

PRESS RELEASE

August 12th, 2014

Distress Centres in Ontario offer help with mental health issues, thoughts of suicide

KITCHENER, ON – With the tragic passing of Robin Williams, many of us reflect on mental health issues, depression and suicide and how to deal with the anguish of loneliness, isolation and emotional pain. How does one reach out for help, support or referrals during what seem like the darkest and bleakest times of one's life?

There are many compassionate, empathic individuals available 24-7 to provide a ready ear to those who wish to have a conversation and be listened to in a confidential and anonymous manner about any issues that may be troubling them.

Distress Centres (DCs) throughout Ontario have been providing these telephone listening and referral services for 40 years with highly trained and professional call responders. In 2012, the centres answered over 240,000+ calls discussing mental health issues, interpersonal situations and suicide to name just a few of the various topic.

Suicide was a very significant component in over 25,000 calls in 2012. Here is how the statistics break down. 37% involved ideation (where someone is contemplating the prospect of suicide); 39% were discussions with individuals who had engaged in prior suicidal behavior and 11% with conversations with survivors of suicide (those who have lost a loved one or friend to suicide). Thankfully, in over 2% of our call volume, the call to a DC was made and interventions with either the police or 911 were initiated to help keep the individual safe.

Calls to DCs increased to over 275,000+ between January and December 2013. Of these calls, 37% included conversations about the caller's mental health status or mental health related issues. The callers discussed the heavy burden of depression, anxiety/panic disorders and phobias, bipolar or mood disorders, PTSD and many other mental health issues. They spoke about the self-abuse or harm they had engaged in or the schizophrenia or psychotic disorders they worked to control.

Does empathic listening help? Yes, as the outcomes for the callers are routinely assessed. Callers report they feel a decrease in isolation and loneliness, an increased ability to cope, a decrease in distress or anxiety levels and often they experience an increase in self-esteem, self-control or confidence.

Though the value of an empathic ear is very important, in some situations it is the start of a longer journey that involves referrals to additional community resources to provide specialized assistance. When referrals are provided, they include 16% to counselling services, 14% to mobile crisis units, 9% to community or government agencies, 7% to hospitals or ER and 7% to doctors or psychiatrists.



MOVING FORWARD THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS

How to reach a Distress Centre:

Find a listing of Ontario's Distress Centres at www.dcontario.org at the GET HELP link (upper left corner).
In most telephone books on the inside cover or emergency contact pages.

Contact:

To learn more about getting help and Distress Centres' services and statistics, please contact

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