

# UNDERSTANDING AND PREVENTING SUICIDE

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10 OCTOBER 2023





# OVERVIEW

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- GLOBAL IMPACT
- RISK FACTORS
- WARNING SIGNS
- MYTHS VS FACTS
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# DEFINITION

SUICIDE IS THE ACT OF INTENTIONALLY TAKING ONE'S OWN LIFE. IT IS A DELIBERATE AND SELF-INFLICTED ACTION WITH THE TRAGIC OUTCOME OF CAUSING ONE'S OWN DEATH. SUICIDE IS A COMPLEX AND DEEPLY DISTRESSING ISSUE, OFTEN ASSOCIATED WITH MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES, EMOTIONAL PAIN, AND A FEELING OF HOPELESSNESS. IT IS A CRITICAL PUBLIC HEALTH CONCERN THAT REQUIRES UNDERSTANDING, PREVENTION EFFORTS, AND SUPPORT FOR INDIVIDUALS AT RISK.



# GLOBAL IMPACT

**High  
Prevalence:**

**Demographic  
Variation:**

**Economic  
Burden:**

**Mental Health  
Impact:**

**Stigma and  
Discrimination:**

**Impact on  
Families**

**Global Suicide  
Prevention  
Efforts:**

**Research and  
Data  
Collection:**

**Cultural  
Factors:**



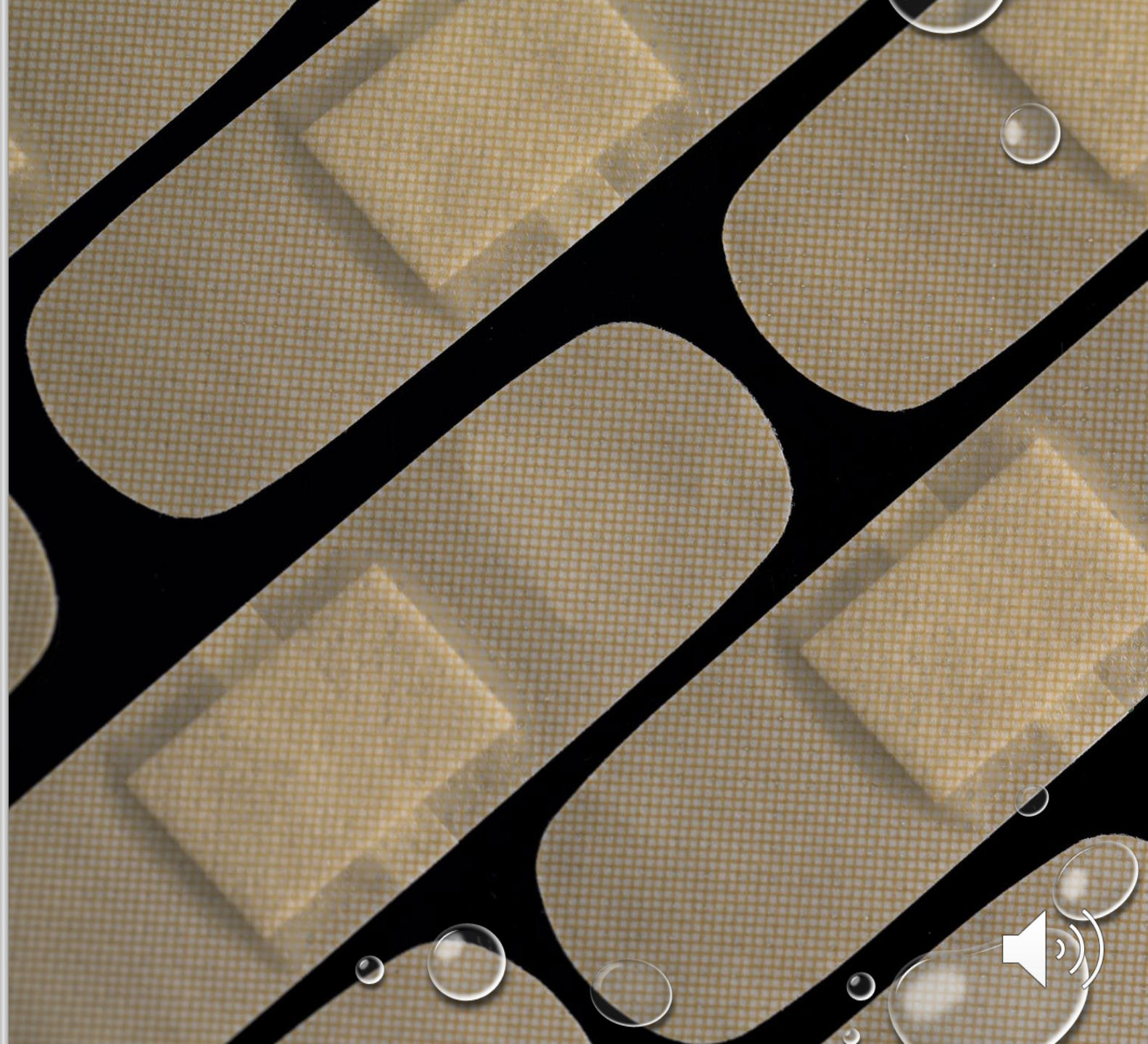
# WARNING SIGNS

- **EXPRESSING SUICIDAL THOUGHTS:**
- **DRASTIC CHANGES IN BEHAVIOUR:**
- **EXTREME MOOD SWINGS:**
- **ISOLATION:**
- **GIVING AWAY BELONGINGS:**
- **PREOCCUPATION WITH DEATH:**



# WARNING SIGNS CONT...

- **INCREASED RISK-TAKING**
- **SAYING GOODBYES:**
- **SUFFERING FROM MENTAL  
HEALTH ISSUES:**
- **PREVIOUS SUICIDE ATTEMPTS:**





# MYTHS VS FACTS

## **MYTH 1: PEOPLE WHO TALK ABOUT SUICIDE ARE JUST SEEKING ATTENTION.**

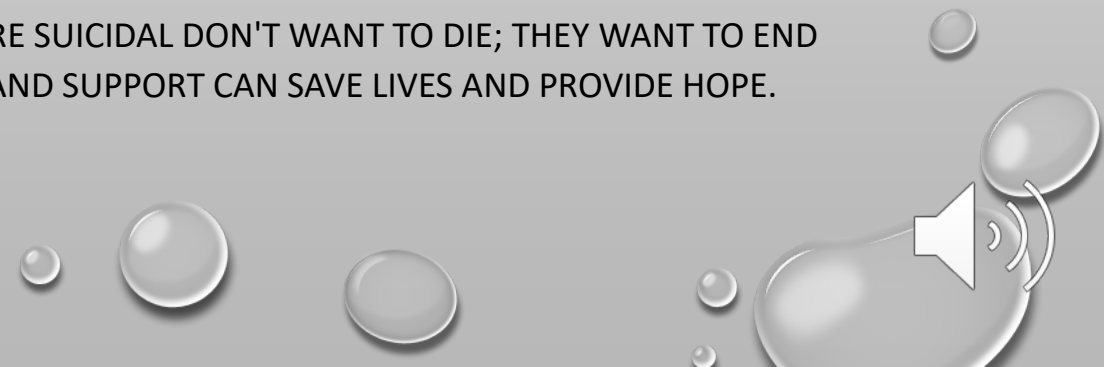
- **FACT:** MANY INDIVIDUALS WHO TALK ABOUT SUICIDE ARE IN DISTRESS AND NEED HELP. IT'S CRUCIAL TO TAKE ALL MENTIONS OF SUICIDE SERIOUSLY.

## **MYTH 2: PEOPLE WHO ATTEMPT SUICIDE ARE SELFISH OR WEAK.**

- **FACT:** SUICIDAL THOUGHTS AND ACTIONS ARE OFTEN SYMPTOMS OF UNDERLYING MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES. IT TAKES COURAGE TO SEEK HELP AND RESILIENCE TO OVERCOME THESE CHALLENGES.

## **MYTH 3: YOU CAN'T PREVENT SOMEONE FROM DYING BY SUICIDE IF THEY'RE DETERMINED TO DO IT.**

- **FACT:** MOST PEOPLE WHO ARE SUICIDAL DON'T WANT TO DIE; THEY WANT TO END THEIR PAIN. INTERVENTION AND SUPPORT CAN SAVE LIVES AND PROVIDE HOPE.





## CONT....

### **MYTH 4: ASKING SOMEONE ABOUT SUICIDE WILL GIVE THEM THE IDEA.**

- **FACT:** ASKING SOMEONE ABOUT THEIR FEELINGS AND THOUGHTS CAN PROVIDE AN OPPORTUNITY FOR THEM TO OPEN UP AND SEEK HELP. IT WON'T PLANT THE IDEA IF IT WASN'T ALREADY PRESENT.

### **MYTH 5: SUICIDAL THOUGHTS ARE RARE AND NOT COMMON.**

- **FACT:** SUICIDAL THOUGHTS ARE MORE COMMON THAN MANY PEOPLE REALIZE. MILLIONS OF INDIVIDUALS WORLDWIDE EXPERIENCE THEM AT SOME POINT IN THEIR LIVES.

### **MYTH 6: ONLY PEOPLE WITH DIAGNOSED MENTAL ILLNESSES ARE AT RISK OF SUICIDE.**

- **FACT:** WHILE MENTAL ILLNESSES INCREASE THE RISK, ANYONE CAN EXPERIENCE SUICIDAL THOUGHTS OR FEELINGS DURING CHALLENGING TIMES.







## CONT....

**MYTH 7: ONCE SOMEONE IS SUICIDAL, THERE'S NO HOPE FOR THEM.**

- **FACT:** WITH THE RIGHT SUPPORT AND TREATMENT, MANY PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN SUICIDAL CAN RECOVER AND LEAD FULFILLING LIVES.

**MYTH 8: TALKING ABOUT SUICIDE WILL MAKE THE SITUATION WORSE.**

- **FACT:** OPEN AND EMPATHETIC CONVERSATIONS ABOUT SUICIDE CAN BE A CRUCIAL STEP TOWARD GETTING SOMEONE THE HELP THEY NEED.

**MYTH 9: SUICIDAL INDIVIDUALS ALWAYS SHOW OBVIOUS SIGNS. FACT:** WARNING SIGNS CAN BE SUBTLE, AND SOME PEOPLE MAY HIDE THEIR DISTRESS. IT'S IMPORTANT TO BE AWARE OF BOTH OVERT AND SUBTLE INDICATORS.

**MYTH 10: SUICIDAL INDIVIDUALS ARE ONLY SEEKING ATTENTION; THEY WON'T ACTUALLY DO IT.**

- **FACT:** SUICIDAL INDIVIDUALS CAN HAVE A GENUINE INTENT TO END THEIR LIVES. EVERY MENTION OR INDICATION OF SUICIDE SHOULD BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY.





# PROTECTIVE FACTORS

- **STRONG SOCIAL SUPPORT:** A NETWORK OF SUPPORTIVE FRIENDS AND FAMILY MEMBERS.
- **ACCESS TO MENTAL HEALTHCARE:** EASY ACCESS TO MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES,
- **PROBLEM-SOLVING SKILLS:** EFFECTIVE PROBLEM-SOLVING SKILLS.
- **POSITIVE COPING STRATEGIES:** ENCOURAGING HEALTHY COPING MECHANISMS
- **CONNECTEDNESS TO SCHOOL OR WORK:** ENGAGING IN MEANINGFUL ACTIVITIES
- **RESTRICTING ACCESS TO LETHAL MEANS:** REDUCING ACCESS
- **CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS BELIEFS:** STRONG CULTURAL OR RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND PRACTICES
- **EFFECTIVE CLINICAL CARE:** ACCESS TO EFFECTIVE MENTAL HEALTH TREATMENT AND ONGOING CARE





## CONT...

- **SUPPORTIVE FAMILY ENVIRONMENT:**  
HEALTHY HOMES AND HEALTHY COMMUNITIES
- **POSITIVE PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT:**  
ACTIVE AND POSITIVE PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT
- **CONFLICT RESOLUTION SKILLS:** HEALTHY CONFLICT RESOLUTION SKILLS.
- **ACCESS TO CRISIS RESOURCES:**  
KNOWLEDGE OF AND ACCESS TO CRISIS HELPLINES
- **SENSE OF HOPE AND PURPOSE:**  
ENCOURAGING A SENSE OF HOPE FOR THE FUTURE



# HOW DO YOU GIVE SUPPORT TO SOMEONE SUICIDAL

- **TAKE THEIR WORDS SERIOUSLY:** IF SOMEONE TALKS ABOUT FEELING SUICIDAL, TAKE THEM SERIOUSLY. EVEN IF YOU'RE UNSURE, IT'S BETTER TO ERR ON THE SIDE OF CAUTION.
- **STAY CALM:** STAY CALM AND COMPOSED. YOUR CALM DEMEANOUR CAN HELP THE PERSON FEEL MORE SECURE.
- **LISTEN ACTIVELY:** ALLOW THE PERSON TO TALK OPENLY ABOUT THEIR FEELINGS. BE NON-JUDGMENTAL, PATIENT, AND EMPATHETIC. AVOID INTERRUPTING OR BEING DISMISSIVE.
- **ENCOURAGE PROFESSIONAL HELP:** ENCOURAGE THE PERSON TO SPEAK TO A MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONAL, SUCH AS A PSYCHOLOGIST, PSYCHIATRIST, OR COUNSELLOR. OFFER TO HELP THEM FIND APPROPRIATE RESOURCES.
- **URGE THEM TO CONTACT A HELPLINE:** PROVIDE THEM WITH THE CONTACT INFORMATION FOR SUICIDE PREVENTION HOTLINES IN SOUTH AFRICA, SUCH AS SUICIDE CRISIS HELPLINE (0800 567 567) OR LIFELINE SOUTH AFRICA (0861 322 322).
- **DO NOT LEAVE THEM ALONE:** IF YOU ARE SERIOUSLY CONCERNED ABOUT THEIR IMMEDIATE SAFETY, DO NOT LEAVE THEM ALONE. ENCOURAGE THEM TO STAY WITH YOU OR FIND SOMEONE ELSE WHO CAN STAY WITH THEM UNTIL THEY ARE SAFE.
- **REMOVE ACCESS TO MEANS:** IF POSSIBLE, HELP REMOVE ANY LETHAL MEANS, SUCH AS MEDICATIONS OR SHARP OBJECTS, FROM THEIR VICINITY.



# CONT...

- **ENCOURAGE A SUPPORTIVE NETWORK:** ENCOURAGE THEM TO REACH OUT TO FRIENDS, FAMILY, OR OTHER SUPPORTIVE INDIVIDUALS WHO CAN BE THERE FOR THEM.
- **STAY CONNECTED:** REGULARLY CHECK IN ON THEM, EVEN IF THEY DON'T INITIATE CONTACT. LET THEM KNOW YOU CARE AND ARE THERE TO SUPPORT THEM.
- **ENCOURAGE SELF-CARE:** REMIND THEM OF THE IMPORTANCE OF SELF-CARE ACTIVITIES, SUCH AS EXERCISE, RELAXATION TECHNIQUES, AND ENGAGING IN HOBBIES.
- **ENCOURAGE THEM TO EXPRESS THEMSELVES:** ENCOURAGE THEM TO EXPRESS THEIR FEELINGS THROUGH WRITING, ART, OR OTHER CREATIVE OUTLETS.
- **BE PATIENT:** RECOVERY TAKES TIME. BE PATIENT, SUPPORTIVE, AND UNDERSTANDING THROUGHOUT THEIR HEALING PROCESS.
- **SEEK SUPPORT FOR YOURSELF:** SUPPORTING SOMEONE WHO IS SUICIDAL CAN BE EMOTIONALLY CHALLENGING. DON'T HESITATE TO SEEK SUPPORT FOR YOURSELF FROM FRIENDS, FAMILY, OR MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS.
- **IN CASE OF IMMEDIATE DANGER, CALL EMERGENCY SERVICES:** IF YOU BELIEVE THE PERSON IS IN IMMEDIATE DANGER AND HAS A SPECIFIC PLAN FOR SUICIDE, CALL EMERGENCY SERVICES (10111) OR TAKE THEM TO THE NEAREST EMERGENCY ROOM.
- REMEMBER, WHILE YOU CAN OFFER SUPPORT, YOU CANNOT REPLACE THE EXPERTISE OF MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS. ENCOURAGE THE PERSON TO SEEK PROFESSIONAL HELP AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.



