

You're Not Alone

A mental health and suicide prevention blog for the construction industry



Protecting Our Youth from Suicide

March 2019

by Bob Swanson

The competition during March Madness is intense, and there is only one champion. In life, while the competition can be intense, we all have the opportunity to be successful. During a recent presentation to a group of construction union members and their families, I was reminded about an all too often negative consequence of this intense competition in life.

A young middle school male approached me after my presentation to tell me he had very strong suicidal thoughts recently due to persistent bullying at school. He assured me he is now getting the support he needs. I reminded him he is a valuable young man, and he doesn't need the approval of anyone else.

After this experience, I began to wonder how many of our youth are impacted by strong verbal and electronic messages from bullies and other messages giving them the perception that they are not valuable. I decided to look into it, and here's what I found.

Suicide was the second leading cause of death among people ages 10 to 24 in 2016. A study conducted by the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control found: in 2013, 17 percent of the students surveyed for grades 9-12 seriously considered attempting suicide over the previous 12 months (22.4 percent for females and 11.6 percent for males). Additionally, 13.6 percent of the students made a plan on how they would attempt suicide over the previous 12 months, and 8 percent of students attempted suicide one or more times during that same period (10.6 percent for females and 5.4 percent for males).

I bring these sobering statistics to your attention, because while we often focus on adult suicides, our youth can also be the ones in danger. In this information age, we are inundated with many disturbing images that can give our youth the perception that the future is bleak.

Adults understand life is full of challenges, and through our experiences, we realize they can be overcome. Our youth, on the other hand, aren't able to rely on this wealth of experience. We have all had extensive mentors including family members, and supporters from work, school, church, etc. to guide us along. We all have an opportunity to have a positive impact in the guidance of our youth. Remember it takes a village to raise a child.



About the Author - Bob Swanson

Bob Swanson is the past president of Swanson & Youngdale and the first Chairman of FCA International. He tragically lost his son Michael to suicide on March 13, 2009 at the age of 33. Bob now focuses his efforts on creating awareness of the impact of mental health and suicide in the construction industry.