

WHY DO PEOPLE COMMIT SUICIDE?

It is a fact that more and more young people between the ages of 12 and 18 are choosing to end their own lives. Death by suicide ranks as the second leading killer of adolescents.

Suicide by young people is needless and it can be prevented. Your knowledge about this subject may help save the life of a friend, a family member or even yourself.

MYTHS AND FACTS ABOUT SUICIDE

It is a myth that talking to someone about their suicidal feelings will cause them to commit suicide.

Fact: Asking someone about their suicidal feelings may make the person feel relieved that someone finally recognized their emotional pain.

It is a myth that all suicidal people want to die and there is nothing that can be done about it.

Fact: Most suicidal people are ambivalent, that is, part of them is saying "I want to die" but part of them is saying, "I want to live."

It is a myth that people who talk about committing suicide never actually do it.

Fact: When someone talks about committing suicide, he/she may be giving a warning that should not be ignored by others who hear such comments.

It is a myth that there is a "typical" type of person who commits suicide.

Fact: The potential for suicide exists in all of us. There is no "typical" type of suicidal person.

It is a myth that suicide occurs without warning.

Fact: Many people, including adolescents, give warnings of their suicidal intent.

The suicidal person feels a tremendous sense of loneliness, isolation, helplessness and hopelessness. For the young person these feelings may be caused by family conflicts, a divorce or separation, the death of a parent, the break-up of a romance, the move to a new school or pressure to succeed at school.

Suicidal people feel that they can no longer cope with their problems and that suicide may be the only way out. Most people think about suicide at some point in their life. Most people find that these thoughts are temporary and that things do get better. Suicide is a needless and permanent solution to short-term problems.

SOME SIGNS OF SUICIDE

Often people who are contemplating ending their lives will give signs or signals of their intent. One sign alone does not mean that a person is suicidal. Several signs at one time, however, may mean that the person is seeking help. A few of these signs are:

- . Verbal suicide threats,
- . Previous suicide attempts,
- . Personality changes (unusual withdrawal, aggression or moodiness),
- . Depression (changes in normal appetite, sleep disturbances, sudden drop in school performance, etc.),
- . Final arrangements (making a will, giving away prized possessions).

WHAT TO DO

When you suspect that a friend or a family member may be suicidal, you may become nervous and anxious. This is a normal feeling. It may help if you remember the following:

- 1) Believe or trust your suspicions that the person may be self-destructive.
- 2) Communicate your concern for the well-being of the person. Be an active listener and show your support.
- 3) Be direct. Talk openly and freely and ask direct questions about the person's intentions. Try to determine if the person has a plan for suicide (how, where, when). The more detailed the plan, the greater the risk.
- 4) Get professional help. Encourage the person to seek help from a school counselor, minister, or someone who can help solve the problems. If the person resists, you may have to get the necessary help for them.

WHAT NOT TO DO

- 1) Do not allow yourself to be sworn to secrecy by the suicidal person. You may lose a friendship but you may save a life. *
- 2) Do not leave the person alone if you believe the risk for suicide is immediate.
- 3) Do not act shocked at what the person tells you.
- 4) Do not counsel the person yourself.
- 5) Do not debate whether suicide is oo right or wrong. This may make the oo person feel more guilty.