



The Key to Suicide Prevention: Knowledge

An important way to prevent suicide is by learning about mental illness in general and by separating the facts from the myths that surround suicide. Mental illness is **treatable** and suicide is **preventable**.

Myth: Suicide is primarily a teenage problem.

Fact: Although teen suicide is a growing concern, the rate of geriatric suicide (ages 65 and older) is nearly three times the rate of the general population.

Myth: People who are thinking of suicide are just sad.

Fact: 90% of individuals who die by suicide had some sort of diagnosable mental illness at the time of their death. The most common are depression and bipolar disorder, followed by substance-related disorders and schizophrenia.

Myth: People who die by suicide do so on impulse.

Fact: 75-80% of people who die by suicide display signs of their suicidal thinking (e.g., talking about it, giving away their possessions, posting messages through social media).

Myth: Suicidal people really want to die and nothing will stop them.

Fact: Many people who consider suicide are ambiguous about death and may talk or plan a suicide with the hopes that someone will stop them.

Myth: Once someone attempts suicide, they are at constant risk of trying it again.

Fact: Often the risk of suicide is high only during a specific period of time the person feels in a particular crisis. If help is provided during that time, suicide can be prevented. Although previous attempts of suicide do increase the chances of future attempts, the person is not at constant risk.

Myth: People who die by suicide always leave a note.

Fact: Only 15-25% of people who die by suicide leave a note. Notes often do not indicate the reasons for the suicide.

Myth: Once someone is feeling less depressed, the chance of suicide is not as high.

Fact: When someone is feeling better, the opportunity for suicide increases because they have more energy and feel they are thinking more clearly. They are actually able to plan a suicide more successfully.

Myth: Suicide rates increase around holidays and winter months.

Fact: Suicide rates actually decrease around holidays and winter months. More suicides occur in the spring.

Myth: People who live in big cities are under more stress and are more likely to try to kill themselves.

Fact: Suicide rates are higher in sparsely populated rural areas.

Myth: Don't talk to someone about suicide or it may put the idea into their head.

Fact: Talking about suicide does not cause suicide. In fact, talking openly about suicide helps to reduce the stigma and shame surrounding it. Consequently, talking about suicide helps to keep it from happening.

Resources

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1.800.273.8255

National Institute of Mental Health <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/suicide-prevention/index.shtml>

Thank you Catholic Diocese of Toledo, Ohio for sharing the original document with us

