



Suicide Myths and Facts

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Myth: People who talk about suicide rarely die by suicide and are faking to get attention.

Fact: Do not ignore threats. Every depressed person **requires attention** and their threats are their attempt to get what they need. When you feel that down, you're entitled to get help.

Myth: The tendency toward suicide is inherited and passed on from one generation to another.

Fact: All types of people have died by suicide. It is true that previous attempts, mental illness, or major life problems can put someone at higher risk. However, we've all heard the stories about people with everything going for them who have also died by suicide.

Myth: The suicidal person wants to die and feels there is no turning back. Nothing can be done to stop the person once they have made up their mind to kill themselves. ("Why stop them? It's their decision.")

Fact: People usually have mixed feeling about dying. Even when life seems not worth living, death is still a frightening alternative. Few people die by suicide without letting others know how they are feeling, either directly or indirectly. They give clues which are really **cries for help**.

Myth: Once the depression lifts, the risk of suicide is over.

Fact: Sometimes people actually seem unusually cheerful before their suicide, as if they feel relieved that they have finally made a decision. To us it looks like the depression is over but the danger is still there.

Myth: If you ask someone directly, "Do you feel like killing yourself?", this will lead them to make a suicide attempt.

Fact: The opposite is true. Many people contemplate suicide at one time or another. A person who is considering suicide usually feels very alone with their problem. Your willingness to talk openly will come as a great relief. However, if you guessed wrong and they weren't contemplating suicide they'll simply tell you so. Then you don't have to wonder anymore.

Myth: Suicide happens without warning.

Fact: At least 80% of people who die from suicide have given clues.

Myth: All true suicides leave a suicide note.

Fact: No, in fact a surprising number of people do not leave suicide notes. According to Canadian researcher Dr. A. Leenaars, who has extensively studied suicide notes, and only 12 to 37% leave notes.

Myth: Suicide rates are higher at Christmas.

Fact: Although it is a commonly held belief that depression and suicide rates are higher at Christmas, research does not support this notion. Some studies have even shown a suppressing factor for Christmas and other holidays.