

# BEYOND

**SUICIDE IS THE SECOND LEADING CAUSE OF DEATH IN MICHIGAN FOR PEOPLE AGES 15 TO 34.**

**FEMALES ATTEMPT SUICIDE THREE TIMES AS OFTEN AS MALES, BUT MORE MALES DIE FROM SUCCESSFUL SUICIDE ATTEMPTS.**

**FIREARMS ARE USED IN 51 PERCENT OF MALE SUICIDES.**

**ABOUT TWO-THIRDS OF PEOPLE WHO COMPLETE SUICIDE ARE DEPRESSED AT THE TIME OF THEIR DEATHS.**

**34.8 PERCENT OF FEMALE SUICIDES INVOLVE DRUGS, MEDICINE OR POISON.**

**1,668 U.S. TEENAGERS TOOK THEIR OWN LIVES LAST YEAR, 63 PERCENT WERE WHITE MALES.**

SOURCES: WWW.DOSOMETHING.ORG, AMERICAN FOUNDATION FOR SUICIDE PREVENTION AND NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF MENTAL HEALTH

**ONE IN 65,000 CHILDREN AGES 10 TO 14 COMMIT SUICIDE EACH YEAR.**

**EVERY SUICIDE AFFECTS AT LEAST SIX OTHER PEOPLE.**

**FIREARMS AND SUFFOCATION ARE THE MOST COMMON.**

**ON AVERAGE, ONE PERSON COMMITS SUICIDE EVERY 16.2 MINUTES.**

**ONE IN 25 SUICIDE ATTEMPTS ARE SUCCESSFUL.**

**THERE ARE TWO TIMES AS MANY DEATHS FROM SUICIDE THAN DEATHS FROM HIV AND AIDS.**

**EACH YEAR ABOUT 157,000 PEOPLE BETWEEN THE AGES OF 10 AND 24 RECEIVE MEDICAL CARE FOR SELF-INFLICTED INJURIES.**

**SUICIDE COSTS THE UNITED STATES \$51 BILLION ANNUALLY.**

**DEPRESSION LEFT UNTREATED OR UNDIAGNOSED IS THE LEADING CAUSE OF SUICIDE.**

**SUICIDE IS THE 10TH LEADING CAUSE OF DEATH IN THE U.S.**

**IN THE U.S., SUICIDE RATES ARE HIGHEST DURING THE SPRING.**

**EACH YEAR 44,193 AMERICANS DIE BECAUSE OF A SUICIDE ATTEMPT.**

# REASONS

By Lindsey Ramsdell, Katelynn Mulder, Katie Thomas, Amber Braker & Chloe Ribco  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF, EDITORS & STAFF REPORTER

# The controversy

Suicide is the third leading cause of death for young people ages 10 to 24, according to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention. They are taking their own lives, and society still avoids the topic.

Aiming to raise awareness for the sensitive subject, one of Netflix's newest original series has brought it to the forefront and sparked a controversy over how conversations about suicide should be handled.

"13 Reasons Why" is about a group of teenagers whose classmate, Hannah Baker, commits suicide and leaves behind tapes accusing each of them of playing a role in her decision to end her own life.

The show's creators said they wanted to foster a dialogue about a problem that is personally important to them. Some viewers agree it does exactly that. However, critics claim that the show grossly mishandled its subject matter. In fact, its creators allegedly ignored warnings from psychologist and executive director of Suicide Awareness Voices of Education Dan Reidenberg about its contents. Netflix originally reached out to Reidenberg for advice and he recommended that they not release the show.

"I actually read the book several years ago, and I watched it because of all the talk," counselor Jennifer Sherman said. "I wanted to be informed about what students are seeing just so I understood. I have to tell you there (were) really disturbing parts for me. As an adult, I had a hard time watching it and hearing some of the stuff, and so I worry about that with different age groups that are watching it."

While the controversy centers around the graphic depiction of Baker's suicide in the last episode, experts for the National Association of School Psychologists and other mental health organizations have stated that many aspects of the show can be triggers for those struggling with mental health issues such as depression or anxiety.

They have stated that the show simplifies the struggles that lead people to suicidal thoughts to present bullying as the only factor. They also feel that it not only presents suicide as a viable option, but even romanticizes it.

"I mean the whole idea of sending out these tapes to kind of get revenge. It's not ok. It's also not realistic," Sherman said. "And I hate to be blunt here, but when you're dead, you don't get to control what happens after. I also think that you have this girl and there's this cute boy, and he fights for her after she dies. And that, to me, is a glamorization."

Mental health experts also warn that the media's portrayal of teenage suicide, if not handled correctly, can be harmful and even bring about "suicide contagion." This phenomenon occurs when there is an increase in thoughts of suicide among a group of people. It can be the result of someone close to them committing suicide or sensationalized media coverage of one.

Netflix has stated that they will add additional advisories to the series, but some say this is not enough. In fact, Diversity Club adviser Daniel Gilleran feels that this may even encourage kids to watch it.

Gilleran said that he thinks having a healthy discussion about suicide and suicide prevention is important, but that people also don't want to plant the idea in kids who are vulnerable to those kinds of thoughts.

"To be honest, I'm not sure that all the students want to have this conversation," Gilleran said. "I could see some students being turned off by it. That's why the mandatory thing might be a little difficult. But there are also students who would be reluctant to talk about it unless prompted, which I think is important. And there are other students that really want to talk about it."

Gilleran said that if students confide in a faculty or staff member about having suicidal thoughts, that adult is legally

obligated to seek out a counselor or trained professional to get them help. He notes that even if a threat to self harm doesn't seem legitimate, it should still be taken seriously.

"You don't want to just dismiss it and say, 'oh, they're fine,' and they're not. Because then that's horrible," he said.

Sherman said counselors have an obligation to say something when someone's life is on the line. Counselors try to connect parents and students to help them get the necessary support and resources.

"I would say this to the student who was struggling with those thoughts, and I would say this to the student's friends who know they are struggling with those thoughts: you can't keep it a secret," Sherman said. "Even if you feel like it's not a big deal or doesn't feel like it would go in that direction, you can't say nothing because you never know what would happen, and you don't want to regret anything happening to your friend."

She said it's crucial to reach out to a trusted adult—a parent, counselor, social worker, school psychologist or teacher—and was dismayed by the show's portrayal of counselors.

"The counselor in that show was represented poorly," she said. "That cannot be the image of a counselor that I want people to have."

Netflix has also stated that "13 Reasons Why" will return for a second season in 2018. Cliffhangers from the last episode promise more drama and possibly even more violence. Freshman Hannah Zalewski watched the first season and is looking forward to the second. However, she also understands why there is controversy surrounding the series.

"I think that this show could definitely be a trigger for certain people because it does discuss serious topics and situations," Zalewski said. "But at the same time, I think that it does need to be seen, and people need to know about it."

## Students join the conversation on



Junior Grace Howard



grape howie  
@gracehowie

13 reasons why is a big eye opener

4/13/17, 6:30 PM

Senior Thomas Mowen



Thomas Mowen  
@ThomasMowen

13 Reasons Why has such an unsatisfying ending

4/15/17, 2:41 PM

Junior Savannah Burguron



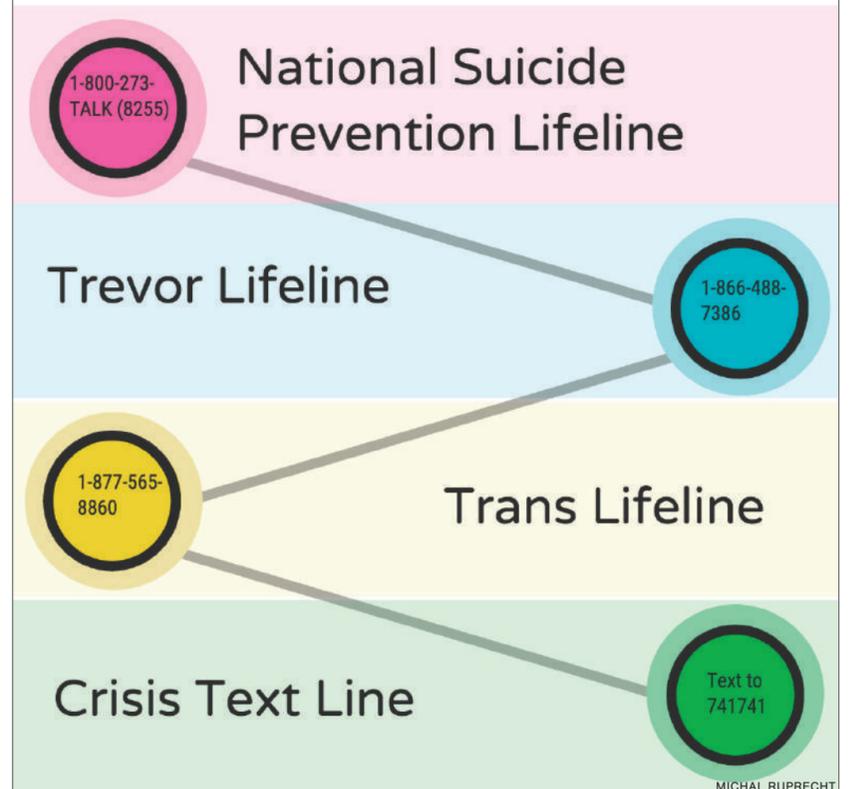
savannah burguron  
@savannahhh27

13 Reasons Why breaks my heart in so many ways

4/10/17, 7:40 PM

KATIE THOMAS & MICHAL RUPRECHT

## Suicide prevention hotlines



## YOUR TURN: Do you think '13 Reasons Why' did a good job of portraying depression and suicide?



"I think that they did a good job, but they did a little too much by showing how she did it to herself and the pain she was in ... (and) how the people in there impacted her life."

Sarah Seagram  
FRESHMAN



"I think they really showed the point that it does happen and people just don't really realize it."

Maddie Mills  
SOPHOMORE



"I don't think they gave a good impression on the show because it tells kids that even if they commit suicide, that they can still get back at the people who are bullying them."

Julian Martin-Turner  
SOPHOMORE



"I think that they showed an accurate situation with it, but at the same time they didn't because there was a lot of people that knew that didn't really do anything."

Shpetim Fama  
JUNIOR



"I think they did a decent job, but I don't like how they romanticized it and included Clay and how he could have saved her, because I don't really think he could have."

Danielle Bennett  
SENIOR



"They make Hannah out to be a so much more popular after death ... and I fear that it would make kids that are suicidal think that if they did kill themselves, then all of a sudden everyone would talk about them."

Diane Montgomery  
ENGLISH TEACHER

## A little sensitivity goes a long way

### MY TAKE

LINDSEY RAMSDELL



"How could a teenager living in Grosse Pointe feel the need to end their life?"

On April 18, I was out running errands when I heard an adult cynically pose this question, just hours after news had spread that a senior at South High School had taken his life.

The insensitivity and ignorance of this person struck me, especially coming from someone who is usually expected to have a mature response to something of this nature.

Yes, I know that teenagers in Grosse Pointe have it pretty good. This is one of the safest, richest and well-developed suburbs in the nation. The school system is exceptional, and any kid born in Grosse Pointe has a step-up in life just by being raised here. But, with that being said, no one has the right to discredit another person's pain, no matter their social or financial status.

We will never be able to know what's going on in someone else's mind—what pain they have suffered in their life, what issues they have at home, what mental illnesses they could be struggling with. I can only imagine the kind of tortured state of mind one must be in to feel that suicide is the only way out, but I can't actually feel it.

For those of us that have never felt that severity, it's easy to assume that someone who is suicidal could be over-exaggerating or only thinking of themselves. But in reality, all pain is pain. While money and upbringing certainly can factor into why one may feel the need to end their life, they

also can have nothing to do with it. We don't get to choose what we care about or what makes us sad in life, so no other person has the authority to decide what is worthy of another's pain and sadness. Any emotional pain is valid.

As a society, we have a long way to go with understanding suicide and how to prevent it. But, perhaps the first step is simply recognizing that we are allowed to have moments of pain and working on trying to understand the way others feel. We have all had, or will face, experiences during which it feels like our world is crumbling down around us or that we will never get over the sadness we feel in that moment. So why is it so hard for us to sympathize with people who are suicidal or who have committed suicide?

In the past decade, suicide has earned a lot more attention in media, schools and communities. But, there are still people who don't understand it and, because of this, are insensitive to it. When the topic of suicide

is brought up, our first response should be concern, not disdain and judgement.

Suicide is not the right solution to emotional pain. I know that with time, most pain will subside. But, I do know that pain is real, and it hurts. I know that adults feel it, kids feel it, boys feel it, girls feel it, teenagers feel it—heck, even teenagers from Grosse Pointe feel it. No one is susceptible to it, and therefore no one else can judge another person for it.

I hope that one day we will live in a world where this kind of hypocrisy doesn't exist. Maybe then we will be better at putting ourselves in others' shoes. This could help us understand what others are feeling and know how to help them.

If you can't relate to a person's sadness, that is ok, too. But you can always be empathetic. It may just save someone's life.

We all have a role to play in preventing suicide, and it starts with validating and accepting others, even if their experiences are different than our own.