



Sorting facts, myths could save lives

May 3, 2010

Evansville Courier and Press

When we think of suicide rates, we often tend to focus on the 2009 local statistics for Vanderburgh County that were released on January 20, 2010. Although these numbers are very important, we must first realize that suicide is not only a local problem, but a national one as well. The following was reported by the World Health Organization regarding suicide rates globally:

- Every year, almost one million people die from suicide; a "global" mortality rate of 16 per 100,000, or one death every 40 seconds.
- In the last 45 years suicide rates have increased by 60% worldwide. Suicide is among the three leading causes of death among those aged 15-44 years in some countries, and the second leading cause of death in the 10-24 years age group; these figures do not include suicide attempts which are up to 20 times more frequent than completed suicide.
- Although traditionally suicide rates have been highest among the male elderly, rates among young people have been increasing to such an extent that they are now the group at highest risk in a third of countries, in both developed and developing countries.
- Mental disorders (particularly depression and alcohol use disorders) are a major risk factor for suicide in Europe and North America; however, in Asian countries impulsiveness plays an important role. Suicide is complex with psychological, social,

biological, cultural and environmental factors involved.

Although these numbers are alerting, we as a community can work together to prevent suicide. As a basic step, we must first understand the facts about suicide versus the myths. Having a complete understanding about suicide and its warning signs will help us recognize when intervention is needed to help save a life.

Myth: No one can stop a suicide, it is inevitable.

Fact: If people in a crisis get the help they need, they will probably never be suicidal again.

Myth: Confronting a person about suicide will only make them angry and increase the risk of suicide.

Fact: Asking someone directly about suicidal intent lowers anxiety, opens up communication and lowers the risk of an impulsive act.

Myth: Only experts can prevent suicide.

Fact: Suicide prevention is everybody's business, and anyone can help prevent the tragedy of suicide.

Myth: Suicidal people keep their plans to themselves.

Fact: Most suicidal people communicate their intent sometime during the week preceding their attempt.

Myth: Those who talk about suicide don't do it.

Fact: People who talk about suicide may try, or even complete, an act of self-destruction.

Myth: Once a person decides to complete suicide, there is nothing

anyone can do to stop them.

Fact: Suicide is the most preventable kind of death, and almost any positive action may save a life.

In 2009, Vanderburgh County had a record high rate of 49 suicides, of which 11 were completed by individuals who do not reside in this county. This number causes a few concerns for those studying this issue:

1. What major factors are contributing to these increased rates in suicide?

2. Do people know how to help others they fear may be suicidal?

3. Do people know where to go to get help?

In this four part series running each Monday this month, we'll help answer some of the questions above using an abbreviated version of an educational course that is offered free to our community called QPR (Question, Persuade and Refer). At the end of this series we'll be offering a free QPR community workshop that goes into more depth about suicide.

Our hope is that after the training you'll walk away feeling that you could help save a life. This workshop will be held in the Welborn Room at 410 Mulberry Street in downtown Evansville on Tuesday, May 25, 2010 from 6:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. Please call 812.436.4221 to register to attend.

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