

## **Myths about Suicide**

*1. Myth: If a person is suicidal and intends to die, there is nothing that I or others can do or say to help.*

**Fact: Most suicide is preventable. Most suicidal people want to live but for the period of significant risk they are unable to effectively consider alternatives to the unendurable pain they feel. For them, considering suicide is an attempt at problem solving to end that pain.**

*2. Myth: Most suicides happen without warning.*

**Fact: There are definite warning signs preceding most suicide attempts. Knowing the warning signs is the first step you can take to deter suicidal behavior. Learning intervention skills for how to helpfully respond to someone who may be suicidal is the next step.**

*3. Myth: Students who talk about suicide aren't likely to attempt or complete suicide.*

**Fact: Most people who attempt or complete suicide have talked about or given some warning sign about their suicidal intentions.**

*4. Myth: My asking a student, "Are you thinking about committing suicide?" may trigger him/her to make a suicide attempt.*

**Fact: Research evidence and clinical experience recommend asking the student in a direct and compassionate manner about suicidal thoughts and/or intent. Instead of "planting the idea," asking in a caring way often reduces the student's anxiety and offers you and others opportunities to deter suicidal behavior.**

*5. Myth: I believe that the student won't follow-through on his/her threat to suicide - it's just an attempt to get attention. If someone is going to kill themselves, they just do it without telling anyone.*

**Fact: Suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death among college students Any threat to suicide is to be taken seriously as a communication by the student for wanting and needing help. Most people who commit suicide have talked about or shown definite warning signs of their suicidal intentions.**

*6. Myth: All individuals who are suicidal are depressed.*

**Fact: Thoughts and feelings associated with suicide are some of the indicators for depression, but not all individuals who attempt or complete suicide are depressed. Other**

emotional factors may be involved. It is estimated that 90% of all suicides are related to mental illnesses including depression, bipolar disorder, anxiety and some personality disorders.

*7. Myth: I do not have to be concerned about the student whose mood and suicidality seems improved.*

**Fact: Many suicides can occur up to several months after noticeable improvement because the individual has the energy to act on suicidal thoughts.**

*8. Myth: Suicide only occurs in one small segment of the student population.*

**Fact: Suicide occurs across social, economic, ethnic, and cultural boundaries.**