



13 REASONS WHY ▶

DISCUSSION GUIDE

About the show

13 Reasons Why is a fictional drama series that tackles tough real-life issues experienced by teens and young people, including sexual assault, substance abuse, suicide and more. This Netflix series focuses on a high school student, Clay Jensen, and his friend Hannah Baker, who died by suicide after experiencing a series of painful events involving school friends, leading to a downward spiral of her mental health and sense of self.

Filmed in a candid and often explicit manner, the series takes an honest look at the issues faced by young people today. The information below

is meant to help viewers understand the various issues presented in Season One of *13 Reasons Why* and to help guide productive conversations around the tough topics the series raises and how these situations can be addressed particularly if viewers resonate with any of the characters.

13 Reasons Why seeks to highlight how the behaviors we show others and that are shown to us can be very impactful, the importance of having empathy and compassion for others, even when their struggles aren't obvious, and that everyone matters to many, even when it doesn't feel that way.



Tips for watching / rewatching Season One

- Hit pause and talk about an issue during an episode. Talking about the scenes as they take place can help young (and old) viewers frame the content in helpful ways.
- Discuss what you think is similar to what you've seen or experienced in your own life and what might be amplified for dramatic emphasis.
- Think about what might be missing that is typical in the real world, but not portrayed in the series. For example, how a teacher or school counselor you know may behave differently from those portrayed in the show.
- If there are scenes that feel uncomfortable to watch, don't feel that you must. Similarly, if there is something you see that feels disturbing, talk with someone—a counselor, a parent, a trusted adult or friend.
- Continue the conversation even after you are done with an episode. If you are a parent or young person concerned about a peer, listen for prompts from others that may indicate an interest in discussing the episode in greater detail. Prompts such as, "I was watching *13 Reasons Why* last night" or a discussion about an actor in the show, could come in the classroom, at the dinner table, in the car, on the way to sports practice, or during homework time. At that point, you can say "tell me more" or "I am so glad that you are telling/asking me this."



Difficult topics

Difficult but important topics are raised in *13 Reasons Why* Season 1. Below are some tips for talking about these issues:

Depression

- It's important to encourage open dialog about mental health. Mental health challenges are commonplace and often have onset during the teen or young adult years.
- In the case of the most common mental health condition, depression is a serious illness that causes symptoms that can interfere with one's ability to study, work, sleep, eat and enjoy life. Some signs of depression include: Persistent sadness, decreased energy, overwhelming fatigue, feelings of hopelessness or helplessness, loss of interest in hobbies or daily activities, difficulty concentrating, changes in sleeping patterns, other atypical behaviors for the person such as agitation, irritability or anger outbursts.
- If you think that you may be struggling with depression, seek help from a counselor, pediatrician or mental health professional- if you are a teen, talk to a trusted adult to help you get the help you need right away.



Self-Harm and Suicide

- While *13 Reasons Why* portrayed a suicide death that already occurred, it's important to know that suicide is known to be a tragic but often preventable health outcome. The vast majority of people who face the challenges portrayed in *13 Reasons Why* find ways to be resilient.
- There's no single cause for suicide. Suicide most often occurs when stressors and health issues converge to create an experience of hopelessness or despair.

- Depression is the most common condition associated with suicide and it is often undiagnosed or undertreated. Conditions like depression, anxiety and substance abuse, especially when left unaddressed, can increase risk of suicide. But, most people who actively manage their mental health lead fulfilling lives.
- Don't be afraid to have a conversation about mental health and suicide—it doesn't increase the risk or plant the idea in someone's head. But it is helpful to invite conversations about feelings, thoughts and perspectives.
- If someone you know is distressed, don't judge or minimize their problems. Be patient, kind and practice active listening skills. Offer to help them get professional help (see list on page 9).
- Look out for possible warnings signs of increased suicide risk:

- Changes in behavior, especially during a painful event, loss or life transition
- Talking about harming or killing oneself
- Expressing feelings of hopelessness, feeling trapped
- Increased alcohol or drug use
- Withdrawing from activities, isolating from family and friends
- Feelings of depression, anxiety, loss of interest, humiliation, rage

- Sometimes people avoid reaching out to someone who may be struggling with mental health, but just having a conversation can make all the difference in helping them to feel connected and supported. Often, it's the first step toward getting what could be life-saving help.
- If you feel you are at risk or suspect a child, friend or loved one is thinking about suicide, talk to a trusted adult or reach out to a resource such as a hotline or text line to talk to someone who can help.

Bullying

- Bullying is repeated aggressive behavior in which one person in a position of power deliberately threatens, abuses or harms another person physically or emotionally.



- In *13 Reasons Why*, bullying is demonstrated in several forms—physical, verbal, social isolation. Whatever the form, it can be helped by speaking to a trusted adult—a parent, teacher or school counselor.
- Some people may think talking to someone is tattling but it is important to alert trusted adults about issues that may cause harm to oneself or to someone else.
- Because the characters in *13 Reasons Why* play different roles in the various bullying scenarios, these scenes offer a chance to consider how—by playing a different role—bullying can be prevented.
 - Those who Assist: they don't start the bullying behavior, but they encourage bullying and occasionally join in
 - Those who Reinforce: they aren't directly involved in the bullying but they're part of the audience, sometimes laughing or supporting the bullying
 - Those who Defend: they come to the defense of the person being bullied and offer comfort
 - Outsiders: they don't reinforce the bullying behavior, nor do they defend the child being bullied

Sexual Assault

- Sexual assault, or unwanted sexual contact, is a theme in several episodes of *13 Reasons Why*, providing an opportunity to open a dialogue about issues related to consent, ongoing harassment and peer pressure.
- Some viewers have reported that the show better helped them to recognize sexual assault. For clarity, sexual assault can include:
 - **Rape:** when a person does not or is unable to physically or mentally consent to sex and is *threatened* with force
 - **Sexual coercion:** when someone makes you feel obligated to say yes to a sexual activity by using guilt, pressure, drugs/alcohol or force
 - **Sexual harassment:** includes unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors and verbal or physical harassment of a sexual nature in the workplace or school setting. It can also occur in public in the form of catcalling, stalking, groping
- Remember that consent to one sexual activity, such as kissing, doesn't mean that someone has the right to touch further in any way that makes one uncomfortable.



Starting the Conversation

13 Reasons Why is meant to provoke important conversations and watching the show is an opportunity to talk with people about issues that concern you—whether you experience them yourself or you are worried that a friend or young person may be struggling.

If you are not quite sure how to start the conversation, here are some ideas:

- Do you think the characters in the show are behaving in ways that are similar to people you know? How so? How are they different?
- What do you think about what happened in this episode?
- Did parts of the story make you think about how people who are struggling do not show the full

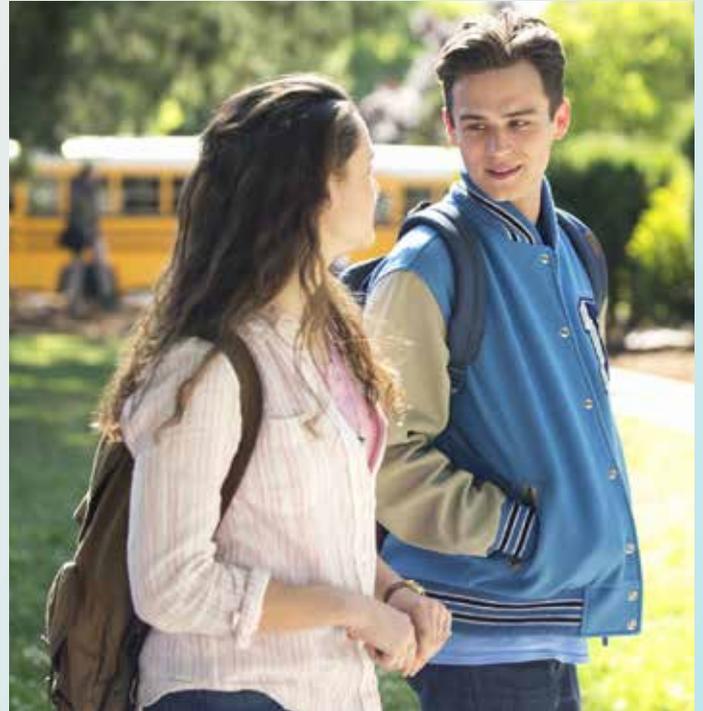
picture of what they are dealing with to others?

- What did you learn about “so-and-so character’s” situation from this episode? For example, what did you learn about what happened to Jessica and sexual assault?
- How does what you have seen change how you view some things that happen in real life?
- Do you think the adults did anything wrong? What could they have done better?
- What would you do if you knew a friend were considering suicide or had been sexually assaulted?
- Who would you go to if you were experiencing any of the situations these teens went through?
- Have you ever felt the way that Hannah, Clay or any of the other characters feel? Which ones?
- Have you ever wanted to tell someone about a sexual assault or bullying but worried that it was tattling?
- How do you know when to offer compassion/support/empathy and when to set clear boundaries?



Resources

While talking about these issues is important, if you or someone you know is at risk, it is critical to get help from either a trusted adult or a professional resource. Below are some resources to enable you to seek information or additional professional help.



For immediate help:

- Crisis Text Line: Text TALK to 741741; <https://www.crisistextline.org/>
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: Talk or chat 1-800-273-TALK <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>

For further help or information:

- 13ReasonsWhy.info
- Depression: <https://www.nlm.nih.gov/health/publications/depression>
- Anxiety: <https://adaa.org>
- Substance use - drugs: <https://teens.drugabuse.gov>
- Alcohol: <https://www.niaaa.nih.gov>
- Suicide prevention: <https://afsp.org>
- Bullying: <https://www.stopbullying.gov>
- Sexual assault: <https://www.rainn.org/get-help>
Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN) offers free 24/7 online chat and a telephone hotline
- After a suicide loss: <https://afsp.org/find-support/ive-lost-someone>

Information Regarding the Upcoming Release of *13 Reasons Why, Season 2*

The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) has received numerous requests for guidance regarding the upcoming second season of the Netflix series *13 Reasons Why*. Netflix has not formally announced the release date, but prerelease promotions and media coverage indicate a release date sometime this spring, approximately a year after the release of the first season.

NASP has not been able to preview the second season, but we can provide the following information and considerations.

1. The first season, which was virally popular among adolescents, raised significant concerns for parents, educators, and mental health professionals because of its dramatic, often graphic portrayal of difficult issues such as sexual assault and suicide. Netflix's stated goal of sparking conversations about these very real issues is a good one. However, most experts believed that the intense handling of the content without appropriate safeguards (such as warning cards before each episode) had the potential to put some vulnerable youth at risk for emotional distress or harmful behavior, including increased suicide ideation and attempts.
2. NASP issued [guidance](#) to help schools and families engage in supportive discussions with youth and respond to the needs of those who may have been triggered by viewing the series. We also joined with other education and mental health organizations to communicate directly with Netflix about [concerns](#) regarding a second season.
3. Chief among our recommendations were to address: the lack of cautions regarding vulnerable youth and safeguards associated with each episode, the overwhelmingly negative choices and actions of the teen characters, the unrealistically clueless and uncaring depiction of adults, the failure to address mental health directly, and the unnecessarily graphic and potentially triggering depiction of harmful behaviors, such as a possible school shooting alluded to at the end of the first season.
4. Netflix appears to have listened to some of the guidance they received. Cast members have recorded [a video](#) warning some viewers that they may not want to watch the series if they are struggling with similar issues, or to watch the series with a trusted adult. The video also urges viewers to "reach out for help" and "talk to someone" if they need assistance. Netflix has indicated that it will provide warning cards before each episode, a discussion guide designed to facilitate conversations and outlets for assistance for viewers, and [other safeguards](#).
5. **Importantly, there are indications that young people are watching or rewatching the first season in order to "be up to speed" for the second season.** Netflix has created a [discussion guide](#) and added some additional warning cards; however, we strongly recommend that vulnerable children and youth (such as those struggling with depression, previous suicidal behavior, or trauma) not watch the first season, and most certainly not alone. Schools and parents can refer to our [season 1 guidance](#) for additional recommendations.
6. Netflix has not confirmed the season 2 storylines other than to say that most of the season 1 characters will return and that difficult issues will again be explored. Given the possible storylines set up at the end of season 1 (e.g., another suicide attempt, a rape trial, and a school shooting), it is important for adults to be aware of what the children and youth in their care are watching. This includes monitoring access to content via computers and mobile devices.

7. School psychologists and other school-employed mental health professionals can assist stakeholders (e.g., school administrators, parents, and teachers) to engage in supportive conversations with children and youth as well as provide resources and offer expertise in preventing harmful behaviors. Following are some general recommendations:
- Provide the guidance developed by NASP for [13 Reasons Why, Season 1](#) to parents and educators.
 - Encourage parents to watch the series with their child; children and youth who view this series may need supportive adults to help process it. Help students articulate their perceptions when viewing controversial content. The difficult issues portrayed do occur in schools and communities, and it is important for adults to listen, take adolescents' concerns seriously, and be willing to offer to help.
 - Caution against binge watching, as doing so with intense content, particularly in isolation, can be associated with increased mental health concerns.
 - Reinforce that school-employed mental health professionals are available to help.
 - Make sure parents, teachers, and students are aware of [suicide risk warning signs](#). **Always take warning signs seriously, and never promise to keep them secret. Establish a confidential reporting mechanism for students.**
 - Reinforcing resiliency and protective factors can lessen the potential of risk factors that lead to suicidal ideation and behaviors. Once a child or adolescent is considered at risk, schools, families, and friends should work to build these factors in and around the youth.

NASP fully supports a stated goal for the Netflix series: the need for forthright discussions among youth and between youth and adults about the serious issues represented. We are hopeful that Netflix is adopting a responsible way to do this, which requires both providing the scaffolding for supportive engagement and minimizing harmful triggers. We will offer further content-specific guidance if deemed necessary, once we have had the opportunity to review the second season.

RESOURCES

- **National Suicide Prevention Hotline, 1-800-273-TALK (8255), or text "START" to 741741**
- [SAMHSA Prevention Suicide: A Toolkit for High Schools](#)
- [Suicide Prevention Resource Center, After a Suicide: Toolkit for Schools](#)
- [School Violence Prevention](#)
- ["13 Reasons Why" Netflix Series\(Season 1\): Considerations for Educators and Families](#)

WEBSITES

- National Association of School Psychologists, www.nasponline.org
- Suicide Awareness Voices of Education, www.save.org
- American Association of Suicidology, www.suicidology.org
- American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, <https://afsp.org/>
- Stopbullying.gov
- Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network, www.rainn.org
- 13reasonswhy.info/