

Message by Hon. Delma Thomas: Minister for Social Development, Housing and Community Development on World Suicide Prevention Day 2020 September 10, 2020

10 September 2020

Dear Friends: I bring you greetings from the Ministry of Social Development, Housing and Community Empowerment. Our Ministry, joins the world on this day September 10th, 2020 in celebrating World Suicide Prevention Day. Every year on this day awareness is brought to suicide prevention with renewed worldwide commitment and action to prevent suicides, with various activities around the world.

This year 2020 with the advent of covid19 is even more crucial for public education around suicide prevention. The MOSDH&CE recognizes that this is a time of high stress and anxiety for many persons who may be faced with many stressors. Financial problems, unemployment, breakdown in intimate relationships, domestic abuse, grief and loss, chronic illnesses are just a few of the challenges people battle with daily.

It is indeed tough times! Today one's mental health has to be top priority, as there is no health without good mental health. As a nation we must take steps to safeguard and improve our mental health by engaging in positive coping strategies.

Ladies and gentlemen, suicidal behavior has existed throughout human history, but due to several complex factors, it has increased gradually in all parts of the world and, in the past few decades, has reached alarming statistical levels. Even in Grenada we have recorded four (4) persons dying by suicide. One person dying by suicide is too way many.

Ladies and gentlemen, research shows that worldwide, every 15 seconds someone thinks about committing suicide and every 11 minutes someone does take his or her own life. For every death by suicide there are many more persons who attempt.

According to the World Health Organization, more than 800,000 people die by suicide a year, making it the principal cause of death among people fifteen to twenty-nine years old. It is myth to believe that adults are the only ones who exhibit suicidal behaviors. Research has shown that many children and young people engage in suicidal and other self-mutilating behaviors as a result of violence, abuse, bullying, cyberbullying, depression and severe childhood trauma.

Suicide is a global public health problem that deserves the attention of all persons in the field of mental health, including scientific and professional organizations, Churches, NGO's and Government. Suicide and suicide prevention MUST be seen as a community and family issue.

We need to all get involved. When someone takes his or her own life it affects the family, sometimes in more tragic ways that can imagine.

The topic of suicide and suicide prevention deserve particular attention and our Ministry has taken some bold steps to address this plaguing social problem. We have employed a cadre of professional counselors and clinical psychologist who can offer both therapeutic and crisis intervention as well as psycho-education services to persons contemplating suicide or suffering from mental illness.

Suicide is usually associated with some form of mental illness or psychotic break.

I would like to use this opportunity to appeal as I have done in the past, let us work towards ending the stigma and discrimination surrounding mental illness. There is a very fine line that separates the sane from the insane.

Many persons suffer in silence because of how society treats them. Our ministry wants to lend its voice in ending societal misconception about suicide and mental illness. If you know of anyone who is suicidal, contemplating suicide or is suffering from severe mental illness and is in need of help, please call our Ministry at 440-2269 and you will be connected with a professional counsellor who is trained to recognize and treat suicidal thoughts and provide psycho-social support.

There are numerous complex factors that contribute to a suicide, but what is most important is that all of our actions must be geared toward prevention. So if you see these signs in a friend or family member you are encouraged to seek help for them: • Talks of killing themselves • Having no reason to live • Being or feeling like a burden to others • Increased use of alcohol or other drugs • Looking for a way to end their lives, such as searching online for methods