



PAUL ROOS

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SUPPORTING OUR SONS

FROM THE PRG COUNSELLING OFFICE

Following the loss of one of our learners, our school community continues to hold one another with care. Grief moves through a school in different ways, and for some boys it surfaces only weeks later, in ways that are easy to miss. September is observed internationally as Suicide Prevention Month, and we use this time each year to strengthen the support around our boys, particularly while feelings may be closer to the surface than usual. Some boys identify closely with another person's experience, and repeated exposure to talk of suicide can affect them even when they were not close to the learner concerned. Few learners become suicidal, but a calm adult, an honest conversation and early help make a real and lasting difference. This document offers guidance on two related fronts: understanding the developmental stage your son is moving through and recognising the signs that call for prompt support.

UNDERSTANDING THIS STAGE: ADOLESCENCE AND THE SEARCH FOR IDENTITY

The years your son spends with us, from Grade 8 to Grade 12, span one of the most significant periods of psychological development in his life. The developmental psychologist Erik Erikson described adolescence as a stage of "*identity versus role confusion*": the central task of these years is to develop a stable, coherent sense of who he is, separate from, yet still connected to, his family, his peers and his school community.

During this stage, boys test values, form friendships that carry increasing emotional weight, and measure themselves against their peer group, their house, their team and the wider school. Because his sense of self is still forming, a loss experienced by the community can be processed differently than it would be by an adult. A boy may absorb another learner's story more personally than expected, question his own place within the group, or feel a heightened need for belonging and reassurance, often at the very age when he is also pulling towards greater independence from you.

None of this signals that something is wrong with your son. It is a normal, expected feature of adolescent development. It does mean, however, that your steady, attuned presence carries particular weight across these five years.

HELPING YOUR SON BUILD A SECURE SENSE OF IDENTITY

A secure identity develops gradually, through consistent relationships, genuine acceptance and safe opportunities to explore who he is becoming. You can support this by:

- **Reflecting his strengths back to him.** Notice and name what he does well beyond marks or performance on the field, so his sense of worth is not tied only to achievement.
- **Staying curious rather than corrective.** Ask about his opinions, friendships and interests, and take his answers seriously, even when they differ from your own.
- **Offering steady presence rather than constant supervision.** Let him know you are reliably available, while allowing him room to make age-appropriate decisions, and the occasional mistake.
- **Keeping him connected to the structures that anchor identity.** His house, team, faith community, hobbies and friendships each give him a felt sense of belonging and contribution.
- **Modelling that difficult emotions are survivable.** A boy who watches an adult name and manage a hard feeling learns that his own feelings do not need to be hidden or feared.
- **Avoiding narrow labels.** Terms such as “the sporty one” or “the quiet one” can box in a boy’s sense of self at precisely the age when he is trying on many identities for size.

HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT YOUR SON RIGHT NOW

- **Check in gently and often.** Ask what he has heard, how he is feeling, and what, if anything, he needs from you.
- **Listen without needing to fix.** Allow him to be sad, confused, angry or quiet, without pressing him to talk before he is ready.
- **Ask directly if you are worried.** “Are you having thoughts of suicide?” A calm, direct question does not plant the idea; it opens a door.
- **Protect ordinary routines.** Sleep, meals, school and the activities he enjoys provide structure at a time when little else may feel steady.
- **Limit exposure to distressing content.** Discourage the forwarding of graphic images, rumours, or any message that presents suicide as brave or as a way out.
- **Keep us informed.** Please tell us if your son is struggling with recent events, has received a worrying message, or has a history of self-harm or suicidal thoughts, so that we can support him at school as well as at home.

WARNING SIGNS REQUIRING PROMPT ATTENTION

What he might say or do

- Talking about wanting to die, disappear or not wake up
- Expressing hopelessness, feeling trapped, or feeling like a burden
- Self-harm, searching for methods, or making a plan
- Farewell messages, unusual goodbyes, or giving away possessions

Changes in Mood or Behaviour

- Marked withdrawal, agitation, impulsivity or aggression
- Sudden changes in mood, sleep, attendance or day-to-day coping
- Increased alcohol or substance use
- A sudden, unexplained calm following severe distress

IF YOU ARE CONCERNED ABOUT IMMEDIATE SAFETY

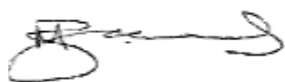
Stay with your son. Contact a mental health professional or emergency service immediately and remain with him until you have handed over directly to another responsible adult.

EMERGENCY AND SUPPORT CONTACTS

If your son is in immediate danger, phone:

Service	Number	When to Use
Emergency (from a cellphone)	112	Immediate danger
Ambulance	10177	Urgent medical emergency
SADAG Suicide Crisis Line	0800 567 567 SMS 31393	24-hour crisis support
Lifeline South Africa	0861 322 322	24-hour confidential counselling
Childline South Africa	116	Support for children and concerned adults
Western Cape Safe Schools	0800 454 647	School safety and support concerns
Nearest emergency department	Nearest hospital contact number	Immediate assessment when safety is uncertain

Our school community holds your son in mind, not only in moments of crisis, but as a young man who is still becoming who he will be. Please do not hesitate to contact the school for support.



Monique Barnes
COUNSELLOR



Lelani Cloete
COUNSELLOR

18 September 2026