

When the Going Gets Tough

In this month's group sessions for parents, a total of 77 parents were involved in conversations on some of the common issues faced by our teens.

During the sessions, I shared that low mood and anxiety are common among teenagers when they experience family issues, friendship issues, difficulty coping with expectations and academic stress. Some teenagers deal with their emotional distress by "acting out" in the form of self-harm behaviours, problematic eating behaviours, addiction and other poor coping mechanisms. We talked about how parents can identify the warning signs that teenagers may be exhibiting. For example, parents should be concerned if your children become more withdrawn, and you observe that there are changes in their behaviour, appetite, sleep patterns and energy levels. When your children share about their friends, you can also be mindful of issues that may be of concern. You can explore ways your children can be supportive and reach out to their friends, or encourage their friends to seek help when the need arises. Parents can also support one another in the social networks established in our school so as to strengthen the caring culture of the school community. I reminded our parents that we can prevent mental health issues by providing a secure and stable family environment and encouraging our children to establish a strong social network of friends. We also need to help our children build resilience and have a range of positive and adaptive ways to cope with life's stresses.

We have one more session for this year and the topic will be: "managing academics, other activities and social life". If you would like to join us, please sign up at <http://tinyurl.com/SJII-mothers> or <http://tinyurl.com/SJII-fathers>.

Below are resources which were shared during the sessions. They are also available on the Teamie lesson for parents on "Counselling Service":

- "I had a black dog, his name was depression" by World Health Organization [<http://tinyurl.com/parents-mentalhealth1>]
- TED talk by Erika Brodnock on "The Importance of Raising an Emotionally Intelligent Child" [<http://tinyurl.com/parents-mentalhealth2>]
- TED talk by Brene Brown on "The Power of Vulnerability" [<http://tinyurl.com/parents-mentalhealth3>]
- How parents can help teens in dealing with:
 - * Depression & anxiety [<http://tinyurl.com/parents-mentalhealth4>]
 - * Eating disorder [<http://tinyurl.com/parents-mentalhealth5>]
 - * Self-harm [<http://tinyurl.com/parents-mentalhealth6>]



Michelle Koay, High School Counsellor, michelle.koay@sj-international.com.sg