



Preventing suicide

A global imperative

Myths



World Health
Organization

Myths about suicide

Myth:

~~Once someone is suicidal,
he or she will always
remain suicidal~~

Fact:

Heightened suicide risk is often short-term and situation-specific. While suicidal thoughts may return, they are not permanent and an individual with previously suicidal thoughts and attempts can go on to live a long life.

Myths about suicide

Myth:

~~Talking about suicide is a bad idea
and can be interpreted
as encouragement.~~

Fact:

*Given the widespread stigma
around suicide, most people who are
contemplating suicide do not know
who to speak to. Rather than
encouraging suicidal behaviour,
talking openly can give an
individual other options or the time
to rethink his/her decision, thereby
preventing suicide.*

Myths about suicide

Myth:

~~*Only people with
mental disorders are suicidal*~~

Fact:

Suicidal behaviour indicates deep unhappiness but not necessarily mental disorder. Many people living with mental disorders are not affected by suicidal behaviour, and not all people who take their own lives have a mental disorder.

Myths about suicide

Myth:

~~*Most suicides happen suddenly
without warning.*~~

Fact:

The majority of suicides have been preceded by warning signs, whether verbal or behavioural. Of course there are some suicides that occur without warning. But it is important to understand what the warning signs are and look out for them.

Myths about suicide

Myth:

~~Someone who is suicidal
is determined to die.~~

Fact:

Fact: On the contrary, suicidal people are often ambivalent about living or dying. Someone may act impulsively by drinking pesticides, for instance, and die a few days later, even though they would have liked to live on. Access to emotional support at the right time can prevent suicide.

Myths about suicide

Myth:

~~People who talk about suicide
do not mean to do it.~~

Fact:

*People who talk about suicide may
be reaching out for help or support.
A significant number of people
contemplating suicide are
experiencing anxiety, depression
and hopelessness and may feel that
there is no other option.*