



Quick Facts: Treatments to Decrease the Risk of Suicide

Children and teens who have ADHD are at an increased risk for suicide, especially if they have a coexisting mental health condition. There are ways [parents can help](#). Here are treatments supported by research that can significantly lower the risk for suicide attempts.

Medication

Studies have shown that certain stimulant medications used to treat ADHD [may lower suicide risk](#) in youth with ADHD. If your child has ADHD and another condition, commonly referred to as “complex ADHD,” it is important for your child’s doctor to identify which condition is causing the most problems and to treat that condition first. Treatment for complex ADHD may include medication and behavior therapy. Be sure to communicate regularly with your child’s doctor and to follow the prescribed treatment plan.

Behavior Therapy

Behavior therapy, including parent training, is effective for ADHD and can also help with anger and anxiety symptoms in children and teens. In behavior therapy, a therapist will work with the family to identify problem behaviors, also called target behaviors. Parents, along with the child’s teachers, work together to use interventions at home and in the classroom to reduce target behaviors.

Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT)

This therapy has been shown to [reduce the risk](#) of self-harm. DBT helps change behaviors, regulate emotions, and normalize emotional and behavioral challenges that are common symptoms of ADHD. DBT helps teens accept their circumstances and change problem behaviors.

There are four main parts:

- Mindfulness (encourages acceptance of past and current circumstances)
- Distress tolerance (increases tolerance of stressful situations and emotions)
- Emotional regulation (teaches how to identify, label, and predict emotions and how to create positive emotions and experiences)



- Interpersonal effectiveness (teaches relationship skills through conflict resolution while focusing on maintaining relationships)

Cognitive Therapy for Suicide Prevention

This type of therapy is designed specifically for suicide prevention. It has been shown to reduce suicide attempts, and to help decrease depression and feelings of hopelessness by focusing on the thoughts and experiences of suicidal children and teens. Cognitive therapy for suicide prevention involves three parts:

- Discussion of most recent suicide attempt
- Identification of triggers that lead to a suicidal crisis and learning strategies to help deal with triggers
- Practice problem solving to prevent a relapse

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Suicide Prevention

Symptoms of mental illness and depression are related to increased suicide risk. If your adolescent with ADHD has a mental illness, anxiety, or depression, CBT can help reduce the risk of suicide when therapy is focused on suicidal thoughts and behaviors. CBT teaches skills to change automatic, negative thoughts and behavior and strategies to increase emotional regulation and decrease impulsivity.

Collaborative Assessment and Management of Suicidality (CAMS)

CAMS is a clinical therapy framework focused on suicidal behaviors. A teen works in close collaboration with their therapist. CAMS involves:

- Interactive risk evaluation and management
- Thorough treatment planning including the development of a stabilization plan
- Identification and treatment of what is driving an adolescent or teen to want to die by suicide

To find a healthcare provider familiar with treatment options:

- [Psychologist Locator](#), a service of the American Psychological Association
- [Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist Find](#), a research tool created by the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
- [Find a Cognitive Behavioral Therapist](#), a search tool created by the Association for Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies
- If you need help finding treatment facilities, visit [MentalHealth.gov](#).

Get Help Now

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

(formerly the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline)

Call the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline by dialing or texting 988 or call 1-800-273-8255. You can chat online at 988lifeline.org.

Crisis Text Line

[Crisis Text Line](#) is a texting service for emotional crisis support. To speak or text with a trained listener, text HELLO to 741741. It is free, available 24/7, and confidential.

Veterans Crisis Line and Military Crisis Line

These are for all veterans, active military members, and their families and loved ones. Call 988 or 1-800-273-8255 and press 1. You can text the crisis line at 838255.

