

UNDERSTANDING SUICIDE: FACT VS. MYTH



Suicide is a serious public health problem that takes an enormous toll on families, friends, classmates, co-workers and communities, as well as on our military personnel and veterans. To understand why people die by suicide, and why so many others attempt to take their own lives, it is important to know the facts. Please read these facts about suicide and share them with others.

Myth: Suicide can't be prevented. If someone is set on taking their own life, there is nothing that can be done to stop them.

Fact: Suicide is preventable. The vast majority of people contemplating suicide don't really want to die. They are seeking an end to intense mental and/or physical pain. Most have a mental illness. Interventions can save lives.

Myth: People who take their own life are selfish, cowards, weak or are just looking for attention.

Fact: More than 90% of people who take their own life have at least one and often more than one treatable mental illness such as depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia and/or alcohol and substance use disorder. With better recognition and treatment, many suicides can be prevented.

Myth: Asking someone if they are thinking about suicide will put the idea in their head and cause them to act on it.

Fact: When you fear someone you know is in crisis or depressed, asking him or her if they are thinking about suicide can actually help. By giving a person an

opportunity to open up and share their troubles, you can help alleviate their pain and find solutions.

Myth: Barriers on bridges, safe firearm storage and other actions to reduce access to lethal methods of suicide don't work. People will just find another way.

Fact: Limiting access to lethal methods of suicide is one of the best strategies for suicide prevention. Many suicides can be impulsive and triggered by an immediate crisis. Separating someone in crisis from a lethal method (e.g., a firearm) can give him or her something they desperately need: time. Time to change their mind, time to resolve the crisis, time for someone to intervene.

Myth: Talk therapy and/or medications don't work.

Fact: Treatment can work. One of the best ways to prevent suicide is by getting treatment for mental illness such as depression, bipolar illness and/or substance use disorder and learning ways to solve problems. Finding the best treatment can take some time, and the right treatment can greatly reduce the risk of suicide.