

# “Prevention before Intervention”

## *Strategy of Problem Solving - Section Three*

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# LEARNING AND USING PROBLEM SOLVING SKILLS SAVES LIVES!





# **“Prevention before Intervention”**

## ***Strategy of Problem Solving - Section Three***

- **How Do Problem Solving Skills Prevent Suicide?**
- **How are these skills used as an prevention and intervention tools?**
- **How does teaching our children problem solving save lives?**

# Suicide is an attempt to solve a problem(s)



- “The situation was so unbearable. I had to do something, and I didn’t know what else to do.  
(Williams 1986)
- What can we learn from the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral factors associated with suicide? If we start from this point we can work to develop the interventions that might help with prevention.

# Cognition, emotion, and behavioral factors associated with suicidality.



- Cognitive Constriction—especially characterized by dichotomous thinking
  - Psychache---profound emotional pain
  - Perturbation—the need to take action
  - (Shneidman, 1986; Jobes and Nelson, 2006)
- A feeling of hopelessness develops. Hopelessness has been one of the critical factors associated with suicidality (Beck et al., 1990)

# Why cultivate problem solving skills in children?



- Deficits in problem solving are one of a constellation of risk factors associated with suicide
- Good problem solving skills can help children develop the habit of managing stressors in a proactive way that contributes to a sense of self efficacy (the belief that one's actions can be effective).

# Components of Problem Solving Skills



Broadly two major components:

## Motivational

- A belief that attempts at solving problems will have an impact. This is the opposite of learned helplessness will not have any effect situation or solving a problem.

# Components of Problem Solving Skills



## Specific Skills

- Define the Problem
- Identify the Emotion/Feelings Associated with the Problem
- Identify Thoughts Associated with the Problem (e.g. expectations and attributions)
- Generate Options to Confront the Problem (Brainstorm)
- Consider the Possible Outcome/Consequences of Each
- Chose an Option
- Assess the Outcome of the Option Taken and Evaluate Efforts to Manage the Problem

## Identifying populations to teach problem solving skills:



General population of children

Children at specific risk

- Family history of suicide

- Family history of depression (other mental illness)

- Family history of substance abuse

- Children facing specific stressors

# Pathways for helping children learn problem solving skills:

- Parenting
- Educational
- Professionals



# **“Prevention before Intervention”**

*Helping all age groups LIVE, healthy, happy and productive lives!*

