

SESSION ON SUICIDE PREVENTION



Title of the session: Living through life: A choice

Resource Person: Dr. Avinash Desouza (Consultant Psychiatrist and Psychotherapist, Founder Trustee of Desouza Foundation, Mumbai)

Organised by: Student Council, College of Social Work, Nirmala Niketan

Platform: Zoom

Report: Mr. Benedict Antony

8 / 09 / 2021

Time: 3: 00 pm – 4:00 pm

A session titled ‘Living through life : A choice’ was conducted based on the theme of World Suicide Day that was to be commemorated two days later on 10th of September. The session was focused on understanding suicide, self-harm, and pathways towards recovery. While the session was attended on Zoom platform by the students from the BSW and MSW classes, it was also live streamed on YouTube simultaneously, thanks to the technical support of Mr. Sandesh Lalge, Director of Anubhav Mumbai.

The session was anchored by Ms. Suprita Dutta, from MSW II. At the onset, she gave the audience a brief understanding from statistics about cases of suicide about the importance of suicide prevention in our lives. Soon after, Mr. Albin Thomas, as Convenor of the Student Council welcomed the resource person and everyone for the session. Mr. Benedict Antony, from MSW II introduced the speaker to the participants.

The speaker began by giving some of his views about suicide. The points highlighted were thoughts that lead one to attempt suicide like feeling lonely, helpless, hopeless, not having the power to go on, not having family support, etc. Elderly suicide, often not spoken about, was highlighted. That both men and women attempt suicide, while more men complete it was pointed out.

Also it was brought to light how every suicide is preventable. Both active and passive thoughts of suicide need help. The importance of staying vigilant to ask a person who feels low if a thought to end their life has crossed their mind was underlined. This could help save a life that has begun to go down the downward spiral. And to genuinely tell them that they need help and to seek help of any mental health professional- be it a psychiatrist, psychologist, social worker- is vital at that point of time. Certain myths were also clarified: that someone who talks a lot of ending life is seldom likely to attempt suicide. While on the other hand, a person attempting suicide would surely make at least a single attempt to get help from someone before giving in. This was a vital message that brought across the need to reach out to give immediate help possible for a person who seems suicidal, to be with the person, try to speak with the person when a person says he or she feels suicidal. The speaker also reiterated that all of us are at some point weak and might feel suicidal if under a certain amount of stress.

Thus, we need to be gatekeepers to prevent suicide, to dare to care, to prevent the loss of a life, help someone recover when he or she is low or disheartened. To be there for each other, support each other, build and nurture each other's resilience – at an individual level, family level and community level was a takeaway message from the speaker.

The impacts of a person attempting suicide to the family and close friends; feeling anger, guilt, shame and hurt or not having been able to save a life once lost was brought out. We need to learn to prevent it, tell people we are available if they need us, tell them that life is worth living, that you have to keep moving, fighting, forging ahead.

Once the speaker concluded the session, the anchor gave a short summary of the session after which the forum was opened for questions and answers. The queries were posted on chat either on zoom or from live chat on YouTube that gave opportunities for quite a number of students to ask questions to the speaker, who patiently responded to each of them. The group together took the oath for Suicide Prevention. Ms. Nikita from BSW 3 recited the oath for others to repeat. Session concluded with the vote of thanks by Ms. Enrica from BSW III.