

One of the most daunting frightening experiences as a parent is having a suicidal child. I know, I have been there, but despite all my efforts my fifteen-year old daughter completed suicide. We battled her unseen demons for five years and I wanted to share with you some of the measures we took to fight the beast of suicide. I do understand that every child, every family and every situation is different, but I wanted to share our experience. Just because we lost the battle doesn't mean you can't succeed.

With a suicidal child all bets are off and normal parenting tactics don't work. You need to go to extreme measures and put everything in your life on the back burner. It's a war zone with a very conniving enemy and your child's life is the center of the battle.

The most important thing is to foster good communication with your son or daughter. Don't be afraid to ask, "are you suicidal?" Don't be afraid to tell them that you want them to live and share their life with you, they mean everything to you, and that their death would hurt because so many people care about them. Suicidal teens often think they are unloved, a burden on their family and think they have no friends. You need to stress that you love them and that they are not a burden because everything you do for them is out of love.

Make sure you have several adults whom your teen love and trust to help you out. Many times your teen would not want to talk to you but would prefer a trusted younger aunt, uncle, family friend or older sibling.

Make sure to communicate with those adults and that they will be prepared for late night visits with your teen. It's important to have the support so you can take a break, especially if you are a single parent.

Follow the instincts a parent will often feels when their teen is in distress. No one knows your child like you.

Be prepared to spend few days off work, sleeping in your teen's room for a 24/7 supervision when they are suicidal. A teen who has been in inpatient for being suicidal in the past might resist returning there.

Make sure your teen has all the professional help you can get them, a therapist who they have rapport with, a psychiatrist who actually take the time to talk rather than just pulling out the prescription pad.

Try to establish communication with one of your teen's trusted friends. Someone who would notify you if your son or daughter confides in them that they are suicidal. I was able to extend my daughter's life because of such communications.

Monitor their Facebook page, many teens block their parents. Find a friend or family member who is not blocked and ask them to check your teen Facebook

twice a day. Many teens post clues to suicidal thoughts on Facebook.

Learn the warning signs of suicide and keep in mind that anger is one of them. Teens are impulsive and being angry might give them the energy and detachment from you to complete suicide.

Don't make it easy for them, make sure there are no weapons in the house, locking them up is not good enough. Lock away all medications, household poisons, and sharp knives and razor blades. Just like you childproof your home when your teen was a toddler, you have to do the same but now your child is smarter and taller.

Discipline is always an issue with teens, pick your battles. Don't discourage your teen from seeing friends or going online, that's their lifeline. Don't worry about grades, when you're fighting for your teen's life college is not that important. They can always get an education later.

Seek professional help and guidance yourself, you need all the help you can get.

Never give up, losing a child to suicide is the most devastating blows in life. Remember, it takes a mountain of unconditional love.

- Miki,  
Katie's mom  
March 2012