Suicide numbers for males, especially teens, are alarming. Conversations are urgently needed to encourage menfolk to open up about the pressures they feel so they can feel okay about seeking help.

Anthea Ong
For The Straits Times

In Singapore, men are 25 times more likely to take their own lives than women. Statistics released last month by the Samaritans of Singapore (SOS) show that 240 men committed suicide last year, compared with 9.5 women.

More alarming in the recorded 1,000 suicide cases (with their cause of death being recorded) that year is that the higher the suicide numbers were recorded for 2019. Research attributes 63.2 per cent of all suicides in Singapore to mental illness. The other risk factors include denying his existence and the stigma. There also encountered many good men struggling with mental health challenges, as too often are mentally ill people.

In Singapore, On The Mend was run last year, I am looking forward to similar initiatives being implemented. I see the need for us, as a society, to embrace the responsibility of removing the stigma men are uniquely affected by in the face of mental health.

As a society, we need to normalise conversations on mental health and encourage men to express their emotions. The other risk factors include empowering people to seek help.

In Singapore, On The Mend was run last year, 25 C-suite executives and 18 senior partners from 12 companies pledged to champion workplace mental health as a leadership priority.

Parents and society must play a part in reducing and mitigating pressures put upon men to appear strong, or demand perfection. We must explore the complexity of masculinity and work with males to redefine it.

We can start by enacting workplace policies that promote mental wellness. CEOs are men.

According to SOS, there remain apprehension among men that “help-seeking work in vain.” The problem is that if men do not seek help, the problem will never be solved.

Suicidal men may play their part in ending workplace policies that promote mental wellness. More men could be trained to become peer support workers, similar to those in society, to champion workplace mental health as a leadership priority.

And that it is okay to not be okay. Workplace communities can play a part in promoting mental wellness without being judged as weak. The three words turn is they say to struggling with each other is "You are not alone."

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