



# Suicide

Psychology 311  
Abnormal Psychology

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## Suicide

- Is the 8th leading cause of death in the US
- 30,000 killed themselves
- 500,000 attempted
- In mental illness, Bipolar II have the greatest risk for suicide
- Para suicide – Suicidal behavior that does not result in death

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## Risks

- Age
  - Young people and individuals >70 at greatest risk
- Sex
  - Women are more likely to attempt
    - Use pills, cut wrists, etc.
    - More likely to survive
    - Can change mind and usually survive
  - Men are more likely to succeed
    - Use guns, jump off buildings, etc.
    - Once you pull the trigger or jump you cannot change your mind.

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## Other Variables

- Ethnicity
  - Native Americans and Alaskan Native males have highest rates per capita
- Culture
  - Is important for considering suicide is ok
  - Japan, seen as acceptable
  - Canadians – seek mental help professionals

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## Variables that are Important

- Hopelessness
  - No way out, consider suicide
  - Beck Hopelessness scale is useful in determining risk
  - Beck model of therapy
    - Helps modify hopeless thinking
- Perfectionism – have unrealistic expectations
- Life events – death, divorce, job loss, etc

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## Myths about Suicide

- People who talk about suicide don't actually commit suicide
- Wrong: Most have a history of threats:
  - Have an extremely high risk.

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### Myth 2.

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- Usually take place with little or no warning.
- Wrong: 8 of 10 attempts are preceded by warnings
  - Can be clear threats or vague statements or actions

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### Statements or Actions

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- Giving away possessions
- Saying
  - I won't be around soon.
  - You won't have to worry about me anymore
  - Cutting up credit cards

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### Myth 3

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- People who attempt suicide are fully intent on dying.
- Wrong:
  - Only 3-5% really want to die
  - 30% are ambivalent and arrange things so it's a matter of chance
  - 65% don't want to die so arrange suicide so rescue is likely
    - Reason only 1/8th of attempters succeed

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### Myth 4

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- People who attempt suicide remain so forever
- Wrong: Usually is only for a limited period of time

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### Myth 5

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- People attempting suicide always appear to be sad or blue
- Wrong: Often a person who is sad and blue and contemplating suicide will become very happy when they make the decision to actually do it.
- Mood swings from very depressed or sad to very happy – be cautious.

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### Some Warning signs of Suicide

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- Eating / Sleep changes
- Becoming withdrawn
- Violent actions
- Unusual neglect of appearance
- Personal changes
- Physical complaints
- Being bored
- Putting affairs in order
- Past attempt
- Can be a large weight loss

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### What to do

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- Take very seriously
- When people are making vague threats ask them directly "Are you thinking about committing suicide"
- They will usually tell you yes
- Provide empathy and support
- Show you care and are genuinely concerned
- Get the person to a trained professional and take them there
- Use suicide prevention hotlines

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### Assessing Risk

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- Many types of instruments
- Some are more in-depth than others
- Doesn't matter which one you use, just know how to use it

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### Example of an Instrument

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### Conclusions

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- Is a big problem among young and old people,
- Is often preventable with some concern by others
- Get individuals at risk to trained professionals

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### Finally,

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- If someone succeeds at suicide that you know or worked with

YOU ARE NOT RESPONSIBLE

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