

Suicide is a leading cause of death in the United States and a critical public health issue.

Dispelling commonly held myths helps increase understanding and better support those affected by suicide.

MYTH 1:

Talking about suicide will make a person more likely to act on it.

FACT: Talking about suicide may reduce suicidal thoughts and behaviors.

Asking people about suicidal thoughts does not cause or increase such thoughts. Asking someone directly, "Are you thinking about suicide?" can be the best way to identify someone at risk.

Talking about suicide in the community helps reduce stigma around mental health issues and spread awareness of resources.

MYTH 2:

Suicide cannot be prevented.

FACT: Suicide prevention is possible with a comprehensive approach.

Family and community support and access to healthcare interventions can decrease suicidal thoughts and behaviors. Limiting access to lethal means, such as firearms, can decrease the chances of suicide.

Community-based substance use prevention efforts, resiliency education programs, gatekeeper training and more contribute to suicide prevention.

MYTH 3:

People who take their own lives are selfish, crazy or weak.

FACT: People do not die of suicide by choice.

Suicidal thoughts or actions are a sign of extreme distress and an indicator that someone needs help. Often, people who die of suicide experience significant emotional pain and find it difficult to consider different views or see a way out of their situation.

MYTH 4:

Suicide usually occurs without warning.

FACT: There are almost always warning signs before a suicide attempt.

Common warning signs include talking about suicide, increasing substance use, reckless behavior, withdrawing or isolating, extreme mood swings, increase in depression or anxiety, researching or obtaining lethal means, giving away belongings and saying goodbye to people.

Sources: 988 Suicide & Crisis Line, CDC, Mayo Clinic, National Institute of Mental Health

If you need help for yourself or someone else, the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline provides 24/7, free and confidential support for people in distress, prevention and crisis resources for you or your loved ones, and best practices for professionals. Call or text 988 or visit 988Lifeline.org for help.