

SEPTEMBER 10TH IS DECLARED WORLD SUICIDE PREVENTION DAY BY THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR SUICIDE PREVENTION (IASP). THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION (WHO), WHO CO-SPONSORS THIS DAY OF AWARENESS, DEFINES SUICIDE AS THE "ACT OF DELIBERATELY KILLING ONESELF." AS A PART OF SUICIDE PREVENTION, IT IS IMPORTANT TO KNOW HOW TO IDENTIFY THE WARNING SIGNS OF SUICIDE AND WHAT STEPS SHOULD BE TAKEN IN ORDER TO PREVENT THE ACT OF SUICIDE ITSELF AND SAVE THE LIFE OF SOMEONE YOU KNOW OR MAYBE EVEN YOUR OWN.



According to Windhoek Express, Namibia's suicide rate is ranked as the fourth highest in Africa and 11th in the world. Globally, suicide is the second leading cause of death among young people ages 15-29. Risk factors of suicide include mental disorders, neurological disorders, some physical disorders, cancer, and HIV infection. These factors do not necessarily predict suicide, but are factors that commonly contribute to suicidal tendencies or thoughts. Raising awareness of these risk factors is important in identifying early warning signs of suicide and how to begin suicide prevention in one's own community.

Suicide Awareness Voices of Education (SAVE) identifies warning signs as indicators that an individual may be in danger and may need to seek help. These signs include:

- Talking about wanting to die or to kill oneself
- Looking for a way to kill oneself
- Talking about feeling hopeless or having no purpose
- Increasing the use of alcohol or drugs
- Acting anxious, agitated, or reckless
- Sleeping too little or too much
- Withdrawing or feeling isolated

Yet, awareness of the risk factors and warning signs of suicide is only one step towards prevention. Real suicide prevention takes an entire community. If you or someone you know displays warning signs of suicide it is important to start a conversation or seek help. Many times when a person is contemplating suicide, the individual withdraws and does not speak about it because these emotions are seen as weakness in societal standards. What an individual who is experiencing suicidal thoughts really needs

is support without judgement, whether that is through family and friends or through ongoing medical and mental health treatments. Whatever the case, it is important to seek help.

All in all, mental health is most important when it comes to suicide prevention. Self-care is one way to stay in tune with your mental health, and every individual can and should participate in taking care of his or her mental health. However, self-care can take many forms and only each individual knows what works best for him or her, whether that be seeing a therapist regularly, taking time to yourself to reflect thoughts and feelings, or connecting with others who can offer care and support.

According to WHO, Namibia is the only country in the WHO African region with a National Prevention Strategy and after more research, a second strategy will be devised as well. These prevention strategies include reducing access to means of suicide and providing health-care services that are trained in suicide prevention and know how to identify early warning signs. Through awareness of these early warning signs and knowledge of preventative measures, a community can come together in order to fight the stigma and provide support for individuals who may not seek help themselves. Together, through awareness and support, we can save lives. ♀

Sources: <https://afro.who.int/news/who-ministry-health-and-social-services-conclude-workshopsuicide-prevention>

<http://www.we.com.na/news/suicides-continue-to-rock-the-country2018-09-24/>

<https://save.org/aboutsuicide/warning-signs-risk-factors-protective-factors/>