

Dear Parents/Guardians,

Many of you have heard about, and possibly watched, the popular Netflix show *13 Reasons Why*. With the upcoming release of the second season (Friday May 18) I felt that it would be helpful to pass on information surrounding this sensitive topic. I know there will be multiple arenas that families will fall under - not watching it at all, watching it together, and allowing children to watch on their own - and I hope to cover all of these options. Talking about sensitive topics does not increase the likelihood that children will participate in harmful acts. Rather, discussing these topics gives them knowledge to better understand and deal with tough situations, and even help their friends. Below I am including links to discussion topics and more information about the show itself. As always, please feel free to reach out if you have any questions regarding these sensitive topics, or if you have a concern about your student.

Watching together as a family:

This option is best for facilitating discussions surrounding the graphic topics included in the show. Season one included sexual assault, various forms of bullying, underaged drinking, self-harm, and of course suicide. Season 2 is guaranteed to include these and other similar topics as the show continues off the previous plot line. While this content can seem overly intense, the series is full of teachable moments. When watching the show together, it is easy to reflect and even ask children how they may handle the various situations these teens are put into. There can even be teachable moments about how adults handle these situations. One of the prominent topics for schools is the school counselor's interaction with the main character, Hannah. The school counselor, similar to some other adults in the show, did not validate the signs that she was struggling. While this could be an aggravating instance for school counselors everywhere, it can actually be turned into a great discussion about what signs of suicide were being shown and missed. Friends often tell each other more than adults, making it vitally important to inform teens on how to know their friend is struggling, and what steps to take if an adult is not aware.

Allowing children to watch on their own:

This will give your child a wide range of freedom that they may deserve, but will also lead them to interpret the show solely on their own. If this is the option you go with, I still suggest having meaningful conversations with them as they progress through the episodes. These topics are very heavy, even for adults, and kids may not know what to do with the depth of intensity a show like this brings. A few of the questions you may want to ask are: 'What are your biggest takeaways from the show?', 'What parts of the show do you relate to the most?', and 'How do you usually help yourself when you are

stressed or dealing with something difficult?'. The last question may be the most important, creating a discussion about healthy coping.

Not allowing your child to watch the show:

If you feel that your child should not watch the show due to the graphic nature of the topics, you are not alone in this group. Netflix has created a tool where you can require an access code to watch particular shows. This give parents the ability to block sensitive, or inappropriate material. However, I do urge that if you choose to not allow your child to watch the show you have a discussion of the reasons for doing so. This part is included in one the articles shared at the bottom of this message. Also, I want parents to keep in mind that this is a very popular show and there is a great likelihood that students will have conversations about this show with their peers. While we try to monitor conversations of sensitive topics, this cannot always be the case when peers talk to each other. Many of the discussion questions surrounding healthy coping are still relevant to young teens, regardless of them watching this show.

Helpful Guide for Parents & Educators:

<https://teenlineonline.org/13-reasons-help-parents-educators/>

Screenagers 13 Reasons Why S2 Preparations:

<https://www.screenagersmovie.com/tech-talk-tuesdays/how-to-prepare-for-13-reasons-why-season-2>

7 Essential Questions:

<https://www.weareteachers.com/discussion-questions-13-reasons-why/>

Season 1 Discussion Guide:

<http://13reasonswhy.info/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/13-Reasons-Why-Season-1-Discussion-Guide.compressed.pdf>