



## SUICIDE PREVENTION: CREATING HOPE



### EDITORIAL TACKLING TEENAGE MENTAL HEALTH

Suicide is a critical and complex public health concern globally. The increasing incidence of suicide among teenagers in India, over the years, has raised alarms, in the Indian government and other stake-holders. It is believed that academic pressures, family pressures, and societal expectations are some of the primary factors contributing to the vulnerability of teenagers to mental illness.

National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data, states suicide as one of the leading causes of death among young Indians. The Mental Health Act, 2017, was a significant milestone in India's efforts to address mental health and suicide prevention. This legislation decriminalizes suicide, recognizing it as a manifestation of underlying mental health problems.

The Act also emphasizes the right of every individual to access mental healthcare services, helping to reduce stigma and increase awareness. The Indian government has also launched various initiatives aimed at addressing teenage suicides and promoting mental well-being- the National Mental Health Programme (NMHP), at the district level, School Mental Health Program in school-based curricula. Two digital apps, *MANAS* for preventive mental health and *SAFL* for suicide assessment, have been launched.

It is true that there is a shortage of mental health professionals. We need to invest in infrastructure, increase awareness, and integrate mental health education into school curricula. Society at large must work towards fostering a culture of empathy and supportive environment for India's teenagers, helping them navigate the challenges of adolescence and mental health and creating hope.



-Rita Aggarwal,  
Consulting Psychologist, India.

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## PRESIDENT MAMTA JAISWAL ROTARY CLUB OF NAGPUR ELITE.

President of Rotary Club of Nagpur Elite, Rotarian Mamta Jaiswal is a bundle of energy, creativity, unlimited enthusiasm. She is always brimming with new ideas. Her determination about the progress of her club is admirable. A social entrepreneur and hotelier by profession, she is happily married to Manish who is also in the hotel business. They are blessed with two kids, Pranay who is a qualified doctor and doing internship; and daughter Sanvi studying in the 9th std.



Mamta has a busy yet satisfying schedule. Like many women, her day starts early by preparing food for her family. She believes in exercising in the mornings, is a brisk walker and goes to the gym for workouts too.

According to her, happiness comes from serving the Almighty, the society and her family. Cooking and doing things for her family makes her happy. She enjoys dinner times, where everyone gathers to discuss the day and share happy thoughts. Mamta is involved in the social service circle as well. She has always been passionate about the youth, especially teenagers. She has been instrumental in guiding and promoting Rotary Youth Exchange programs. She plays multiple roles of a mother, counsellor, friend and guide to all the Rotary Exchange students who come from various countries. The doors of her home and heart are always open to them. She is grateful that DAGMHI 3030 is focussing on the mental health of the youth, since they are the path makers of our future.

She endorses the famous quote by Nelson Mandela, "The youth of today are the leaders of tomorrow"

Dr Shantala Bhole,  
Director DAGMHI 3030.

## F-ACTUAL

Suicide is death caused by injuring oneself with the intent to die (cdc.gov).

### According to WHO:

- Suicide is a global phenomenon.
- Each year 703,000 people die due to suicide and many more attempt.
- In 2019, 77% of global suicides occur in low- and middle-income countries.
- Suicide is the fourth leading cause of death among 15–29-year-olds.
- Though there is a link between suicide and mental disorders and/or previous suicide attempts; many suicides happen impulsively (in the moment of crisis).

### Indian Scenario: according to NCRB (National Crime Records Bureau) 2021

- A total of 1,64,033 suicides were reported in India.
- There is an increase of 7.2% in comparison to 2020.
- In students, suicides have increased by 4.5% - around 35 suicides are reported every day.
- 864 out of 10732 students suicide cases were linked to failure in exams.
- Highest number of students death by suicide is reported in Maharashtra (1834), followed by Madhya Pradesh (1308) and Tamilnadu (1246).
- 'Family Problems' (33.2%) and 'Illness' (18.6%) were the major causes of suicides.
- 8.0 % of total victims were students.
- 12.3% of the total victims were self-employed persons.
- 25.6% of total victims were daily wage earners.
- 14% of total victims were housewives.

-Dr. Aabha Pimprikar,  
Co-Editor.

## SUICIDE PREVENTION: CREATING HOPE FROM THE SPIRAL OF DESPAIR.

**Deliberately ending one's own life is referred to as "suicide".** When individuals contemplate death by suicide, they often find themselves **ensnared in a spiral of hopelessness-a state where the burdens of pain and suffering seem insurmountable.** It is a deeply distressing phenomenon that affects individuals, families, and communities worldwide.

Understanding the 'why' of suicide is complex and multifaceted. Suicidal thoughts and tendencies can emerge at any point in a person's life. They may be prompted by a sudden crisis, such as a traumatic event or an overwhelming emotional distress. However, they can also develop gradually over time due to prolonged feelings of hopelessness, depression, or other mental health challenges. **While mental health conditions often play a significant role, it is important to note that not every person with a mental health disorder experiences suicidal thoughts.** Environmental stressors, such as financial difficulties, relationship problems, addictive behaviours, or a history of trauma, can exacerbate vulnerability. The motivations for suicide are deeply personal and are unique to each individual. They are commonly intense emotional pain, feeling trapped, loss and grief, escaping mental agony.

Suicidal tendencies are a global issue that affects people from all walks of life. They are not bound by geography, social status, or cultural background. It is vital to acknowledge that despair is a subjective experience, rooted in complex emotional, psychological, and societal factors.

To effectively address this issue, we must recognize the need for a multifaceted approach that encompasses psychological support, social connectedness, and a rekindling of purpose.

**The Role of Empathy :** Empathy serves as the cornerstone of any suicide prevention strategy. It is the ability to understand and share the feelings of another, transcending judgment and offering solace. By creating spaces where individuals can express their innermost struggles without fear of condemnation, we create a lifeline of human connection that has the power to uplift even the heaviest hearts.

**Listening without Agenda:** Active listening is an invaluable tool in suicide prevention. It requires setting aside preconceived notions and offering a safe, non-judgmental space for someone to voice their pain. By allowing individuals to articulate their emotions, we validate their experiences, affirming that they are not alone in their struggle.

**Cultivating Resilience :** Hope thrives in the soil of resilience. Encouraging individuals to tap into their innate strength and capacity for growth can be transformative. It involves fostering a sense of self-efficacy, reminding them that they possess the power to overcome challenges and forge a path toward healing.

**Fostering Social Bonds:** Human beings are inherently social creatures. Isolation can exacerbate feelings of hopelessness, while meaningful connections can provide a vital lifeline. Building a supportive community involves creating spaces for open dialogue, mutual understanding, and shared experiences. Through these connections, individuals can find solace, encouragement, and a renewed sense of purpose.

**Nurturing a Sense of Purpose:** Finding meaning in life is a powerful antidote to despair. Encouraging individuals to explore their passions, engage in activities that resonate with their values, and contribute to the well-being of others can reignite a sense of purpose. This newfound direction can serve as a guiding light through even the darkest of moments.

**Professional Intervention and Support:** In tandem with compassionate community efforts, professional intervention is crucial. Mental health professionals, equipped with the knowledge and expertise to navigate complex emotional terrain, play an indispensable role in the journey toward hope and healing.

Suicide prevention is a collective endeavour that requires a nuanced, multifaceted approach, by which, **we can illuminate the path from despair to hope. Together, we can create a world where every individual feels valued, supported, and empowered to embrace life's challenges with courage and resilience**

- Dr Sripriya Shaji Ph.D

Counselling Psychologist & Nutritionist  
Srisha Counselling, Kerala.

## WARNING SIGNS OF SUICIDE

Experiencing feelings of melancholy and distancing oneself from friends and family.

- An increased tendency towards social isolation.
- A strong desire for solitude.

Negative Self-Perception:

- Feelings of self-disgust and self-loathing, accompanied by a sense of worthlessness, guilt, and shame.
- A belief in one's burden on others and an inclination to reject compliments or rewards.
- Expressing thoughts of not wanting to continue living or discussing self-harm or harm to others.

Neglect of Personal Care:

- Unusual disregard for personal hygiene and appearance, with a lack of concern for others' opinions.

Feelings of Hopelessness and Helplessness:

- Experiencing a sense of hopelessness, helplessness, or feeling trapped.
- Believing that circumstances will never improve or change.

Drastic Behavioral Changes:

- Sudden and extreme alterations in behavior or personality.
- Engaging in dangerous, reckless, or self-destructive behavior, such as frequent fighting, bullying, or running away.

Substance Abuse as a Coping Mechanism:

- Turning to drug or alcohol use as a way to cope with emotional distress.

Self-Harm Attempts:

- Engaging in deliberate self-injury, including actions like cutting or burning oneself.

Altered Eating and Sleeping Patterns:

- Noticeable changes in eating habits, including a sudden loss of appetite and unexplained significant weight loss.

References to Death and Suicide:

- Conversations that frequently mention suicide or death.
- An unusual focus on violent topics, including writing poems or stories about death.

Access to Lethal Means:

- Seeking access to potentially harmful objects such as sleeping pills or knives that could be used in a suicide attempt.

Farewell Gestures:

- Unexpected visits or calls to friends and family that seem like goodbyes.
- A sudden shift from extreme depression to an unusual sense of calm and happiness, which may indicate a decision to attempt suicide.

Please remember that if you or someone you know is exhibiting these signs, it's crucial to seek professional help immediately.

-Sahitya Raghu  
Psychologist, Chennai.

## SAFLAPP REVIEW

The SAFL (Self Assessment for Life) app is a self assessment tool available free of cost for Android users. It empowers people to evaluate their emotional well-being and seek help when necessary. It does not collect personal data and maintains confidentiality.

Using the app is very easy, the user needs to answer some questions about their mood, thoughts, and behaviors, and the app generates an **emotional distress score**. If the score indicates significant distress, **the app provides a list of resources, including suicide prevention hotlines, crisis support websites, and mental health professionals.**

This app is a valuable tool for those facing mental health challenges, whether for self-assessment or assessing loved ones. With SAFL, one can confidentially and easily assess emotional well-being, making it a vital resource for those seeking help or supporting others in their journey to mental health.

-Dr. Geetanjali Jha,  
Head of Digital Parenting and Cyberpsychology at  
iMature EdTech, Raipur,  
Co editor Mind Matters.

## IMPACT OF INTERNET ON SUICIDE AND ITS PREVENTION

Not many people are aware that there is a dark side to the Internet that exerts undue pressure on mental well-being.

Recent research indicates that youngsters who spend over six hours a day on the Internet have a higher risk of harboring suicidal thoughts. The Internet can also foster loneliness and isolation, leading to feelings of disconnection and depression - two significant factors associated with suicidal tendencies. The Internet can also ensnare us in addictive behaviors, like gambling, video games, pornography. Virtual activities are so alluring that they make us forget our real world responsibilities. Online victimization of various kinds, such as getting trapped in sexual and financial scams is quite common. Unwitting exposure of vulnerable individuals to disturbing content, such as violent imagery, self-harm depictions etc. can serve as triggers, aggravating their mental anguish. Emotions like jealousy, envy, and fear of missing out can be amplified through the lens of the Internet, making us susceptible to emotional turmoil. One is also susceptible to cyberbullying and harassment which can inflict emotional wounds on victims.

However, it is important to recognize that the Internet is not solely a breeding ground for despair. It can also offer support to people suffering with suicidal thoughts:

- **Online communities-** Forums, chat rooms, and support groups, have emerged as safe havens, these spaces provide an opportunity for connection, empathy, and shared experiences.
- **Invaluable resource for suicide prevention-** It disseminates critical information about warning signs, risk factors, and available treatment options. It raises awareness, dispels myths, and offers guidance on how to extend a lifeline to someone teetering on the edge of despair.

Thus, the Internet is a double-edged sword - a powerful force that can both push us towards the precipice of despair and pull us back from it.

**-Dr. Geetanjali Jha,**  
Head of Digital Parenting and Cyberpsychology at  
iMature EdTech, Raipur,  
Co editor Mind Matters.

## SUICIDE AND MENTAL ILLNESS: AN INTERCONNECTED REALITY

Mental illness is a significant risk factor for suicide, and the connection between the two is intricate. While not all individuals with mental health conditions contemplate or attempt suicide, there is a clear correlation. Common mental disorders associated with suicide are major depression, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, anxiety disorders, personality disorders, substance abuse disorders and eating disorders. A mental illness in conjunction with an overwhelming life circumstances can lead to lot of distress and can result in suicidal ideation and a desire to make an attempt to end life.

It is crucial to recognise that even individuals who seem cheerful may be battling significant emotional pain. Research and experience tell us that those who attempt suicide once are likely to attempt it again and are at a higher risk for future attempts, so it is priority to provide them with immediate and ongoing support as well as connect them with professional mental health resources to address the underlying issues and mitigate the risk of further attempts.

Many suicides happen due to untreated mental illness and lack of knowledge about mental disorders. The key is to generate awareness about mental illnesses, remove the stigma and make treatment accessible.

**-Arundhati Srikhande**  
Psychologist.

## POSTVENTION: A VITAL PILLAR FOR SURVIVORS OF SUICIDE LOSS.

In the mental health spectrum, **postvention** holds immense significance as a critical support system for dealing with aftermath of traumatic experiences. Postvention encompasses giving professional care and support to those left behind in the wake of a traumatic event, helping them to navigate the path of grief and healing. Postvention plays a crucial role in mitigating the psychological consequences that survivors of suicide may experience as they are subjected to guilt, anger, and abandonment. Exposure to an event of 'suicide' can have a **contagion effect** in the family and even in the community, as it can trigger suicidal thoughts and subsequent action.

Srinivasan, a software engineer, returned home one day to find that his younger brother, Ravi had tragically taken his own life. Ravi had been silently battling depression. In the aftermath, Srinivas and his family were consumed by a tidal wave of grief, guilt, and confusion. The counseling sessions provided Srinivas and his family with guidance on coping with their intense grief. By sharing their experiences in the support group meetings, they found solace in knowing they were not alone in their pain.

Survivors or their family members often have persistent depression or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Research shows that targeted interventions like grief counseling and cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) can effectively mitigate these risks. **Additionally, postvention serves a preventive role by reducing the probability of subsequent chain of suicide attempts by the family or the society.**

Through postvention, providing immediate support to those bereaved by suicide, can serve to alleviate their distress, reduce the risk of contagion effect and ultimately break the cycle of suicide. In a nutshell, postvention strategies can provide solace, support, and education, contributing to a more empathetic, understanding society.

**-Dr. Sripriya Shaji Ph.D**  
Counselling Psychologist & Nutritionist  
Srisha Counselling, Kerala.

## UNDERSTANDING SUICIDAL BEHAVIOUR

Suicidal behaviour is a major public health problem. Its pathophysiology involves a deep exploration of multiple factors that contribute to such devastating outcomes. It is a study of how our body and mind work together, especially when someone is feeling so low that they consider hurting themselves.

Brain being the control center, sometimes, due to various reasons, things get imbalanced, like a mix-up in chemicals. **These imbalances can make people feel really sad, angry or anxious, making it hard for them to cope with life's challenges.** Mental health conditions like depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder are characterized by such chemical imbalance causing emotional dysregulation, impulse control & negative cognitive processes, eventually contributing to the vulnerability of an individual to suicide ideation. At times, genes also play a role in suicide. Tough genetic predisposition and difficult life situations can make things worse. The chemical imbalance can also occur because of social or environmental factors such as trauma, abuse or social isolation.

There are various psychological tests and assessments available to identify alarming signs in individuals who might be struggling. **Timely intervention is equally important.** One can take help of mental health professionals at any stage. Therapies work! Counseling helps to navigate through negative thoughts. **The key factor of suicide prevention is ongoing care and psychological support.**

**-Aditee Bhargave**  
Clinical Psychologist, IPH Mindlab Nashik.



## WHY WE NEED SUICIDE-SAFE SCHOOLS

As most of us have heard by now, young people are facing mental health challenges – and beginning to talk about them – since we emerged from the shutdown of 2020. This is good news as we know that people with those challenges need to express their thoughts and fears in a safe environment.

Having a program to introduce staff and faculty to the data on youth mental health in your region is the start. This is the evidence which underlies the reason for preparing staff to take action in school. This data can be updated annually and the trends need to be recognized and understood. Sometimes there are fluctuations regionally which aren't identical to national data. Schools having a mental health champion (the 'go-to' person) have been successful in guiding a student to appropriate care in a safe manner.

Parents then must become aware of this data and how to not only observe signs and listen for symptoms, just like school staff, but phrases to use to open the conversation – a conversation which is guided by what the youth says. Therefore, active listening skills are what parents need to hone.

Students also can be trained to be the 'safe' conduits to care through the Rotary Action Group's *Wellness in a Box* which is created for adolescents allowing them to develop skills such as active listening. With this understanding of mental health challenges as well as communication skills, they can guide their peers to appropriate adults in the school or community before a challenge becomes a disorder.

Before this can be successful, though, your community providers must be aware and sensitive to a youth referred by the school having been vetted and they can assure the young person needs help now.

So, when we wrap the community, the parents and the school around each young person, we will have suicide-safe schools in our community.

**-Bonnie Black**

**Trainer/Consultant/Certified Intrinsic Coach  
Suicide Prevention/Intervention/Postvention  
Chair, Clinton County Coalition to Prevent Suicide,  
Founding Chair, RAGMHI. USA.**

## HELPLINES AND NGO'S

In India, there are several helplines dedicated to mental health and suicide prevention. These helplines offer support, counselling and assistance to individuals in crisis or those seeking help for mental health issues. Here are some important helplines:

- Vandrevalla Foundation Helpline: You can reach out to the Vandrevalla Foundation at +91-7304599836 for support related to mental health and emotional well-being.
- Roshni Helpline: Roshni operates a 24x7 helpline at +91-40-66202000. They provide counselling and crisis intervention services for individuals in distress.
- VIMHANS Helpline: VIMHANS in Delhi offers a helpline at +91-9717177319 where you can seek guidance and support for mental health concerns.
- iCall Helpline: The Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) operates the iCall helpline at +91-22-25563291. They provide emotional support and counselling services.
- Snehi Helpline: Snehi offers a helpline at +91-9821599776 for children and adolescents facing mental health challenges.
- Samaritans Mumbai: You can contact Samaritans Mumbai at +91-8422984528 or +91-8422984529 for emotional support and a listening ear.
- Sumaitri: Sumaitri operates a 24x7 helpline at +91-11-23389090 for individuals experiencing emotional distress or contemplating suicide.
- Razum International Helpline: Razum International offers support for mental health issues. You can contact them at +91-9742792117.
- Roshan (Kochi): This helpline at +91-8590260197 provides support for individuals facing mental health challenges in the Kochi area.

**-Khushi Agrawal,  
B.A Psychology, Nagpur.**

## BAL SADAN - RAY OF HOPE AND DREAMS

Bal Sadan, in Hindi means "Children's Home". This is a remarkable NGO based in Nagpur, India which has dedicated itself to providing a lifeline to young survivors, who lost parents to suicide. It not only offers shelter and sustenance but also shapes the futures of children, transforming them into responsible, compassionate, and empowered individuals. The children who find refuge within Bal Sadan's walls face a unique set of challenges. They are often abandoned or left to fend for themselves in the wake of their parents' suicides, a time when they are perceived as burdensome by their extended families. It is here that Bal Sadan steps in, becoming a surrogate family for these young souls at a time when they need it most.

At the heart of Bal Sadan's mission is the belief that every child deserves a chance to thrive, regardless of their circumstances. The organization provides a comprehensive support system, including education, healthcare, emotional counselling, and vocational training, to help these children heal from their trauma and acquire the skills they need to lead fulfilling lives.

Education is a cornerstone of Bal Sadan's work. By providing a solid educational foundation, the NGO equips these children with the tools to break the cycle of poverty and despair. They receive not only formal education but also valuable life skills that empower them to make positive choices and contribute to society.

Bal Sadan's impact extends far beyond the confines of its physical space. It nurtures dreams, fosters resilience, and instills a sense of belonging in each child. These young boys, once seen as liabilities, are now on a path to becoming responsible citizens who can uplift their communities. Without such a support children might have faced bleak futures, possibly ending up in juvenile detention homes.

Bal Sadan's work serves as a powerful testament to the transformative power of compassion, education, and unwavering support. As these young boys graduate from Bal Sadan, they carry with them hopes for a brighter, and promising future. Bal Sadan truly is a beacon of hope, illuminating the path toward a better world for such children, regardless of the shadows that may have cast their beginnings.

**- Shivangi Garg**

**HR recruiter – Certified trainer for child safety  
& sex abuse, Nagpur.**

## MY STORY: DREAMS DO NOT LAST FOREVER

Today, I woke up feeling empty. This feeling has been with me for quite some time now. The words like love, affection, kids, family – no longer hold any value. The time to seek help has passed. I used to be a very happy-go-lucky child with an effervescent personality. I used to be called the 'Life of a party'.

Wheels of time turned, things started changing slowly and *like a frog in the boiling water*, I started to adjust slowly in my new home. New expectations, and new life used to excite me. It no longer remains the motivation to get out of bed. I feel dejected all the time. Can I do something right? – Is the question hovered over all the time? I tried to act brave today. Procured some sleeping pills from different pharmacies. Phew! It has become so difficult to obtain these white babies these days. These many questions I don't think get asked even in a Civil services interview.

The time is never right. So today is the day when it has to happen. I find myself alone in an empty space, I feel this emptiness slowly has become me. Tried to consume, but who knew these would also give a tough time.

Failed again!!! Will write to you another day – Dear Diary. Hasta La Vista – till we meet again.

**Narrated to- Shivangi Garg.**