

Suicidal thoughts: how serious is our condition?

Many of us have been told, "Your problems aren't that bad. They don't add up to suicide," or, "If you only took 15 pills, you weren't really serious."

We have a condition that causes others to feel uncomfortable. They reduce their discomfort by using denial, belittlement and [minimization](#) on the seriousness of our situation. While most of this denial is due to their fear concerning the possibility our death, a part of it has another source. They may also have had or be afraid of having bad periods in their own lives, and their [denial](#) on our vulnerability to suicide helps them deny their own vulnerability.

Since we have also been taught the myths of suicide, and we are not immune to social pressure, and -- like anyone else -- we fear death, we often acquiesce in this process. We can think that unless we have shot ourselves squarely in the head, we must not have a very serious condition. In the face of all this pressure, it is hard for us acknowledge that our lives are in danger.

An effective way to confront this kind of denial is to attend suicide bereavement support groups. Listen to [relatives and friends describe the lives of the people they lost to suicide](#). Some completed suicides had no prior attempts, some had gestures, some had one or more attempts. While some suicides endured decades of multiple and severe problems, in other cases their survivors say in bewilderment, "We don't understand how it could have happened. Those problems just weren't enough for suicide."

No one outside of us, nor we ourselves, can accurately determine our risk for dying by suicide. It cannot be determined on the basis of attempts we have or have not made, and it cannot be determined by totaling up the number of our warning sign conditions.

Consider two people who smoke the same number of cigarettes for the same number of years. At age 40 one of them gets cancer and dies. We are like the survivor. For each of us there is someone who had problems similar to ours who is now dead from suicide. Like the survivor, we have a life-endangering condition. The longer it lasts and the worse it gets, the greater the likelihood that we will die.

People who survive unhurt from horrible car accidents, get mild heart attacks, or are threatened by violence from others, are people who have been in serious life-threatening situations. Our fear of death is just as real and legitimate as theirs. Fortunately, overcoming denial makes us stronger. It gives us a realistic view of our situation. It motivates us to do whatever it takes to get better and stay better.