

Suicide prevention at Lake Tahoe: Moving forward after an attempt

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Special to the Sun



Remember, to be there for your child, you have to take care of yourself as well. We're all in this together.

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There are other resources available to assist parents dealing with mental health issues and their children. For more coping tools, visit:

Society for the Prevention of Teen Suicide, Inc.: <http://www.sptsusa.org>, 732-410-7900

National Alliance on Mental Illness:
<http://www.nami.org>

EDITOR'S NOTE

This month's suicide prevention column is a follow-up to Sarah's column in May about the same topic — life after an attempt is made. Visit bit.ly/1TU0aT4 to read that. Also, visit SierraSun.com and search "McClarie" to read all of Sarah's previous items on this important topic.

The immediate crisis is over. The next challenge is figuring out how to best help a child get his or her life back after an attempted suicide.

A lot of anxiety may occur as many of the supports that your child received from mental health services are no longer in place. You may wonder how protective you need to be, when to give them space, and how should you advise your child to discuss this experience with friends.

Following a suicide attempt or an instance of self-harm, it's important to help your child come up with an explanation for his or her absence in school and social settings to ease their communication with peers.

There is no right or wrong answer, and each circumstance depends on the individual. Dealing with peers may be more difficult than communicating with adults. Some youth choose to tell peers their experiences while others don't want to give an explanation.

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Helping your child to prepare for this difficult conversation will reduce some of the stress they may be feeling and ease the process of reintegrating into their daily lives.

It's important to acknowledge the likelihood that rumors of your child's extended absence from school may be circulating the student body.

This gives you them the opportunity to prepare for what they may face upon their return and create a plan for coping with the stress this may cause. School counselors are a great resource for your child, and they can help with coping mechanisms in the return to school.

While you are there for your child and providing support, it is also important to make sure that you are providing yourself with support. You've just dealt with a traumatic issue with your son or daughter.

Having someone to talk to about your experience is one of the best ways to care for yourself. Remember, to be there for your child you have to take care of yourself as well. Seeking help through a counselor is one way to do so and sets a good example for your child to witness.

Sarah McClarie is the facilitator for the Tahoe Truckee Youth Suicide Prevention Coalition. And , Outreach Facilitator for the Tahoe Truckee Suicide Prevention Task Force. Contact her at smcclarie@ttusd.org or by calling 530-582-2560.

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