

Mental health warning signs

The Philippine Star · 10 Jul 2018 · C6 · MONS ROMULO

Mental illness is one subject people don't usually talk about mainly because of the social stigma attached to it.



But cases of depression are reportedly increasing all over the world, including the Philippines, especially among the youth. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates 3.3 million Filipinos are living in depression, which more often than not eventually leads to suicide.

We have read of celebrities telling us how they have struggled with depression more now after well-loved personalities Robin Williams, Alexander McQueen, Kate Spade and Anthony Bourdain died by suicide. We laud President Rodrigo Roa Duterte's signing of Republic Act No 11036 or the Mental Health Law that would secure, among others, the rights and welfare of persons with mental health needs. Hopefully now that it has been signed into a law, everyone will be more open to talk about depression. Antipolo City Rep. Chiqui Roa Puno, author and principal sponsor of the bill in Congress shares, "Mental health is not merely the absence of a psychological illness. It is the ability to function properly and perform daily tasks effectively; the capacity to make sound decisions; to have meaningful relationships with others; and to be able to fulfill one's potential. Just as we need to be physically healthy, it is important that we also stay mentally sound. Overall health is, after all, a guaranteed right in our constitution." The Philippine Mental Health Law stands to benefit all Filipinos. We may not suffer major mental health issues ourselves, but surely, we know someone who does. We, as a society, are also prone to mental health problems that are inherent in poverty, major disasters and calamities, and OFW situations. Often, as in depression, we unintentionally contribute to the problem because we don't know any better. As such, a better understanding of the issues that surround mental health will allow us to take part in achieving an overall improved state of well-being in our country. If you think you or someone else might be battling with depression, here are some of the signs to look out for according to the World Health Organization:

Persistent sadness or irritability.

Everything gets in your nerves. You can't control negative thoughts or feelings of emptiness. You may be crying for no apparent reason.

Loss of interest in activities one normally enjoys and an inability to carry out daily activities. It is when you cease to care about former hobbies, pastimes, or social activities. You've lost your ability to feel joy and pleasure. In some cases, these include as neglecting responsibilities or one's physical grooming.

Loss of energy. Feeling sluggish or tired all the time. Even small tasks are physically draining. Change in appetite. Eating too much or too little. A gain or loss of more than five percent of your body weight in one month is one of the warning signs of depression, according to health experts. Changes in sleeping patterns. Waking up too early in the morning, insomnia, or sleeping too much can all be symptoms of depression. Anxiety. Feeling restless or anxious.

7 Reduced concentration. Trouble focusing or remembering things.

Indecisiveness. Difficulty making decisions even about small things like when to get out of bed or when to take a bath.

Feelings of worthlessness, guilt or hopelessness.

Pervasive thoughts of being a failure or feeling bad for having let your family down. You may become overly self-critical and feel that nothing will ever get better.

Thoughts of self-harm or suicide. Thoughts of harming yourself or thinking that you are better off dead are serious symptoms of depression.

(If you are, or someone else is contemplating suicide, get help immediately. Call Hopeline at 804-4673 or 0917-5584673.)