

Suicide Facts

Myths

- **MYTH:** Talking about suicide will put the idea in someone's head.
TRUTH: By asking someone if they feel suicidal, you are providing them with a safe opportunity to express their feelings and to have an ally in seeking help.
- **MYTH:** Suicide is spontaneous and those who talk about it won't kill themselves.
TRUTH: 70% of people who die by suicide express the desire to a loved one or show warning signs.
- **MYTH:** Once someone makes up their mind to kill themselves, there is nothing you can do.
TRUTH: Although suicidal thoughts are powerful, they are temporary and the usual cause (depression) can be treated.

Statistics

- Over 30,000 people in the United States die by suicide every year.
- Each year, there are almost twice as many suicides as homicides.
- Suicide is the third leading cause of death among 15-24 year olds.
- More than 90 percent of people who die by suicide have at least one psychiatric illness, most often depression and or alcohol/substance abuse.

Risk Factors

Any of the following risk factors means the person is more vulnerable to suicide than the average person. In general, the presence of more risk factors means higher risk.

Psychiatric and Medical Illnesses:

- Depression, bipolar disorder, alcohol/drug abuse, schizophrenia, seizure disorders, multiple sclerosis, any serious illness

History of:

- Previous suicide attempt(s)
- Trauma or abuse
- Family suicide

Recent Stress:

- Suicide of a friend, acquaintance or someone in the community
- Loss of a relationship
- Failure or humiliation

Access to Method:

- Especially guns, but also drugs, high buildings, etc.

Studies indicate that the best way to prevent suicide is through the early recognition and treatment of depression and other psychiatric illnesses.

In Crisis?

Call: 800.273.TALK

available in US only

Warning signs

- Threatening suicide or self-harm
- Looking for ways to kill oneself (weapons, pills or other means)
- Talking or writing about death, dying or suicide
- Feeling desperate or trapped
- Feelings of hopelessness
- Feeling there is no reason or purpose to live
- Expressing rage, intense anger or seeking revenge
- Feelings of intense anxiety or panic
- Acting reckless or engaging in risky activities
- Increasing alcohol or drug use
- Withdrawing from friends or family

What to Do: ACT[®]

- **A**cknowledge:
 - Take warning signs seriously. Don't ignore a friend or loved one's threats.
- **C**are:
 - Be willing to listen. Don't be afraid to ask if he/she is considering suicide or has a particular plan or method in mind.
 - Let the person know you care and understand. Reassure them that they are not alone, but try not to be confrontational.
- **T**reatment:
 - Encourage your friend/family member to get help immediately.
 - Help them find a knowledgeable mental health professional or a reputable treatment facility.
 - Do not leave a suicidal individual alone.
 - If all else fails, call 911.

References:

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