

The impact of celebrity suicides on mental health patients: What can you do to help?

Processing any death news is not easy for anyone. And if it is a death by suicide that is being widely covered in the media — particularly a suicide case of a superstar or an idol — it can trigger negative consequences among those with suicidal tendencies or with other mental health issues.

What triggers?

First of all, suicidal tendency in general stems from an unbearable burden or ache from which a person wishes to relieve or escape from, by taking his/her own life.

And when it comes to the impact of celebrity suicide cases on individuals, “A celebrity suicide can give rise to the motivation for an individual to commit suicide,” explained Dr Helal Uddin Ahmed, Associate Professor, Child Adolescent & Family Psychiatry, National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH). “The thought goes: if such a successful person like him commits suicide, then what is the problem if I, a failed person, commit suicide too. Hence, a celebrity suicide can give encouragement to others.”



Who are vulnerable?

While the death news of an icon is not easy for any fan, suicide cases can have a harmful impact on fans that are vulnerable. Who are vulnerable, then?

Dr Helal says that in addition to those with suicidal tendencies, people suffering from any kind of mental health illness are also vulnerable. People who are underprivileged or who belong to a gender minority group may also be vulnerable.

Looking for signs

“Every person before committing suicide gives some sort of hint,” Dr Helal states. And it is the duty of the family member or friend to recognise and understand that hint.

What kind of sign, though? “He or she may speak of death, express the desire to die, isolate himself or herself, or perhaps give posts on social media on loneliness and death,” Dr Helal elaborates. “Expressing death wish must not be taken lightly.”

What can you do to help?

If you have identified someone with suicidal tendency, you have a role to play as a family member or guardian.

Trying to block out media content when the media is covering a suicide case may not always be the ultimate solution. Focus should be on not leaving the person alone and engaging in a dialogue with him: “So you want to die, understood; but speak

to me first, tell me the logic and your arguments behind it,” Dr Helal elaborates. “We have to keep that conversation going and make him fight against the wish to die, till the point where the will to live is ignited again.”

The best solution is of course to take the person to a mental health professional. “For some people, medicines may be needed, some may have to go through counselling, and some may need hospitalisation,” he stated.

Observing World Mental Health Day

In the spirit of World Mental Health Day (10 October), let’s strive to garner more empathy towards mental health patients and gain an understanding on suicide instead of being judgmental.

We all have our roles to play, be it by being there for the person to listen to, and definitely by encouraging him/her to seek professional supervision.

As a society, we still lag behind when it comes to mental health issues. Even media coverage of suicide cases — especially when it comes to celebrities — is a big aspect of it. In terms of reporting on suicide, Dr Helal points out to international guidelines for media, set by World Health Organization and International Association for Suicide Prevention.

From media professionals to family members, each one of us should do our bit in building a society where mental health issues are not frowned upon or ignored.

By M H Haider
Photo: Collected

◆ HOROSCOPE ◆



ARIES (MAR. 21-APR. 20)

Issues with co-workers are evident. Issues with lovers can escalate. Don't create unnecessary drama. Your lucky day this week will be Thursday.



TAURUS (APR. 21-MAY 21)

Don't shy away from potential romances. Be aware of emotional deception. Avoid signing legal contracts this week. Your lucky day this week will be Thursday.



GEMINI (MAY 22-JUN. 21)

Travel will be on your mind. Insincere gestures of friendliness are likely. Don't reveal any personal information. Your lucky day this week will be Thursday.



CANCER (JUN. 22-JUL. 22)

Make sure everything is in order. Work late in order to avoid any disharmony. Help elders with their problems. Your lucky day this week will be Wednesday.



LEO (JUL. 23-AUG. 22)

Don't forget your limited budget. Residential moves will be beneficial. Discuss serious matters behind closed doors. Your lucky day this week will be Friday.



VIRGO (AUG. 23-SEP. 23)

Control your temper at work. Plan outdoor activities. Dazzle others with your obvious charm. Your lucky day this week will be Tuesday.



LIBRA (SEP. 24-OCT. 23)

Travel for pleasure will be rewarding. Be accommodating for the time being. Sudden romantic infatuations won't last. Your lucky day this week will be Thursday.



SCORPIO (OCT. 24-NOV. 21)

Come up with new ideas. Look into ways for self-improvement. Private matters will get emotional. Your lucky day this week will be Friday.



SAGITTARIUS (NOV. 22-DEC. 21)

Don't be too hasty to help. Avoid being overly opinionated. Alienation may be the result of a misunderstanding. Your lucky day this week will be Monday.



CAPRICORN (DEC. 22-JAN. 20)

Travel can bring about new romantic opportunities. Your sensitivity will be appreciated. Seminars will provide you with knowledge. Your lucky day this week will be Thursday.



AQUARIUS (JAN. 21-FEB. 19)

Expect opposition at work. Don't let competition get to you. Personal problems could be hampering your professional performance. Your lucky day this week will be Thursday.



PISCES (FEB. 20-MAR. 20)

Join a creative activity. Consider moving to larger quarters. Hidden matters will be disturbing. Your lucky day this week will be Wednesday.