



Jo Gawthorpe

Meditation
coach
www.calmrMe.

Worried about someone? Then please ask them how they are, twice

Sadly, suicide remains one of the leading causes of death worldwide, according to the World Health Organisation's latest estimates, published in a June 2021 report "Suicide worldwide in 2019."

Every year, more people die as a result of suicide than HIV, malaria, breast cancer or war and homicide. In 2019, more than 700 000 people died by suicide: that's one person every 40 seconds.

Three out of four suicides are men, with middle-aged men being more likely to die by suicide than any other age group. There's discussion around this being due to 'toxic masculinity' teaching young boys that they can't express their emotions openly and show vulnerability, that they have to be tough all of the time. Some generations grew up with these embedded beliefs and unknowingly passed them on and this needs to change. We need to encourage our children to show emotion and be proud, and even though we are getting better at this, we do still need to challenge our unconscious biases.

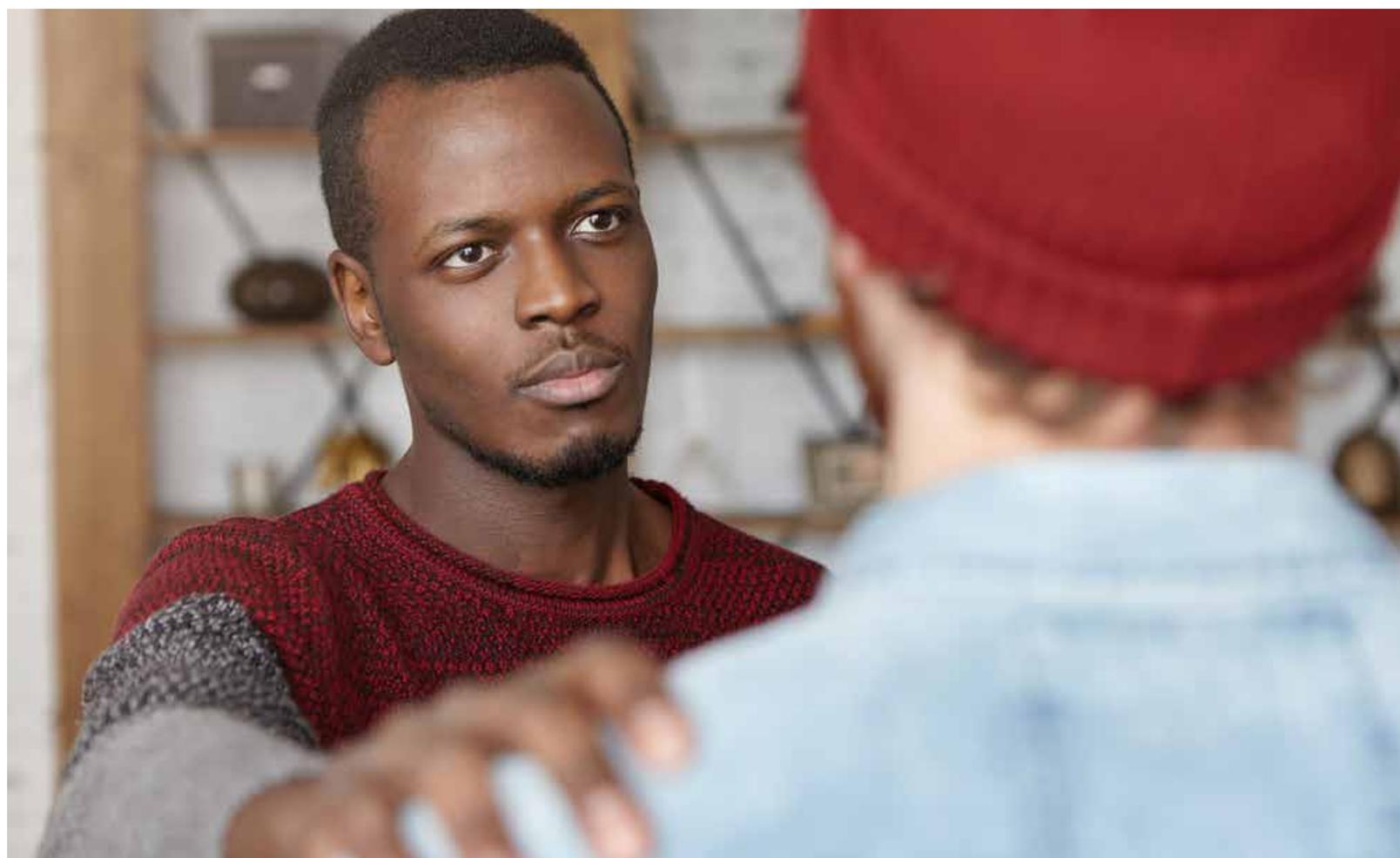
Among young people aged 15-29, suicide was the fourth leading cause of death.

"We cannot, and must not, ignore suicide," said Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO director-general. Each one is a tragedy."

So what part can we play in helping to reduce these numbers?

When we ask someone how they are the immediate response is often: "I'm fine thanks how are you?" and that is where the conversation ends. But what if you asked twice, what if after the auto-response you said: "How are you really?"

A client of mine did just that with a friend and was taken aback at the response. This person, who was a close friend that he thought he knew everything about, broke down to reveal he was losing his job, he had mounting financial problems, relationship issues and did not know what to do. He hadn't told anyone else, and probably wouldn't have done if he had not been asked twice. Up until that moment, my client had no idea what was really going on.



Call Samaritans
free on 116 125
FREE day or
night, 365 days
a year



So, what do you do when someone tells you how they are really feeling?

Firstly, when someone opens up, it's important to just listen, just hold space for them. Holding space means just being there, being present and allowing what is happening to be without trying to repair,

solve or fix it. It allows that person to be vulnerable and feel safe. It may not feel constructive but often listening is one of the most helpful things we can do. By creating a compassionate space, we empower others to voyage down their own path of healing or resolution. We provide a safe container to ex-

plore emotions allowing them to move through their pain and emotions at their pace.

Once you have listened you can gently remind that person to focus on simple things that could improve how they feel but also encourage them to get professional help and of course, check in with them af-

ter your chat.

Many people experience depression and mental health problems and it can be the tiniest thing that can tip someone over the edge. So, if anyone says they are fine, ask again because a second 'how are you really?' can make all the difference to their day, sometimes their life.