



**SHINING A
LIGHT ON
SUICIDE
PREVENTION**

WORKING TOGETHER TO PREVENT SUICIDE

**WORLD SUICIDE PREVENTION DAY
10 SEPTEMBER 2020**

**SUICIDE PREVENTION HELPLINE
0800 567 567**

PRESS RELEASE - 9 September 2020

SADAG Shines a light on Suicide Prevention for World Suicide Prevention Day on the 10th September 2020

Suicide prevention remains a universal challenge – the World Health Organisation (WHO) estimates that over 800 000 people take their own life each year – that’s 1 person every 40 seconds. While pandemic-related suicides have already been reported in many countries, these deaths have been largely overshadowed.

The South African Depression and Anxiety Group (SADAG) are urging South Africans to work together to prevent suicide for World Suicide Prevention Day on the 10th September 2020 – if more people are aware about the warning signs of suicide and know how to get someone help before it’s too late, we can help reduce the high number of suicides in South Africa every day.

Cassey Chambers, SADAG’s Operations Directors says “Suicide is still a very taboo topic in our society - no one wants to talk about it, no one knows how to talk about it, and parents don’t want to talk to their children about it in case it “plants ideas”. However, suicide is a very real issue in South Africa and we can see it by the increasing number of calls we are receiving every day to the Suicide Helpline from people all over the country.”

“I want help. I feel so helpless in my life”

“I have a sister that's suicidal and I think she suffers from depression and anxiety...please help”

“I have suicidal thoughts, am depressed”

“I desperately need someone to talk to. I'm seriously falling apart...I just can't anymore”

So many people are dealing with serious problems everyday – from relationships, work stress, unemployment, trauma, grief or financial stress - many people have no access to mental health treatment or care, or don't know where to get the help they need, never mind the stigma that prevents people from speaking up and getting help, until it is too late.

SADAG has seen a huge increase in the number of calls to the Helplines since COVID19 lockdown – the majority of callers are female either calling for themselves or a family member or loved one needing help. However, men are more likely to die by suicide than women globally, with South African men being 5 times more suicidal than women.

While so many people have already reached out to the Suicide Helpline for telephone counselling, crisis intervention and emergency help – SADAG have received over 55 000 calls to the Suicide Helpline since January 2020 – there are still so many people who don't know how to get help, or where to go, or who are too scared to seek help.

To tie in with the international theme for World Suicide Prevention Day of “Working Together to Prevent Suicide” – if more people knew what warning signs to look out for and where to get help, then more people can get help before it's too late.

Possible warning signs of suicide include:

- Talking about ending their life, dying or suicide; or a previous suicide attempt
- Talking about suicide recently or making a plan
- Strong wish to die or a preoccupation with death and dying
- Giving away prized possessions
- Signs of Depression - such as moodiness, hopelessness, withdrawal, difficulty with appetite and sleep, and loss of interest in usual activities
- Increased alcohol and/or other drug use
- Hinting about not being around in the future or saying good-bye (including good bye messages on social media, whatsapp or SMS)
- Drastic behavioural changes
- Making arrangements to take care of unfinished business

What to do if someone is suicidal – start by asking questions

The first step is to find out whether the person is in danger of acting on suicidal feelings. Be sensitive, but ask direct questions, such as:

- How are you coping with what's been happening in your life?
- Do you ever feel like just giving up?
- Are you thinking about dying?
- Are you thinking about hurting yourself?
- Are you thinking about suicide?
- Have you ever thought about suicide before, or tried to harm yourself before?
- Have you thought about how or when you'd do it?
- Do you have access to weapons or things that can be used as weapons to harm yourself?

Asking about suicidal thoughts or feelings won't push someone into doing something self-destructive. In fact, offering an opportunity to talk about feelings may reduce the risk of acting on suicidal feelings.

It's never too late to seek help, you are not alone. Looking out for a friend or loved one is an important part of preventing suicides. In South Africa there are 23 suicides a day recorded and a further 20 attempted suicides for every 1 suicide in the country. Please call South African's only Suicide Helpline (24 hours) 0800 567 567 or SMS 31393 offering free telephone counselling, crisis intervention, information and referrals nationwide. SADAG has lots more information on Suicide Awareness and Prevention via www.sadag.org.

ENDS.

How to help someone who is suicidal

If a friend or loved one is thinking about suicide, he or she needs professional help, even if suicide isn't an immediate danger. Here's what you can do.

- **Encourage the person to call a suicide helpline number – 0800 567 567 (24 hours a day) or SMS 31393 and a counsellor will call you back**
- **Encourage the person to seek treatment.** A suicidal or severely depressed person may not have the energy or motivation to find help. If the person doesn't want to go to a doctor or mental health professional, perhaps you can help make an appointment, or take them to their appointment as support. You can also get help from a local clinic, hospital, school counsellor, GP, trauma ~~center~~, etc. And if you are not sure what resources are available in your area, contact SADAG for resources nearby. You can offer support and advice — but remember that it's not your job to substitute for a mental health provider.
- **Offer to help the person take steps to get assistance and support.** For example, you can research treatment options, make phone calls or even offer to go with the person to an appointment.
- **Encourage the person to communicate with you.** Someone who's suicidal may be tempted to bottle up feelings because he or she feels ashamed, guilty or embarrassed. Be supportive and understanding, and express your opinions without placing blame. Listen attentively and avoid interrupting. Asking "How are you really feeling today" or "How can I help you today" can start an open conversation
- **Be respectful and acknowledge the person's feelings.** Don't try to talk the person out of his or her feelings or express shock. Remember, even though someone who's suicidal isn't thinking logically, the emotions are real. Not respecting how the person feels can shut down communication.
- **Don't be patronizing or judgmental.** For example, don't tell someone, "Things could be worse" or "You have everything to live for." Instead, ask questions such as, "What's causing you to feel so bad?" "What would make you feel better?" or "How can I help?"
- **Never promise to keep someone's suicidal feelings a secret.** Be understanding, but explain that you may not be able to keep such a promise if you think the person's life is in danger. At that point, you have to get help.
- **Offer reassurance that things can get better.** When someone is suicidal, it seems as if nothing will make things better. Reassure the person that with appropriate treatment, he or she can develop other ways to cope and can feel better about life again.
- **Encourage the person to avoid alcohol and drug use.** Using drugs or alcohol may seem to ease the painful feelings in the moment, but ultimately it makes things worse — it can lead to reckless behaviour or feeling more depressed. If the person can't quit on his or her own, offer to help find treatment.
- **Remove potentially dangerous items from the person's home, if possible.** If you can, make sure the person doesn't have items around that could be used for suicide — such as knives, razors, guns or drugs. If the person takes a medication that could be used for overdose, encourage him or her to have someone safeguard it and give it as prescribed.

WORLD SUICIDE PREVENTION DAY

Calls to SADAG Jan - Aug 2020



273 405



That's almost **3x**
the capacity of
FNB stadium



55 504

calls to the **Suicide Helpline**



+1400

calls per day

Our call volumes have increased by

53%

from
2019
-**2020**

Additional

22 770

emails, sms's, whatsapp
messages and online
messages from people
needing help



Only Suicide Crisis Helpline in the country

Our call volumes have literally
doubled during **COVID19 lockdown**



Suicide Helpline

0800 567 567 | SMS 31393 | www.sadag.org