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Health Promotion Board
3 Second Hospital Avenue
Singapore 168937
Tel. 6435 3500
Fax. 6438 3848
www.hpb.gov.sg

HEALTH PROMOTION BOARD LAUNCHES NEW MENTAL HEALTH INITIATIVES TO HELP YOUTH BOUNCE BACK STRONGER FROM LIFE'S CHALLENGES

The Youth Support Youth (YSY) Programme offers peer support training while the Bounce Back Stronger Youth Online Kit equips youth with effective coping strategies

Recognising the importance of a strong peer support network for youth, the Health Promotion Board (HPB) is launching Singapore's first local mental health peer support programme developed jointly with three partner organisations and endorsed by the World Federation for Mental Health.

2. The three partners are the Institute of Mental Health's youth-oriented Community Health Assessment Team (CHAT), Silver Ribbon (Singapore) and Samaritans of Singapore (SOS).
3. Open to students from educational institutions and youth leaders from community organisations, the Youth Support Youth (YSY) Programme offers synergised training in the area of mental health, to youth between 17 and 25 years old.
4. At the three-day workshop, participants learn to identify early warning signs, encourage help-seeking behaviours, de-stigmatise mental conditions, develop peer support skills and establish a supportive environment for themselves and their peers.
5. Upon completion of the training programme, the youth will work with their school counsellors or Student Affairs Officers to provide systematic support to their peers in their various schools and communities.

Bounce Back Stronger Youth Online Kit

6. HPB is also launching a brand new online portal to provide youth 13 years and above with the knowledge and skills to deal with life's adversities, so that they can bounce back from challenges stronger than before.

7. Part of breathe.sg, an existing youth-centric online portal, the Bounce Back Stronger Youth Online Kit is designed to equip youth with coping techniques and peer support tools.

8. Users of the Bounce Back Stronger online portal can find:

- Tips and strategies to enhance their psychological resilience and wellbeing.
- Inspiring stories and videos featuring peers who have overcome setbacks and become stronger in the process.
- A checklist that provides a general indication of the current range of coping strengths, so that they may discover opportunities to improve it.

9. A key area the kit places emphasis on is resilience, which is the capacity to cope with stress, overcome the odds and recover from life's challenges. By increasing resilience, young people are also able to build self-esteem and enhance their social connectedness.

10. HPB's School Health Surveys in 2006 and 2009 revealed that resilience is an increasingly important issue among young Singaporeans. More and more youth are beginning to understand that one's perception and attitude in the face of difficult events can influence the outcome of those events.

11. "Adolescence is a potentially turbulent period when teenagers go through both physical and emotional changes. They face a lot of pressure to perform well and to keep up with today's fast-paced society. The Youth Support Youth Programme and the Bounce Back Stronger Youth Online Kit will help our teenagers acquire the support and resources they need to build mental resilience – to bend instead of break and to transform negative events into positive, life-enhancing experiences," said Dr Amy Khor, Minister of State for Health.

12. "Everybody goes through disappointments and tough times. Since many young people spend a lot of time online, HPB hopes to provide timely intervention for youth dealing with difficult situations, yet don't want to seek help through the traditional channels such as face-to-face counselling. By launching the Bounce Back Stronger Youth Online Kit, HPB wants to ignite and

inspire young Singaporeans. The checklist, designed to provide a gauge of current coping strengths, is a one-stop platform for youth to discover opportunities to improve their resilience. The other features and resources found at the portal are meant to offer inspiration, guidance and peer-to-peer support. In addition, HPB is also launching the Youth Support Youth Programme, which is the first local mental health programme that is endorsed by the World Federation for Mental Health,” said Mr Ang Hak Seng, Chief Executive, HPB.

13. “Besides teaching concepts, theories and skills, the Youth Support Youth Programme offers interactive activities such as role-playing, group discussions and live testimonials. I went away with more compassion for youth unable to cope with life’s pressures as well as a greater understanding of the kind of care and support they need to pull through,” said Lim Jing Heng, second-year student, Temasek Polytechnic.

14. Together with the 183 Youth Mental Health Ambassadors who recently graduated on HPB’s Health Ambassador Day, YSY-trained youth will work towards building the positive mental wellbeing of their peers. By 2013, HPB and its partners aim to train at least 250 youth under the YSY programme.

Showcase of peer-led projects

15. In conjunction with the launch of the Bounce Back Stronger Youth Online Kit, HPB will be showcasing students’ projects at the event, to inspire other students to start similar mental health projects.

16. These projects include the Happiness Revolution project, a social movement by students from the Nanyang Technological University (NTU) Wee Kim Wee School of Communication and Information. The students hope to communicate to Singaporean youth to adopt positive activities to enhance one’s mental wellbeing. ITE College West’s Student Care Union (SCU) Dramatics will present a therapy-based drama workshop that will give youth a platform to raise social and personal issues.

Mental Wellbeing Seminar

17. Resilience is one of the five domains identified in HPB’s study on how Singaporeans define mental wellbeing. Resilience is an important capacity to have and to build, as it empowers one to face the challenges that life may bring, such as those arising from an uncertain economic outlook or when one experiences loss.

18. In line with spreading the word on resilience, HPB held a mental wellbeing seminar on 19 February, which saw celebrities Chew Chor Meng, Bryan Wong and Catherine Sng sharing their personal stories about how they overcame adversities. The public seminar, which attracted close to 500 people, aimed to encourage attendees to learn more about resilience and how one can take action to transform seemingly negative events into positive, life-enriching experiences.

19. The Mental Wellbeing scale is available online via the following link – <http://www.hpb.gov.sg/mentalwellbeing/scale/>. The public can also attend a series of talks on resilience and other related topics at various community libraries.

Annex 1 Fact Sheet – Youth Support Youth Programme

Annex 2 Partners' Quotes

Issued by Health Promotion Board

YOUTH SUPPORT YOUTH PROGRAMME

The Youth Support Youth (YSY) Programme is a customised, holistic mental health training to empower youth between 17-25 years to provide appropriate care and support to peers in their community.

PURPOSE OF COLLABORATION

The purpose of the collaboration is to synergise existing training efforts for youth by efficiently utilising available resources, raising greater awareness on mental health and wellbeing of youth and providing them the skills to lend appropriate support to their peers in their community.

SKILLS GAINED THROUGH PROGRAMME:

1. Identify early warning signs in their friends and encourage help-seeking behaviour
2. De-stigmatise mental health and promote early treatment
3. Develop peer support skills
4. Establish a supportive environment for themselves and their peers

TARGET AUDIENCE

Youths 17-25 years

TRAINING WORKSHOP

3-day workshop (9am – 6pm)

Classroom size of 18 – 25 people

CONTENT OF WORKSHOP

HPB's Role:

- Overview of mental health and wellbeing of youth and importance of peer support
- Discussion on common youth issues and challenges
- Learning and application of peer support skills – listening, providing empathy and asking appropriate questions (which is applicable to subsequent modules by IMH, SOS and SRS)
- General coping strategies

CHAT's Role:

- Identify truths to common myths of mental illness
- Explain the common mental illnesses and identify their warning signs and symptoms
- State the importance of getting help when needed
- Identify avenues of help for a distressed friend
- How to encourage and engage a distressed friend to seek help

SOS's Role:

- Suicide prevention and self-harm
- Application of peer support skills

Silver Ribbon's Role:

- Sharing by recovered patient on personal experience and how youth can help their peers with mental health problems
- Promotion of positive mental health advocacy
- Summary and conclusion of the messages from all the modules

TIMELINE

- Started in October 2011
- Schools who have completed the programme:
Temasek Polytechnic, Republic Polytechnic & Nanyang Technological University
- The YSY Programme will also be rolled out to more tertiary institutions as well as community organisations with youth wings such as the mosques, MENDAKI and People's Association Youth Executive Committee.

Partners' Quotes

Community Health Assessment Team (CHAT)

“During the focus groups we conducted with youth, we found that they usually turn to their friends for support. In addition to being a collaboration among the four partners, YSY is an innovative, first of its kind programme to train youth to provide peer support and to better understand mental health issues that are relevant to them.”

-Dr Swapna Verma, Project Director, Community Health Assistant Team

Silver Ribbon (Singapore)

“Besides improving their mental health literacy, participants learn about the importance of advocacy for positive mental health through YSY and explore ways to combat mental health & encourage early treatment during group discussion.”

-Dr Lee Cheng, President, Silver Ribbon (Singapore)

“World Federation for Mental Health is pleased to support this wonderful training programme and applaud the collaborative effort of those involved organisations in reaching out to the youth.”

-Ms Porsche Poh, Regional Vice President (Asia Pacific), World Federation for Mental Health

Samaritans of Singapore (SOS)

“Peers can relate to peers better. With the collaborative effort of all the partners involved, a more holistic training package has been designed for the youth to help each other.”

-Christine Wong, Executive Director, Samaritans of Singapore

ITE College West

“ITE College West is pleased to support the Health Promotion Board in launching this year’s Youth Resilience Campaign. In today’s globalised environment, our youths are constantly subjected to the challenges of the changing world. While these challenges will present new opportunities, it is important that our youths assimilate the right values to adapt to the constant changes. This campaign is in line with our emphasis to prepare our work-ready and world-ready graduates for Singapore.”

- Dr Yek Tiew Ming, Principal, ITE College West