

# Counselling Suicidal Persons and Their Loved Ones

**Prof Cnsl Mrs Helen O. Kwanashie**

*Department of Educational Foundations, Faculty of Education, National Open University of Nigeria  
(NOUN), Headquarters at University Village, 91 Cadastral Zone, Nnamdi Azikiwe Expressway,  
Off Airport Road, Jabi, Abuja 900286, Federal Capital Territory, Nigeria*

[helenkwanashie@gmail.com](mailto:helenkwanashie@gmail.com)



# Presentation Outline

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## PREAMBLE

### 1. INTRODUCTION

- Definitions & Other Basic Facts About Suicide
- Photo Speak, Statistics and Causes
- Suicide Prevention Focus & ACCN
- Professions & Professionals Involved

### 2. SUICIDE AND CHRISTIANITY

- Suicides Recorded in the Bible
- Can a Christian Commit Suicide?

### 4. COUNSELLING SUICIDAL PERSONS

### 5. COUNSELLING THEIR LOVED ONES

### 6. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

## REFERENCES & BIBLIOGRAPHY

THANKS!

# What is Suicide?

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Etymologically, the word ‘suicide’ originated from the Latin terms for ‘self’ and ‘the act of slaying’, being *sui* and *caedere* respectively.

Thus, the World Health Organization (WHO) and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have the following definitions:

***Suicide is the act of deliberately killing oneself. (WHO)***

***Suicide is death caused by injuring oneself with intent to die. (CDC)***

# News Headlines: 11<sup>th</sup> January 2024

## “Female Banker Commits Suicide in Lagos”

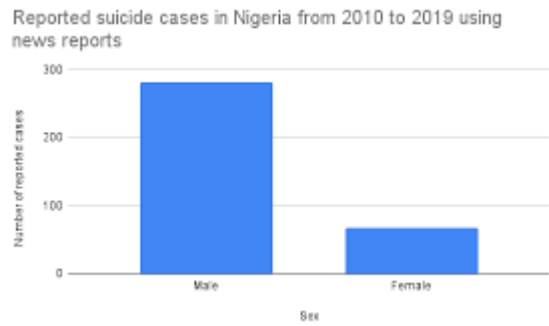
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- Female banker commits suicide in Lagos over ‘hardship’ - *The Cable*
- Netizens mourn as female banker kills self, pens suicide note – *Punch Newspapers*
- 32-yr-old bank staff commits suicide - *Vanguard News*



What can we do?



# Statistics and Causes of Suicides

## Statistics of Suicides

(In Africa / Nigeria, the problem is huge)

- From WHO, CDC, etc... 2022 Data - reflects the magnitude of the problem
- Approx. 1m suicides yearly (1 every 40s)
- 17<sup>th</sup> leading cause of death
- 2<sup>nd</sup> leading cause of death in 15-29 year old
- Among 3 leading cause of death <25 years
- 86% suicides occur in LMIC
- 10-20% of deaths in women up to 1 year postpartum
- Suicide is normal reaction to abnormal set of circumstances
- In Africa/Nigeria, statistics vary widely between countries & regions with under-reporting due to stigma & cultural factors (incomplete or unreliable data)

## Causes of Suicides

(Christians are not immune to these causes)

- i. Financial and other hardships due to the economic downturn (poverty, unemployment)
- ii. Failed marriage and other relationships (interpersonal conflict)
- iii. Loneliness (going through rejection or failure)
- iv. Depression and anxiety (high level of hopelessness & despair)
- v. Frustration (high degree of stress & mental suffering)
- vi. Extortions, blackmail, financial or other bullying impact.
- vii. Mental illness, drugs and substance abuse
- viii. Other illnesses, neurological disorders, cancer, HIV

**In all these situations, suicide is one way of having control in uncontrollable situations... but it is not the only way.**

# Efforts to Address Mental Health & Suicide Prevention in Nigeria

## Suicide Prevention Focus

Today, there is a growing recognition of, and efforts to address mental health and suicide prevention issues in Nigeria through focus on:

- i. Advocacy and awareness campaigns
- ii. Education
- iii. Improving access to mental health services across the country
- iv. Research and data collection efforts to better understand scope of the problem and inform targeted interventions and policies.

## ACCN: Association of Christian Counsellors of Nigeria

Incorporated in 2008 with the aim to obey the scriptural instruction to administer holistic Christian counselling to all seeking persons, God's way.

- The aim of this association is to create a platform of interaction / networking for empowerment and capacity building for individual, groups, and national counselling interventions.
- To promote healthy living through Bible-based guidance and counselling.
- To undertake / assist in the process of rehabilitation of traumatized / challenged persons.

# Professions & Professionals Involved in Suicide Prevention

## Professions

- All 'helping fields' such as:
- Psychology
- Psychiatry
- Marriage and Family Therapy (MFT)
- Counselling
- Social work
- Clinical rehabilitation counselling
- Behavioral medicine
- Addiction treatment
- School counselling
- Psychotherapy
- Pastoral counselling

## Professionals

The interdisciplinary approach used in suicide prevention, intervention and postvention cuts across many professionals

- Professional Counsellors
  - School counsellors
  - Pastoral counsellors
  - Clinical psychologists
  - Psychotherapists
- Others
  - Lay counsellors
  - Therapists
  - Psychiatrists
  - Psychologists
  - Social workers



# Suicide and Christianity

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## Suicides Recorded in the Bible

- i. Samson (Judges 16:25-30)
- ii. Saul (1 Samuel 31:1-4)
- iii. Saul's Armor-Bearer (1 Samuel 31:5)
- iv. Ahithophel (2 Samuel 17:23)
- v. Zimri (1 Kings 16:15-20)
- vi. Judas Iscariot (Matthew 27:3-5)

**Suicide is one way of having control in uncontrollable situations... but it is not the only way. JESUS IS THE WAY!**

## Can a christian commit suicide?

- i. Life is sacred: Genesis 2:7; Psalm 139:13-16; Exodus 20:13
- ii. God's sovereignty: Job 14:5; Acts 17:26
- iii. Christians are not immune to despair: 1 Kings 19:4; Jonah 4:3
- iv. Suicide as a sin, not an unforgivable sin: Matthew 12: 31-32
- v. Salvation by Grace Through Faith: Ephesians 2:8-9
- vi. Mental health and moral responsibility: Psalm 34:18; Hebrews 4:15-16
- vii. Offer compassion, not condemnation: Galatians 6:2
- viii. Encourage seeking help:

# Counselling Suicidal Persons [1]: What to do & What not to do

SUICIDE Vs SUICIDAL	
Considered a Tragedy	Considered Attention Seeking
People are Present	People Try to Avoid Them
People Feel Bad	People Feel Irritated
People Wish That They 'Saw the Signs'	People Pretend the Problem Isn't There & dismisses it
Everyone Wishes They Hadn't Done it	No one believes that they will ever do it

If someone tells you that they are feeling suicidal, **TAKE THEM SERIOUSLY**. No matter how many times they have said it, you need to treat and act on it like it's the first time. **It could save their life!**

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- Don't ignore them!

# Counselling Suicidal Persons [2]: What to say & What not to say

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## Action Steps to Help Them-I

1. Ask if they are okay (let them know how much they mean to you)
2. Listen & be there for them (be available to them; empathise, not judge)
3. Help them connect to help liners (let them know it is okay to be sad)
4. Stay connected to them (make sure they know they are not alone)

(Adapted from: Expand your knowledge in Mental Health with MDIS)

## What Not to Say to Them

1. “It’s not that bad,” “Stay positive” or “Don’t say that”
2. “I know how you feel” or “I would be devastated if you were gone”
3. “You have a lot to live for”
4. “Other people have it worse” or “You’re being selfish”
5. “You’ll go to hell”

# Counselling Suicidal Persons [3]: How to Act & How not to Act

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## Action Steps to Help Them-II

- Check if the risk is imminent
- Confirm suicidal thoughts
- How to help someone who is suicidal
- Seeking emergency help
- Other helpful resources

(Schimelpfening and Block (2023))

## Be forthright

- **Don't be afraid to ask, “Are you having thoughts of suicide?”**
- Studies show that asking at-risk friends and family members if they are thinking about suicide does not increase suicidal thoughts.

# Counselling for Prevention of Suicide in Nigeria (and Elsewhere)

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1. Accessible Counseling Services
2. Addressing Stigma
3. Awareness and Education
4. Community Involvement
5. Crisis Intervention and Hotlines
6. Follow-up and Aftercare
7. Government Support
7. Integration with Healthcare Services
8. Partnerships with NGOs
9. Research and Evaluation
10. School-based Programmes
- 11. Training for Counselors**
12. Utilisation of Technology

# 10<sup>th</sup> September 2023: World Suicide Prevention Day (WSPD)

- “Established in 2003 by the International Association for Suicide Prevention in conjunction with the WHO, 10<sup>th</sup> September of each year aims to focus attention on the issue, reduces stigma and raises awareness among organizations, governments and the public, giving a singular message that suicides are preventable.
- **“Creating Hope Through Action”** is the triennial theme for the World Suicide Prevention Day from 2021-2023. This theme serves as a powerful call to action and reminder that there is an alternative to suicide and that through our actions we can encourage hope and strengthen prevention.”



# 29<sup>th</sup> September 2024: WSPD “Changing the Narrative on Suicide... Start the Conversation”



**COUNSELLING ASSOCIATION OF NIGERIA**  
(ABUJA CHAPTER)

**WORLD SUICIDE PREVENTION DAY**

**SUICIDE PREVENTION**  
**YOUR STORY ISN'T OVER**

**KNOW THE 12 SUICIDE WARNING SIGNS**

- ▶ FEELING LIKE A BURDEN
- ▶ BEING ISOLATED
- ▶ INCREASED ANXIETY
- ▶ FEELING TRAPPED OR IN UNBEARABLE PAIN
- ▶ INCREASED SUBSTANCE USE
- ▶ LOOKING FOR A WAY TO ACCESS LETHAL MEANS
- ▶ INCREASED ANGER OR RAGE
- ▶ EXTREME MOOD SWING
- ▶ EXPRESS HOPELESSNESS
- ▶ SLEEPING TOO LITTLE OR TOO MUCH
- ▶ TALKING OR POSTING ABOUT WANTING TO DIE
- ▶ MAKING PLANS FOR SUICIDE

**5 STEPS TO HELP SOMEONE AT RISK**

- ▶ ASK
- ▶ KEEP THEM SAFE
- ▶ BE THERE
- ▶ HELP THEM CONNECT
- ▶ FOLLOW UP

**LET'S FIGHT SUICIDE TOGETHER**

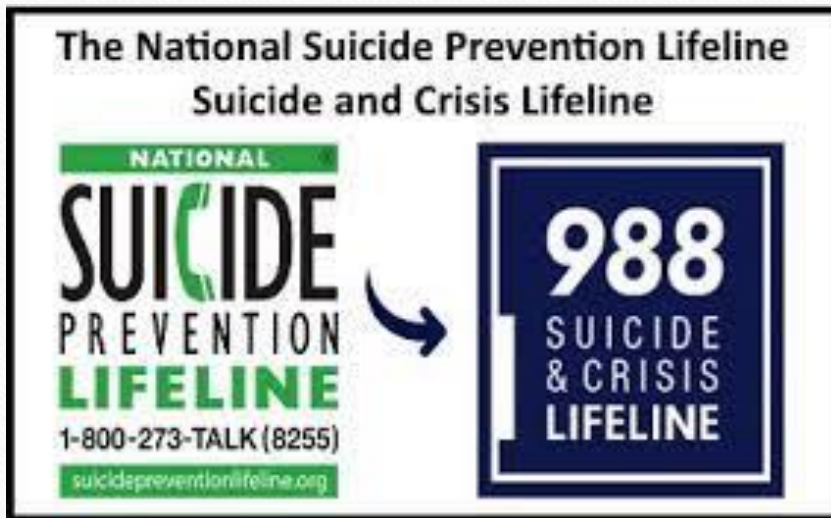
**YOU ARE NOT ALONE**

☎ 08058023060, 07036989995  
✉ fctcasson@gmail.com, cassonfct@gmail.com



# Suicide Prevention Hotlines & Lifelines

## Suicide Hotlines in USA & Canada



## Suicide Hotlines in Nigeria

SURPIN Helpline Nigeria:  
0800 0787 746

The Human Development  
Initiative: 0808 0551 376



# Summary 1/3: A 3x3 Matrix for Suicide Prevention, Intervention and Postvention

SUICIDE...	A	B	C
PREVENTION	Public Awareness and Education	Risk Assessment and Intervention	Access to Mental Health Services
INTERVENTION	Crisis Intervention	Psychotherapy and Counselling	Medication Management
POSTVENTION	Bereavement Support	Risk Assessment and Monitoring	Prevention of Suicide Clusters

- Suicide Prevention, Intervention and Postvention are three interconnected aspects of addressing suicide risk and supporting individuals who are either experiencing suicidal ideation, have been affected by suicide or both.

# Summary 2/3: Counselling Missives to Yourself & Others

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**“For everyone, self-care is an absolute *essential*”**

“It’s my time to take care of myself... to make changes in my life for *me.*” - Becky



**“No one should ever have to walk *alone!*”**

# Summary 3/3: A Way Other Than Suicide

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- “There is usually a way where there seems to be no way!”
- For the Christian, JESUS IS OUR SURE WAY
- Let’s say ‘NO’ to Suicide!

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# Thanks for Listening!

## Questions & Comments?

- ACCN, especially the President
- Organising Committee of this Training
- Co-speakers & Attendees at the Training
- Ladies & Gentlemen

