

Voices of Life Lecture Series

Lecture #4

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Observation of World Suicide Prevention Day

Date: 10th September, 2025

Online Platform: Zoom

Organised by: Indian Association of Life Skills Education (IALSE)

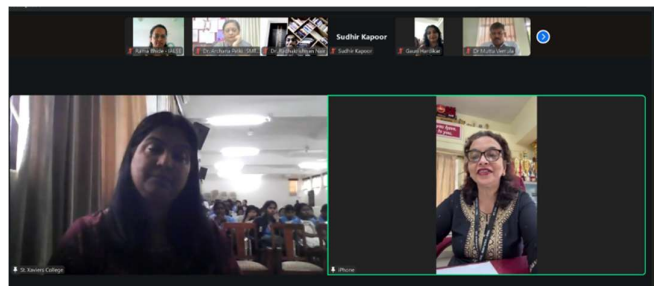
In collaboration with: Smt. Maniben M.P. Shah Women's College of Arts & Commerce (Autonomous), Mumbai & St. Xavier's College, Mapusa, Goa

EVENT REPORT

The Voices of Life Lecture Series is an initiative by the Indian Association of Life Skills Education (IALSE), focusing on equipping individuals with essential life skills and promoting holistic wellbeing. The term 'Voice of Life' embodies a beacon of hope, education and empowerment, aiming to amplify voices of resilience, purpose, and positive change. By undertaking this initiative, IALSE seeks to empower individuals to resist harmful temptations, make positive choices and create a culture of positivity and resilience.

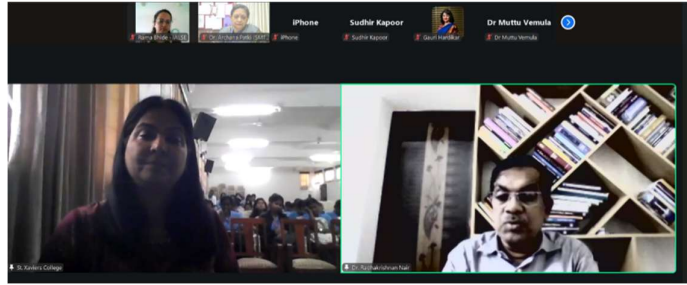
On the occasion of *World Suicide Prevention Day* (10th September 2025), Indian Association of Life Skills Education (IALSE), Chennai, in collaboration with Smt. M.M.P. Shah Women's College of Arts & Commerce, Mumbai, and St. Xavier's College, Goa, organized the fourth lecture of the Voices of Life Lecture Series. The webinar was anchored by Professor Janet Fernandes from St. Xavier's College, Goa and was attended by faculty members, students, psychologists, and professionals committed to mental health awareness. The theme — "*Strengthening Life Skills for Resilience and Suicide Prevention*" — emphasized building inner strength and life skills as tools to combat rising mental health challenges and suicidality.

The session began with a warm welcome from Ms. Ursula Barreto, Officiating Principal of St. Xavier's College, Goa. She highlighted the importance of breaking silence around suicide and moving towards understanding, compassion, and community support. She reiterated the collective commitment of the organizers to empower students with life skills that help them navigate stress and adversity.



Dr. A. Radhakrishnan Nair, President of IALSE, delivered an impactful presidential address. He drew attention to the alarming increase in suicides among students and young adults, citing real-life cases that highlighted the pressures of academic and social expectations.

In his address, he highlighted that suicide prevention is not merely a medical or psychological issue but a collective societal responsibility. He stressed the importance of self-management skills such as emotional regulation, empathy, effective communication, and stress-coping abilities in prevention efforts. He further urged institutions to integrate life skills education into their curriculum to better equip students to face setbacks, failures, and life transitions with resilience. Emphasizing the three R's of prevention — Recognize, Respond, and Refer — he underscored the role of timely and collective action in safeguarding well-being.



The resource person and keynote speaker, Dr. Avinash Desouza, Consultant Psychiatrist and Founder Trustee of the Desouza Foundation (Mumbai), delivered an insightful session combining scientific knowledge, practical strategies, and lived experiences. His presentation was packed with practical insights on understanding and strengthening resilience in today's VUCA (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, and Ambiguous) world, where individuals are increasingly vulnerable to stress and hopelessness. Emphasizing the importance of developing an *Adversity Quotient (AQ)* alongside IQ and EQ, the speaker underscored the need for educational institutions to teach coping strategies for challenges such as failure, rejection, grief, and financial stress.



Dr. Desouza elaborated on the six domains of resilience—*composure, reasoning, health, tenacity, optimism, and collaboration*—as key dimensions that help individuals navigate adversity effectively. The presentation further distinguished between protective factors (such as family support, close friendships, faith, and resilience training) and risk factors (including rejection, exam or workplace stress, bullying, impulsivity, and social isolation).

Highlighting the role of early intervention, Dr. Desouza urged teachers, peers, and parents to identify warning signs like withdrawal, hopelessness, or self-harm, and to ensure timely referral to counsellors or helplines. He emphasised that schools must intentionally build resilience by encouraging healthy exploration, play, and problem-solving. Allowing children to “fall and get up” fosters genuine strength, while open, empathetic conversations about mental health promote lasting well-being. Dr. Desouza concluded by stressing that suicide prevention begins at the grassroots level — in families, schools, and communities — and resilience is the foundation of mental well-being.

The interactive Q&A session allowed participants to raise concerns and seek clarifications and share concerns on aspects of mental health and resilience.

Responding to a query on how educators can identify students who may be silently struggling with suicidal thoughts, Dr. Desouza emphasized the importance of observing behavioural changes such as withdrawal, irritability, decline in academic performance, or expressions of hopelessness. He advised educators to initiate gentle, empathetic conversations and, where required, refer students for professional counselling.

While addressing a query on the role of parents in resilience-building, Dr. Desouza highlighted that harsh criticism must be avoided, as well as overprotection as it may hinder resilience. He shared that open communication, allowing children to face challenges, encouraging independence, balanced discipline, and emotional warmth, all help to build coping capacity in children.

Responding to a concern raised on the stigma around counselling, Dr. Desouza stressed the need to normalize mental health care, encouraging people to seek help just as they would for any physical ailment. He suggested that educators and leaders may model this openness.

When asked for practical strategies that students use during academic stress, Dr. Desouza recommended relaxation techniques, time management, peer support, and physical activity. He also emphasized breaking large tasks into smaller, achievable goals.

Responding to a question on how communities can support individuals after a suicide attempt, Dr. Desouza answered that communities must avoid blame and stigma. Instead, they should provide compassion, consistent support, and connect individuals with professional help. Reintegration into school or work environments should be sensitive and encouraging.

This interactive segment helped participants gain clarity and practical insights into applying resilience strategies in real life.

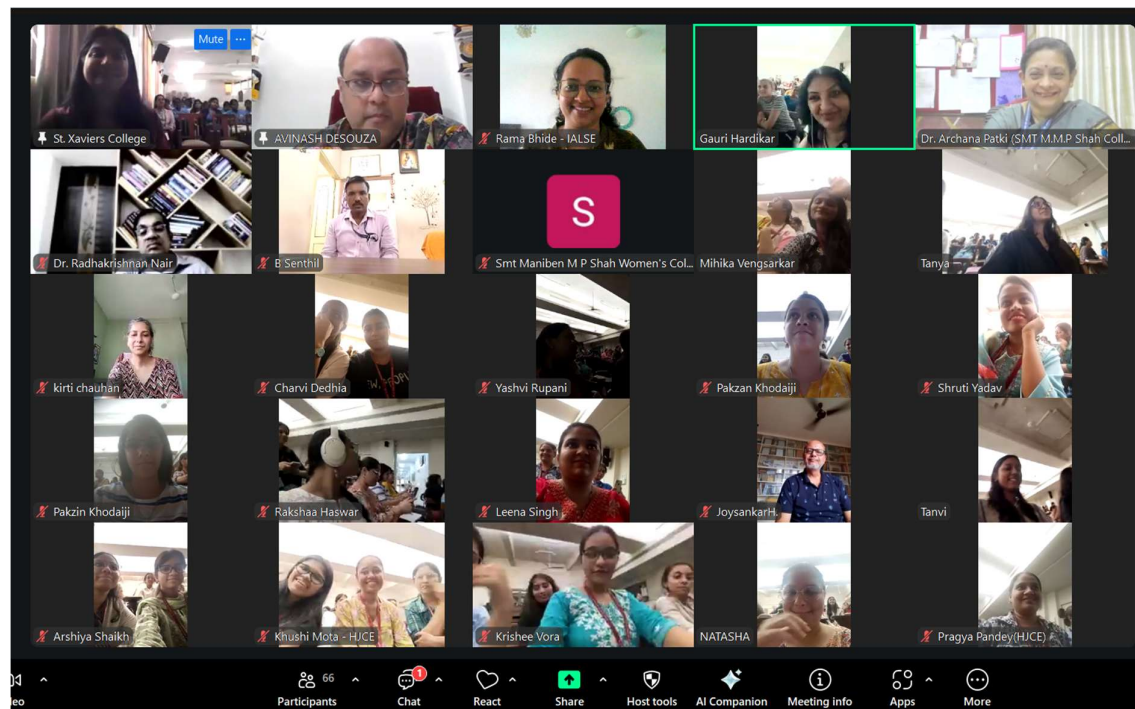
The webinar highlighted that suicide is preventable through awareness, early intervention, and strong community support. It emphasized the importance of building resilience and life skills within schools and families, while also underscoring the need to break the stigma around counselling to encourage timely help-seeking. The discussions further brought out that suicide prevention is a shared responsibility, requiring multi-level involvement from families, educators, institutions, and policy-makers.

Dr. Archana Patki, Principal of Smt. MMP Shah Women's College (Autonomous), delivered the Vote of Thanks. She expressed her gratitude to the distinguished speaker, collaborating institutions, and participants for their valuable contributions to the success of the webinar. She also reaffirmed the college's commitment to continuing initiatives that foster awareness, compassion, and resilience among young people.



The Voices of Life Lecture Series - Lecture #4 - successfully highlighted the urgent need to change the narrative around suicide from silence to compassion. With expert insights from Dr. Avinash Desouza and the strong commitment of partnering institutions, the session empowered participants to take actionable steps towards resilience-building and suicide prevention. The event was a meaningful

reminder that *every life matters* and that suicide can be prevented through education, empathy, and collective responsibility.



Report prepared by:

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