

# Caring youth-parent relations can be vital to preventing adolescent suicide attempts

February 11 2015

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Credit: SnapDoc/Flickr

Positive relations between youth and their parents can be key to preventing adolescent suicide attempts, according to the University of British Columbia (UBC) research.

Suicide is the third-leading cause of adolescent death worldwide, and is responsible for a quarter of all adolescent deaths in Canada. The research examines the link between parental bonding - a term describing the quality of a parent-child relationship - and a history of suicidal thoughts and attempts.

Numerous studies suggest that positive parental relationships reduce

adolescents' risk of experiencing depression, loneliness and suicide. "However, it has been unclear whether positive adolescent-parent relations protect against suicidal thoughts, suicide attempts or both," says Boaz Saffer, the study's lead author and a graduate student in clinical psychology at UBC. "This is a crucial distinction, given that most people who think about suicide do not act on their thoughts."

The research used two U.S.-based samples: adolescent psychiatric patients and [high school students](#). Parental bonding was divided into two categories: [parental care](#) and parental overprotection. The patients and students completed several questionnaires measuring parental care and overprotection, as well as other known suicide risk factors such as loneliness, [emotional distress](#), and self-worth.

Results indicated that adolescents with a history of suicide attempts reported lower parental care than non-suicidal adolescents and adolescents with a history of suicidal thoughts. The other variables assessed - parental overprotection, loneliness, emotional distress and self-worth - were no different in those who made suicide attempts compared to those who only thought about suicide.

"These findings indicate that caring parent-adolescent relationships reduce the likelihood that suicidal thoughts lead to [suicide attempts](#)," says Saffer. "Therefore, increasing parental care might represent an important opportunity to reduce suicide risk in adolescents, especially in adolescents already experiencing [suicidal thoughts](#)."

**More information:** Clarifying the Relationship of Parental Bonding to Suicide Ideation and Attempts, [onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/sltb.12146/abstract](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/sltb.12146/abstract)

Provided by University of British Columbia

Citation: Caring youth-parent relations can be vital to preventing adolescent suicide attempts (2015, February 11) retrieved 18 January 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2015-02-youth-parent-vital-adolescent-suicide.html>

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