

MEDIA RELEASE

National mental well-being campaign, “It’s OKAY to Reach Out”, launched to raise awareness on the importance of mental well-being

The campaign aims to normalise the topic of mental health and well-being, generate greater understanding and awareness, and encourage Singaporeans to reach out for support

Singapore, [30 October 2021] – The Health Promotion Board (HPB) kicked off its inaugural national mental well-being campaign, “It’s OKAY to Reach Out”, at a virtual dialogue session on mental health and mental well-being that was held today with Senior Minister of State (Health) and Chair of the Interagency Taskforce on Mental Health and Well-being, Dr Janil Puthuchery.

The dialogue session, which was watched by over 6,000 viewers, saw Dr Puthuchery as well as subject matter experts discuss topics including the importance of mental well-being, the benefits of reaching out for support as well as efforts by the government to help Singaporeans improve their mental well-being.

The session also covered the launch of the “It’s OKAY to Reach Out” campaign, set to run from October 2021 to March 2022, which aims to normalise the topic of mental health and mental well-being, generate awareness and understanding of mental well-being and encourage Singaporeans to reach out for support when they feel overwhelmed.

According to the National Population Health Survey 2019¹, which was conducted before the COVID-19 situation:

- Mental well-being among Singaporeans aged 18 to 74 years old has declined. The mean mental wellbeing score, as measured by the Singapore Mental Wellbeing Scale on a scale of 1 to 9, has decreased from 7.4 in 2017² to 7.28 in 2019.
- Only 1 in 2 (47.8%) Singaporeans are willing to seek help from a professional when they are constantly unable to cope with stress.
- Although 3 in 4 (74.5%) Singaporeans reported that they are willing to seek help from informal support networks such as from a friend, relative, colleague, religious leader, or teacher when constantly unable to cope with stress, more can be done to encourage individuals to come forward to seek help.

A survey that HPB conducted in 2021³ also found that 52% of Singaporeans viewed mental health as being all about mental illnesses, while another 41% of Singaporeans felt that their mental well-being was not as important as their physical health. These are some of the

¹ Ministry of Health and Health Promotion Board, Singapore. The National Population Health Survey 2019 tracks health and risk factors, as well as lifestyle practices of Singapore residents, was conducted from August 2018 to July 2019 by HPB.

² Ministry of Health and Health Promotion Board, Singapore. National Population Health Survey 2017. The National Population Health Survey 2017 tracks health and risk factors, as well as lifestyle practices of Singapore residents, was conducted from November 2016 to May 2017 by HPB.

³ The “Hi” #JustCheckingIn campaign evaluation report was conducted In March 2021 by HPB.

perceptions that the mental well-being campaign aims to address, so that Singaporeans can better understand what mental well-being fully encompasses and how it can directly impact one's overall health.

In the current COVID-19 environment, this is especially relevant as there are greater unknowns and uncertainties in people's daily lives, from having to cope with changes to previous ways of lifestyle routines, including possible feelings of social isolation for some, to concerns about keeping safe and free from infection.

Dr Janil Puthuchery said, "We recognise that COVID-19 has brought mental health to the fore. We need to raise the awareness and understanding of mental well-being, and further our efforts to strengthen mental health resilience in our population. Mental health is an important part of our overall health, just like physical health. With the launch of HPB's mental well-being campaign to encourage Singaporeans to reach out, we also want to highlight the importance of support networks. When there is an inclusive and supportive environment, individuals can feel encouraged to reach out for support when they feel overwhelmed or to offer support to those in need, When we come together, we can play a part in developing a stronger mental health ecosystem in Singapore."

Ms Joanna Chan, Group Director, Programmes, HPB said, "Living healthily encompasses all aspects of our health - both mental and physical well-being. The "It's OKAY to Reach Out" campaign aims to normalise conversations around mental well-being and its importance to healthy living. It is important to help everyone understand how to observe our emotions and cope with stress and challenges, how to seek support when needed, and how to reach out to those in need of support. It is also important to get Singaporeans to talk openly about mental health as they do for physical health. This awareness building will be supported by our HPB mental well-being programmes to equip Singaporeans with skills, information and resources to cope and reach out for support."

As part of the campaign, there will be a series of engagement initiatives such as community dialogue sessions on various radio talk shows as well as in all the 17 Group Representation Constituency (GRCs) hosted together with community partners, activity-based workshops and educational webinars for Singaporeans to learn more about mental well-being, how to reach out to seek support, and support those they care for, as well as equip themselves with practical coping tips through fun and experiential activities.

These programmes will be rolled out progressively from November 2021.

One-stop Online Portal for National Mental Health Resources

To complement the "It's OKAY to Reach Out" campaign, HPB will also be rolling out MindSG, a one-stop online portal for national mental health and well-being resources, to provide Singaporeans with information on mental health and well-being. MindSG is developed in collaboration with whole-of-government partners and pulls together content curated by mental health experts, such as doctors and psychologists, offering Singaporeans credible, reliable and convenient access to content and resources that can support them in looking after their own mental well-being as well as those of family and friends around them.

The portal is one of the recommendations of the COVID-19 Mental Wellness Taskforce which was announced earlier in August 2021. It aims to address the challenge of Singaporeans having to navigate numerous online resources on mental health and well-being.

A pilot version of the portal will be available in late November at www.MindSG.gov.sg. This pilot phase of roll-out, which is targeted at adults, focuses on information pertaining to self-care and mental well-being topics on sleeping well and managing our emotions and stress. The portal will be enhanced progressively to introduce more topics and features for the public.

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About the Health Promotion Board

The Health Promotion Board (HPB) was established as a statutory board under the Ministry of Health, Singapore, in 2001 with the vision of building “A Nation of Healthy People”. HPB aims to empower Singaporeans to attain optimal health, increase the quality and years of healthy life and prevent illness, disability and premature death. As the key agency overseeing national health promotion and disease prevention programmes, HPB spearheads health education, promotion and prevention programmes as well as creates a health-supportive environment in Singapore. It develops and organises health promotion and disease prevention programmes, reaching out to the healthy, the at-risk and the unhealthy at all stages of life – children, youths, adults and older Singapore residents. Its health promotion initiatives cover nutrition, physical activity, mental well-being, health screening, tobacco control and communicable disease education.

More information can be found at www.hpb.gov.sg.