- Mental health

How to avoid depression, suicide

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Second of two parts

IN the 2017 World Health Organization global school-based survey report, there were close to 800,000 suicides reported. And this does not include suicide cases that have never been reported.

In the Philippines, there has been a reported increase in young Filipinos ending their lives, according to UCAnews, a Catholic news source. In 2016, 237 children aged 10 to 14 committed suicide. It's an alarming rate especially since the country's median age is 23.4. Also, suicide by countries in 2018 showed the Philippines with 3.2 suicide per 100,000 ranking at 155 out of 176 countries.

Stress and depression effects

It should have been a fresh start for Melanie Moreno as a secondary school teacher in Cavite. But her experience with her suicidal student happened during her practical teaching and as observer in 2006.

A 15-year old girl decided to end her life when she allegedly learned that her older boyfriend had a family. Because of her stress that caused depression, she decided to end her life one weekend.

According to Melanie, the girl had a turning point and told her mother that she was not yet ready to end her life. But things did not turn for the better.

"We were shocked because she was a cheerful kid. And it never looked like she would one day end her life," the teacher said.

Stigma and taboo

Numerous research have shown that stigma, particularly surrounding mental disorders and suicide, means many people thinking of taking their own life or who have attempted suicide were not seeking help.

And stress can be a major cause of suicide.

"Stress interferes at least moderately with their lives. Chronic stress can affect your health, causing symptoms from headaches, high blood pressure, and chest pain to heart palpitations, skin rashes, and loss of sleep," said Felicitas Soriano, a psychiatrist at the Veterans Memorial Medical Center, said.

She added that there was no health without mental health. "Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act."

"It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make choices. Mental health is important at every stage of life, from childhood and adolescence through adulthood," Soriano said.

She further said that only half of those with mental health illness receive treatment, which results in poor performance at school and work, fewer employment opportunities, and increased risk of suicide.

Besides getting treatment, those with mental illness or suspected of having one can take various steps to improving their health.

"Having a good family relationship, being in full-life resiliency, exercising, doing relaxation activities, setting goals and priorities, are some of the key ways to distress and fight anxiety and depression," Soriano said.

"You must also know your limitations so pressures won't affect you fully. Always get connected with people, especially parents, friends and siblings," she added.

Then there's the dimension of having a powerful spiritual attitude.

"But, you must also know the signs and when to go to a doctor," said Soriano.