



Fact, Fiction or Somewhere in Between: Youth Suicide & Self-Injury

Statement	Answer
Self-Injury	
1. Self-harm is a mental illness.	Fiction: It is actually a behavior and is often a symptom of a mental illness, such as depression, psychosis or borderline personality disorder. It can become addictive.
2. Self-harm is more than just cutting, burning and things we can see.	Fact: Excessive exercise, pinching oneself, increased drinking, overdose with non-fatal intention, sabotaging relationships, staying with people who treat you terribly, pulling hair and mixing meds with alcohol can all be forms of self-injury.
3. Self-harm is a failed suicide attempt.	Fiction: Intention is to harm self, not kill self.
4. Self-harm can be a good thing.	Fact: It may stop suicide, perhaps sacrificing a part of the body to save the whole. Self-harmers often say there is a build-up of pressure—harming can be like opening the lid of a boiling pot to give some release. So, it can temporarily be a relief until new coping strategies are learned, and/ or an underlying mental health problem is treated.
Suicide	
1. If you ask a young person about his or her suicidal intentions, you will encourage the person to kill themselves.	Fiction: The opposite is true. Asking someone directly about their suicidal feelings will often lower their anxiety level and act as a deterrent. Your openness and concern in asking about suicide will allow the person experiencing pain to talk about their problems. This may allow the person with suicidal thoughts to feel less lonely or isolated, and perhaps a bit relieved.
2. Suicide is the third leading cause of death for young people.	Fact: In the United States in 2008, an average of one young person (age 15-24) died of suicide every 2 hours and 3 minutes.
3. A young person who attempts suicide will always be “suicidal.”	Fiction: Most people who are at risk feel suicidal for only a brief period in their lives. With proper assistance and support, they will probably never be suicidal again.

Continued

<p>4. When administering mental health first aid to a young person experiencing a suicidal crisis, the role of family members or other caregivers cannot be overstated.</p>	<p>Fact: For the young person, family may mean the biological or legal parents, siblings, other relatives, foster parents, legal guardians, caregivers, or other individuals with primary relationships to the child whether they be blood, adoptive, legal, or social relationships. Remember, parent, caregiver, or family notification is a vital part of suicide prevention for young people.</p>
<p>5. Suicide happens without warning.</p>	<p>Fiction: Studies reveal that a person who is suicidal generally gives many clues and warnings regarding their suicidal intentions. Alertness to these cries for help may prevent suicidal behavior.</p>
<p>6. Suicide occurs across all classes of young people.</p>	<p>Fact: Suicide is neither a rich man's disease nor the poor man's curse. Showing no class prejudice, suicide is represented throughout society.</p>