

One in five teens suicidal

Sadag, which is heading Teen Suicide Prevention Week, urges teens to talk to someone

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WITH almost 10% of teen deaths in South Africa being the result of suicide, the South African Depression and Anxiety Group (Sadag) has appealed to teenagers who may be feeling depressed to talk to someone they can trust about their problems.

Sadag, which is spearheading Teen Suicide Prevention Week, yesterday addressed scores of pupils at Kliptown Secondary School in Eldorado Park about depression.

The organisation revealed that 9.5% of teen deaths in the country are due to suicide and 16.5% have made plans to commit suicide. Statistics also show that more than 20.7% of teenagers have considered committing suicide, and young people between 15 and 19 are the most at risk.

“Sadag is trying to raise as much awareness as possible. With 80% of people who have committed suicide, having told someone first, it is important to educate people about the warning signs and symptoms of depression,” Sadag operations director Cassey Chambers said.

The organisation has listed relationship problems, family issues, violence, sexual abuse, acute bullying and previous attempts as high risk factors behind teenage suicide.

Sadag’s counsellors and celebrity ambassadors spent their time yesterday at the school educating pupils about the signs and warnings to look out for when dealing with depressed people.

One of them, Sade Giliberti,



QUICK FACTS

- » ABOUT 60% of teens with mental disorder do not get treatment
- » Females attempt suicide more often than men, with a ratio of 3:1
- » 40% of fatal suicides in South Africa occur at the weekends, mostly between 7am and 8pm
- » Free State province has the highest prevalence of pupils with hopeless feelings, with 28.6%

CARING INFORMATION: Actress Hlubi Mboya visited Kliptown Secondary School to share and promote the Suicide Shouldn't be a Secret campaign. PICTURE: SUPPLIED

who started her TV career at the age of seven, said her battle with depression started at a tender age.

“I was only seven years old when I started mixing everything (into a concoction) in the house hoping that I would die. Sometimes when I was still on TV, I had to pretend that I was happy even when I wasn't. But most of the time, TV was my escape from my life. I spoke to

some colleagues and a school psychologist and was put on antidepressants, but did not like them and I ended up seeing a psychiatrist,” Giliberti said.

Giliberti said that her depression was triggered by her young mother’s “wild lifestyle”.

“When I was depressed my parents did not know. And when my father found out he was shocked, but he supported me.

Actress Hlubi Mboya, who

is also an ambassador said: “Depression doesn't have to be part of the future. Teenagers who are being bullied at school feel hopeless, helpless. And many who are suicidal feel that they are burden to their families. But, don't keep suicide a secret, talk about it. Life is worth living.”

Mboya said she was passionate about the youth and issues affecting them.

Grade 8, pupil, Ashely

Johannes, 13, from Kliptown Secondary said she had come across many young people dealing with depression.

“I know a lot of young and old people who have taken their own lives in my community. Some of my friends who have problems at home and who are doing well at school tend to think that killing themselves is the only solution,” Johannes said.

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