

Suicide is a very serious problem, and it happens too often for us to ignore. I have always been interested in the different things involved in suicide and what would cause a person to kill themselves, but have never had the time to find out, until now.

I used to think it was something that was a spur of the moment decision, but it's not always. I thought it only happened to kids whose parents abused them, but that's not always true. I found that out when one of my friends that I had known since I was born had given serious thought about it. She is a wonderful poet with poems in hundreds of magazines, and she is also an extraordinary artist with paintings in museums that are selling for a thousand dollars. This girl is only 17. The one thing that seemed to be the slightest bit disturbing about her life was that her parents had a divorce when she was about seven, but other than that she seemed to have the perfect life. She had been giving this serious thought for about a year, and then one day she actually attempted to kill herself. I thought if someone wanted to kill themselves it would be hard to fail. That's when I figured she didn't really want to die. It was a cry for help, and she didn't know of any other way to ask for it. I stayed a week with her through this trying period in her life, and found out it was partly because of her French exchange student boyfriend. They weren't broken up, but he had to go back to France, and she couldn't see him as much as she would have liked to. Her mother started taking her to a psychiatrist to help her through her depression. If we hadn't have done this she might not be with us today. Now, she has a fairly normal life. She has a job at Amy's Ice Cream which required her to design an art piece in order to get the job. Of course she was hired since she's so talented, and she draws and paints to deal with her emotions. They call this art therapy, and it really seems to work for those who already express themselves in their art work. Other ways depression is dealt with is through writing, anger therapy, exercise, dancing, group counseling, treatment centers, and peer assistance networks.

When people don't talk to each other about something, they may believe a lot of things about it that are myths. Here are some of the myths about teen suicide and the truth about each one. People who say they're going to kill themselves never do. That is not true. It is also dangerous to believe it. Eight out of every ten suicide victims had told someone they were planning to die. It is true that most people who talk about killing themselves don't do it. But some of them mean what they say. Always take it seriously when someone talks about suicide. If someone in your family killed himself, you are more likely to do the same thing. This belief is very harmful. It makes some young people feel that there is something wrong with them. They feel that they are certain to kill themselves. Thinking about suicide is not handed down from your parents. But having very strong feelings can run in the family. Some people feel on top of the world when they are happy. Then they are down in the dumps when they are sad. Strong feelings of sadness can make a person think of suicide, but they don't have to, and they usually don't. A person who tries suicide will try again. It is true that some people who died of suicide had tried before. But it doesn't have to be true. Getting help quickly may save them. Most suicides happen at night and at times of the full moon. This is not true at all. Most suicides happen in the afternoon or early evening. The moon has nothing to do with it. This same myth says that most suicides happen at holiday times. The truth is that there are no more suicides on holidays than on other days. People who try suicide want very much to die. This is the most untrue myth of all. Most people who try suicide do not want to die. They just cannot find an answer to a bad problem. They are really calling out for help. Today people are specially trained to give that help and prevent suicide. If you talk about suicide to an unhappy person, you may give them the idea. This is not true either. People who are thinking about killing themselves are so afraid of the thought that can't talk about it. Your friend may be glad if you bring it up so that you can know how he/she feels. (Teen Suicide pg. 19-21)

A person who is thinking about suicide gives signs of it, and looking for them could help before it's too late. Here's a few signs from (Teen Suicide pg. 7)

~Talk about suicide, death, and dying.

~Give away things he/she really likes.

~Do dangerous things.

~Act very different

~Not want to do anything

~Start to drink or use other drugs.

~Go suddenly from happy to sad and happy to sad.

If you notice more than one of these signs, then the person is in real danger. You can call 411, and ask for the Suicide Hotline number, or you can dial 911.

Suicides are most common among white males. I was appalled to find this out. In 1981 there were 3,775 white males, 856 white females, 316 black males, and 71 black females who committed suicide in the United States. That's a total of 5,161 in the United States. (Coping with Suicide pg.26) I read in Teen Suicide by Gail Stewart (pg. 12) that there were 600,000 suicide attempts in 1987. In the book Get Help by Sara Gilbert, from Rossanne, Sara talks about different ways to get help. On page 123 it lists over one hundred different organizations that will provide you with the assistance you need. I recommend this book to anyone that is thinking about suicide or knows a person that is thinking about it. It tells you what you need to know about suicide, where to find help, what to ask, and what are the many different causes. Remember there is no problem too big, too complicated, or too unusual to be solved.

Reading about this subject was depressing, but I think everyone would benefit from reading about this whether they are suicidal or not. I now know how to recognize the symptoms, why people choose to die over a problem, and how to get a friend help. I am relieved to know that it looks like none of my friends have these signs, and am glad to know if they ever do have these signs I'll know what to do and be right there for her to talk to.
