

SUICIDE MYTHS AND FACTS

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS COUNSELING CENTER

Myth: You have to be crazy even to think about suicide.

Fact: Most people have thought of suicide from time to time.

Myth: Once a person has made a serious suicide attempt, that person is unlikely to make another

Fact: The opposite is often true. Persons who have made prior suicide attempts may be at greater risk of actually committing suicide.

Myth: Talking about suicide may give a person the idea.

Fact: The crisis and resulting emotional distress will already have triggered thought in a vulnerable person. Your openness and concern in asking about suicide can allow the person experiencing pain to talk about the problem, which may help reduce their anxiety. This may also allow the person with suicidal thoughts to feel less lonely or isolated, and perhaps a bit relieved.

Myth: People who talk about killing themselves will never do it. It's a way of letting off steam. Those who kill themselves don't normally talk about it. They just go ahead and do it.

Fact: Most people either talk about suicide or do something to indicate that they are going to kill themselves. There is no need to blame yourself if you don't see it coming, but if you are worried about someone you know, make sure you are aware of the warning signs of suicide and what you could do to help.

Myth: Once someone has already decided to complete a suicide, nothing is going to stop them.

Fact: Most of the time, a suicidal person has mixed feelings about the decision – torn between wanting to die and wanting to live. Most suicidal individuals don't want death; they want their pain to stop.

Myth: A person will always welcome someone intervening with their suicidal plans.

Fact: It is actually quite common for some suicidal persons to become angry or defensive when someone tries to intervene. This is because, for that person, suicide is an answer to their problem and intervention may be perceived as an unfair elimination of their solution. In the longer term however, once the crisis is resolved, the vast majority express gratitude for the intervention and the caring behind it.

