



# MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID AUSTRALIA

## 13 Reasons Why: Important talking points

- It's important to remember that *13 Reasons Why* is a fictional story and many aspects should not be taken as a reflection of real life.
- If a person dies by suicide, they are not there afterwards to observe the aftermath. Because of the way Hannah's story is told, it often feels like she is there watching and seeing how the story unfolds. Some young people may view suicide as a way of punishing someone or getting revenge, however they need to understand that a person who suicides will never see or know how things turned out after their death.
- Young people who find that they can identify with Hannah, her life experiences, and thoughts of suicide, need to know that there is help available.
- The poor way the school counsellor reacted to Hannah's statement that she had been raped, and his lack of attention to her, such as taking a phone call during their session, is not typical of counsellors. Counsellors are professionals who are trained to listen and provide help, and seek additional support for a person if needed.
- A young person who believes that adults can't or won't help because of the show's themes need to be encouraged to be persistent. It's a matter of finding the right person, and there are many suitable people who can help.
- Keeping secrets about traumatic events such as rape and bullying is never okay. When these things happen, there are people who can help. Keeping secrets can delay a person's recovery.
- Suicidal thoughts are painful and difficult to endure, but most people who have thoughts of suicide don't act on them. A young person who feels like there are no other options left needs to hear that there are *always* other options.
- Young people who have lost a friend to suicide need to know that there is no one to blame in a situation like this. Young people who feel guilty need support and counselling.
- People can learn to recognise some of the signs that indicate a person is at risk of suicide. If a young person thinks that a friend is at risk of suicide, they should ask the friend directly e.g. "Are you thinking about killing yourself?" If the answer is yes, they need to get an adult involved right away.
- Though it is normal to feel guilt when a friend suicides, no one is to blame for another person's suicide. Young people may point to characters in the show, particularly the classmate who raped Hannah, and those who bullied her, and say that these characters are responsible. While those characters are guilty of the things they did, and should face legal consequences, this is not the same as being responsible for her suicide.

### If a young person is distressed and in need of support, they can call or visit:

- Kids Helpline (1800 55 1800) or [kidshelpline.com.au](http://kidshelpline.com.au)
- eHeadspace (1800 650 890) or [eheadspace.org.au](http://eheadspace.org.au)
- Lifeline (13 11 14) or [lifeline.org.au](http://lifeline.org.au)

**Mental Health First Aid Australia** is a national not-for-profit charity that provides training to adults who live and work with young people (Youth Mental Health First Aid) and young people themselves (teen Mental Health First Aid) to build knowledge, skills and confidence in how to help a person experiencing a mental health problem or crisis. In addition, specific suicide first aid training is available (Mental Health First Aid for the Suicidal Person). Suicide first aid guidelines are available on the website.

**For information, visit [mhfa.com.au](http://mhfa.com.au)**

[www.mhfa.com.au](http://www.mhfa.com.au)

**A not-for-profit organisation focused on mental health training and research**

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