

5 COMMON MYTHS ABOUT RURAL MENTAL ILLNESS & SUICIDE



In crisis? Call or text 988

There are many myths and misunderstandings about mental illness and suicide, which can act as barriers to someone seeking help for themselves or someone they love who is experiencing a mental health challenge or crisis.

Myth #1 People who live in rural communities are less likely to be affected by mental illness.

Fact Compared to people living in urban areas, rural Americans have higher depression and suicide rates, but are less likely to access mental healthcare services. Suicide rates among people living in rural areas are 64% to 68% higher compared to those living in urban areas.

Myth #2 Mental illness is a sign of weakness or character flaw that people can fix themselves if they try hard enough.

Fact Mental illness is a disease – just like cancer or diabetes. A disease is not caused by a person being weak or flawed. A disease needs to be treated. There are many causes of mental illness including biological factors (e.g., genetics, injuries and physical illnesses) and life experiences, such as a history of abuse or trauma. People with mental illness can get better with treatment and support.

Myth #3 Talking about suicide increases the chance that people will act on it.

Fact Talking to someone about suicide can be a difficult and uncomfortable conversation. But it can save a life. Starting a conversation about suicide with someone you think may be at risk can actually decrease suicidal thoughts. Talking about suicide gives that person the opportunity to share what they are struggling with and have a better chance of seeing options other than suicide.

Myth #4 People who talk about suicide are just looking for attention.

Fact People who die by suicide often talk about it first. That's why it's important to always take suicidal talk seriously. It's true that a person may be seeking attention, but it is likely a call for help. And the attention that you give them may actually save their life. Learn more about suicide prevention and warning signs of suicide at www.ruralminds.org/rural-suicide-awareness-and-prevention.

Myth #5 Once a person decides to die by suicide, you can't stop it.

Fact: People who are suicidal can be helped. And suicide is preventable in many cases. Because a suicidal crisis can be confined to a brief period, you can help someone you suspect may be suicidal by encouraging them to talk, staying with them to provide support and calling 988. If appropriate, consider assisting the person with getting the professional help they need following the crisis – such as counseling and mental healthcare.

For mental health and suicide prevention information and resources, visit the Rural Mental Health Resilience Program website at www.RuralMinds.org/resilience or via the QR code below:



If you or someone you know is in crisis and needs help, call or text 988. The 988 Lifeline connects you with a trained crisis counselor who can help. It is free, confidential, and available 24/7. If this is a life-threatening emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest hospital emergency room.

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