

LOOKING AFTER YOURSELF AND YOUR FRIENDS

MENTAL HEALTH

TEEN SUICIDE PREVENTION WEEK



**Western Cape
Government**

QUALITY EDUCATION

for every child | in every classroom | in every school in the province.



MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS

Mental health is about how you think, feel, and cope with everyday life, including stress, friendships, school, and challenges. It's important because just like your physical health, your mental health affects how you learn, make decisions, handle emotions, and enjoy life. Taking care of your mental health helps you feel more balanced, confident, and able to ask for help when things get tough, and everyone needs that sometimes.

YOU DON'T HAVE TO HANDLE IT ON YOUR OWN



Sometimes stress and emotions build up without us realising it. These signs can help you notice when you might need a bit of extra support – and remind you that you don't have to handle everything alone.

- **Emotions feel overwhelming:** If stress, sadness, or anger start to feel too heavy to manage on your own, it's a sign you may need support.
- **School and focus change:** Struggling to concentrate, stay motivated, or keep up with work can be a signal that you need extra help.
- **Relationships feel harder:** Pulling away from others, feeling more irritable, or misunderstood can mean it's time to talk to someone.
- **Your body is affected:** Changes in sleep, energy, or physical health can be your body's way of saying you need support.

Looking After Yourself



Here are some simple ways to take care of your mental and physical health every day.

- **Get enough sleep:** Sleep helps your body recharge and your brain handle emotions, stress, and concentration better.
- **Eat regularly and stay hydrated:** Fueling your body with food and water supports your energy, mood, and focus.
- **Move your body:** Exercise, walking, dancing, or sport can reduce stress, boost your mood, and improve overall health.
- **Talk about how you feel:** Sharing worries or feelings with someone you trust can help you feel supported and less alone.
- **Take breaks and rest:** It's okay to pause, relax, or switch off when school, social life, or online pressure feels too much.
- **Limit social media stress:** Take breaks from screens if they affect your mood or make you compare yourself to others.
- **Do things you enjoy:** Making time for hobbies and fun helps balance stress and keeps life feeling meaningful.
- **Ask for help early:** If your mental or physical health feels off for a while, reaching out for support is a strong and healthy choice.

Even when things feel really dark and overwhelming, there is always hope because support, understanding, and change are possible, and you don't have to face everything on your own.

The Importance of Suicide Awareness

Suicide is a major public health issue in South Africa, and studies have found that nearly one in five learners has attempted suicide at least once, showing how widespread the crisis is among youth.

South Africa observes Teen Suicide Prevention Week and encourages open conversations about feelings and support, with campaigns aimed at helping teens know they are heard and valued.

Warning Signs We Need To Look Out For In Our Friends



- Talking about feeling hopeless, trapped, or like a burden
- Persistent sadness, anger, anxiety, or emotional numbness
- Saying they wish they could disappear or that others would be better off without them
- Withdrawing from friends, family, or activities they used to enjoy
- Risk-taking behaviour or increased substance use
- Posting or sharing hopeless or despairing content online

Helping a Friend

We can help our friends by following three steps:

1. **Notice:** Changes in mood or behaviour, Things they say
2. **Talk:** Listen calmly, Be kind, Don't judge or panic
3. **Tell:** Teacher, School counsellor, Parent or trusted adult

Trust your gut to know when something is not right. It's okay to be wrong. It's not okay to ignore it

HELPFUL COPING SKILLS TO USE

We can use coping strategies to help us manage stress and emotions so challenges feel more manageable and less overwhelming.

BREATHING

Slow breathing calms the body.

GROUNDING

Name 5 things you can see and 3 things you feel

CONNECTION

Talk to someone. Don't isolate.

AVOID

Try not to take substances or be around triggers.



Who Can You Ask For Help?



- Teacher
- School Counsellor
- Parent or trusted adult
- Psychologist, Doctor, Social Worker

MY SAFETY PLAN

When thoughts of Suicide are overwhelming, staying safe takes a great deal of strength. A safety plan is something to use during those crisis times. It's not a cure to the issues and feelings you are suffering, but it will give you the time to seek professional help . Keep it near you to keep you safe!

CONTACTS

If things get too much and you can't distract yourself with the self-help measures, here is a list of people that you know who will be there for you when you need them the most:

Name: _____

Contact Number: _____

Name: _____

Contact Number: _____

Name: _____

Contact Number: _____

MY DISTRACTIONS

If you are having bad thoughts, these are things that help t o distract you, e.g. Deep breathing, go for a walk or listen to music

MY REASONS

Mention the positive things in your life, that give you energy to keep going: e.g. positives in life, a pet or a friend

Help is available:

SADAG Suicide Helpline: 0800 567 567

Lifeline Whatsapp: 063 709 2620

