

# The Journal of Values-Based Leadership

---

Manuscript 1474

---

## Avert Suicidal Thoughts to Lead an Exciting and Meaningful Life

M. S. Rao

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholar.valpo.edu/jvbl>



Part of the [Business Commons](#)

---

This Case Study is brought to you for free and open access by the College of Business at ValpoScholar. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Journal of Values-Based Leadership by an authorized administrator of ValpoScholar. For more information, please contact a ValpoScholar staff member at [scholar@valpo.edu](mailto:scholar@valpo.edu).

## CASE STUDY

# Avert Suicidal Thoughts to Lead an Exciting and Meaningful Life

— Professor M.S. Rao, Ph.D.

### **Abstract**

*The purpose of this study is to offer tools and techniques to identify and address situational suicidal<sup>1</sup> thoughts in order to lead an exciting and meaningful life. It outlines healthy habits to help ensure mental health. It implores parents to educate their children and help strengthen their character in order to face the challenges in life. It concludes that every person must properly weigh both all-consuming excitement with successes and complete dejection with failures; instead, all must be level-headed to enjoy the peaks and valleys in life.*

### **Introduction**

**“Suicide is a permanent solution to a temporary problem.” – Phil Donahue**

Globally people are stressed due to demanding workplace pressures, cutthroat competition, and VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity). Research shows that situational suicide is increasing at an alarming rate, in part as a consequence of the rapid growth in, and use of, technology. People compare and compete with others. Those who succeed may enjoy name and fame. In contrast, those who compare and fail may fall into a state of hopelessness, depression, and unmitigated anxiety.

### **Causes**

Suicide is a threat to public health. There are many causes which prompt situational suicidal ideations: an elderly person may attempt suicide when there is nobody to take care of them. When people suffer from chronic diseases, they may elect to end their lives to overcome pain and suffering. When people encounter repeated failures in business and/or in home life, they may contemplate the end of their earthly existence.

### **Tools and Techniques to Prevent Suicidal Thoughts**

Feeling suicidal indicates that an individual may be experiencing a level of emotional pain that appears, at least at that moment, to be insurmountable. To relieve the pain, one should

---

<sup>1</sup> **JVBL Editor’s Note:** Situational depression must be distinguished from clinical depression-related. Medically, situational depression is an “adjustment disorder with a depressed mood.” It often resolves with time, and talking about the problem can ease recovery. Clinical depression, known medically as a “major depressive disorder,” can develop if the individual does not recover. This is a more severe mental health condition (MedicalNewsToday, <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/314698#clinical-depression>). One does not “commit suicide” but rather “dies by/from suicide” as no one dies by committing cancer. Regardless of the type, it is imperative for the afflicted person to reach out for help and to understand that the only “sin” is that of judging others and failing to show empathy for their respective situations. The 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline is a national network of local crisis centers that provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week in the United States.

open up with trusted friends and share inner feelings, emotions, and ideas. Try to latch on to positive thoughts to dispel suicidal ideations. Think of the people who love you and cherish those memories. Understand the power of visualization techniques and project more appreciation of positive influences.

Avoid ruminating about unpleasant events and experiences. Explore ideas to address challenging issues. Set SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Trackable) goals and engage effectively to accomplish them. Exercise regularly. Give adequate rest to your body and mind. Socialize with others. Eat right. Sleep at a consistent time. Connect with your family members emotionally. Be compassionate. Serve others to provide meaning to your life.

### **Acquire Healthy Habits to Improve Mental Health**

The following represent ways to address mental health challenges and to excel as a leader.<sup>2</sup>

1. **Visualize Oneself:** Understand the power of visualization. Learn how to visualize success and yourself as a successful person. It is rightly said that a battle is won twice – first in mind and second in reality. That means one must have a mental script first and then act in accordance with the real script. In this manner, a person is better suited to follow a desired pathway.
2. **Equip with Positive Affirmations:** One must always immerse in positive affirmations. Goal setting is one way to instill a positive attitude and improve the way life is viewed. This helps to stay focused on objectives and enhance time management skills. They enhance longevity as optimism reigns. James Allen once remarked, “All that you accomplish or fail to accomplish with your life is the direct result of your thoughts.” Whether one wants to succeed or fail, thoughts will inevitably lead to actions. When thoughts are positive, actions will be corresponding so. Replace “if” with “when,” “hopefully” with “certainly” and “I hope” with “I expect.” Don’t think about what is lacked. Think about what is there. Don’t say, “Have a great day!” but say, “Make it a great day!” It all depends on what is contemplated. One’s thinking can be inspirational and mesmerizing to others. Adopt the following tips to affirm oneself positively – first, engage in self-appreciation. Look at the positive things within oneself and use sentences like “I can do it.” Use “I” to affirm oneself and the present tense in statements to achieve maximum outcome. Remain optimistic. Look at the door that is opened rather than the one that is closed.
3. **Strengthen the Subconscious Mind:** We operate 95 percent from our subconscious minds and 5 percent from our conscious minds. To strengthen the subconscious mind, give positive commands 30 minutes before going to bed. A study shows that upon falling asleep, the conscious mind clicks gives way to the subconscious for the remainder of the slumber. What is done during the last 30 minutes beforehand is replayed 15-17 times during the night. Hence, the importance of giving commands cannot be underestimated to help shape one’s life. If one desires to win the Nobel Prize, give commands daily before bedtime to that effect. When done regularly, the subconscious mind is strengthened and behavior and thought shaped accordingly to allow for hard work to accomplish that goal. Additionally, when a new skill is learned, the conscious mind is very much alert. After acquiring the skill, it is shifted to the subconscious mind and applied automatically to achieve desired ends. For instance, when a person learns to

---

<sup>2</sup> **JVBL Editor’s Note:** While there is no “silver bullet” to control suicidal ideations, and the author is not a medical professional, his study is merely attempting to offer positive actions to help alleviate temporary, situational depression.

swim initially, that individual will be alert due to the conscious mind. Once the art of swimming is mastered, this art is transferred to the subconscious mind, allowing the conscious mind to think of other things.

4. **Use Inner Dialogue Effectively:** All human beings have dialogue within themselves throughout the waking hours which is known as “inner dialogue” or “self-talk.” This is most powerful when used effectively. However, it becomes mere noise when failing to listen to others during the conversation. We can use it effectively throughout the day by practicing or thinking about good things. A person can use inner dialogue during leisure and traveling time to concentrate and develop goals.
5. **Exercise Regularly:** Invest your time to go to the gym or a walk or engage in meditation. Burn calories during a walk to energize the body. Exercise can elevate energy levels and permit the development of new ideas and thoughts. Regular physical activity maintains a good appetite, ensures free motion, and provides sound sleep which are the symptoms of good health. One must invest time in maintaining personal health. By doing so, one can better tackle life’s challenges.
6. **Eat Healthy and Nutritious Food.** Include Omega-3 fatty acids in the diet. Take a gram of fish oil each day. It decreases symptoms such as anxiety, sleep disorders, unexplained feelings of sadness, suicidal thoughts, and decreased sex drive. In his book, *The Depression Cure: The 6-Step Program to Beat Depression without Drugs*, author Stephen Ilardi writes, “Because the brain needs a steady supply of Omega-3s to function properly, people who don’t eat enough of these fats, are at increased risk for many forms of mental illness, including depression. Across the globe, countries with the highest level of Omega-3 consumption typically have the lowest rates of depression.”
7. **Follow Your Heart:** Find out your passions and follow them. Unfortunately, people follow others’ passions and fail miserably. You must identify your strengths and concerns and capitalize on your strengths and overcome the concerns. Passion can take you to greater heights of success. When you are dispassionate, you are unclear about the direction of your life. With passion, your work has meaning. Some people chase money, ignoring their passions and eventually burn out. The truth is that when you follow your passions, making a living follows naturally. The noted author and speaker, Wayne Dyer, rightly remarked, “When I chased after money, I never had enough. When I got my life on purpose and focused on giving of myself and everything that arrived into my life, then I was prosperous.” Remember to follow two things in your life—choose the career of your dreams and be with one who you love. When you choose the right career, you enjoy doing your work and excel professionally. When you are with the one you love, you enjoy your personal and social life. In this way, you can enjoy the entirety of your life.
8. **Write and Burn the Paper:** It is challenging to forget unpleasant experiences and events. But here is a solution where you can get past them. When you are overcome by negative thoughts or angry with someone, write down the sources of these ills on a piece of paper and then burn it. Through written expression and purging in this manner, one vents weighty feelings and experiences relief.
9. **Acquire Internal Locus of Control:** Internal locus is all about taking responsibility for success, and the external locus of control is all about blaming the external forces and factors for failures. Internal locus is about taking responsibility for the consequences of one’s actions. It is about making things happen. True leaders possess an internal locus of control as they take responsibility for their actions. Remember, it is the bad

tradesperson who blames their tools, and it is the good tradesperson who avails what they have and works within those constraints to achieve the outcomes.

10. **Practice the “Winner and Mirror” Method:** Whenever you are depressed, go inside a room and lock it. Stand in front of the mirror, smile, and shout *I am the winner* for a few minutes. You return to normalcy and stay motivated. When you see your smiling face in the mirror you enjoy looking at your face. Secondly, since you locked the room, you hear the echo of your voice loudly and it reinforces your mind with positive thoughts. It is like having audio and video effects simultaneously where audio is to hear your own voice and video is to see your face with a smile in front of the mirror.
11. **Hold Your Thoughts for 21 Seconds:** Whenever you get any negative thoughts, have control over them for a few seconds and try to replace them with positive thoughts and to expel them any negativity. Whenever people experience acute depression, they should sustain positive thoughts for 21 seconds and they will be amazed to find themselves motivated again. They must maintain memories of their past achievements or events for 21 seconds to bounce back to an exciting state of existence. In this way, people can escape a depressive state and overcome suicidal tendencies.
12. **Practice for 21 Days:** Healthy habits will benefit one’s existence and change one’s life for the better. To form habits, one must work hard sincerely and consistently for 21 days. You may have to struggle for a few days to acquire the habits but once you start working diligently, you will be amazed to find yourself acquiring good habits. Similarly, if you want to expel any bad habit, control yourself for a few days, and you will be astonished to find yourself free from that bad habit. For instance, you set a goal to go to the gym regularly at 4 AM. You must work hard to get up on the time for a few days. Once you start getting up on a regular schedule, from the 22<sup>nd</sup> day onwards it becomes habit-forming and you arrive at the gym on time regularly. Similarly, you can also eschew bad habits by staying away for 21 days continuously.
13. **Journal Regularly:** When you journal, you manage your time as you stay clearly focused on your activities. It aligns and guides you in your destined direction. You learn to prioritize and become better disciplined to move forward what is important to you. It enhances your focus and inculcates perseverance. These are the days of information overload and it is essential to prepare a To-Do list to work on only what is essential. Remember, a journal is different from a diary. A diary is a place where you record events while a journal is a place where you analyze and evaluate them. Additionally, journalizing enhances self-awareness. For instance, Warren Buffett has an interesting routine to increase his self-awareness. He writes down his reasons for making an investment decision as well as anticipated results. Once the decision is implemented and in play, several months or years later, he reads his recorded initial thoughts about a decision and compares the actual results with what he expected. Explicitly, Warren Buffett assesses the outcomes of every decision he makes. Therefore, maintain a diary to jot down the lessons you have learned and a journal to analyze and evaluate to take matters forward for execution.
14. **Accept Feedback Constantly:** Requesting and accepting feedback is one of the greatest habits of highly successful people in the world. It helps them know where they stand at any given time and track their selected course. It helps people address their concerns to develop more favorable behavioral changes. It is a fact that a change in one’s behavior will help produce dramatic improvement in performance. Many successful CEOs hire executive coaches to address their concerns to perform better. Mark Zuckerberg took

lessons to heart when he realized that he needed to be a leader, and not just another tech guru if Facebook/Meta was going to be a dominant company. He hired an executive coach and addressed his weaknesses. He strove to identify and hone the skills essential to running a fast-growing company. He met with, and learned from, successful leaders in his industry. He matured as a leader. And that is because he made learning a priority and accepted feedback. What worked in a particular context will not necessarily work again. That means you cannot take success for granted. Hence, accepting feedback identifies the blind spots to becoming a better professional and a great achiever.

15. **Be a Giver:** There are three types of people in the world. The first type refers to those who are takers and often take from others. The second type refers to those who are both takers and givers. The third type refers to those who are givers and often give to others. The first type always expects from others; these are selfish people. The second type gives something to others only when they extract from others. They have a "What's-in-it-for-me?" mindset and expect a reciprocal response. This type is still better than the first one. The third type never expects anything from others. They often think about others and care for others. They are big-hearted people. They are givers who live for others, not for themselves. They are altruists and are rarely found in this world. They stand taller in the world. Everybody departs from this world with empty hands. Why should we not give away something to society before we depart? Hence, be a giver, rather than a taker to establish a legacy. Many people leave the earth without a way to remember them. But we do remember great leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., Mother Teresa, and Nelson Mandela because they were givers and lived for others, all making an indelible impression on the world.
16. **Volunteer to Make a Difference:** Society is a collection of individuals. When all individuals think collectively for the greater good, they can make a real difference. Margaret Mead rightly remarked, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has." The people who are altruistic and think of helping and serving others make a mark for themselves beyond their lifetimes. Most high achievers have this type of mindset and engage in philanthropic activities to help society. They realize that nobody takes their wealth with them. Hence, they serve society as best as possible with the resources and abilities they have to make a difference in the lives of others. Nelson Mandela rightly remarked, "What counts in life is not the mere fact that we have lived. It is what difference we have made to the lives of others that will determine the significance of the life we lead."

### **Identify the Problem and Take Action**

Situational depression is a common condition globally. It exists among all individuals at some point of time in their lives. The intensity varies. When it becomes extreme, it is important to explore the underlying issues and take immediate remedial measures. Ensure that depression does not go unbridled and become unmanageable.

The world has become highly complex. Children should be imbued with self-confidence to enable them to be independent and competent. They should be taught how to handle the challenges in life right from childhood to enable them to be confident to overcome challenges. Instead of sharing their wealth with children, parents must provide character and education to their children. They must teach their children to face challenges head-on to become productive and well-adjusted individuals.

Views things positively. Possess a positive, right, and strong attitude to avert suicidal thoughts. Empathize with others rather than regret unpleasant events. Avoid blaming and scapegoating others. Identify problems and address same comprehensively. Situational depression is a state of mind and can be overcome if the situation is understood and remedial measures undertaken immediately. People assume that their problems are insurmountable. But in reality, people don't realize that others have similar problems probably much more significant than their own.<sup>3</sup>

### Life is Great!

“But in the end, one needs more courage to live than to kill himself.” — Albert Camus

You have a right to live in this world. You were born with some purpose and you must work hard to accomplish it to provide meaning to your life. Don't get excited with successes and dejected with failures. Be level-headed to enjoy the peaks and deal with the valleys in your life. Life is great!

---

## References

See the Light in You: Acquire Spiritual Powers to Achieve Mindfulness, Wellness, Happiness, and Success <https://www.amazon.com/See-Light-You-Spiritual-Mindfulness/dp/1949003132>

21 Success Sutras for CEOs: How Global CEOs Overcome Leadership Challenges in Turbulent Times to Build Good to Great Organizations by M.S. Rao Motivational Press (2016). <https://www.amazon.com/21-Success-Sutras-Ceos-Rao/dp/162865290X>  
<https://www.psychologytoday.com/intl/blog/just-listen/201704/breaking-through-suicidal-mind>  
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC533861/>  
[www.health.harvard.edu](http://www.health.harvard.edu)

---

## About the Author



### Professor M.S. Rao, Ph.D. International Leadership Guru

Professor M.S. Rao, Ph.D. is the Father of “Soft Leadership” and the Founder of MSR Leadership Consultants, India. He is an International Leadership Guru with over forty years of experience and the author of over fifty books including the award-winning ‘*See the Light in You*’ URL: <https://www.amazon.com/See-Light-You-Spiritual-Mindfulness/dp/1949003132>. He is a C-Suite advisor and global keynote speaker. He brings a strategic eye and long-range vision given his multifaceted professional experience including military, teaching, training, research, consultancy, and philosophy. He is passionate about serving and

making a difference in the lives of others. He is a regular contributor to Entrepreneur

---

<sup>3</sup> **JVBL Editor's Note:** Nobody's pain should be decried and supporters need to recognize that it is very real to them.

“Did you really want to die?”

“No one commits suicide because they want to die.”

“Then why do they do it?”

“Because they want to stop the pain.”

— Tiffanie DeBartolo, *How to Kill a Rock Star*

Magazine. He trains a new generation of leaders through leadership education and publications. His vision is to build one million students as global leaders by 2030 URL: <http://professormsraovision2030.blogspot.com/2014/12/professor-m-s-raos-vision-2030-one-31.html>. He has the vision to share his knowledge freely with one billion people globally. He advocates gender equality globally (#HeForShe). He was ranked #1 Thought Leader and Influencer in Entrepreneurship and Business Strategy globally by Thinkers360 URL: <https://www.thinkers360.com/top-50-global-thought-leaders-and-influencers-on-entrepreneurship-2022/>. He invests his time in authoring books and blogging on executive education, learning, and leadership. Most of his work is available free of charge on his four blogs including <http://professormsraovision2030.blogspot.com>. He is a prolific author and a dynamic, energetic, and inspirational leadership speaker. He can be reached at [msrlctr@gmail.com](mailto:msrlctr@gmail.com).