



# MYTHS & FACTS

Test your knowledge of suicide

**Every life matters**



## **SAFETY WARNING**

These cards have been created to help you gain more understanding of this very important issue, but suicide is a sensitive subject that has affected many people, and some may find the contents of these cards upsetting.

For more information on talking about suicide, or if you need support following using these cards, visit [www.every-life-matters.org.uk](http://www.every-life-matters.org.uk)

## **i** MYTH OR FACT

Suicide only happens to certain types of people



## MYTH

Suicide can happen to anyone

There are people who may be more at risk - because of their physical or mental health, gender or sexuality, life events such as problem debt or relationship breakdown, and even our job role can make us more at risk.

But it is important to be aware that anyone could have thoughts of suicide, and anyone could die by suicide.

## **i** MYTH OR FACT

Suicide is a crime in the UK



## MYTH

Suicide ceased to be a crime in 1961.

But still the language around suicide suggests wrongdoing eg "he committed suicide". Many people bereaved by suicide find this use of language hurtful and it can compound stigma.

Being mindful of the language we use can be one way we can try and make a difference

## **i** MYTH OR FACT

Suicide is the biggest killer of men under 50



## FACT

Tragically it is the leading cause of death of men under 50, and at particular risk are middle aged men in their 40s and 50s

Suicide is also the leading cause of death for women under 35.

But suicide is a preventable death, and we can all learn to play a part in preventing it happen.

## **i** MYTH OR FACT

People who are suicidal want to die



## MYTH

The majority of people who feel suicidal do not actually want to die - they want the pain to end - or they cannot bear to live the life they have at the moment. Suicide is a permanent solution to a temporary problem.

The distinction may seem small but is very important. Helping people hang on to hope that things can get better, or to their reasons for living, can make all the difference.

## **i** MYTH OR FACT

Suicidal people don't ask for help



## MYTH

The majority of people will ask for help in some way. But it is often very hard to come out and ask directly so it may be in more subtle ways.

There are signs we can learn to recognise - what a person is saying, how they are behaving, and what events are happening in their lives.

We can all learn about how to spot these signs, and potentially make life saving interventions.

## **i** MYTH OR FACT

More people die on our roads each year than they do by suicide.



## MYTH

Actually three times as many people die by suicide than die on our roads.

In 2019, in England alone, there were 5,316 reported suicides. That's the equivalent of 483 football teams, or nearly 10 full Jumbo Jets. In comparison, in 2019 there were 1,752 road deaths.

It is a huge issue but we are still reluctant to talk about it.

## **i** MYTH OR FACT

1 in 30 people will have thoughts of suicide in any given year



## MYTH

1 in 17 of us each year will have thoughts of suicide. And 1 in 5 of us will consider suicide over our lifetime.

Thinking about suicide is a relatively common response to challenging life situations- BUT having these thoughts doesn't mean it is inevitable that you will act on them.

## **i** MYTH OR FACT

More women die by suicide than men.



## MYTH

Around 75% of deaths by suicide are men, and at particular risk are middle aged men in their 40s and 50s.

However, more women attempt suicide.

A previous attempt though is also the highest risk indicator for actual death by suicide.

## **i** MYTH or FACT

Suicide is the biggest killer of young people



## FACT

Suicide is the leading cause of death of children and young people

A recent study showed, around 7% of young people have made some attempt at suicide by the age of 17, with 1 in 4 reporting they have self-harmed. While numbers of actual deaths remain low, suicide attempts as a young person increase the risk of an individual going on to take their own life as an adult.

## **i** MYTH or FACT

Only 1 in 4 people who die by suicide are in contact with mental health services in the year leading up to their death



## FACT

This is true. Some do reach out for mental health support but many people struggle alone with their thoughts of suicide.

People who die by suicide may not be known to services - but they will be known to family, friends, colleagues and neighbours - and we can all play a part in spotting the signs someone may be at risk, starting a potentially life saving conversation, and helping someone find the support they need.

## **i** MYTH or FACT

Asking someone directly if they are thinking about suicide might put the idea in their head



## MYTH

This is not true. We are not that susceptible.

If someone is thinking about suicide the seed is already there. Asking will not plant that seed and all evidence shows that talking about thoughts of suicide decreases the risk.

If you are at all concerned someone is having thoughts of suicide you need to ask, and ask directly "Are you thinking about suicide?"

## **i** MYTH or FACT

People who talk about suicide aren't serious and won't go through with it



## MYTH

People who kill themselves have often told someone that they don't feel life is worth living, that they have no future, or even that they want to die.

It's possible that someone might talk about suicide as a way of getting attention, in a sense of calling out for help.

But it's important to always take someone seriously if they talk about feeling suicidal. Helping them get the support they need could save their life.