

WHO COMMITS SUICIDE?

More than 32,000 people in the United States kill themselves every year. Suicide ranks as the ninth leading cause of death in this country, exceeding homicides.

Contrary to popular belief, winter is not the peak time of year for suicides; in fact, suicide peaks in April and May, while December ranks below the yearly average.

More than 90 percent of those who commit suicide suffer from some sort of a mental illness, 60 percent of which is major depression.

About one-third of all clinically depressed patients attempt suicide; half of them succeed.

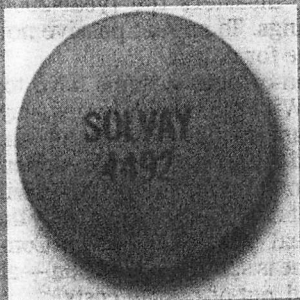
Up to half of all those with manic depression attempt suicide at least once; one out of five persons with manic-depression will die by suicide.

DEMOGRAPHICS

- White men commit 75 percent of all suicides. While twice as many women attempt suicide, there are four male suicides for every female one.
- Among younger groups, suicide is the second leading cause of death among college students, and the third leading cause of death among people aged 15 to 34.
- The suicide rate for men between the ages of 15 and 24 has tripled since 1950; suicide rates for women in the same age range has more than doubled in that same time.
- The highest suicide rates are among people older than 50. White men over 50 represent 10 percent of the population, but commit 33 percent of all suicides.
- Suicides among women peak between the ages of 40 and 54, and after age 75.

WARNING SIGNS

- Previous suicide attempts.
- Family history of suicide.
- Talking about death or suicide.
- Planning for suicide by giving away prized possessions or buying suicide aids, such as firearms.
- Impulsive behavior.
- Loss of pleasure in activities that had been enjoyable.



The pill: The anti-suicide drug lithium carbonate in a 300 mg, slow-release tablet.

Source: The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention.

A Cry for Help

This cry for help was sent to the Tablet office this week by a young reader who said she had "no future ahead of me" and that "now maybe God will take notice."

Can anyone, teen, parent, teacher, youth minister, priest, offer some words of encouragement to this young person in need of help. Let her know she is not alone. Send your thoughts to: Youth Editor, The Tablet, One Hanson Pl., Brooklyn 11243.

Answer Me, Soon

Wrong, Wrong, Wrong.
That's all I hear,
Sometimes I think,
It was a mistake that I was born,
I think to myself; why am I here,
And why was I put on this earth?
Just to be told to go to church?
I really do believe in God,
but I wish he would believe in me.
It's like using bait
for him to have faith in me.
I have been praying,
And asking him why me,
And why can't
he have faith in me.
He hasn't yet answered me,
I don't think I ask for much—
mostly love, peace and harmony.
God, if you're not listening now,

And my faith in you will fade,
to nothing.
I thought I was a good
judge of character.
I believed in you, didn't I?
So please believe in me,
because if you don't believe in me,
I don't think I can stand to
live any longer.
No one for 17 years has had faith
in me, for a lasting relationship
together, you're my last hope.
Please, answer me soon.



Coping with Suicide and Grief

A Grief Observed. C. S. Lewis (Seabury, 1961). Powerful account, first published under a pseudonym, of the famous writer's despair when his wife died.

How to Help the Hurting. Everett Worthington, Jr. (IVP, 1986). Ideas from a counselor on how to counsel friends in need.

Living through Mourning. Harriet Sarnoff Schiff (Viking,

1986). Finding comfort and hope when a loved one has died.

Necessary Losses. Judith Viorst (Simon & Schuster, 1986). Life is a series of losses, says the author, and we must confront them in order to grow.

When Bad Things Happen to Good People. Rabbi Harold S. Kushner (Schocken, 1981). Thought-provoking ideas about the goodness, compassion and omnipotence of God.

Where the Wind Begins. Paula D'Arcy (Shaw, 1985). Stories of hurting people, including D'Arcy's account of how she said yes to life after the tragic death of her husband and daughter. A sequel to *Song for Sarah* (1979). ■