



FACTS AND FABLES ON SUICIDE



FABLE: People who talk about suicide don't commit suicide.

FACT: Of any ten persons who kill themselves, eight have given definite warnings of their suicidal intentions.

FABLE: Suicide happens without warning.

FACT: Studies reveal that the suicidal person gives many clues and warnings regarding his suicidal intentions.

FABLE: Suicidal people are fully intent on dying.

FACT: Most suicidal people are undecided about living or dying, and they "gamble with death," leaving it to others to save them. Almost no one commits suicide without letting others know how he is feeling.

FABLE: Once a person is suicidal, he is suicidal forever.

FACT: Individuals who wish to kill themselves are suicidal only for a limited period of time.

FABLE: Improvement following a suicidal crisis means that the suicidal risk is over.

FACT: Most suicides occur within about three months following the beginning of "improvement," when the individual has the energy to put his morbid thought and feelings into effect.

- FABLE:** Suicide strikes much more often among the rich-or, conversely, it occurs almost exclusively among the poor.
- FACT:** Suicide is neither the rich man's disease nor the poor man's curse. Suicide is very "democratic" and is represented proportionately among all levels of society.
- FABLE:** Suicide is inherited or runs in the family.
- FACT:** Suicide does not run in families. It is an individual pattern.
- FABLE:** All suicidal individuals are mentally ill, and suicide always is the act of a psychotic person.
- FACT:** Studies of hundreds of genuine suicide notes indicate that although the suicidal person is extremely unhappy, he is not necessarily mentally ill.

From Some Facts about Suicide by E. S. Shneidman and N. L. Farberow, Washington, D. C., PHS Publication No. 852, U. S. Government Printing Office, 1961.