

## **Hello Harborside Families,**

Each month we will be delivering “**Pirate Pete’s Tough Topic.**” These will be topics that directly impact high school students and could serve as a tool for conversation with your teen. High school is often a time where teenagers will try to distance themselves from their families, but it is crucial to keep open the lines of communication. These can be some very trying times for students because of the pressures that they face at home, school, and in the community. We hope that our messages will serve as an opportunity to bring families closer together, while also providing some advice and resources for those individuals who may need some support.

### **Pirate Pete’s Tough Topic for September: Suicide Awareness**

Suicide Awareness Week comes up in September, so we wanted to bring attention to some of the warning signs and share some tips for dealing with these concerns. The information provided below comes from the National Association of School Psychologists website which can be found at [http://www.nasponline.org/about\\_nasp/index.aspx](http://www.nasponline.org/about_nasp/index.aspx). If you have a concern or further questions regarding depression or suicide and how to find other resources in our area, please do not hesitate to contact our school counselor, Mr. Buschmann, at 359-8405.

### **Preventing Youth Suicide - Tips for Parents and Educators**

Suicide is the third leading cause of death among youth between 10 and 19 years of age. However, **suicide is preventable**. Youth who are contemplating suicide frequently give warning signs of their distress. Parents, teachers, and friends are in a key position to pick up on these signs and get help. Most important is to never take these warning signs lightly or promise to keep them secret. When all adults and students in the school community are committed to making suicide prevention a priority—and are empowered to take the correct actions—we can help youth before they engage in behavior with irreversible consequences.

#### **Suicide Risk Factors**

Certain characteristics are associated with increased suicide risk. These include:

- Mental illness including depression, conduct disorders, and substance abuse.
- Family stress/dysfunction.
- Environmental risks, including presence of a firearm in the home.
- Situational crises (i.e., traumatic death of a loved one, physical or sexual abuse, family violence, etc.).

#### **Suicide Warning Signs**

Many suicidal youth demonstrate observable behaviors that signal their suicidal thinking. These include:

- Suicidal threats in the form of direct and indirect statements.
- Suicide notes and plans.
- Prior suicidal behavior.
- Making final arrangements (e.g., making funeral arrangements, writing a will, giving away prized possessions).
- Preoccupation with death.
- Changes in behavior, appearance, thoughts and/or feelings.

#### **What to Do**

Youth who feel suicidal are not likely to seek help directly; however, parents, school personnel, and peers can recognize the warning signs and take immediate action to keep the youth safe. When a youth gives signs that they may be considering suicide, the following actions should be taken:

- Remain calm.
- Ask the youth directly if he or she is thinking about suicide.
- Focus on your concern for their wellbeing and avoid being accusatory.
- Listen.
- Reassure them that there is help and they will not feel like this forever.
- Do not judge.
- Provide constant supervision. Do not leave the youth alone.
- Remove means for self-harm.
- **Get help:** Peers should not agree to keep the suicidal thoughts a secret and instead should tell an adult, such as a parent, teacher, or school psychologist. Parents should seek help from school or community mental health resources as soon as possible. School staff should take the student to the designated school mental health professional or administrator.