

**YESTERDAY WAS WORLD SUICIDE PREVENTION DAY**

# Just tell them They are not alone



**BY SAMANGIE WETTIMUNY**

“One single telephone call saved my life,” she said. Next, she took a deep breath and looked straight into my eyes as if she remembered something. “Will you ever reveal my identity?” she asked. “Never,” I said. But I sought her permission to let the world know her story without her identity being revealed at any cost, because her story may save someone’s life somewhere in some corner of this world!

“Okay,” she agreed. “If my unnamed story could save at least one life, let the story be heard.”

“This happened exactly ten years ago. As I remember it was a Wednesday. The whole day suicidal thoughts were haunting me and I definitely knew that I am going to take my own life. I was alone at home, And I was thinking of a “comfortable” way to die,” she said.

And why did you want to take your life? The reason? I asked.

“Trauma of infidelity. The moment I got to know that the love of my life, (not anymore!), my husband had betrayed me and when I saw the ugly truth in my own eyes, I felt devastated. I did not want to lose my love. More than all I felt as if I was being watched by almost everyone from neighbours, colleagues to cynical relatives who had always been waiting to laugh at me,” she said.

When asked whether she did not want to battle on at least for the sake of her own children she replied in the negative. “I knew that taking one’s own life is against my religion. I knew that it was not the answer. But still, I wanted to end my life,” She said, still looking straight into my eyes.

When she was about to open the window of her apartment on the tenth floor her phone started ringing and it was an unknown number.

“I did not want to answer. But it rang again and again and finally I decided to answer the phone for some “unknown” reason,”

It was an unexpected call, she said. A very old university friend of hers had found her number from another contact of hers and had dialled

her to see how she was doing. “You know what I told her? I said I am about to die - just two minutes closer to taking my own life,” she said.

Her friend had come up with a different story – that she was undergoing hell because her son had been addicted to drugs and her husband was not at all bothered about the gravity of the matter.

Why did you find her words comforting? I asked her.

“What she just told me did not make any change in me. I thought I should invite her to die with me,” she grinned.

“What she said next really moved me though. She said she was on top of an urgent assignment, but she wanted me to share my address with her. “I will rush to wherever you are, to be with you. Let’s chat leisurely. You are not alone, I am with you.”

Why did you find your friend’s words so comforting, I asked her again.

“The moment my friend said I AM WITH YOU, I felt relieved. I felt I am not alone, I felt I am being loved, I felt I am being listened to,”

And today nearly 10 years after the incident she lives a happy life with her children thanks to her friend’s prudent and kind intervention.

### Miracle

A young guy who also wishes to remain anonymous for obvious reasons had different reasons to “consider taking his life” as the “most suitable way to end his life’s worries,” But he too had one common ‘reason’ to reconsider his decision! He said he thought no one loved him - his parents, relatives, or anyone and the pressure exerted on him to find a job took a heavy toll on his mental health, “Who made you understand that life is precious,” I asked.

“My cousin whom I always disliked for no reason,” he gave a quick reply.

His cousin, whom he met unexpectedly at a pharmacy, had started a friendly conversation with him.

‘I think my cousin saw hopelessness in my eyes and he got a bit scared,’

Finally, his words saved me. What were those miracle words?, I asked the guy.

**THE ESSENCE OF THEIR STORIES IS THAT WORDS CAN WORK WONDERS AND ACCOMPLISH MIRACLES. YES, KIND WORDS ARE MUCH MORE POWERFUL THAN WE CAN IMAGINE. AN ATTENTIVE EAR IS MORE HEALING TO A DROPPING HEART THAN ANY OTHER POWER. THOSE WHO ARE IN DISTRESS DESPERATELY NEED A SHOULDER TO CRY ON, OR A PERSON WHO WOULD MAKE THEM FEEL THAT THEY ARE AS IMPORTANT AS ANY OTHER HUMAN BEING. IN SHORT A PATIENT LISTENER WHOM THEY CAN CONFIDE IN!**

“Malli, We have known each other for years. I am ready to help you anytime. Let’s go and have a chat peacefully. You are most welcome anytime.”

These words are still fresh in his mind. Today, more than five years after this episode, he is a happy guy employed as a Manager at a private company. “YOU ARE MOST WELCOME ANYTIME, are miracle words,” he added with a grateful smile.

### Kind words

The essence of their stories is that words can work wonders and accomplish miracles. Yes, Kind words are much more powerful than we can imagine. An attentive ear is more healing to a dropping heart than any other power. Those who are in distress desperately need a shoulder to cry on, or a person who would make them feel that they are as important as any other human being. In short, a patient listener whom they can confide in!

The very idea that their woes are being listened to has helped many to cope with suicidal thoughts. How important is it to share your problems with a trustworthy colleague, relative, or any other person? , the *Sunday Observer* asked an authority on the subject, the Sri Lanka Sumithrayo Chairperson (SLS) Kumudini de Silva.

“Yes, it’s very important to tell your woes to someone without bottling it up,” she said.

“Being listened to without any criticism and judgment helps the person to unburden and relieve themselves. “Talking helps and listening heals,” De Silva said.

She added that if someone has thoughts of suicide, it doesn’t mean that they really want to die. They just want to escape or end the unbearable pain they are going through. If there’s someone trustworthy whom they can talk to in confidence such as Sri Lanka Sumithrayo, they will definitely help them to see ‘another tomorrow.’

What should be done if someone is suicidal? How should we respond if someone tells us he feels like taking his own life?

De Silva wants each of us to take the matter “very seriously.”

“Sometimes they may not say it directly, but they might say I am fed up with my life or I have had enough. I just want to go. I am better off dead rather than living like this. You may not see me again. Be aware, they are giving you some clues and signs and also crying out for help. Give them your time. Make them comfortable, show them that you genuinely care for them and give your undivided attention and listen, and allow them to pour their heart out. Give your shoulder to cry. Most importantly be there with them until these thoughts subside. If you don’t have time refer them to places like SLS and also for professional support,” she said.

### WSPD

World Suicide Prevention Day (WSPD) was celebrated yesterday under the theme “Creating Hope through Action.” The annual event is organised by the International Association for Suicide Prevention (IASP) and well endorsed by the World Health Organization (WHO).

This year’s theme is a reminder that there is an alternative to suicide and aims to inspire confidence and light in all of us, states WHO in its special release on World Suicide Prevention Day 2022.

As emphasized by WHO, “We can all play a role in supporting those experiencing a suicidal crisis or those bereaved by suicide whether as a member of society, as a child, as a parent, as a friend, as a colleague or as a person with lived experience. We can all encourage understanding about the issue, reach out to people who are struggling, and share our experiences. We can all create hope through action and be the light.”

Just as Winston Churchill once said, “Never, never, never, give up.” But what if someone still wants to give up? So it is up to us to reach out to them and most importantly to listen to them simply because “listening is often the only thing needed to help someone!” Listening to their sad stories will not take a heavy toll on your mental health, it will only save yet another precious life! Be a saviour! And that’s a ‘choice’ you will never regret!

**“THE MOMENT MY FRIEND SAID I AM WITH YOU, I FELT RELIEVED. I FELT I AM NOT ALONE, I FELT I AM BEING LOVED, I FELT I AM BEING LISTENED TO,” AND TODAY NEARLY 10 YEARS AFTER THE INCIDENT SHE LIVES A HAPPY LIFE WITH HER CHILDREN THANKS TO HER FRIEND’S PRUDENT AND KIND INTERVENTION**

