



B2: Robert: An adolescent questioning his sexuality

Robert is a 14-year old male with a history of suicidal thoughts and outbursts. He has made overtures of suicide although his attempts have been rather minor. He has been hospitalized on your child/adolescent psychiatric unit following an overdose of Tylenol.

He came home from a friend's house yesterday afternoon upset and spent the rest of the evening in his room. His parents found him around midnight in the bathroom taking a handful of Tylenol. It is suspected that he took 10 500 mg capsules. His mother called 911 and Robert was rushed to the hospital. Vomiting was induced and it was felt that very little of the drug was actually absorbed into his system. His labs are within normal limits and he was admitted to the child psych unit for further evaluation.

Robert is reserved and has said very little about the incident. You begin a conversation with Robert and he asks you about having sex. Through the conversation he tells you his best friend and he have been having oral sex for the past month. He is worried that everyone will know this and think that he is a 'faggot.'

How do you respond to Robert? Think of at least three things that you could say that would be supportive of Robert and encourage him to be open with you.

Another day, Robert wants to use the computer on the unit and he asks you if there are blocks on the computer. You inquire what is at the root of his question. Robert hesitates and then says he wants to do some research.

How do you respond to Robert? How can you ensure that he is accessing accurate information on the internet?

In the family support group session, Robert's parents, Glen and Maria, mention that they suspected that Robert was exploring his sexuality. Maria has found a variety of explicit sexual magazines and because some of them were photos of two men she wondered if Robert might be gay. Glen was silent throughout the entire therapy session. On leaving the session, Maria asks you how she can learn more about homosexuality.

How do you respond to her? What resources are available in your community for her?

Glen was silent through most of the exchanges and encounters with Robert. Today he has come alone to visit his son. You encounter both in the day





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room, neither one talking with each other. Robert says he wants to go to his room and gets up to leave. Robert's father remains seated and turns to you with tears in his eyes, "I just don't understand him. He won't even talk to me. I can't figure out a way to tell him I don't care if he is gay."

How do you respond to him? Suggest at least two ways that he could tell his son that he loves him.



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Developed for Lavender Health by Mickey Eliason and Carla Randall