

# Myths & Misperceptions

## *Uncovering the Truth about Suicide*

BY THE STATEWIDE OFFICE OF SUICIDE PREVENTION



Suicide is one of the most misunderstood and misrepresented subjects in the media today. In many ways, it remains the last taboo. People will air their most personal concerns but suicide hardly gets a mention. Shrouded with such anonymity, this preventable tragedy often comes in under the radar screen. With six Floridians dying by their own hand every day, now is the time to clear the air and set the record straight. Here is the real deal on suicide.

**Myth:** *People who talk about suicide are only trying to get attention.*

**Fact:** Although sometimes difficult to detect, out of every 10 people who kill themselves, eight have left either verbal or non-verbal clues (crisislink.org). All suicide threats or attempts must be treated seriously, as though the person has the intent to die. Do not dismiss this behavior as an attention-seeking device.

**Myth:** *Talking to someone about suicide or feeling suicidal will encourage them to kill themselves.*

**Fact:** Discussing suicidal feelings will not plant the idea in a person's mind; many depressed people have already considered suicide as an option. Talking about suicide opens a line of communication and can help to sort through problems, even provide a sense of relief or understanding. The first step is simply just to ask if the person is intending to end their life.

**Myth:** *Suicide only occurs among the wealthy, or on the contrary, among the poor.*

**Fact:** Suicide defies all social and economic boundaries. No one is immune. Everyone has the potential for suicide; however those with predisposing conditions, such as depression or substance abuse, may be at a higher risk.

**Myth:** *If someone attempts suicide and survives, they will never attempt again.*

**Fact:** 80% of people who die by suicide have at least one previous attempt (crisislink.org). Each attempt should be treated as an indicator of a future attempt. It is also likely that the level of danger will increase with each additional attempt.

## Eight out of ten people leave clues...

**Myth:** *All suicidal people are insane.*

**Fact:** Although a significant number of suicides are not related to mental illness, it is widely accepted that 90% of suicide victims have one or more psychiatric disorders at the time of suicide, more than half of which have never seen a mental health professional (suicidology.org). Most people experiencing suicidal thoughts still function as normal members of society.

**Myth:** *Suicide happens without warning.*

**Fact:** There are almost always warning signs, but others are often unaware of these or unsure what they can do. To find out more about these warning signs and risk factors please visit:  
<http://www.sprc.org/library/srisk.pdf>