



香港城市精神健康聯盟

City Mental Health
Alliance HK

CMHA HK FACTSHEET

WORLD SUICIDE PREVENTION DAY 2022 RESOURCE

World Suicide Prevention Day is an initiative of the International Association for Suicide Prevention (IASP) and takes place on 10 September each year. The theme for 2022 is **CREATING HOPE THROUGH ACTION** #WSPD2022.

In this resource, we explore the importance of businesses raising awareness, challenging stigma and equipping people with the skills to spot warning signs and take action.

We also share a list of tips for employees who wish to approach and support colleagues who have been affected by suicide. A special thank you to Esther Wong, Clinical Advisor at Mind HK for providing the tips on pages 3 & 4.

Every suicide is a tragedy that affects families and communities and has long-lasting effects on those left behind. While the link between suicide and mental disorders, particularly depression and alcohol abuse, is well established in high-income countries, many suicides happen impulsively in moments of crisis when there is a breakdown in the ability to deal with life stresses, such as financial problems, relationship break-up or chronic pain and illness.

In addition, experiencing conflict, disaster, violence, abuse, or loss together with a sense of isolation, are strongly associated with suicidal behaviour. Suicide rates are high amongst vulnerable groups who experience discrimination, such as refugees and migrants; indigenous peoples; and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) persons.

What can businesses do

Suicides are preventable. There are a number of measures that can be taken at population, sub-population and individual levels to prevent suicide and suicide attempts.

Workplaces are communities in which people spend a significant amount of time. By raising awareness, challenging stigma and equipping people with the skills to spot warning signs and take action, we can all play our part in suicide prevention.

Language is important

Choosing our words carefully is about more than avoiding stigmatising terms. The language we use can also have a positive effect which makes choosing the right words just as important as avoiding the wrong ones.

Avoid:

- Anything that reinforces stereotypes, prejudice or discrimination against people with mental illness and suicidal ideation
- Anything that implies mental illness makes people more creative, fragile or violent
- Anything that refers to or defines people by their diagnosis

Mental health awareness days such as World Suicide Prevention Day (WSPD) can be good opportunities for businesses to challenge stigma, foster a culture of openness and remove barriers for help seeking behaviour. They can also be great anchor points around which to build a mental health at work strategy. Businesses can use WSPD to encourage open conversations about suicide and provide information on the support available in times of need.

Be direct. We know that talking to someone about suicide won't cause or increase suicidal thoughts, or cause the person to act on them. It can help them feel less isolated and scared.

Be hopeful. People can and do get better. Encourage people to seek help.

More detailed information on how to become more conscious of your own language decisions is available in this [guide](#) which shows how you can avoid reinforcing the stigma that prevents people from seeking help when they need it most.

SUICIDE STATISTICS AND FACTS

For every person who dies,
20 more have attempted suicide

Suicide is the leading cause of death
among **15–29 year olds** globally

700,000 people die by suicide
every year around the world
(This is more than 1 in every 100 deaths)

In at least 20 countries,
suicide remains a criminal offence

77% of suicides occur in low and
middle-income countries



Tips for employees to approach and support colleagues who have been affected by suicide:

- 1. Sometimes, less is more.** When we see people in pain, we often want to do something to help them. When we can't, we feel pretty helpless. In sensitive situations though, we may not know what to do or what to say, and we may end up scrambling for "the right words". Acknowledge that people are affected by suicide in different ways and, as such, there are no absolute right or wrong things to say. Sometimes, less is indeed more. Something simple such as "I am sorry for your loss" or "Let me know if I can do anything to make your day a bit easier" will go a long way. At the same time, do not ignore the elephant in the room. It is OK to ask "How are you doing?", or "Do you need a minute?", or to make them a cup of tea then carry on with the task at hand.
- 2. Be prepared that they may not want to talk about it.** Sometimes people do not want to talk about what has happened, or they may behave not a lot differently than before. They may appear "normal", and want to talk about the weather instead. This is OK too. This is their way of coping. Please do not take it personally if you offer a listening ear and they tell you they are fine. Also, do consider your position in the company. If your role is to performance manage this person, another option may be to signpost and ask someone else on the team to have a quick check in.
- 3. Notice and acknowledge ahead of time if this situation makes you uncomfortable.** For some of us, the idea that someone close to us is experiencing something so intense can be

very scary or uncomfortable for us. This is not something most of us have had experience with. It is important we acknowledge this before we try to find ways to help them. If we are extremely uncomfortable with the situation, it is likely that the person will feel this too, and subsequently feel their pain is making other people uncomfortable. If you feel as though you are not equipped to talk to them, that is OK. You can direct them to someone else or offer practical support.

- 4. Help them in practical ways.** This could be as simple as making them a cup of tea in the morning, helping them with work (that is reasonable within the scope of your responsibilities), giving them updates as to what they may have missed, if they have taken time off, or offer to attend a meeting on their behalf so they have more flexibility in terms of time.
- 5. Avoid telling them you've been through the same thing or you understand how they feel** (e.g. I know how you feel, my best friend had a heart attack last year. It was a sudden death too.), even if it comes from a good place. When we say that, what we want to do is let the other person know they are not alone, and they can come to us should they want to talk. However, each death, and each suicide, is different and we don't want the other person to feel unseen in the complexity of such a complicated grief.

A special thank you to Esther Wong, a Clinical Advisor from [Mind HK](#) for providing these tips



The [International Association for Suicide Prevention](#) website has lots of events and ideas on how to mark World Suicide Prevention Day.

Tips for employees who have been affected by suicide:

- 1. Grief is a complicated process.** There is no one way to grieve, or a guide for how you “should be” feeling. This process involves ongoing emotions and reactions, and it’s called a process because grief ranges in duration and intensity and happens over the course of time, without a specific end point. Whether it be intense sadness, overwhelming guilt or anger that you cannot explain, or pure numbness; acknowledge that there is no right way to grieve and no emotions that you have are wrong. Be kind and compassionate to yourself and give yourself time to process those feelings, without judgement.
- 2. Understand that it may trigger feelings related to other losses in your life** which may add to the complexity of emotions you may experience. If your grief is so intense that it is affecting your daily functioning for a prolonged period of time (e.g. you are unable to get out of bed, eat meals, sleep, leave your home) or if you are having thoughts about suicide, then it is important that you seek medical or mental health support immediately. Make time to see your doctor, a psychiatrist or go straight to the nearest hospital emergency department. Please also look at the resources from Mind HK for a range of mental health support resources:
<https://www.mind.org.hk/find-help-now/>
- 3. Be honest with your boss and colleagues** about your needs during this difficult time. They may want to support you but appear reluctant to offer as they do not know what would help. If you are able to, be specific about how you are affected and what you would find helpful. For example, you may need to take some time off if you’ve lost someone very close to you. Or you may be struggling to focus due to a lack of sleep and therefore your productivity may be lower and thus you need extensions for certain deadlines. You may need more flexible hours during this time if your family is also extremely affected by the suicide, or maybe you simply need to work in a smaller/quieter work place away from people.
- 4. It is common for a person to feel guilty when someone close to them takes their life.** We are often left with all the “should haves” and “could haves” – as we want to be able to find a reason or an explanation for such a tragedy. It is important, however, to acknowledge that the feeling of guilt is a feeling, but it is not a truth. We may feel guilty, but it does not mean we are guilty. There is rarely a single cause for suicide and as such, it is pointless to find a reason for it. At the same time, it might be helpful to process such feelings of guilt with a friend, family member or a professional.

For further information on Suicide Prevention in Hong Kong, please visit:

- [HKJC Centre for Suicide Research and Prevention](#)
- [Suicide Prevention Services](#)
- [Samaritans Hong Kong](#)
- [Mind HK](#)

Helpful (global) workplace resources:

- [The International Association for Suicide Prevention – Resources](#)
- [IASP Resource: Suicide & The Workplace](#)
- [Stories from organisations](#) around suicide prevention, from the Zero Suicide Alliance
- Free bite-sized online training from [Zero Suicide Alliance](#)
- [The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, Canada](#) ‘Words Matter’ language guide



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