

MURDER – SUICIDE / SUICIDE BY COP

A murder-suicide is an act in which an individual kills one or more persons immediately before or at the same time as killing oneself.

As early as the 18th century people wishing to commit suicide in Denmark would sometimes commit murder in order to receive the death penalty. They believed, for religious reasons, murder followed by repentance would allow them to end their life while avoiding damnation.

Reflecting on Columbine High School, Sandy Hook Elementary, and the shooting at a Wisconsin Sikh temple, among others – many wonder why individuals who commit these acts often kill themselves at the end of the massacre.

Tim Dees, a criminal justice technology writer, offered his opinion that suicide is the shooter's "last great act of revenge and defiance." Dees stated, "Most of these people are angry at the world over the way they have been treated, or at least the way they perceive they have been treated. This is payback. They go into a situation with the full intent of killing themselves to deny the world its opportunity for retribution."

Adam Lankford, a criminal justice professor at the University of Alabama, offers a different opinion. "That by killing more people a shooter kills, the guiltier he feels, meaning he is more likely to kill himself. This suggests that those who have the most rage towards others – and therefore end up killing the victims – would also feel the most guilty and ashamed about their crimes and more likely to engage in 'self-punishment' via suicide or suicide by cop."

The combination of murder and suicide can take various forms, including the following:

- Suicide after murder to escape punishment
- Murder followed by suicide by a mentally unstable person
- Suicide after murder as a form of self-punishment due to guilt
- Murder before suicide with the intent of preventing future pain and suffering of others including family members and oneself

Though there is no national tracking system for murder-suicide in the United States, medical studies estimate between 1,000 to 1,500 deaths per year in the US with the majority occurring between spouses or intimate partners and the vast majority of the perpetrators being male. Depression, marital and/or financial problems, and other problems are generally motivators.

SUICIDE BY COP

Suicide by cop, or police assisted suicide, is a suicide method when a suicidal individual deliberately behaves in a threatening manner, with intent to provoke a lethal response from a law enforcement officer.

There are two categories of suicide by cop. The first is when someone has committed a crime and is being pursued by the police, and decides that he would rather die than be arrested. Such individuals may not otherwise be suicidal but may simply decide that life is not worth living if they are incarcerated and thus will provoke police to kill them. The second involves individuals who are already contemplating suicide and who, for whatever reason, decide that provoking law enforcement into killing them is the best way to act on their desires. These individuals may commit a crime with the specific intention of provoking a law enforcement response. The most common scenario is pointing an unloaded or non-functioning gun (such as a toy gun, air gun, airsoft gun, or starter's pistol) at officers.

Some suicidal individuals choose suicide by cop because it is the only method they seem capable of. In such cases they harbor no anger towards the police. In fact, they may like the police and view them as providing one final service for them. However, dying from suicide by cop endangers the life of officers as well as civilians.

Suicidal thoughts should not be ignored and help should be obtained as soon as possible by calling 911 or a local crisis team (844-493-8255), or the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (800-273-8255)

REFERENCES, RESOURCES TO CONTACT & ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- Business Insider – Why Do Gunmen Kill Themselves After Committing Mass Shootings? (<http://www.businessinsider.com/suicide-and-mass-shootings-2012-12>)
- Murder-Suicide (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Murder%E2%80%93suicide>)
- The Brains of Violent Males: The Homicidal and Suicidal Brain (<http://serendip.brynmawr.edu/bb/neuro/neuro03/web2/nhjackman.html>)
- Psych Central – Having Suicidal and Homicidal Thoughts (<http://psychcentral.com/ask-the-therapist/2010/08/07/having-suicidal-and-homicidal-thoughts>)
- Suicide by Cop (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suicide_by_cop)
- Suicide.org – Suicide by Cop (<http://www.suicide.org/suicide-by-cop.html>)
- Police Link – Suicide by Cop (<http://policelink.monster.com/training/articles/2313-suicide-by-cop>)

**If you need immediate assistance contact the
National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1-800-273-8255
Colorado Crisis & Support Line 1-844-493-8255**