



**PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLBEING AT SEA
UNDERSTANDING DEPRESSION
PREVENTION OF SUICIDE**

Seafaring is a dangerous occupation.

Studies indicate that the escalating demands of modern living and the challenges of life at sea, causes a great deal of stress.

Stress seriously affects the physical and mental health of seafarers.

Sometimes life and events can overwhelm an individual with problems, and he /she can't see a way forward. This is when **suicide ideation** may become reality.

The Mind - Body Connect

- The mind and body make a complete human being.
- Any change in one produces some kind of change in the other.
- The mind is impacted by **internal** events like-: thoughts, beliefs, attitude and emotions
- It is also impacted by **external** situations: events, illness, exercise

Over time, the body gets addicted to certain thought patterns and emotional states.

Psychological Wellbeing

- When our mood is low, and we are far away from friends and family, our psychological wellbeing is affected.
- We do not talk about it because there is a stigma/ social taboo attached to mental ill health
- Recent studies indicate that increased use of *smart phones* and the *internet* have resulted in **social isolation, depression and increased suicides.**

Understanding Psychological Wellbeing

It includes the following

- Realize one's own potential.
- Feel good about ourselves and about life.
- Feel a sense of life satisfaction.
- Have a sense of purpose.
- A sense of control over our lives and that it is on track.
- A sense that one is capable of coping with the normal stresses of life.

Suggestions To Enhance Psychological Wellbeing

1. **Adopt the right Attitude**
2. **Define Success for Yourself**
3. **Acquire Social Ease**
4. **Build Self Esteem and Self Confidence**
5. **Control Anger**
6. **Learn Problem Solving Skills**
7. **Make Time for Hobbies/ Activities you enjoy.**
8. **Express Gratitude**
9. **Stay Physically Healthy**
10. **Lead a Meaningful Life**

Depression

Most people feel sad or depressed at times.

It's a normal reaction to loss or life's struggles.

Depression affects millions of men, women, and children.

It carries a high risk of suicide.

Symptoms Of Depression

If the individual has **5** or more of these symptoms, for at **least 2 weeks**, a diagnosis of depression is made.

1. Depressed mood during most of the day, especially in the mornings.
 - Has sad, anxious or empty feelings.
2. Feels tired/ lacks energy almost every day.
3. Feels guilty/ worthless almost every day.
4. Has a hard time focusing, remembering details and making decisions.
5. Sleeps too much almost every day.
6. Takes no interest or pleasure in most activities, almost every day.
7. Thinks often of death/ suicide.
 - (NOT FEAR OF DEATH)
8. Is restless/ irritable.
9. Speech and movement may be slow.
10. Has gained/ lost weight.
11. Has aches and pains/headaches/cramps/digestive problems, that do not get better with treatment
12. Strong link between serious alcohol use and depression
 - Alcohol abuse harms the brain and leads to depression
 - When you drink too much you are more likely to make bad decisions
 - Genetic implications, both for alcohol abuse and depression.

Treatment Of Depression

If you have any of the above mentioned symptoms, reach out to someone you trust and seek medical help immediately.

- Psychiatric evaluation
- Medication
- And counseling

Suicide

Almost everyone has a brief, passing thought about suicide or one's own death, when they are going through a rough patch in life. This is normal behaviour. Most people are embarrassed to admit they think about it. Hence they rarely discuss it openly.

Definition of Suicide

- Suicide is an act with a fatal outcome that is deliberately initiated and performed by the person, who wishes to die.

Important Points To Note On Suicides

Most suicides are **Planned**

- In most cases a **Warning** is given by expressing suicidal ideas.
 - It's a “**cry for help**”
- There's a strong association between suicidal behaviour and **IMPULSIVITY** and **AGGRESSION**.
- They have **Problem Solving Deficits**

The Causes Of Suicide

1. Mental Disorders

Majority have been diagnosed with mental disorders and mood swings.

Mental disorders are difficult to detect as patients and their families do not disclose it, due to the stigma attached to it.

They include:

- Depression
- Schizophrenia
- Personality Disorder
- Obsessive Compulsive Disorder

2. Alcohol dependence and abuse.

3. Drug dependence and abuse.

4. Unemployment and Poverty.

5. Social Isolation and Loneliness; often caused by the increased use of smart phones and internet.

6. Chronic painful illness

The Causes Of Suicide

7. Recent breakup of a relationship/ divorce.
8. Recent bereavement.
9. Heavy financial losses
10. Biological Factors
 - Strong association between suicide and Impulsivity and Aggression
 - F/H/O-psychiatric/mental disorders or Suicide
11. Psychological Factors
 - include feelings of low self-esteem, worthlessness and hopelessness
 - Problem Solving Deficits an important factor
12. To change the behaviour of others or to make them feel guilty
13. Copycat Attempts_ due to media coverage
14. Rational Suicide of a mentally healthy person: e.g. Euthanasia

Individuals At High Risk

- Suicidal behaviour is complex and there is no single cause. It is a combination of Genetic, Physical and Environmental risk factors that work together.

Any person with the following is at high risk-:

1. Depression and other Mental Health Conditions.
2. A previous suicide attempt.
3. Alcohol and Substance Abuse.
4. F/H/O-Suicide.
5. A H/O-Physical or Sexual Abuse
6. Failing Relationships.

Warning Signs Of Suicide

People who attempt suicide, do not want to die, but only to end their pain

1. **Become withdrawn and Isolate themselves**

- They avoid family, friends and colleagues
- Lose interest in work, activities and social events.

2. **Focus on Death**

- May talk **openly** about wanting to die
- Fixates on the topic of Death and Dying.
- May research ways to kill themselves. -e.g. buy a gun, knife, poison, narcotics

3. **Shows Despair**

- May talk about unbearable pain or being a burden to others

4. **Makes Plans to prepare for death**

- Updates a will.
- Writes letters to family and friends
- Gives away personal things
- Says goodbye to others.
- Writes suicide notes.

5. **Sleep**

- May sleep a lot/little.

Warning Signs Of Suicide

6. **Mood Swings**

- May be depressed, anxious or sad.
- Or is moody, irritable, angry, aggressive
- Then may suddenly turn calm/sudden cheerfulness.
- This indicates that they have decided to go through with the suicide.

7. **Alcohol/Drug Abuse**

- This increases the chance of suicide.

8. **Reckless and Impulsive**

- Takes dangerous risks

9. **Change in Appearance**

- Maybe unkempt
- Poor hygiene

10. **Recent Trauma/Life Crisis**

- This may trigger a suicide attempt
- Death of a loved one
- Divorce/breakup of a relationship
- Recent diagnosis of a major disease

11. **Loss of a job**

12. **Financial crisis.**

How To Help

Take all suicide warning signs **VERY SERIOUSLY**.

Immediate help to the individual may save his life

1. Talk to him

- **Stop EVERYTHING** you are doing.
- A **frank conversation** eases suicidal thoughts.

2. Listen

- Empathetic listening is very therapeutic, very important and a most powerful way to connect to another person.
- Show understanding, compassion and a hopeful attitude
- Listen carefully to what he has to say, even if said in a joking manner.
- Don't be judgmental.
- Don't give advice.
- Do not argue with the person.
- Do not make statements such as-"It's not as bad as you think"
- Look at the situation from his perspective.
- **Don't challenge the person.**
- Arguing with the person only increases his feelings of being out of control of his life.
- Don't interrupt or finish their sentence for them.

How To Help

3. **Inform Senior Officers immediately.**
4. **Seek Help from Mental Health Professionals/National Suicide Hotline**
5. **Keep the person calm.**
6. **Do not leave them alone, even if they want to go to the toilet.**
7. **Ensure a Safe Environment**
 - No access to an open window.
 - Remove all guns, knives, sharp instruments, ropes, medication tablets.
8. **Educate the person on the following skills:**
 - Problem Solving Skills
 - Stress Management.

Conclusion

Sometimes life and events can get on top of us.

We feel overwhelmed by problems and we can't see a way forward.

Remember, that as long as a person is alive, things can change for the better. Situations change. Even if the external situation is unchangeable, the person may discover that life is still worth living.

There is always the possibility that the person may find ways to cope.

Or he may come to appreciate different things in life. He may even find a purpose in life that gives his loss/ trauma meaning.

Depression is just another illness. There's massive advancement in treatment. If you see a family member, friend or colleague suffering from depression, seek medical help immediately.