Virginia Cooperative Extension Service

VIRGINIA TECH AND VIRGINIA STATE • VIRGINIA'S LAND GRANT UNIVERSITIES

306-043 1988

A 4-H/CRD Video Discussion Guide

DEAD SERIOUS

DEAD SERIOUS encourages young people to consider some of the major factors that may contribute to teenage suicide. It explores warning signs and suicide myths, and promotes listening skills that teens can use to better understand a friend's problems and to help a friend get professional help, if needed.

Through live footage and dramatic vignettes, **DEAD SERIOUS** is designed to motivate young people to consider the finality of death and to play a role in preventing the increase in teenage suicide.

INTENDED AUDIENCE

For students in grades eight through twelve.

OBJECTIVES

The viewer will:

- Understand many of the problems facing today's teenagers.
- Become aware that teenage suicide is preventable.
- Learn the warning signs, some of the contributing factors and many of the myths surrounding teenage suicide.
- Explore the role depression and depression mixed with drugs and alcohol play in teenage suicide.
- Learn some of the steps teenagers can take to help a friend who may be suicidal, including important listening skills.

SYNOPSIS

In the opening of **DEAD SERIOUS**, teenagers talk about their worries . . . academic pressure, peer pressure, self esteem, the future, and the threat of nuclear war. "If these are supposed to be the best years of our lives," one teen muses, "why is everyone so dead serious?"

Following the opening of the program, the teenage narrator, an integral member of the all-teenage cast, talks about the disturbing statistics: the number of American young people who take their own lives each year and the alarming number of teenagers who attempt suicide during the same time period. The narrator also makes the important point that teenagers talk to other teenagers when they are depressed or suicidal. Most teens don't want to die; they just want someone to take their problems and their pain seriously.

The balance of **DEAD SERIOUS** is a series of vignettes depicting the factors and situations that can lead to teen suicide. Included in this overview is a comprehensive discussion of the warning signals most teens display prior to attempting suicide.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Do you think there is usually one major reason why a teenager takes his/her own life or is it due to a combination of factors?
2. Do most adults look back on their teenage years as the best years of their lives? How does that attitude make you feel when you're down?
3. Who would you tell if you were thinking of taking your own life? How do you think those people would respond? How would you like them to respond?
4. You may have noticed that many of the warning signs of suicide are behaviors that many teens exhibit. How do you think you might tell the difference between "normal" teenage behavior and suicidal behavior?
5. Have you or any of your friends ever been depressed? What does it feel like? Does it seem as if the bad times will last forever? What pulls you or a friend out of depression?
6. What do you think about teens who use drugs and alcohol? Are they just out for a good time or are they covering up for their insecurities or problems?

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

Help teens face their many pressures by talking about them and realizing they are not alone. The following could be used to stimulate discussion with youngsters:

1. What do you worry about most and why?
2. Whom do you turn to when you have a problem?
3. How do you feel when you get sad or depressed?
4. What makes a good listener?
5. What advice would you give to a friend who appears to be thinking about suicide?
6. What are some of the more common suicide myths?

MTI Film and Video
Length: 23 minutes

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CRD
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Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, and September 30, 1977, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Mitchell R. Geasler, Director, Virginia Cooperative Extension Service, and Vice Provost for Extension, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg, Virginia; Clinton V. Turner, Administrator, 1890 Extension Program, Virginia State University, Petersburg, Virginia.