

Publication: The Straits Times Online

Date: 11 December 2020

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Five educational institutions here were recognised on Friday morning (Dec 11) for their efforts in promoting mental health awareness on campus.

They received the inaugural Silver Ribbon Mental Health Awards for Schools in a virtual Zoom ceremony attended by Minister of State for Education and Manpower Gan Siow Huang.

Silver Ribbon (Singapore) is a mental health advocacy organisation that organised and gave out the award.

In her speech, Ms Gan said all students must have access to timely support, including getting referrals for mental health and social support in the community.

"However, schools can't do this alone. Strengthening mental health of our young is a whole-of-society effort," she added.

The awards are meant to acknowledge and applaud the effort of schools in holding workshops and talks for staff and students and encouraging students to embark on mental-health related projects, among others.

The recipients were Nanyang Technological University, River Valley High School, PSB Academy, Singapore Management University and Singapore University of Social Sciences.

In her speech, Silver Ribbon (Singapore) president Ellen Lee said one in four young people experienced low mood, loneliness and anxiety amid the Covid-19 pandemic.

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This was based on an online survey the organisation did in April 2020 involving 577 young people.

She added that the Silver Ribbon team has been working closely with its stakeholders to identify and address the gaps to combat mental health stigma and to encourage early help.

"We encourage more schools to come forward and join us in creating a friendly and mentally healthy learning environment for youth and future generations of Singapore," Ms Lee added.

At the ceremony, River Valley High School vice-principal Alvin Lau said that the school had implemented a positive education framework for teachers and trained peer support leaders to provide mental health support for its students.

"We actually teach our students about mental health issues in lessons... to help raise their awareness - what are mental health issues, what are the symptoms - so that they can recognise the signs in themselves and their peers," said Mr Lau.

He added that it is important to create a caring and enabling environment.

"They actually can apply what they have learnt and look out for each other.

"By having a good relationship with their peers, the school will also have a conducive environment. The students will be happy to come to school and their school life will be happy... and (this will) prevent them from falling into negative thoughts and having anxiety issues," said Mr Lau.