communication, it might be helpful as well to check in on their accounts on a regular basis to monitor their thoughts, feelings, and any reference that might indicate a concern. Our children need and deserve our active supervision of these communication tools as they are learning how to navigate the social media world.

It is the priority of the Talawanda School District that students are supported academically, but also socially, emotionally and mentally. We have school counselors, school psychologists, as well as other professionals who are trained and are here to help students. If you suspect that your child is struggling mentally and emotionally, please reach out to your school counselor, utilize the Butler County Crisis Hotline at 1-844-427-4747 or you can access local mental health resources at <http://healthyoxfordarea.org/mental-health/>.

Sincerely,
The Talawanda Health Coordinating Council

GUIDANCE FOR FAMILIES

(Source: National Association of School Psychologists)

1. Ask your child if they have heard or seen the series *13 Reasons Why*. While we don't recommend that they be encouraged to view the series, do tell them you want to watch it, with them or to catch up, and discuss their thoughts.
2. If they exhibit any of the warning signs above, don't be afraid to ask if they have thought about suicide or if someone is hurting them. Raising the issue of suicide does not increase the risk or plant the idea. On the contrary, it creates the opportunity to offer help.
3. Ask your child if they think any of their friends or classmates exhibit warning signs. Talk with them about how to seek help for their friend or classmate. Guide them on how to respond when they see or hear any of the warning signs.
4. Listen to your children's comments without judgment. Doing so requires that you fully concentrate, understand, respond, and then remember what is being said. Put your own agenda aside.
5. Get help from a school-employed or community-based mental health professional if you are concerned for your child's safety or the safety of one of their peers.

Conversation Talking Points and Tips:

(<https://www.jedfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/13RW-Talking-Points-JED-SAVE-Netflix.pdf>)

