



## ***Suicide Prevention***

According to the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), suicide is a top 10 leading cause of death in the United States. This article presents myths and realities of suicide in an effort to prevent suicide, followed by what to look for and how you can help prevent suicide.

**MYTH:**

Those who talk about suicide don't do it.

**FACT:**

Most of the people who either attempted or died by suicide have made their intentions known ahead of time by either talking about it or by giving other clues. Talk of suicide should not be ignored or readily dismissed.

**MYTH:**

If a person is intent on killing themselves, there is nothing anybody can do to stop them.

**FACT:**

Even a person who is severely suicidal may have a mixed feelings or an ambivalence about dying and most likely just wants to end the pain they are in, not their lives. Suicide is preventable.

**MYTH:**

If you talk about suicide, you give people the idea to kill themselves.

**FACT:**

Chances are, if you are worried about someone and you have noticed the warning signs and risk factors, they've possibly thought about suicide themselves. Asking somebody directly about suicidal thoughts may bring a sense of relief to someone who is in need of help.

**MYTH:**

Only experts or professionals can prevent suicide.

**FACT:**

Suicide prevention is everybody's business, and anyone can help prevent a suicide. Potential warning signs and how to seek help follow; please note that these warning signs may vary and the lists below serve only as some possible warning signs to monitor.

### **Possible Warning Signs in Adults**

1. Talking about suicide, wanting to die, kill oneself; seeming preoccupied with death
2. Looking for a way to kill oneself, such as searching online or buying a gun
3. Talking about feeling worthless, hopeless, or having no reason to live
4. Talking about being a burden to others
5. Suddenly happier and calmer, especially after a period of depression or sadness
6. Giving away prized possessions
7. Getting affairs in order, making arrangements
8. Increasing alcohol or drug use
9. Acting anxious or agitated, behaving recklessly
10. Withdrawal from or changing in social connections/situations
11. Displaying extreme mood swings

### **Possible Warning Signs in Children and Adolescents**

1. Talking about or making plans for suicide
2. Expressing hopelessness about the future
3. Talking about being a burden to others
4. Self-harm behaviors (e.g., cutting, burning, risky sexual behaviors)
5. Displaying severe/overwhelming emotional pain or distress
6. Withdrawal from or changing in social connections/situations
7. Changes in sleep (increased or decreased)
8. Anger, irritability, or hostility that seems out of character or out of context

### **Risk Factors**

1. Previous suicide attempt
2. Psychological pain (e.g., "I feel terrible all the time")
3. Family history of suicide
4. Loss of job, home, money
5. Death or terminal illness of a loved one
6. Significant loss or divorce/separation
7. Loss of health, either real or imagined
8. Someone close to the person has died by suicide
9. Recent disappointment or rejection
10. Being expelled from school/fired from job
11. Sudden loss of freedom/fear of punishment
12. Victim of assault or bullying
13. Questioning gender

### **What to do if you notice warning signs and/or are worried about someone**

1. Ask if they are ok or if they are having thoughts of suicide
2. Express your concern about what you are observing in their behavior
3. Listen attentively and non-judgmentally
4. Reflect on what they share and let them know they have been heard
5. Tell them they are not alone
6. Let them know there are treatments available that can help
7. Guide them to professional help

**If you or someone you know are in crisis, please call 911, the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255) or contact the Crisis Text Line by texting TALK to 741741.**

*The above suggestions are not intended to substitute for professional help. Many professionals are offering psychotherapy via secure internet video connection at this time. If you feel you would benefit from talking with a professional and would like the name of a qualified psychologist in your area, please try our [Psychologist Locator](#). You can also ask your health care professional or a trusted friend to recommend a psychologist or other mental health professional.*