

**'MIND Your Health' Webinar**  
**Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**

**1. With the growing importance of Mental Wellness, will there be any actions/steps taken to improve mental wellness in the schools or workplace?**

There is a Covid-19 MOM workgroup looking to improving workplace mental health. One way that is being explored will be to provide training and education for staff in hope that there is raised awareness on mental health. (<https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/jobs/new-tripartite-advisory-sets-out-steps-to-tackle-mental-health-needs-of-workers>). Employers will be encouraged to do so moving forward.

MOE is also looking at increasing the mental health literacy of school-going children. Relevant topics regarding mental health, resilience and mental illnesses will be incorporated into the curriculum.

**2. What should I do if I have a negative outlook in life and the feeling doesn't go away? How should I manage these negative thoughts especially during challenging times?**

Having negative and pessimistic outlook in life may be a symptom of depression. You may want to consider consulting a mental health provider, such as a counsellor to have a chat about the issues in your life. He/she may be able to help you find the roots of these as well.

If you need to talk to someone about it, please approach your nearest Family Service Centre, or Non-Government Organization (NGO) for counselling. Exploring those issues with a trained counsellor can sometimes bring new perspectives and help relieve stress.

**3. Are there any possible underlying health issues with me if I am unable to do the deep breathing exercises? What are some suggestions for people who have difficulties doing the deep breathing exercise?**

This usually happens when your breathing is not paced (e.g. you might be breathing out too much, too quickly). Noticing how you are breathing is one way of noticing whether your body is tense (and thus stressed).

One suggestion would be to breathe in and out using your nose (instead of your mouth). Another would be to consciously slow the pace of your out-breath. There are mobile application and videos online that be used to aid practice as well. Deep breathing exercises will come more naturally with practice. Do continue practicing them at home. The main aim will be to slow down your breathing and take deep breaths. The relaxation happens in the out-breath, and not the in-breath. Your hands should move with your chest and abdomen if you inhale deeply. Find a timing and counting method that works well for you.

**4. Can unpleasant childhood experiences or abuse result in mental illness? If yes, what type of mental illnesses could be caused by it?**

Adverse childhood experience is a major risk factor for the development of psychological and behavioural problems not only during childhood, but also in adulthood as well.

There are studies that have shown that adults who experienced child abuse do have higher rates of depression, suicidality, anxiety disorders and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). They may also be more likely to develop alcohol-use disorders.

**5. Is Adult Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) a mental disorder?**

Children with ADHD grow up into adulthood and continue to suffer from symptoms such as inattention, impulsiveness and restlessness. Sometimes, adults were never diagnosed with ADHD as a child because the symptoms were not recognised by their caregivers, teachers etc then.

**6. Is Anger Management considered a type of mental illness? How can we better manage them?**

Anger management problems may be considered a mental illness if it frequently leads to problems with social relationships, legal troubles and occupational function. In such cases, counselling may be needed to help understand the reasons behind the anger and ways to better cope with negative emotions.

**7. How can I support someone who is suffering from Dysthymia or Depression? Can Dysthymia or Depression be cured completely?**

Dysthymia can be managed with medication and/or therapy. There are cases where people can recover from dysthymia. Continued support from family and friends, proper activities and lifestyle balance can also promote recovery.

**8. How can I help someone who is suffering from the side effects of medication, e.g. Emotional and behavioural issue?**

You should bring up the behavioural and emotional issues with his/her doctor, sometimes a review of his/her medication doses or referral to a psychiatrist may be indicated.

**9. How can I help someone who is suffering from mental illness, but refuses help from others? Is there a Support Group for individual(s) who are mentally challenged and with various health issues, but refuses to seek professional help?**

It would be important to assess if the person is able to handle their own personal care and matters on a day to day. If they are struggling, referring them to the community social worker in the family service centre may be a good next step. Continue to try to build that relationship with them and let them know you are there for them.

If someone is currently resisting medical treatment from doctors or hospitals, you can encourage counselling. Family Service Centres and Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) like Singapore Association of Mental Health (SAMH) /Silver Ribbon/ Clarity Singapore do provide counselling. Do check out these resources if you wish to speak to someone.

**10. Many people are afraid of seeking professional help for the fear that there could be a “record” which may affect their career or insurance application(s). Can these “records” be released upon the employer’s or the insurance company’s request?**

Currently this is an issue that the government and policy makers are looking into. You can use your Medisave to pay for certain common mental health issues. Medical records at IMH are confidential and will not be released to your company without your consent for any reasons.

**11. What can we do for someone who requires immediate attention but there is still a long wait before for his/her next referral appointment?**

You can approach the nearest Family Service Centre as well as organisations like Singapore Association of Mental Health (SAMH) for counselling. In case of emergencies, you can also call SOS or the IMH Mental Health Hotline, or present to the IMH Emergency Room, if needed.

**12. What can we do to support someone who is suffering from mental illness? How do we know when to seek professional help?**

If the symptoms you are experiencing starts to affect your functioning, whether at work, at home, in school or in your social life, it is probably time to see a mental health professional. You can see a counsellor or a psychologist. There are also general practitioners and polyclinic doctors who are trained to treat and manage mild to moderate conditions.

You may be able to find a service provider at the AIC care locator website found in the Resource Material.

**13. How can I help someone who is hesitating to seek help and/or has suicidal thoughts?**

The person could be suffering from a depressive or anxiety disorder. He/she should seek mental health assessment and support. You can find providers from the AIC website (<https://www.aic.sg/care-services/e-care-locator>). The list includes counsellors, psychologist, primary care doctors who can help with the initial assessment.

If there are concerns about risk of suicide, you can call SOS or the IMH Hotline.

If there are urgent concerns, you can bring the person to the A&E of general hospitals or the Institute of Mental Health.

It can be difficult for people to seek help when they know they may need to recount stressful events in the past. This may occur especially with Grief and Traumatic events. Sometimes writing it down or bringing someone you trust along for the initial session helps this process. Additionally, most counsellors understand it can be difficult to share everything at the initial assessment, as trust is established more information can be shared with time.

**14. What should I do if I feel “burnt out” from helping someone who keeps approaching me for help?**

Doing things like deep breathing, taking a short break or listening to music may help you cope with the increased stress you may face. You may need to tell the person that you are not able to help them further and that they may need to seek professional help. If he or she continues to call you, it may be important to be firm and tell them that you may not always be able to pick up their calls and to set rules and boundaries for this.

**15. What would be the consequences of enduring stress for a long period of time?**

If one starts losing interest in life activities, it may be a sign that the burnout is moderate - severe. In such cases, seeking mental health counselling may be pertinent.

**16. How can I help if someone with mental issue turns aggressive?**

If people turn aggressive, and you are unable to calm them down, give them space and monitor for dangerous behaviours. In the event it occurs frequently, professional help may be recommended. The police and ambulance services may need to be called in if there is a threat to life emergently.

**17. What are some symptoms of mental illness? Can mental illness be cured completely?**

We may suspect a person has a mental illness if their behaviour and symptoms start to affect their ability to function well in their daily lives. In such cases, recommending professional help may be indicated. Seeking help from a family practitioner, polyclinic or community-based counsellor may be a good start.

**18. Is there any underlying concern if I experience fear and negativity without any reason/triggers?**

If you need to talk to someone about it, please approach your nearest Family Service Centre, or Non-Government Organization (NGO) for counselling. Exploring those issues with a trained counsellor can sometimes bring new perspectives and help relieve stress.

**19. Is it normal to experience stomach discomfort and/or diarrhoea under stressful situations? Is there any cure for it?**

Having gastrointestinal symptoms like abdominal pain, diarrhoea may represent symptoms of an anxiety or depressive disorder. Firstly, it would be important to have them medically cleared by a doctor to make sure that there is nothing physically wrong with them first, before attributing it to being “stress-related”.

The doctor (GP, polyclinic doctor or paediatrician) can also assess whether there is an anxiety or depressive issue and make the relevant referral if necessary, for further assessment.

You can also reach out to the school counsellor to have a chat with them and assess what can be stressing or bothering them.

**20. What is the difference between Bipolar and Unipolar Depression? Besides medication, how can the individual be treated effectively?**

The main difference is that patients with bipolar disorder also suffer from periods of “high” mood, whereas those with “unipolar” depression do not.

Apart from medication, there are also established psychological treatments such as cognitive behavioural therapy that can help patients with depression. If you are currently engaged with a mental health provider, do discuss with him/her what therapies would work best for you.

**21. What are some ways to better manage stressors from work and to develop positive thinking?**

We recommend that if there are other factors affecting your ability to cope at work (e.g. finances, family troubles, personal issues), you may want to consider approaching a Family Service Centre or Non-Government Organization (NGO) for counselling. It may be worthwhile speaking to a counsellor who can evaluate your stress management and work with you on existing challenges you may have. Exploring those issues with a trained counsellor can sometimes bring new perspectives and help relieve stress. Where possible and with your consent, counsellors can sometimes liaise with the workplace on how better to support you.

**22. Are there any supplements that could help with managing stress?**

There is currently little scientific evidence that vitamins/supplements help in stress control. However, they do help in our body's immune system and general health, so it is good to have if you wish to take them.