

Understanding the Myths of Suicide

- M** - Adolescents who talk about suicide won't really attempt.
T - People who attempt or complete suicides often talk about it first.
- M** - Suicide happens without warning.
T - Typically, kids give 9 - 10 warnings (journals, poetry, artwork, others not written).
- M** - Adolescents from affluent families attempt or complete suicide more often than those from poorer families.
T - Suicide occurs essentially evenly across socio-economic lines.
- M** - Once suicidal, an adolescent will be forever.
T - **No**, but the healing process is long and involves extended support systems.
- M** - Once an attempt is made and survived, the danger is past.
T - The most dangerous time is around two weeks after a successful intervention or survived attempt.
- M** - Adolescents who attempt or complete always leave notes.
T - Some do, some don't.
- M** - Every adolescent who attempts suicide is depressed.
T - Depression plays a role in some cases -- it is not the cause per se. Many depressed people never become suicidal.
- M** - Suicide is hereditary (that part is the myth).
T - Family history of depression is real (not myth).
T - Most adolescents don't want to die. It is often cry for help.
T - They often hope someone will somehow intervene.
T - Having a parent model that behavior is a great and negative influence toward adolescents seeing suicide as an answer. It also means the parent is not modeling good problem solving skills.
This means that children who have lost a parent to suicide need extra attention during school crises, especially if it was a suicide.
- M** - Most adolescent suicides happen late at night or during pre-dawn hours.
T - Suicides occur at all times of day.
- M** - Never use the word suicide when talking to adolescents because that will give them the idea.
T - In reality, being up front gives relief.
- M** - Once their mind is made up they can't be stopped.
T - Usually they want a way out of their pain. Professional interventions can very often prevent an adolescent suicide.