



## Bangkok Post Learning: *Test Yourself*

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### **Talk to us** by Gary Boyle (Photo courtesy of the Samaritans of Thailand)

Read the following story and answer the questions that follow.



A young man looks directly at the video camera. “Amm,” he says, “It’s been a while since you left us. I just want to say you are so meaningful to everyone.” A young woman tells her dad that she’s graduated from university. A man asks his friend to come back so they can drink beer together.

#### GOOD LISTENERS

The people appear in a series of powerful and heartbreaking YouTube videos called ‘Talk to the Dead.’ They’re talking to friends, siblings and parents who committed suicide. They explain how they feel and say that the people who died didn’t realise how important they were and how much they were loved. The videos were produced by the Samaritans of Thailand, an organisation that offers support to people struggling to cope, as part of a campaign to raise awareness on the impact of suicide.

The number of suicides in Thailand is shocking. Trakarn Chensy, the chairman of Samaritans of Thailand, told Bangkok Post Learning that each year there are about 4,000 deaths by suicide in the country. “That’s around 12 suicides per day, so one every two hours. And there are a lot more attempted suicides,” Trakarn added.

Sadly, due to Covid-19, that number is expected to increase. Trakarn explained what the Samaritans are doing to prevent that. “We offer emotional support. We operate a call centre for people who are depressed, sad, lonely or suicidal. We are there as good listeners, to make them feel that they are not alone. Our main mission is suicide prevention.”

Samaritans of Thailand has been operating for 41 years and has a team of 100 volunteers who take turns manning the call centre, offering support in Thai and English. Normally callers can speak to someone instantly, but the lockdown has made that challenging.

“Our service hours are from noon to 10pm everyday. Currently because of Covid-19 our call centre is closed because volunteers cannot come in. Now we’re operating a callback service. Callers can leave their name and phone number and our volunteers

will call them back, usually within a couple of hours,” Trakarn said, adding that once the curfew is lifted, the call centre will reopen.

With the call centre closed, Facebook Messenger has become an important way for people to connect. The volunteers can be more responsive in real time, which is essential in dealing with the huge increase in the number of people reaching out for help.

## COVID CONCERNS

Samaritans of Thailand receives around 10,000 calls per year, which is about 25 calls per day. In the past month, however, including the Messenger chats, they're dealing with 50 or 60 contacts per day. Most of those 50 or 60 people are female. Trakarn explained that females are more likely to talk about their emotional problems. As a result, of the average 12 suicides per day, nine are males.

Normally, the majority of calls to the Samaritans are about relationship problems. Covid-19, of course, has changed that. “About 90% [of callers at the moment] aren't really concerned about their health. It's more about the economic problem. People are finding it difficult to make a living. They don't even know if they'll have enough to eat tomorrow. We think that this problem will continue for quite some time.”

But as the Samaritans cannot give people money, what can they do to help?

“All we can do is give them emotional support. Our advice is to not give up on hope. If we have hope and if we can know that this too shall pass then we have something to drive us forward. That would significantly reduce the suicidal thoughts.”

## WE ARE HERE

The Samaritans also stress that people are not alone. “It's very important for people to know that they are not suffering in isolation. At this time it's very clear that everyone is going through the same hardship. So if we're able to turn this into mutual support, that would really help.”

As well as giving support, the Samaritans of Thailand also needs the support of others. They receive no government funding, instead relying on donations. And while their costs are low - one full-time secretary, plus rent, electricity and phone bills - Trakarn described the organisation as extremely poor and underfunded.

During these strange and difficult times, more and more people are affected by mental health issues. The key to feeling better, Trakarn said, is talking about your problems.

“If you feel that you're stressed or suicidal it's very important that you have someone you trust that you can talk to. Someone who is not judgemental and can accept you. Someone who is not there to tell you what to do, but can give you emotional support. It's very important that you let your feelings and emotions out. If you can't find anyone, remember the Samaritans. We are here and we care.”

**Section 1: Answer the following questions in the space provided.**

1. There is only one 'Talk to the Dead' video on YouTube. True or false? .....
2. What is Trakarn's position at the Samaritans? .....
3. How long has the Samaritans been operating in Thailand? .....
4. How many hours does the call centre normally open per day? .....
5. More males than females commit suicide. True or false? .....
6. Trakarn thinks that people's economic problems will end soon. True or false?  
.....
7. The government gives money to the Samaritans. True or false? .....
8. The most important thing people can do is talk about their problems. True or false?  
.....

**Section 2: Write the noun form of the following words in the space provided.**

9. graduated .....
10. struggling .....
11. prevent .....
12. lonely .....
13. reduce .....

**Section 3: Read the following passage. Then, fill in the blanks with the correct words from the choices given.**

Samaritans is a charity working ...14... Thailand to help people who are struggling to ... 15... with how they're feeling. People contact Samaritans for ...16... of reasons including loneliness, mental health illness or suicidal thoughts. The English service is currently ...17... with a call-back option. It is manned by Thai volunteers who are ...18... in English and who are trained for 4-6 months before they are ...19... to take calls.

- |                |            |               |
|----------------|------------|---------------|
| 14. A. across  | B. over    | C. on         |
| 15. A. have    | B. deal    | C. do         |
| 16. A. many    | B. lots    | C. all        |
| 17. A. offered | B. offers  | C. offering   |
| 18. A. fluency | B. fluid   | C. fluent     |
| 19. A. banned  | B. allowed | C. prohibited |

**Section 4: Find words that match the following definitions.**

20. brothers or sisters .....
21. knowledge that something exists .....
22. people who do a job without getting paid .....
23. a feeling that something good will happen .....
24. amounts of money that people give to a charity .....

For the answers, find the story online at [www.bangkokpost.com/learning](http://www.bangkokpost.com/learning). If you have any questions or feedback, please contact the Editor at [garyb@bangkokpost.co.th](mailto:garyb@bangkokpost.co.th)