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Hong Kong NGOs launch mental health resource Coolminds

- ← Mind HK and KELY Support Group join together to offer more resources for teens, giving tips for students, parents and teachers
- ← Youth Ambassadors work with young people to help remove the stigma of mental health problems

by Rhea Mogul | Published: 13:03pm, 18 Jun, 2020



Rhea Mogul

Rhea is a Hong Kong-based journalist interested in gender issues and minority rights, whose work has appeared in a number of publications across Asia. She is also on the 2019 Diversity List, a list of ethnic

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Coolminds youth ambassadors help raise awareness about mental health issues for teenagers in Hong Kong.

Two local NGOs have joined hands to create a mental health resource for young people in Hong Kong.

A joint venture between Mind HK and KELY Support Group, **Coolminds** is a website dedicated to raising awareness, creating a safe space and offering tips about mental health for students, parents and teachers in Hong Kong.

"Pressures are increasing for young people, and we are also seeing an increase in mental health problems, but there's a low level of awareness," says Hanna Reidy, CEO of Mind HK. "We want to educate young people from a relatively early age about mental health, and how they can support one another, as well as adults around them."

KELY Support Group's core mission is to equip young people with the knowledge and opportunities to support each other; and Mind HK's vision is for everyone in Hong Kong to receive recognition, support and respect in dealing with mental health problems. Their team will train students, teachers and parents to recognise the signs and symptoms of mental health

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problems in young people.

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"We are using a school-based approach, which means we train young people and adults," says Sky Siu, executive director of KELY Support Group. "One of the core aspects of the Coolminds project is to provide resources. The website is a key component of the resource."

According to statistics from Mind HK, 51.5 per cent of secondary school students show symptoms of depression, and 25 per cent demonstrate clinically high levels of anxiety. Mind HK says that targeting at-risk youth is the most effective way to prevent mental health problems, as 75 per cent of mental illnesses develop before the age of 24.

As a result, Coolminds is endeavouring to make information more "accessible and attractive" to young people.

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"Rather than have an adult-based approach, where we are telling them how to feel and what to do, our content is very much generated by young people and for young people," says Reidy.

Siu agrees: "For young people to hear from their peers in a way that makes mental health relatable really reduces the sense of isolation. We want them to know that they are not alone."

Coolminds offers students, parents and educators free webinars and workshops with their Youth Ambassadors, a group of students who are passionate and dedicated to removing the stigma surrounding mental health in Hong Kong.

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Audrey Yung, 17, from Canadian International School, is a Youth Ambassador for Coolminds. She says her role is to improve understanding of mental health related topics among teenagers in Hong Kong.

"I believe students need a safe space to voice their fears, worries and struggles," says Audrey. "Living in such a competitive and fast-changing world, not only do students have to carry a heavy workload from school but also they have to bear parental as well as societal pressure to be the perfect, all-rounded individual with high achievements."

Audrey says that mental health is not commonly addressed by teenagers in Hong Kong.

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"In local schools especially, well-being is rarely addressed. Most students do not have the chance to learn about their own mental health as well as illnesses that could arise from poor mental well-being," says Audrey. "False

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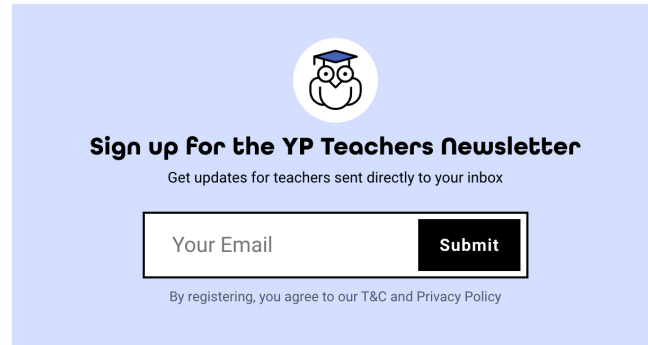
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assumptions might arise with the lack of understanding and this might cause those who are experiencing mental illness to feel even worse.”

Michelle Chau, 19, from The University of Hong Kong, is another Youth Ambassador for Coolminds. Her role is to “detach the stigma and promote positivity” through social media and volunteering opportunities.

“Knowledge gaps lead to stigma and discrimination,” says Michelle. “That’s why we need to debunk the myths, disseminate accurate information and make such information accessible to everyone.”



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by **Dannie Aildasani** | Published: 14:00pm, 3 Jul, 2022 ▼



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