Myths and Facts About Suicide.

September is Suicide Awareness Month

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It can be scary, confusing and overwhelming to know when and how to support someone you love during a mental health crisis. Suicide is a touchy topic that many people shy away from due to lack of understanding and personal fear. However, being open, honest, and direct about suicide with those you love can make all the difference. Here are some important myths and facts about suicide to support your knowledge on the topic.



Myth: Talking about suicide will encourage suicidal thoughts and behaviors.
Facts: Talking about suicide opens the door for communication and support for those struggling with suicidal thoughts. When we share our fears and worries with others, they are more likely to diminish than if we keep them to ourselves. Having someone you care about validate your feelings is one of the most important moments in the healing process. The first step in encouraging someone to choose life is to have them talk about their feelings. Speak openly and honestly, without being afraid to ask direct questions such as, "Do you have a plan to kill yourself?" or "Have you been feeling suicidal?"

Myth: Young kids don't think about suicide.
Facts: Although suicide attempts and completions are rare for children under the age of 10, these numbers have continued to increase over the past several years, with new data showing a sharp 8% increase in the number of children ages 8-12 that die by suicide. In 2017, statistics showed us that 1.3 % of children ages 9-10 had made a suicide attempt, 2.4% had active ideation (method, plan) and 9.1% of them engaged in non-suicidal self-injury behaviors. Despite low attempts, it is clear by these numbers that suicide is on a young child's mind.

Myth: People who threaten suicide are often doing it for attention.
Facts: If someone is using suicide as a way to gain attention and support, it likely means that they desperately need attention and support in order to keep things from escalating. Do not dismiss suicidal statements due to the perception that someone is acting selfishly or fibbing for sympathy. All threats or comments should be taken seriously, because the attention that this person receives may actually save their life.

Myth: If someone survives a suicide attempt, it is unlikely they will attempt again.
Facts: A previous suicide attempt is considered to be a major risk factor in death by suicide, and the level of danger generally increases with each attempt. In fact, the three months after an event are considered to be the most at-risk time for the individual. 40% of youth who died by suicide had a history of a prior attempt.

Myth: Suicide risk is linked to your social economic status.
Facts: The impact of suicide is not specific to a high or low social economic status. Despite limited research in this area, there is currently no definitive link between these two factors.

Myth: Suicide attempts or deaths happen out of nowhere.

Facts: Although there are times when it is challenging to notice someone's intention, there are some common warning signs that someone may be struggling with suicidal ideation or intent. They include but are not limited to:

- Major changes in sleep: sleeping way more, sleeping way less
- Lack of interest in the future, hopelessness
- Giving away possessions
- Suddenly meeting up with others they have not seen in a very long time
- Disengagement from socialization or activities
- Sudden and extreme changes in eating habits
- Frequent irritability, increase aggressiveness, or excessive crying
- Personality changes such as nervousness, outbursts of anger, impulsive or reckless behavior
- Apathy about appearance or health.
- A recent suicide or death of a friend of family member, expressing thoughts about wanting to be re-united with them.
- Extreme emotional reactivity in response to a break-up/interpersonal stressor
- Increase in substance usage
- Preoccupation about death: Talking, drawing, etc. about death or the afterlife.
- Expressing suicidal ideation.
- Having a history of a previous suicide attempt.



Myth: Youth Suicide is not that common
Facts: Suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death for people ages 10-19, with approximately 6,200 youths dying each year. (2017 statistic)

Myth: In order to be suicidal, you have to have depression/be depressed.
Facts: Elevated suicide risk is associated with much more than just depression. Those that struggle with PTSD, Eating Disorders, Bipolar Disorder, Personality Disorders, ADHD, Panic Disorder, & Substance Abuse have elevated risks for suicide. However, you don't have to have a comorbid mental illness to have a suicide attempt. Those who are experiencing grief, chronic pain, terminal illnesses, or acute interpersonal stressors are also at risk for suicide.

If you or someone you love is struggling with suicidal ideation, our therapists at MFS can help. Please reach out for support.
There is **H.O.P.E. Hold On, Pain Ends.**