



**A GUIDE FOR
FAMILIES,
CHURCHES &
COMMUNITIES**



We render relevant & accessible services to vulnerable persons and families in a changing South Africa.

www.afmwelfare.org.za

AFM Welfare is the official welfare ministry of The Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa.



Helplines:

Suicide Crisis Helpline: **0800 567 567**

National Counselling Line / LifeLine: **0861 322 322**

Childline South Africa: **116**

Why This Conversation Matters

Suicide is not happening “out there.” It is affecting homes, schools, churches, and communities across South Africa.



Between April and December 2024, over **7,400 children under 18** were treated for suicide attempts, nearly **930 children per month**.

Each number represents:

- A child in deep pain.
- A family in crisis.
- A community impacted.



The good news:

Suicide is preventable.

Early intervention saves lives.

God is near to those who are hurting. It calls us to reflect His nearness through our compassion, our presence, and our willingness to listen.

“The Lord is close to the broken-hearted.”
Psalm 34:18

Galatians 6:2 tells us to ‘carry one another’s burdens.’ That is what we are doing in this guide - we share openly, learn together, and support one another.

“Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.” **Galatians 6:2**

Why Teenagers Are at Risk

Teenagers face intense pressure today

The biggest contributors are:

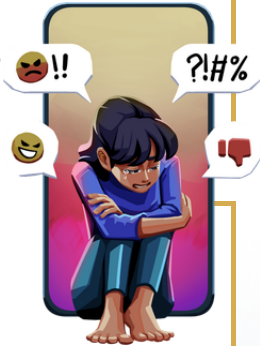
Academic pressure

The fear of failing, disappointing parents, or not getting into university can feel overwhelming.



Bullying, especially online

Social media means bullying doesn't stop at school. It follows them home, into their bedrooms, onto their phones.



Social media comparison

Teens compare their real lives to everyone else's highlight reels. They feel they're not pretty enough, not successful enough, not popular enough.

These pressures can pile up, and without a safe place to talk, a young person can feel trapped.



Undiagnosed depression or anxiety

Many teens don't have the language to express what they feel. They say 'I'm tired' or 'I don't care anymore' - underneath is depression.



Loneliness and isolation

Even in a house full of people, a teen can feel completely alone.



Family conflict or instability

Divorce, financial stress, or constant conflict can make teens feel unsafe or powerless.



Suicide Is Not Only a Teen Issue

Adults also struggle, often silently.

Common pressures include:



- Financial stress or unemployment Unemployment, debt, or feeling unable to provide can crush a person's sense of worth.
- Relationship breakdown Divorce, separation, or family conflict can leave adults feeling rejected or alone.
- Burnout and work pressure Many adults tie their identity to their job. When work becomes overwhelming, they feel like failures.
- Feeling like a burden This is one of the most common feelings among adults who consider suicide — the belief that their family would be better off without them.
- Silent suffering Adults often feel they must 'be strong'. They don't want to worry their families. They don't want to be judged. So they carry their pain alone.

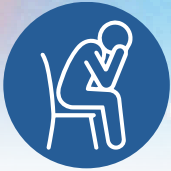
*Adults may hide their pain better.
But the emotions; shame, fear, hopelessness,
are the same.*



Warning Signs to Look Out For



If something feels "off," trust your instinct. It is always better to check in.



Withdrawal from friends or family



Changes in sleep or eating



Talking about hopelessness



Giving away meaningful belongings



Risky behaviour or substance use



Sudden calm after deep distress



How to Respond if Someone Says “I Want to Die”

Your response matters deeply.



Stay calm

Your calmness helps them feel safe.



Listen without judgement

Don't panic. Don't preach.
Don't minimise.



Acknowledge their pain

Say things like: 'I hear you.'
'That sounds incredibly hard.'
'I'm glad you told me.'



Ask gentle questions

Encourage them to talk more: 'How long have you been feeling this way?' 'What happened that made you feel like this?'



Connect them to support

Offer to help them call someone — a counsellor, pastor, family member.



Stay with them if in immediate danger

Safety comes first.



Never promise secrecy

If someone's life is at risk, you must get help.

What Churches & Communities Can Do

The **Church** has a powerful role to play - not as experts, but as safe places.

Create non-judgmental environments

People must feel they can talk honestly without being shamed or dismissed.



Start wellness or support groups

Instead of 'suicide support group', use names like:

- Life & Hope Group
 - Thrive Together
 - Resilient Living Circle
- These names draw people in rather than scare them away.

Train leaders and volunteers

Youth leaders, pastors, teachers, and volunteers should know the warning signs and how to respond.

Encourage counselling & therapy

Counselling is not a lack of faith - it is a tool God uses for healing.

Share testimonies to break stigma



When leaders or people of influence share their own mental health journeys, it breaks stigma and permits others to seek help.



Partner with professionals

Social workers, counsellors, psychologists, NGOs – the church doesn't have to do this alone.

Books, websites, helplines - anything that helps people reach out.

Share helpful resources



Healing requires both **spiritual** and **practical support**.
We need **prayer** and **professional help**.



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A Message of Hope

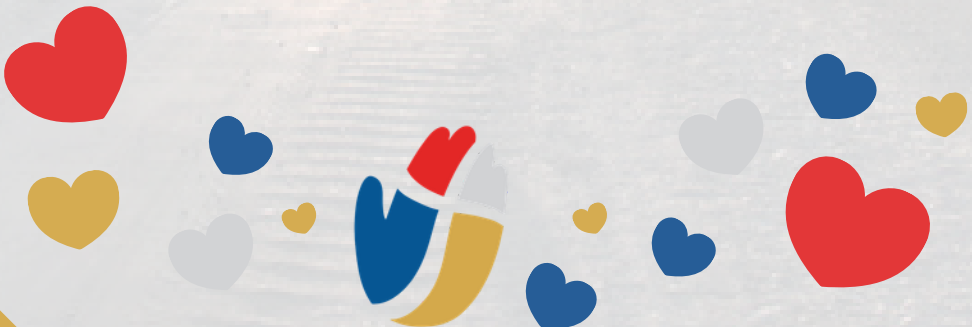


**If you are feeling
overwhelmed or
trapped:**

You are not alone.
Your life matters.
Your story is not over.

**Even when you cannot
feel Him, God is near.**

Please reach out.
There is help.
There is hope.
You are worth fighting for.





Emergency Support

South African Depression and Anxiety Group
(SADAG)

0800 567 567

Speak to:

- A trusted family member
- A pastor
- A teacher
- A social worker



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if you would like to partner with us in this life-saving work, we invite you to consider making a donation to AFM Welfare. Your contribution helps us continue providing guidance, resources, and support to those who need it most.

SCAN HERE

