

13 Reasons Why, Discussion Points

The Downtown Mission's Distress Centre is aware that many people including young people may be watching the Netflix series, *13 Reasons Why*.

Television often brings societal issues to light that produces larger discussions and debate. *13 Reasons Why* is no different. However much of the material is graphic and potentially triggering for vulnerable people.

With this in mind, we have conducted literary searches for talking discussion points around this topic. If you are a parent of a teenager or twentysomething, experts suggest you ask if they have watched the series or are watching the series and use this as an opportunity for open discussion.

What do you like about the series?

What don't you like?

What could you do differently if you were Hannah?

There are more healthy ways to cope with the feelings Hannah experiences – let's talk about some of them. What are some healthy ways you like to use? What are the things that make you feel happy and that you enjoy?

What should you do if you try to talk to an adult when you are struggling, but you don't feel like they heard you?

Who are the adults in your life that you can talk to when you are struggling?

What would you do if your friend asked you to keep a secret about suicide like they do in the show? What were the advantages and disadvantages of all the keeping of secrets in the show?

Some additional points:

Talking openly and honestly about emotional distress and suicide is ok. It will not make someone more suicidal or put the idea of suicide in their mind. If you are concerned about someone, ask them about it.

Knowing how to acknowledge and respond to someone who shares their thoughts of emotional distress or suicide with you is important. Don't judge them or their thoughts. Listen. Be caring and kind. Offer to stay with them. Offer to go with them to get help or to contact a crisis line.

A reminder that this series is fictional. When you die you do not get to make a movie or talk to people any more. Leaving messages from beyond the grave is a dramatization produced in Hollywood and is not possible in real life.

Suicide and the reasons for it are very complex. There is no one single reason why someone takes their life. In fact, suicide is not a common response to life's challenges or adversity. The vast majority of people who experience bullying, the death of a friend, or any other adversity

described in the series do not die by suicide. In fact, most reach out, talk to others and seek help or find other productive ways of coping. They go on to lead healthy, normal lives.

Suicide is never glamorous or romantic as this series may lead someone to believe. Death by suicide is tragic.

It is important to know that, in spite of the portrayal of a serious treatment failure in 13RW, **there are many treatment options for life challenges, distress and mental illness.**

Suicide is never the fault of survivors of suicide loss. There are resources and support groups for suicide loss survivors in our community.

Encourage help seeking behavior and talk about trusted adults and resources in our community including walk-in counselling, peer support and support groups and individual counselling. Here are some good numbers to have on hand:

Suicide affects everyone and everyone can do something to help if they see or hear warning signs that someone is at risk of suicide.

Note: These talking points were taken from a document created by the Suicide Awareness Voices of Education & the Jed Foundation, in collaboration with Netflix. The Ontario School Board and Waterloo Region Suicide Prevention Council also contributed to developing these.