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Talking regularly with youth about the dangers of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs reduces their risk of using in the first place.

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Know! To Gain Understanding About Suicide

May is National Mental Health Month, designed to increase awareness about mental illness. Unfortunately, there continues to be a social stigma surrounding mental illness, which prevents many people (including teens) from seeking the help they need.

Do you KNOW!? Suicide rates are at a thirty-year high, up 24% since 1994 (according to the National Center for Health Statistics). There has been an increase in nearly every age group, including a 200% rise among 10 to 14-year-old females. Suicide is now the second leading cause of death among adolescents. And there are more than 5,400 additional suicide attempts made by seventh through twelfth graders every single day in the U.S.

While suicide has become far too common, it remains highly misunderstood. The following are suicide myths vs. facts:

MYTH: People who commit suicide are selfish.

FACT: While the act of suicide may seem selfish, the person behind the act is not. He/she is likely suffering, potentially with depression, which can cause distorted thoughts and feelings. The person is more than likely seeking relief and may believe there is no other option to end his/ her unimaginable pain.

MYTH: People who commit suicide are weak.

FACT: Most people who commit suicide are dealing with some type of mental illness, like depression. Just like a cancer diagnosis, a mental illness diagnosis has nothing to do with a person's strength of character.

MYTH: People who talk about suicide are just looking for attention.

FACT: It is a dangerous and potentially deadly notion to assume that because a person mentions suicide, he/she isn't taking the idea seriously. There are many warning signs that may occur before a person commits suicide, and this is one of them. It may be a person's way of reaching out for help. If someone talks about ending their life, take it seriously, and seek help.

MYTH: Discussing suicide with someone who is depressed may give them the idea to kill themselves.

FACT: Certainly not every person with depression is suicidal, but chances are a person with severe depression has at least thought about ending their life. Thoughts of suicide are most destructive when they are suppressed. Talking about the topic with a person in this situation may actually bring them some relief by opening the door to a difficult topic.

MYTH: If someone makes the decision to commit suicide, it is impossible to stop them.

FACT: Not true! Depression is highly treatable and suicide is preventable. Thanks to family, friends, teachers and others, many suicides have been stopped. Thanks to mental health experts, suicide hotlines and a host of other resources, many people have received the help they needed.

Experts say that people who commit suicide do not necessarily want to die; they just want to be out of pain. In the following tip, Know! will share the common warning signs of suicide and how to seek help for yourself or someone you care about, to end that pain in a safe, healthy way.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: (800) 273-TALK (8255).

Sources: [Jenev Caddell, PsyD. Verywell.com: 5 Myths About Suicide Debunked. Aug. 13, 2014.](#) [CDC: National Center for Health Statistics – Increase in Suicide in the United States 1999 – 2014.](#) [CDC: National Center for Health Statistics – Adolescent Health.](#) [The Parent Resource Program – The Jason Foundation: Youth Suicide Statistics.](#)

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