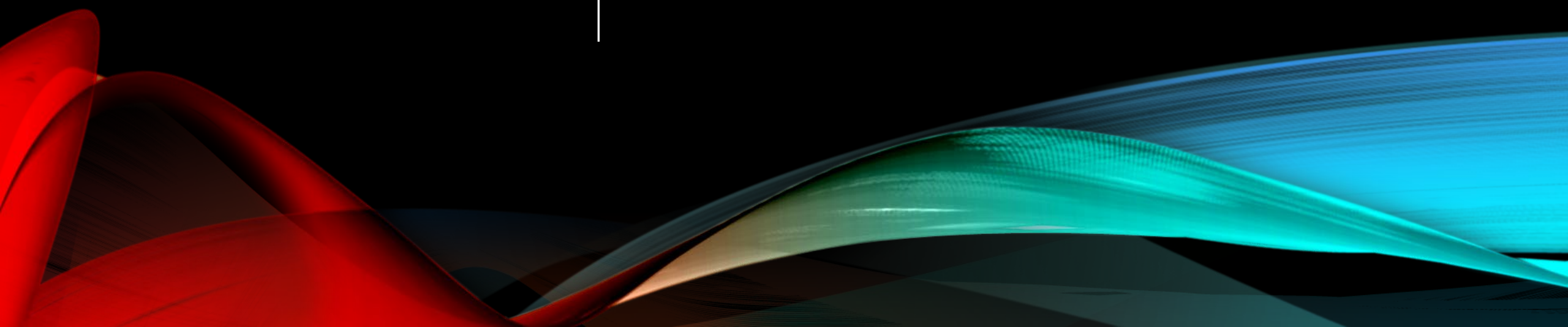


Sarah Golledge
(RN- Apex Care Ltd)

YOUTH SUICIDE



STATISTICS IN NEW ZEALAND

- New Zealand's youth suicide rate for adolescents aged 15-19 years is currently one of the highest in the OECD countries.
- Suicide rates for Māori tend to be higher than those for non-Māori.
- In 2018, there were 448 male suicide deaths and 176 female suicide deaths.
- In 2018, the rate of suicide for males was 17.4 per 100,000 males, and the rate for females was 6.9 per 100,000 females.
- In 2018, there were 624 confirmed suicide deaths in Aotearoa New Zealand. The age-standardised rate of confirmed suicide deaths was 12.1 (95% CI: 11.1, 13.0) per 100,000 population.
- **538** people died by suspected suicide in the 2021/22 financial year (from July 2021 to June 2022), less than the 607 reported for 2020/21 and 628 reported in 2019/20.
- Males are more than twice as likely to die by suicide than females.

RISK FACTORS FOR SUICIDE

Individual risk factors

- Previous suicide attempt
- History of depression and other mental illnesses
- Serious illness such as chronic pain
- Criminal/legal problems
- History of depression and other mental illnesses
- Serious illness such as chronic pain
- Criminal/legal problems
- Job/financial problems or loss
- Impulsive or aggressive tendencies
- Substance use/addiction
- Current or prior history of adverse childhood experiences
- Sense of hopelessness
- Violence victimization and/or perpetration

SUICIDE RISK TOOL

The suicide risk tool is a set of questions that can be asked directly to te tamaiti. They are designed to help kaimahi understand what is going on for te tamaiti and whether they are at risk of suicide.

The accuracy of the information gathered depends on a number of factors, including:

- the self-awareness of te tamaiti
- the memory of te tamaiti
- the honesty of te tamaiti
- The relationship/trust they have with the kaimahi.

Other possible sources of information could include:

- direct observation
- asking trustworthy significant others who know the person well
- professional assessment or treatment reports.

SUICIDE RISK TOOL LINK

<https://practice.orangatamariki.govt.nz/assets/Our-work/Practice-tools/Suicide-risk-assessment/suicide-risk-assessment-template-updated.doc>

- This tool is often used by Social workers along side the SAC'S, Kessler and other tools. However can be used by kaimahi to gain important information.
- If you are dealing with tangata that are showing signs of suicidal ideation, please call Apex and discuss with us first to determine the suitability of using this tool.

WHAT TO DO IF SOMEONE IS SELF HARMING

- If you or the Tamariki are in immediate danger, call 111 immediately.
- If they are bleeding or unwell, have taken an overdose or are drowsy/unresponsive, call 111 immediately. Try and obtain what they have ingested if its an overdose.
- If they are injured, apply First Aid or CPR if unresponsive and call 111.
- Never attempt to approach an individual if they are aggressive or have a weapon. If they are calm and engaged you can ask them to place the weapon on the ground.
- Remain calm and empathetic. A lot of the time Tamariki are harming to try and ease their emotional distress, and not actually end their life. However, we **always** take this seriously and seek support every time.

HOW DOES CARING FOR SUICIDAL TAMARIKI AFFECT ME?

Working with someone who is suicidal can be extremely challenging and confronting. Engaging in supervision and debriefing is essential. Common reactions can include:

- **Anxiety**- particularly in regards to managing the risk of suicide in a patient, knowing how to respond and 'saying the wrong thing'. The fear of letting them out of sight or being on shift when it actually happens and the person dies, or is seriously injured.
- **Avoidance**- particularly when a kaimahi is inexperienced, has had limited exposure to relevant training and is lacking in confidence.
- **Anger**- some kaimahi may feel angry towards the person, and may feel frustrated at all the potential this young person has, yet cannot see that.
- **Distress**- particularly when the support person has had personal experience with suicide or self-harm. On the other hand, the support person may have never experienced dealing with a self-harm in their lives, which could cause significant distress.
- **Conflict with the person**- Support workers are usually responsible for the restoration of health and maintenance of the person's life. They may feel conflicted when needing to care for someone who does not value this goal.
- **Moral conflict**- Most people have strong feelings about suicide. For some, strong religious beliefs against suicide can affect how the person is perceived and treated.

SELF CARE WHEN WORKING WITH SUICIDAL YOUTH

- Supporting someone who has suicidal thoughts and behaviour, or who has attempted suicide, takes a lot of emotional energy, as well as physical at times.
- You may find yourself worried and preoccupied about the person outside of work, and this can be physically and emotionally exhausting.
- When working with youth that are suicidal and high risk, our bodies are constantly in fight or flight mode which can be incredibly exhausting - especially once you finish your shift and the threat or danger is removed. Continuing to work in this environment for too long , or without self care can lead to serious burn out.
- You may feel a responsibility to keep them safe, which may seem like a significant burden; guilty for the way they are feeling; or perhaps angry and frustrated at them for causing you so much worry.
- The lines of the professional boundaries/carer relationship can very quickly become blurred without realising.
- Caring for someone who is suicidal can trigger many emotions, and for some people it can trigger memories or emotions from their own personal lives, which may have a significant impact on how they react in a crisis situation.
- These are all natural responses to a difficult situation.
- It is important to recognise these feelings and focus on self care, so that you can continue to keep both yourself and the tangata safe.

FOCUSING ON YOURSELF AND REDUCING STRESS

- When looking after Tamariki who are experiencing such significant emotional turmoil, it can be easy to overlook your own needs. Try to make your own health and wellbeing a priority, even if only to ensure that you can continue to provide the best care for them.

Strategies that can help to avoid burnout and assist you to keep emotionally and physically healthy.

- Maintain regular exercise
- Get a good night's sleep
- Eat a balanced, healthy diet
- Avoid alcohol or drugs as stress relievers
- Do things that are meaningful and enjoyable for you, such as pursuing hobbies or interests
- Get out into nature
- Listen to your favourite relaxing or uplifting music
- Practice yoga or meditation
- Complete relaxation or deep breathing exercises
- Keep a journal of your feelings.
- Ensure regular debriefs/confidential discussions with management and CNM, as well as debriefing with colleagues can help to acknowledge the intensity and impact of the situation on everyone.
- Use EAP – free and confidential counselling service.

SELF-CARE STRATEGIES CONTINUED

- **Share responsibility-** It is very important that you don't try to deal with this situation by yourself. Use your colleagues to debrief with, acknowledge how hard it is to care for this young person. Always follow the safety plan and check in regularly with colleagues and management to check you are on the right track.
- **Talking about it-** A vital part of looking after yourself is having people to talk to about the situation and how it is affecting you. As mentioned this can be colleagues, managers or EAP. Remember to always maintain client confidentiality.
- **Rational Detachment-** recognising the need to remain professional by managing your own behaviour and attitude.
- Not taking the behaviours and attitudes of others personally, as hard as this may be.
- Checking in with yourself on a regular basis, self talk.
- Do you have support for what may be going on in your personal life, as this will have a huge impact on your work and ability to disconnect from personal life.

USEFUL RESOURCES/REFERENCES

- <https://mentalhealth.org.nz/resources/resource/are-you-worried-someone-is-thinking-of-suicide>
- <https://mentalhealth.org.nz/suicide-prevention/suicide-prevention-resources>
- [Caring for a person who is suicidal \(health.qld.gov.au\)](http://health.qld.gov.au)