

Japan has one of the highest **suicide** rates in the world. About 25 out of 100,000 people take their lives there every year. That means more than 30,000 deaths annually. Compare that **figure** with the US average, which is 12 out of 100,000. And in Britain, it's 15 out of 100,000. Experts in Japan **anticipate** that the awfully high figure will rise because of the economic downturn.

A helpline for people **contemplating** suicide helps combat the problem. However, with 700,000 calls each year, it can't **cope** with the expected increase. Those who run the helpline strongly believe that there will be more calls from **desperate** people in 2011. Fifty call centers around Japan offer help and a **sympathetic** ear, and each call lasts about 40 minutes. A shortage of **volunteers** and money will hinder the organization, and at a time when things look quite **grim**. The Japanese government **currently** provides ¥80 million (\$875,000), which isn't enough to meet the helpline's needs. Even worse, this figure **represents** a 20% decrease from just a few years ago.

Within the last six months, Japanese companies have **laid off** large numbers of employees as the economy has worsened. Medium-sized companies once **relied** on larger companies for orders, yet business has now **dried up**. Families are feeling the change, and **homelessness** has begun to rise. It seems that Japan can do little but wait for the coming suicides this year.

### 1. Comprehension Questions:

Guess the answers to the questions below.

a.	According to the article, Japan has the highest suicide rate in the world.	T / F
b.	The number of suicides in Japan will definitely increase this year.	T / F
c.	There aren't enough people at the helpline, nor money.	T / F
d.	Many employees have lost their jobs in Japan recently.	T / F
e.	According to the article, families are becoming homeless.	T / F

### 2. Fill in the Blanks: Fill in the blank with the correct word. Use a dictionary for any words you don't know, but be sure to check your English-English dictionary, too.

	<b>represents</b>	<b>cope</b>	<b>laid off</b>	<b>dried up</b>	<b>desperate</b>
	<b>anticipate</b>	<b>sympathetic</b>	<b>contemplating</b>	<b>grim</b>	<b>relied</b>
a.	Experts in Japan ( ) that the awfully high figure will rise because of the economic downturn.				
b.	A helpline for people ( ) suicide helps combat the problem.				
c.	With 700,000 calls each year, the helpline can't ( ) with the expected increase.				
d.	Those who run the helpline strongly believe that there will be more calls from ( ) people in 2011.				
e.	Fifty call centers around Japan offer help and a ( ) ear, and each call lasts about 40 minutes.				
f.	A shortage of volunteers and money will hinder the organization. Things look quite ( ).				
g.	¥80 million (\$875,000) ( ) a 20% decrease from just a few years ago.				
h.	Japanese companies have ( ) large numbers of employees as the economy has worsened.				
i.	Medium-sized companies once ( ) on larger companies for orders.				
j.	Business has now ( ).				

### 3. Questions

- 1) What comes to mind when you hear the word 'suicide'?
- 2) Is the suicide rate in Korea high?
- 3) Why do people commit suicide?
- 4) What do you think of the Internet sites that encourage people to commit suicide together?
- 5) Does society do enough for people who feel suicidal to stop them from taking their own lives?
- 6) Is it wrong to commit suicide?
- 7) Should people who commit suicide always leave a suicide note?
- 8) Is suicide the same as murder?
- 9) Nietzsche said: "The thought of suicide is a powerful solace: by means of it one gets through many a bad night." Do you agree?
- 10) Have you ever contemplated suicide?
- 11) If you try but fail to commit suicide, should you go to prison?
- 12) What are your thoughts on assisted suicide for the terminally ill?
- 13) Is suicide a taboo subject in Korea?
- 14) Is committing suicide one of the most selfish acts a person can do?
- 15) What would you do if your friend started talking about suicide?
- 16) If you commit suicide, do you go to heaven or hell?
- 17) What kind of people are more likely to commit suicide?
- 18) Mahatma Gandhi said: "If I had no sense of humour, I would long ago have committed suicide." What do you think of this quote?
- 19) Thomas S. Szasz said: "Suicide is a fundamental human right. This does not mean that it is morally desirable. It only means that society does not have the moral right to interfere." Do you agree?