



RELIEF

Respect Every Life In Every Family

A bi-monthly pro-life newsletter

National Association for Respect For Life, C/o St. Martha's Hospital
Bangalore GPO, Bangalore - 560 001. Tel : 2275081

May / June 1997

"24 year old housewife sets herself ablaze unable to bear dowry harassment"....

"16 year old boy hangs himself after failing the SSLC exams"...

"Businessman and family of four consume poison unable to bear financial losses..."

Everyday, these headlines stare us in the face as distressed people take the final step of ending their own lives. What are the reasons behind suicide? What insurmountable problems confronted these people to make it seem like death was the only solution? How many of these lives could have been saved if only there was someone there for them at that crucial hour? And what of the loved ones left behind to deal with the deep emotional wounds?

It is these and other questions we ask ourselves in this issue of RELIEF, our bi-monthly newsletter. We examine the motives for suicide, the warning signals to watch out for in people contemplating suicide and possible preventive measure.

Dr. Ajit Bhide, a well-known psychiatrist at St. Martha's discusses suicide prevention, while a group of young people from Befrienders International, a voluntary organisation, offers friendly assistance and a patient ear. VISHWAS is another voluntary organisation that offers free and confidential counselling by trained and concerned staff to put people in distress back on the road to life.

In these stressful times hopefully we can tune ourselves to be more sensitive to another's need, make time for someone who's going through a bad phase, listen, reassure and reason with someone who feels there's nothing left to live for ... and we can make a difference in someone's life - which could well be the difference between life and death.

Rosemary Carroll

SUICIDE PREVENTION

by Dr. Ajit V. Bhide, M.D.

The fatal blow of suicide spreads a wave of guilt, remorse and anger in its wake - And yet, so often that blow seems to have been preventable: the mind always wisens in retrospect! "If only", we bear so many people say.

In an age when religion is commonly relegated to a backseat and moral values seem to change rapidly to accommodate the need for material wellbeing, it is not surprising that the act of suicide becomes a major killer.

Who are the people most at risk for suicide? Persons who have been suffering for long periods seem maximally at risk. Suicide seems the inevitable end to many people undergoing the hardship of a crippling or fatal physical condition such as cancer or of a mental illness such as depression. The chance of persons who are thus afflicted trying to end their lives seems to multiply several times over when they have no family or some other form of social support. In other words, when suffering is compounded by loneliness, the risk of suicide phenomenally goes up. In the West, people above the age



People above the age of 60 seem to be at a great risk because of their intense loneliness.

of 60 seem to be at a great risk because of their intense loneliness. The situation for the elderly does not seem so bad (yet!) in a country like ours.

Another group who seem to be at high risk for suicide are individuals in their adolescence or young adulthood. This has something to do with a romantic notion about suicide being an act of great courage. But when young people who have attempted or committed suicide are studied in retrospect, it is often found that some trivial stress in life was the provoking factor. Such factors include disappointment in one's love life, in being unsuccessful in examinations or in pursuing a career. Sometimes, however, the stress is far from trivial - as in the case of a young female who is being forced into a marriage which she is not at all keen about. This type of situation is not at all

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uncommon in our country.

Most persons who end their lives wilfully do so after giving ample warning of their intentions. Families and persons who intend to help prevent this malicious malady should sensitise themselves to picking up the signals that warn of a suicide in the offing. A young man in a hostel had been noticed to withdraw gradually from all social contacts, then over a period of a week he returned all the books and other material he had borrowed from friends and relatives before committing the fatal act. Not infrequently, intending suicides will leave notes to explain their act. When persons openly voice their desire to end their lives, they should always be taken seriously. On the other hand, some may be more subtle, and rather than talk about suicide as such, may engage in talk about the uselessness of life or of its meaninglessness.

WHY DID YOUR SCHOOLMATE ATTEMPT SUICIDE?

- Gideon Arulmani

On youngsters with the "Fatal Mood" and the reasons behind it

Many around us are fighting a battle within themselves. Fighting feelings of deep sadness and hopelessness...feelings that compel them to finally take their lives because of an overpowering sense of personal failure.

People who have attempted to take their lives seem to believe that they are personally responsible for not living up to the societal and personal expectations. They experience a deep sense of loneliness and isolation from other people.

The experience of sadness and loneliness is very real to the person who is considering suicide- so real that he or she is driven to deliberately cut the delicate thread of his or her own life.

But why do such feelings arise... and with such intensity?

Can't be happy

In the opinion of many scholars, "mental health" is another name for personal happiness. A mentally healthy person is generally comfortable with himself and behaves acceptably in the eyes of his fellow-men.

Many verbal definitions of mental health have been attempted, but when they go beyond the portrait of a "happy man" they end in a tangle of words.

Can't Love

Sigmund Freud's description of a mentally healthy person is very meaningful, especially when we try to understand suicide. He says that a person is mentally healthy to the extent that he can love and work. A person's ability to love and work, involves two factors. The first is the individual himself. Much depends on the individual concerned...his perceptions, his development, his environment and so on.

Can't adjust.

The second factor is the fact that there are others around the individual. The question of mental health is centered around the individual's ability to make appropriate adjustments between himself and the world around him. Adjustment is the key word. All of us have needs. Needs that are integral to

The organised battle against suicide began in this century with greater awareness of mental illness and anguish. An important landmark in this battle was the setting up of "hotlines" - telephones for those in distress who were contemplating the taking of their lives to relieve themselves of the suffering of life! The Samaritans in the UK and later several similar organisations the world over, have made themselves available to needy souls who have been saved.

In working in the field of suicide prevention it is important to ensure that one's motivation and commitment are genuine and complete. Noble intentions alone are not enough and if not backed up by committed action can indeed bring greater misery into the life of an already distressed person.

survival... the necessity for food, shelter are universal. We also have emotional needs... all of us require love and affection. Security needs are also important. Life would be simple indeed if our needs were immediately and automatically satisfied. But, as we know, there are many obstacles, both environmental and internal which interfere with the satisfaction of our needs.

Such obstacles place demands upon us that require us to adjust and balance external realities with internal needs. Making the necessary adjustments...finding the correct balance can cause stress and pressure. All of us have the skills to learn to make these adjustments.

Every problem has some kind of a solution. But, some times the experience is so stressful that the answers don't seem to be adequate and the future looks extremely bleak.

When feelings of hopelessness, loneliness and sadness are overpowering, suicide becomes a reality.

Pushing factors

It is important that we understand what the forces are that push a person to taking this extreme step.

Depression

Depression is a disturbance of mood. It is characterised by loss of enthusiasm, dejection and discouragement, slowing down of mental and physical activity and an all pervading sense of hopelessness.

Depression could be the result of life-events...death of a loved one, losing a job, failure in examination...any experience of loss can trigger feelings of depression.

Depression can also be the result of disturbance in the biochemical system of the body. Depression of any sort could become so severe that the desire to carry on living is itself lost.

Life-events.

Suicide could also result from life events that place the individual in a situation that appears hopeless.

People who have deliberately harmed themselves have experienced four times as many stressful life-events in the six months before the attempt than people who have never considered the thought of suicide.

The life-events that trigger deliberate self-harm could be anything. A quarrel with a friend, separations, illness... anything could create stress within an individual.

"Run out"

A very important fact to remember is that the person experiencing hopelessness is under so much stress and strain, that his or her resources to cope with problems have run out. The fact that there are answers and solutions is beyond the ken of those individuals.

The act of deliberate self-harm is very often an act of desperation. It could very well be a **cry for help**.

You can help.

Much can be done to help people who are experiencing

feelings of extreme hopelessness. In most cases, a warning is given by the person in distress, before he or she actually makes an attempt at suicide.



The act of deliberate self-harm could very well be a cry for help.

In interviews held with relatives and friends of those who had committed suicide, it was found that suicidal ideas had been expressed by over two-thirds of the deceased. Definite intent to "end it all", was expressed by more than one-third of the group in this study.

It is also seen that, very often, the warning bell is given to more than one person. The obvious warning sign is a direct statement that one is going to commit suicide.

It is a myth that those who talk about suicide do not intend to actually take their lives. On the contrary, two-thirds of those who die by suicide, have told someone about it.

Therefore, people who express suicidal thoughts, should not be regarded lightly, especially if you know they are already in distress.

(This article by Gideon Arulmani of Befrienders India, appeared in The Catalyst, September '95)

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VISHWAS

C/o Bhagawan Mahaveer
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Timings : 5.30-7.30 pm.

HELPING HANDS

Ph : 2265628 / 2260674

Befriending in a crisis

The volunteers at these centres are men and women chosen for their human qualities; warmth, compassion and understanding. They are able to work in confidentiality and remain anonymous.

The volunteers function as friends to people who are feeling desperate, lonely or suicidal.

What the volunteers do is called "befriending". In other words, being there to listen with empathy and with an open mind to troubled individuals.

The volunteers are non-professionals who make no pretence about their being therapists, counsellors or crisis managers. But they are carefully selected and rigorously trained. They listen, help sort things out, but never dictate to a person as to what he or she ought to do.

AFTER-EFFECTS OF ABORTIONS

- What abortion does to the mother

I had been listening to her for over an hour. She complained of insomnia, headaches, bodyaches, low pressure, blocked arteries, heart ailments, etc. and the side effects of medications. She has been relating to me things of her past, distant and near, in between sobs and tears, and all the time I had been mentally praying for her in tongues, my eyes fixed on her and my ears trying to absorb every word she uttered. I wondered what was the 'real' problem. One thing was sure, she needed inner healing. She was suffering a much greater malady.

She was 67 and had visited reputed hospitals in Goa, Mumbai and some other places. For the last seven years every doctor including her own brother, prescribed tranquillizers, steroids and blood tests. "I think I could have sustained a blood bank with all the blood they extracted for the last 7 years" she observed....

After absolution, as she was trying to get up from the chair to leave, I had a strong feeling to do something more for her. Suddenly something impelled me to ask: "Did you have any abortions in your life?" I didn't even complete the question, she reacted as if being hit by a 10kg hammer. I seated her in the chair and she began to sob very bitterly.....

It was 30 years ago that she had the last of her 7 abortions... She was in Africa and her husband's income was insufficient. She went to work. The boss, an old and arrogant man, would not tolerate any pregnant 'cows' in his office..."In those days nobody told us that abortion was wrong" she cried..."Atleast priests preach about it nowadays..."

And now she was paying for her folly, helplessness and ignorance... She was helped to get reconciled within, experiencing the compassionate love and forgiveness of Jesus.

Before I penned down these lines I phoned her, asking permission. She was more than willing to grant it. "Father, the major part of my prayers now are dedicated to the unborn children and for people who work on their behalf. I pray especially for the unwed mothers and all mothers who have courage to give birth to unwanted children...."

"Do you know something, Father", she yelled before I put the receiver down. "people call me crazy."

"Why?" I asked.

"Because if anyone complains of any sickness, I ask them this question "When have you made your last confession?"

Fr. Nelson Cristo Coiaco, Goa

(A third party may also be responsible for an abortion?)

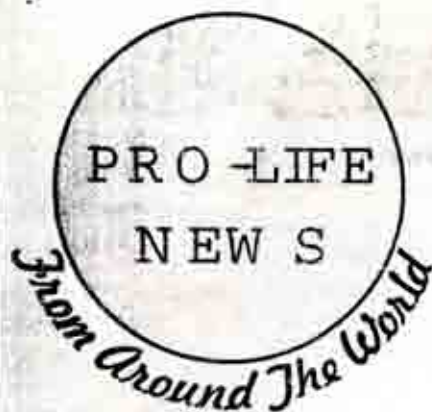
The felt need for confession, reconciliation and forgiveness to regain peace, harmony and self-confidence.....)

WHAT TO DO IF YOU ARE ALONE AND THINKING ABOUT SUICIDE

- * Sit down and breathe deeply. Breathe deeply again and again
- * Turn on the light or open a door or window.
- * Pick up the phone and call a friend, even if you have to call collect. Talk to the operator if you don't have strength to dial the number.
- * Say your name out loud. Say your friends' names out loud. Repeat and combine these names with your name.
- * Cry, even if it means weeping bitterly. Scream: "God, why am I in such despair? Why did you do this to me? Tell me why."
- * Pray. Say, "God, help me. Please give me a reason to live."
- * Touch yourself. Feel the rapid beating of your heart
- * Turn on the television, radio, or stereo.
- * Close your eyes and think about The Wizard of Oz or chocolate icecream or giraffes.
- * Get out a photo album and look at pictures of your family and friends.
- * If you have a pet, pick it up and hold it tightly.
- * When you have the strength, get out from where you are. Go to the movies. Go to the shopping mall. Go to a neighbour's or a friend's house. If you are afraid to drive, run as fast as you can for as long as you can. Get yourself to where there are people.

WHAT TO DO WHEN SOMEONE SAYS 'I'M GOING TO KILL MYSELF'

- * Accept what is said and treat it seriously.
- * Listen, even if the person is verbally abusing you. Say: "I'm sorry you are in so much pain" or "I will not abandon you."
- * Embrace or touch the person. Rub his or her back.
- * Do not give advice and do not say, "Everything will be all right." Say: "I'm asking you not to kill yourself. Please do not kill yourself. My heart will break if you kill yourself."
- * Do not debate whether suicide is right or wrong. Do not add to the person's guilt by saying, "How can you face God? Think how your parents and friends would feel! How can you be so selfish?"
- * Call the police if the situation is immediately life-threatening.
- * Do not leave the person alone if you believe the risk of suicide is immediate. Trust your suspicions that the person may be self-destructive.
- * Do not swear you will keep the person's intentions a secret. You may lose a friend, but you may save a life.
- * Help the person recall how he or she used to cope. Ask what the person needs most right now. Food? Sleep? Money? A hug? Answers? Talk freely about the person's intentions. Try to determine whether the person has a plan for suicide - the more detailed the plan, the greater the risk.
- * Pray for the person silently, saying: "God, you are the source of life. Please grant unto this person's heart a reason to live."



AUSTRALIA REJECTS ASSISTED SUICIDE.

After a long study, Australia has rejected assisted suicide. On Tuesday, 25 March, the Federal Senate rejected the Northern Territory's Right of the Terminally Ill Act. The vote was 38 to 33 following an earlier vote by the House of 88 to 35. The measure had been introduced by Senator Kevin Andrews. Its effect was to cancel, to render null and void an act passed last year in the Northern Territory that legalized voluntary euthanasia.

Mrs. Kath Harrigan, spokeswoman for the Australian Federation of Right of Life Associations, stated that this vote "will be remembered as one of Australia's finest hours...It will greatly relieve aged and infirm Australians whose lives and happiness were traumatized by the Northern territory's law and its dangerous potential

HOMOSEXUAL MARRIAGE - HAWAII:

It looks like the campaign to legalize homosexual marriages in the State of Hawaii is coming down the homestretch. It's quite likely that judges will rule that to deny equal rights to homosexual partners is a violation of human rights.

CLONING EQUALS DEFORMITY?

The Scottish scientist who cloned an adult sheep told the U.S. Congress on 12th March that "it would be quite inhumane" to try to clone a human because of the defective births that could result. "It took 277 attempts to produce Dolly," said Mr. Wilmut of the Roslin institute in Edinburgh, Scotland, "and some of the failures resulted in defective lambs that died quickly after birth. It would be quite inhumane to contemplate using these techniques at this stage. Human cloning is not practical, possible or ethical. Similar experiments with humans would be totally unacceptable."

President Clinton has issued a 90-day moratorium on any federal funding of such experimentation and has asked his national Bioethics Advisory Commission to review the ethical and legal issues involved in cloning. Pro-lifers remember only too well that this is the same Commission of mostly the same people who, three years ago, recommended that human embryos be created for the sole purpose of experimentation and then they could be killed.

STERILIZED & PREGNANT?

A recent study in a March issue of the New England Journal of Medicine reports that a higher-than-expected number of women who have had sterilization surgery become pregnant. Women with cut or blocked fallopian tubes have a "surprisingly high" -1.8% overall--risk of becoming pregnant. Further, one-third of those pregnancies are ectopic, where the embryo lodges in the fallopian tube. With tubal rupture, some of these women die. Those at highest risk were women under age 30 who had bipolar coagulation surgery. This involves burning the tubes shut

PAIN CLINICS:

These are special clinics set up to which doctors can bring patients who have pain that cannot be controlled. This is a rapidly developing speciality within the practice of medicine in many countries in the Western world. Much effort is being expended to bring comfort and relief to patients through these clinics. But guess what? In all of the United Kingdom there are 185 such clinics. In Holland there are only 3. Does it take long to find out why? Not really. In Holland they have no need to control pain -- rather, instead of killing pain, they kill the patient, for euthanasia is legal in Holland.

"NOT DEAD YET", A NEW DISABILITY RIGHTS GROUP:

This was a title on numerous signs in front of the U.S. Supreme Court Building recently. It was when the court heard the pleadings on assisted suicide. The entire front walk of the Supreme Court Building was filled with handicapped people, most in wheel chairs. It is thought that they had an impact on the justices, for it was obvious that they were pleading for their own lives, which might well be in danger in the event that assisted suicide is ever legalized. They carried signs proclaiming "Not Dead Yet"---"We Want To Live"---"Endangered Species"---"We Are The Target". One of the leaders, the editor of the monthly disability magazine, *Mouth* said, "We're not going to let them do this to us. We're mad as hell and we're not going to die for Jack Kevorkian or Tim Quill. We will not go quietly. You're not going to put us out one at a time, quietly, into little rooms. We're going to be loud about this. We want to live."

**I'd just like
to say.....**

I congratulate you on your printed newsletter. A newsletter can do remarkable work, and I commend you for your effort and pray that your work will continue.

**Father Mathew Habiger, OSB,
President
HUMAN LIFE INTERNATIONAL, USA.**

For the first time, if I am not wrong, I have received a copy of your bulletin, RELIEF, March / April 1997. Thank you for the same. I find it interesting and would be grateful if you keep me on the mailing list. Is there any fixed subscription?

My sincere thanks to all concerned for keeping society aware of the "respect for life" issue.

Thanking you and with best wishes.

**Bosco Penha,
Bishop Auxillary, Mumbai.**

The magazine RELIEF is very useful and it is really thought-provoking. Congratulations.

**Fr. Joseph Ladislaus
Kooduthalal - 627 651**

The National Association for Respect For Life is a non-profit, secular organisation of people from all walks of life, united in a common goal - which is promote life in all its stages - from conception to death, and act against all that would lessen human dignity.

NARFL believes that every human is precious and unique in the eyes of God and the human family.

The association is concerned with issues like Abortion, Child Labour, Drug Addiction and Alcoholism, Suicide, Battered Wives, Dowry Deaths, The Plight of the Disabled, Euthanasia and Aids.

For more information call 2275081 or write to us at the address given alongside.

Tell us how you'd like to help

- By making a contribution
- Becoming an active member
- Giving of your time
- Prayer

Congratulations on your very well printed newsletter. This shows growth and development in your organization. Such activities are necessary in order to influence others and get them into the movement also. It must be so much harder for you to promote pro-life activity in a country where Christianity is the minority.

**-Sr. Mary Pilar Verzosa, RGS
PRO-LIFE, Philippines.**

Thanks for sending us a copy of RELIEF of Jan-Feb '97. I am sending it to a couple who approached me last week with the problem of unwanted pregnancy and with the desire to abort the foetus. Just today they phoned me up once again and I said a prayer over the phone to help the mother accept the baby and to thank God.

I am writing now with a request to send me a few more copies of RELIEF of this month. Do continue sending me the copies regularly. I shall send you the subscription. I congratulate all the persons involved in the NARFL. May the Good Lord bless all your efforts!

**Sr. Adele,
Principal, Captitanlo T.T.I., Mangalore**

I sincerely congratulate you for the wonderful publication RELIEF which you have brought out. Your work and direction in life is in keeping with your name "Annuntiation" - made known to the whole world the sprouting of a new life from whom every one would have fullness of life. You have downright taken up that work and it is great. It is a bold step.

The get up and format are fine and the contents so selective to be inspirational and educative, and, reading it, thoughts of many hearts will be revealed.

"Glory of God is man fully alive." I knew you were serious about it, but now I realise how serious you are about it.

Congratulations once again. With prayerful best wishes

**Fr. Jacob P.J.
Good News Welfare Society, Kaighatgi.**

We welcome your comments, reactions and responses to the articles in this issue of RELIEF. Do send in your own articles, letters & testimonies to the address given below.

NARFL

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