

SINGAPORE

Positive involvement of parents, schools can help youth mental health



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One month ago, two girls aged 15 and 16 were found dead at the foot of a Housing Board block.

The police classified it as a case of unnatural death and said no foul play was suspected.

According to reports, they were close friends and fell from the block at the same time.

Mental health awareness is more important today than ever before.

An online survey conducted by non-profit organisation Silver Ribbon Singapore in April last year involving 577 young people showed that one in four experienced low mood, loneliness and anxiety amid the Covid-19 pandemic.

According to Mr Asher Low, executive director of Limitless, a non-profit organisation that provides anonymous counselling services for young people, recovery is easier when parents are positively involved.

Clinical psychologist Carol Balhetchet agreed.

She said: "The youth will be more willing to share with their family if they have a stronger relationship with them that is built upon unconditional love, trust and acceptance."

Parents should validate their pain. And even if a child is not suffering from mental illness, parents should still provide an avenue for them to share their woes. Being attentive to their child's behaviour and asking about their mental health helps them open up.

Outside of the home, the youth spend most of their time in school. Educators can help identify symptoms and encouraging them to seek help.

Last year, private education institution PSB Academy was a recipient of the inaugural Silver Ribbon Mental Health Awards given by Silver Ribbon, which recognises schools for their efforts in promoting mental health awareness on campus.

Mr Derrick Chang, chief executive officer of PSB Academy, told TNP: "Keeping channels of communications open between parents and institutions helps keep an eye on children who have exhibited symptoms of mental health illnesses."

This means the child can get early treatment when needed.

Mr Chang suggests incorporating mental health modules as part of the school curriculum, which "seek to promote healthy individual social and emotional competencies and share coping mechanisms", and developing mental health literacy workshops for parents to attend.