There are many myths regarding suicide. One of the most significant myths is that suicide cannot be prevented. This is false. Suicide is absolutely preventable! It is, however, often difficult to decipher the warning signs that someone is having suicidal thoughts and then take necessary lifesaving action.

I have discussed common warning signs in one of my previous blogs (June 2018), and I will discuss those in further detail in my next blog. Today, I would like to discuss some of the common myths regarding suicide.

**Myth:** Suicide only affects individuals with a mental health condition.

**Fact:** Many individuals living with a mental illness will not have suicidal thoughts and not all people who attempt or die by suicide live with a mental illness. Information from National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) indicate that only 54 percent of those who died by suicide had been diagnosed with a mental health disorder.

**Myth:** Suicide happens most often during the holiday seasons of Thanksgiving and Christmas.

**Fact:** While the holiday seasons can be difficult for those living with mental illnesses and loss survivors, suicide is unfortunately a year-round event. Suicides tend to peak during spring.

**Myth:** Most suicides happen suddenly without warning.

**Fact:** Verbal, behavioral and situational warning signs precede most suicides.

**Myth:** Asking someone if they are having suicidal thoughts will put the idea in their head.

**Fact:** Discussing suicidal thoughts reduces the stigma and shame and can help give the person an opportunity to get the help he or she needs.

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**About the Author - Bob Swanson**

Bob Swanson is the past president of Swanson & Youngdale and the first Chairman of FCA International. He tragically lost his son Michael to suicide on March 13, 2009 at the age of 33. Bob now focuses his efforts on creating awareness of the impact of mental health and suicide in the construction industry.

Find more of Bob’s blogs at:

www.finishingcontractors.org/ preventsuicide
Myths About Suicide
November 2019
(continued) by Bob Swanson

Myth: A person talking about suicide is just seeking attention and won’t actually attempt suicide.

Fact: A person talking about suicide is crying for help and is thinking of ending their life.

Myth: People who die by suicide are selfish and want to die.

Fact: People die by suicide because they want their pain and suffering to end and suicide is the only path they see out. They don’t want their life to end; they don’t see any other option.

Myth: Only a trained professional can stop a person from attempting suicide.

Fact: We all have the capability to save someone during a mental crisis. Read on to learn how you can make a difference.

An Example of How to Make a Difference: Shortly after my retirement, I spoke at a company safety and health meeting about suicide prevention. Within months of that presentation, a supervisor of that company received a text warning from an employee. The text read, “I can’t do it anymore”.

The supervisor and a company officer immediately took action to reach out to this person in crisis. They made contact and determined where the individual was. When they reached the individual, he was alone in his car with the means to end his life. The employee in crisis was able to get the medical help he needed, and a life was saved. Remember: all warning signs are serious and require immediate action.

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