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The pills I hated saved my mother's life

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What I carried with me recently, after an interesting conversation with a young lady whose mother has a chronic mental illness requiring regular medication and therapies, were the words 'the pills I open saved my mother's life'. She went on to explain that as a child she always wondered why her

difference.

The 10th September marks World Suicide prevention day and opens a month of awareness both on suicide as well as mental health which leads up to the 10th October - World Mental Health Day.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) presented its triennial theme for World Suicide Prevention Day (WSPD) for 2024-2026: "Changing the Narrative on Suicide" by putting the first call to action for 2024 with "*Start the Conversation*". This theme aims to raise awareness about the importance of reducing stigma and encouraging open conversations to prevent suicides. Changing the narrative on suicide is about transforming how we perceive this complex issue and about shifting from a culture of silence and stigma to one of openness, understanding, and support. This ties in also with accepting the need and seeking help, when necessary and in a timely manner.

'*Start the Conversation*' - Talking to someone who is having difficulties can prove to be more effective in preventing a suicide rather than not talking about it. It is estimated that 700,000 lives are lost to suicide each year worldwide. It is not about the numbers but about the implications of what each lost life means. People of all ages die by suicide, the rates are similar worldwide, so instead of speaking of numbers, let us practice this year's theme and '*Start the Conversation*'. Research is showing that reaching out to each other, be it a family member, a friend, a colleague or even someone you don't know, can be helpful in preventing suicide.

'*Start the Conversation*' is a call to action, it encourages everyone to open up to the reality of suicide and suicide prevention. Every conversation, no matter how small, contributes to a supportive and understanding society. By initiating these vital conversations, we can break down barriers, raise awareness, and create better cultures of support.

This theme also emphasises the need to prioritize suicide prevention and mental health in policy making, calling for government action. Changing the narrative requires advocating for policies that prioritize mental health, increase access to care, and provide support for those in need. Linking also to the World Mental Health day 2024 theme 'It is Time to Prioritize Mental Health in the Workplace'.

'*Start the Conversation*'. You do not need to be a professional to make a vital difference to someone in distress. You do not have to help someone find all the solutions, but by simply making time and space to listen to someone about their distress or even their suicidal thoughts, you can help. You may be reluctant to help because you don't know what to say - but remember, there is no specific formula. Often people in difficulty may not be looking for advice but rather a genuine person who shows concern, empathy and is non-judgemental. The key is to help prevent a tragedy. This you can do. This is what was learnt from people who have survived a suicide attempt. They thank those who reached out to them at the moment of distress and difficulty and offered them compassion and guided them towards sources of support to recovery and growth.

The work of Erbacher (2017) offers very simple principles which can guide us to prevent suicide, and instead to spread LOVE:

L- Listen

Offer Support
open

Mental Health Service professionals. List of services available in the community to support persons with mental health problems, including services for people passing through difficult moments and contemplating Suicide, as well as suicide loss survivors, can be found in the [Directory of Entities](#).

Gertrude Buttigieg is an officer at the Office of the Commissioner for the Rights of Persons with Mental Disorders

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