

Suicide – Facts and Fiction

Over 65,000 Australians make a suicide attempt and each year over 3,000 Australians will commit suicide. Despite this alarming figure, there are many myths about suicide

Only depressed people commit suicide

- Incorrect – Some people may feel depressed, others may feel deeply unhappy, alone or that they're a burden to others. Generally, people feel overwhelmed with distress and want it to end.

Only people with a mental illness commit suicide

- Incorrect – Sadly, there is a higher rate of suicide amongst people who have a mental illness but not everyone who has a mental illness is suicidal and not everyone who commits suicide has a mental illness.

People who say they are suicidal or attempt suicide are attention seeking

- Rarely correct – Most people who say they “want to end it all” or attempt to harm themselves are looking for help or support. They are saying “I’m not coping” or “I need some help”.

If somebody talks about suicide, they won't do it

- Incorrect – Many people contemplating suicide will talk about it as a way of asking for help. If they ignored or brushed aside, they may follow through and commit suicide.

You shouldn't ask someone if they're suicidal as it will encourage them

- Incorrect - There is no evidence that talking to someone about suicidal thoughts is harmful. By asking a person directly if they are feeling suicidal or if they have been thinking about suicide you give them an opportunity to discuss it openly and honestly, which may be the first step towards getting the help they need.

There are no signs that a person is suicidal

- Not always correct – While some people may successfully hide their suicidal tendency, most people who are suicidal indicate it by their behaviour or things they say such as:
 - Talking about being a burden to other people
 - Talking about feeling trapped or having unbearable pain
 - Behavioural changes such as being withdrawn, agitated or anxious
 - Taking time off work or avoid socialising'
 - Talking about suicide
 - Self harm or injury

Suicide is an act of selfishness

- Incorrect – People who are suicidal are in crisis. They are in pain. They may feel they are a burden; that family and friends would be better off without them. Or they may feel hopeless; that it is difficult to imagine that things will get better.

You can't stop someone who wants to commit suicide

- Incorrect – If you're worried that someone may commit suicide, act immediately. Access to support at the right time can prevent suicide. Talk to them, listen to them, don't leave them alone and get help.
- A safety plan can help people who feel suicidal – this is a plan they can refer to and remind themselves of reasons to live, family and friends they can talk to, ideas of activities to do when they're alone which help support them when they are vulnerable – Beyond Now (free app).