

# Myths about Suicide

**For many communities, suicide has been viewed as taboo or a topic that shouldn't be talked about. As a result, there are several common misunderstandings about suicide and suicide prevention. The following is a list of common suicide myths and facts put together by American Foundation for Suicide Prevention.**

**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. Interventions can save lives.

**Myth:** *People who take their own life are selfish, cowards, weak or 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 and/or alcohol and substance abuse disorder. With better recognition and treatment, many suicides can be prevented.

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

**Fact:** Asking people if they are thinking about suicide can actually help. By giving people an opportunity to 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 are impulsive and triggered by an immediate crisis. Separating someone in crisis from a lethal method (e.g., a firearm) can give them something they desperately need: time, time to change their mind, time to resolve the crisis, time for someone to intervene.

**Myth:** *People making suicidal threats won't really do it; they are just looking for attention.*

**Fact:** People who talk about suicide or express thoughts about wanting to die are at risk for suicide and need your attention. Most people who die by suicide give some indication or warning. Take all threats of suicide seriously. Even if you think they are just "crying for help"—a cry for help is a cry for help—so help.

**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 illnesses such as depression, bipolar illness and/or substance abuse and learning ways to solve problems. The right treatment can greatly reduce risk of suicide.



Ulster County SPEAK: Suicide Prevention Education, Awareness and Knowledge

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