

WELLNESS & MENTAL HEALTH



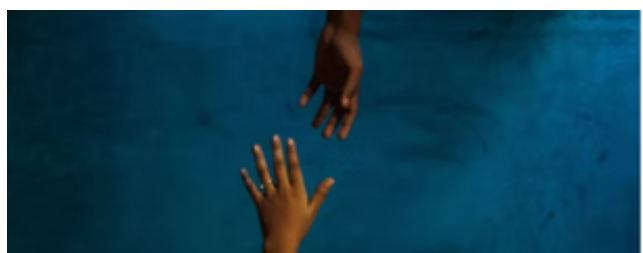
Suicide; what you need to know.

- Did you know? September is Suicide Prevention Awareness.
- Did you know that a suicide attempt or completion is considered a crime in Uganda?

The month of September was suicide prevention awareness month.

As such, we shine a light on those who have left us to suicide and to their families and friends. We also shine a light on those who feel empty, lost, and hopeless. As we empathize with loved ones, it is important to educate ourselves on suicide. Suicide is the act of ending one's life. Globally, suicide is one of the three leading causes of death among the economically productive age group (15 – 44 years) and the second leading cause of death in the 15-19 age group which according to the World Health Organisation approximates to 800,000 people killing themselves each year.

Statistics on suicide in Uganda show a high rate; 19/100,000. Uganda is ranked 17th in country categorization for suicide as a cause of death worldwide and 4th in Africa. More than 20 attempts are associated with each suicide (WHO, 2023) with almost 80% registered in low developing countries.



Women make more suicide attempts as compared to their male counterparts yet on the other hand, men generally complete the act of suicide more frequently than women. Even then, there are arguments that the numbers are not representative due to stigma associated with the act of suicide, making many cases unreported and making help for those who need it inaccessible.

Did you know that anyone can get suicidal thoughts?

The act is preceded by intense and intrusive thoughts due to emotional pain making one believe that they are better off dead. Many people get suicidal thoughts but not all of them act on them. It is important to know that suicide (attempt of completion), comes from a point of emotional pain. As such, it is important to know how to approach the topic to support oneself or another.



- Did you know that saying that one committed suicide is considered derogatory? Instead, saying—one ended their life is encouraged.
- Remember that even the happiest people do struggle. People can fake happiness. It helps to check on those you think are the strong ones.

● What are the drivers/risk factors of suicide?

Suicide starts with an experience which negatively affects a person. The ideas that follow the events negatively impact the individual's perception of themselves, others, and the world. Suicide is associated with regret, shame, and disappointment. Grieving what would have been could also be a driver for suicidal thoughts. The drivers of suicide include, difficulties stemming from one's personal life such as financial hardships, relationship difficulties, lack of opportunities for jobs, experiences of mental health difficulties, trauma including that from childhood, adverse effects such as displacement and staying, working or schooling in a chronically stressful environment.

The risk factors of suicide include, the presence of a severe mental health condition such as depression—often with no treatment, problematic use of drugs, lack of social support, lack of basic needs, a history of a suicide attempt(s), chronic pain or illness, unresolved trauma and abuse, loss of any kind (financial, opportunity, loved one etc.)

What are the tell-tale signs that one is at risk of suicide?

- Fantasizing about suicide or death as a whole and making statements like; 'I am dead already', 'would anyone miss me if I died today?'
- Paying attention to death (preoccupation) e.g. looking at pictures of dead people and constantly talking about dying.
- Mentions of feeling trapped, hopeless, and worthless.
- Sudden mood changes without logical explanations that last for about 2 weeks.
- Withdrawal from social connections and preference for being alone.
- Bidding farewell to loved ones even in discreet ways, at times people use social media to write farewell messages.
- Generously giving away once treasured belongings such as pictures, clothes, etc. without a logical explanation.
- Increased engagement in risky behavior such as overdrinking alcohol, drug use, unprotected sex
- Getting means to take own life, e.g. procuring a gun, rat poison, rope etc.
- Getting highly anxious during some situations in which the individual would have otherwise handled well.

● Help is available**Contact**

Minders Wellness and
Psychological Centre

UHMG Complex,
Ntinda

Tel: 0772 429 712

If you or a loved one is experiencing or has experienced the symptoms above, you need urgent help. It is not shameful to ask for help and you will be treated respectfully by a professional.

- Believe them, regardless
 - Remain calm, do not panic
 - Do not leave them alone.
 - Safely put away children or people with disabilities.
 - If they tell you they have a plan to end their life, tell them that you are available to help but that since you do not have the skills to help, you are obligated to communicate to a third party (e.g. a mental health provider, a family member, a friend) for help and do so right away. You do not need their consent to contact the third party.
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- Safely remove any items such as knives or drugs that are in sight.
 - As you wait for help, establish if they are under the influence of drugs or any intoxication.
 - Call Butabika hospital help line 0800 211 306; Mental Health Uganda help line 0800 212 121, or Minders Wellness and Psychological Centre on; 0763558303