

# September 10th is World Suicide Prevention Day



September is Suicide Prevention Month and September 10th is World Suicide Prevention Day. Let us take this opportunity to remember those whose lives have been affected by suicide, raise awareness and take steps to prevent suicide. In 2018 over 48,000 people died by suicide ([www.afsp.org](http://www.afsp.org)). According to the American Association of Suicidology 2014 data, an average of 1 person died of suicide every 12.3 minutes in the US. Suicide results in more deaths than war, homicides and natural disasters combined. Recently a student from local high school in Edison, New Jersey, died by suicide. There is hardly anyone who has not been touched by suicide in one way or another.

Did you know that asking a depressed person about suicide thoughts does not amount to suggesting suicide or increasing the likelihood of suicide? By asking, you are not going to put a thought in their heads. In fact, asking often opens up a dialogue and a feeling of relief.

People often believe that suicide is not preventable. That is not true. In fact, it is preventable. There are 20 million people who attempt suicide. Most of them go on to live and not die by suicide. There are many factors that contribute to suicide. One of the most important

factors is untreated mental illness e.g. severe depression among many other conditions. 90% of those who die by suicide had untreated mental illness. There are many reasons for this.

Some of the reasons why people do not seek treatment for mental illness when needed, include stigma and shame associated with mental illness, lack of understanding of mental illness and myths associated with mental illness and available treatments, difficulty finding culturally competent care, financial reasons, and so on. Often people have a tendency to deny and refuse to accept the idea of mental illness. I have often heard, "such things don't happen in our family; we are educated and successful . . . mental illness affects weak people. We are strong." Mental illness is not a disease of the "weak." It affects people from any socioeconomic, ethnic, racial, cultural and national background.

Some people choose to seek traditional interventions like yoga, meditation, Ayurveda and so on instead of conventional treatments. Such interventions can be valuable when used in conjunction with conventional treatments. Often, people are not aware that there are many safe and effective treatments available for mental illness. Often their fears of treatments are based on misper-

ceptions of treatments. When treatments are delayed it is harder and takes longer for the illness to respond to treatment. Sometimes, untreated mental illness results in a tragedy.

Preventing suicide is everyone's business. The goal of suicide prevention is reducing the factors that increase the risk and increasing the factors that promote resilience (i.e. protective factors). Besides untreated mental illness, abuse of alcohol and drugs can increase the risk of suicide. Learn more about the risk and protective factors by clicking [here](#). It is also important to become familiar with the warning signs of suicide.

Those who have lost someone to suicide often find their lives shattered. They are left with many unanswered questions and are plagued with guilt, shame and a host of other confusing emotions. They suffer in silence. If you or someone you know has lost someone to suicide, consider attending Suicide Loss Survivor Support group. You can find one near you by clicking [Suicide Loss Support Group](#). In Central New Jersey SAMHIN offers free weekly support group, Janani for anyone who has lost someone to suicide. These groups are currently being offered virtually online because of COVID19 pandemic. Talking about the loss can ease your burden.

You can learn more about depression, myths about suicide and tips on suicide prevention by downloading and reading *Light at the End of the Tunnel*. Additional information can be found by clicking [suicide prevention and suicide survivor resources](#).

If you or someone you know is faced with a crisis, call National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255 (TALK).

SAMHIN, South Asian Mental Health Initiative & Network, is a non-profit organization that strives to address the mental health needs of the South Asians.



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