

# Psychologist shares warning signs for suicide in youth

May 11 2016, by Ayleen Barbel Fattal

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Credit: Florida International University

According to a new study released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, U.S. suicide rates have surged to the highest levels in nearly 30 years.

While suicide rates increased among nearly all [age groups](#) (10-74), the study particularly found an alarming 200 percent increase of suicide among girls 10 to 14. Boys in the same age group experienced the second-largest percent increase at 37 percent.

[Jeremy Pettit](#), professor of psychology and psychiatry at Florida International University shares some warning signs parents should look out for if they believe their child or adolescent may be at risk for suicide:

- Feelings of hopelessness
- Anxiety, agitation, [trouble sleeping](#) or sleeping all of the time
- Expressions of having no reason for living; no sense of purpose in life
- Feelings of being trapped—like there's no way out
- Increased alcohol and/or drug use
- Withdrawal from friends, family and community
- Rage, uncontrolled anger, expressions of wanting or seeking revenge
- Reckless behavior or more risky activities, seemingly without thinking
- Dramatic mood changes
- Giving away prized possessions

"Parents should take all signs of distress and [suicidal thoughts](#) seriously," Pettit said. "If parents suspect their child may be having thoughts of suicide, they are encouraged first to ensure their child's physical safety and then to seek help."

Pettit specializes on the course of depression, anxiety and [suicidal behaviors](#) over time. His research includes interpersonal and cognitive factors that contribute to the onset, maintenance and recurrence of these behaviors. An expert in anxiety and depression, Pettit has written more

than 80 scientific papers and received numerous [awards](#) and grants for his work in this area.

**More information:** The [Center for Children and Families](#) at FIU provides evidence-based treatments—in English and Spanish—for children and adolescents who are experiencing depression, anxiety or suicidal thoughts. Parents can call 305-348-0477 or email [ccf@fiu.edu](mailto:ccf@fiu.edu) for more information.

Provided by Florida International University

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