

## Understanding the Myths of Suicide

**M** - Adolescents who talk about suicide won't really attempt.

**T** - People who attempt or complete suicides often talk about it first.

**M** - Suicide happens without warning.

**T** - Typically, kids give 9 - 10 warnings (journals, poetry, artwork, others not written).

**M** - Adolescents from affluent families attempt or complete suicide more often than those from poorer families.

**T** - Suicide occurs essentially evenly across socio-economic lines.

**M** - Once suicidal, an adolescent will be forever.

**T** - No, but the healing process is long and involves extended support systems.

**M** - Once an attempt is made and survived, the danger is past.

**T** - The most dangerous time is around two weeks after a successful intervention or survived attempt.

**M** - Adolescents who attempt or complete always leave notes.

**T** - Some do, some don't.



**M** - Every adolescent who attempts suicide is depressed.

**T** - Depression plays a role in some cases -- it is not the cause per se. Many depressed people never become suicidal.

**M** - Suicide is hereditary (that part is the myth).

**T** - Family history of depression is real (not myth).

**T** - Most adolescents don't want to die. It is often cry for help.

**T** - They often hope someone will somehow intervene.

**T** - Having a parent model that behavior is a great and negative influence toward adolescents seeing suicide as an answer. It also means the parent is not modeling good problem solving skills.

*This means that children who have lost a parent to suicide need extra attention during school crises, especially if it was a suicide.*

**M** - Most adolescent suicides happen late at night or during pre-dawn hours.

**T** - Suicides occur at all times of day.

**M** - Never use the word suicide when talking to adolescents because that will give them the idea.

**T** - In reality, being up front gives relief.

**M** - Once their mind is made up they can't be stopped.

**T** - Usually they want a way out of their pain. Professional interventions can very often prevent an adolescent suicide.

