

Why I am a Maithri Volunteer

By Rajesh*

It had always been my conviction that no one really wants to die and individuals opt for suicide only as a last resort. I always held in my own mind that a suicidal individual can be brought back to active life, if supported with care and compassion. However, I never imagined that a lay-person like me can help with suicide prevention activities proper. It was one of Maithri's advertisements inviting volunteers that encouraged me to give expression to my convictions.

Even though I was in a position spare time from my busy work, I always knew that suicide prevention is a serious matter. If an individual is already determined to take his/her life, how can assistance be provided? How can a stranger deal effectively with their frustrations and desperations? If there are solutions to their problems, how am I to find them out? Will my sincere efforts be taken as intrusions and resented? These were a few of the apprehensions that overwhelmed my mind as I got enrolled into Maithri's volunteer training programme.

The training programme was a revelation. When concepts of suicide-prevention were explained to me the way Maithri's senior volunteers did, many of my apprehensions were gone. I learnt about "Befriending" - how to show care, how to listen when people talk about their suicidal feelings. I also realized the paramount importance of accepting and respecting individuals – how not to suffocate them with advices, how to guard their right to confidentiality and so on.

Today, I often return from Maithri's befriending center with a feeling of satisfaction that my efforts too might have contributed to saving the life of a fellow-being. To be present at the center for four hours every week, week after week, requires some careful planning of my activities; but the feeling of satisfaction my volunteer-ship with Maithri gives is my greatest reward.

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