

Operation Santa Claus

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Hong Kong project strives to improve mental health after study reveals one in 10 have suspected depression in city

- Two groups offer training and resources to foster greater understanding of psychological conditions
- Scheme part-funded by Operation Santa Claus encourages youngsters to open up about their experiences and seek help



Eddie Lee + FOLLOW

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Charlotte Chan, Cecilia Yiu, Cindy Ng and Vivien So, from the Coolminds project, which is running a scheme to help young people get the mental health support they need. Photo: Tory Ho

Two groups are leading a project aiming to improve the mental health of young people in Hong Kong.

To help teenagers, they have developed a programme offering training, information sharing, online resources and destigmatisation for young Hongkongers and adults around them.

Under their "Coolminds" project, Mind HK and KELY Support Group also want to give mental health information to teachers, parents and pupils to promote literacy on the issue.



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The scheme is funded by [Operation Santa Claus](#), the annual charity fundraiser organised by the *South China Morning Post* and public broadcaster RTHK. Global financial services firm Morgan Stanley also supports it.

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A recent study by the University of Hong Kong found that [nearly one in 10 Hongkongers had suspected depression](#).

Coolminds project manager Cecilia Yiu said the programme had a goal of helping youths and those around them understand psychological conditions.

“We want to provide strategies for maintaining mental health,” she said.



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The Coolminds team says the training and resources offered will be at low or highly-subsidised cost. Photo: Tory Ho

Their team will provide resources such as a mobile application featuring bilingual guides and fact sheets, and mental health stories sharing.

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Cindy Ng Tsz-man, a programme manager at KELY, noted that stigma had prevented many young people from seeking the help they needed.

“We hope to give a platform to young people for them to talk about their experiences,” she said, adding that youngsters could help empower their peers who required support.

Foundation teams with local care providers to help



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Coolminds will leverage proven international best practice, from partnerships established with global mental health organisations, including the Black Dog Institute in Australia, and Time to Change in Britain.

The material is adapted and localised for Hong Kong, and then translated into Chinese to disseminate across the population.

Charlotte Chan, who helped prepare the content, said the team wanted to make sure young people would benefit from the reading material.

“We want to make them feel that the material is not written in a very faraway place,” she said.

“This is something that has been adapted and that can relate to our lives.”

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Coolminds plans to create proprietary content to complement the adapted mental health material. The team are considering writing on topics including stress, social media, transitions, anxiety and depression.

Its training and resources will be offered at low or highly-subsidised cost to maximise potential beneficiaries.

Beneficiaries will be students and young people, including those who have developed or are at risk of developing mental health problems.

Secondary beneficiaries will be teachers who will be equipped to improve their ability to identify, help and support at risk students, as well as parents of the young people.

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Vivien So Wai-lam, the coordinator of the Coolminds project, said her team were recruiting new members to their workshops and other activities.

She said students, parents or teachers might sign up for their training workshops through emailing the team at hello@coolmindshk.com.

The Coolminds team will support the development of the Youth Summit, which will take place on the third day of Mind HK’s Hong Kong Mental Health Conference planned for 2020.

CONVERSATIONS



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