

# InterA.C.T.

Raising *A*wareness, Enhancing *C*hoices and Expanding *T*hought

## TALKING THROUGH THE TOUGH STUFF WITH TEENS THE 10 DO'S AND DON'TS

### **DO:**

- Begin by describing what you've noticed.
- Express your concern.
- Let the teen know that you're glad that they told you.
- Listen and be supportive (reminding the teen that you're there to help them and not to judge them).
- Allow for silences if the teen needs time and space.
- Let the teen know that they deserve to feel better.
- Let the teen know that it's not their fault if they're being mistreated.
- Ask how you can help.
- Respect your limits.
- Secure help (e.g. Program Director, Principal, Youth Chairperson, School Counselor etc).

### **DON'T:**

- Barrage the teen with questions.
- Take it personally if the teen is not ready or willing to share with you.
- Give up on the teen if they shut you out at first.
- React with criticism or horror if a teen shares a troubling issue with you.
- Offer dismissive responses such as, "things can't be that bad."
- Try to talk the teen out of their depression, anxiety or self-harming behavior (even if their feelings or concerns sound irrational to you).
- Offer unsolicited advice by telling the teen exactly what to do or how to act, (e.g. "If you'd just...").
- Promise to keep the teen's secret. (You can tell them that you won't use the information that they tell you to hurt them).
- Share details about your romantic relationships or those of other teens.
- Expect yourself to fix the teen's problem/s.