



WHAT TO DO IF YOU'RE WORRIED ABOUT ONE OF YOUR CHILD'S PEERS

Your child, their age doesn't matter, comes home from school and when you ask the standard 'how was your day?' question, tells you that one of the kids they go to school with has said something that disturbed them. You raise your eyebrows in a bit of disbelief as they explain that their friend has told them they hate their life and they wish they were dead. They've also asked your child to keep this information to themselves. So, what do you do?



- The first thing is to praise your child for their honesty, and for understanding that information about someone possibly hurting themselves can never be kept secret. Let them know that these are not things children should have to deal with and you'll take over from here.
- Find out what you can about who this child is and exactly what they said. It's important to be as accurate about this as you can since you'll be passing the information along.
- If the child is a friend of your child and you have contact information for their parent or guardian, you want to reach out to them as soon as you can and describe the situation. You can be as matter of fact as: "this is what your child shared with my child and I thought you'd want to know". Being timely is important here; you don't want to make an assumption about whether or when this child intends to act on their feelings. Letting the child's caretakers know puts them back in charge of their child's welfare.
- Does this feel like a big responsibility? Does it sound like an overreaction? Ask yourself, would you want someone to inform you if the child who was struggling was yours? This is one of those difficult parenting moments, and you can see why you wouldn't leave this up to your child to follow up. Whenever a child's safety is in question, good parenting requires sharing potentially upsetting information.
- If you can't find any contact information for this child, reach out to a school administrator or resource person via call, text or email. Share the information you've gotten from your child and ask them to follow up. The next day, speak to a counselor at the school to make sure that the risk for this child has been communicated. Find out whom your child can go to during the school day if they receive any more disturbing texts from their friend.

This is an upsetting situation, yet more and more parents report being on the receiving end of this type of disturbing information. Remember, it's not up to you to decide how serious the threat is - that's why passing the information to the parents or the school as soon as possible is important. What's also important is the fact that your child felt safe enough to share their worries with you. Good for them for trusting you and good for you for being trustworthy!