

## **Mental health awareness**

*'It's OKAY not to be okay at times'*



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Date of publication: 16.7.24

Dr Chrystal's vision is to educate and motivate the individual and population towards better health outcomes.

Her mission is to help make sense of the rich Science articles that are important to health to the everyday person through her articles and to highlight the key health issues that affect you.

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## On mental health awareness:

As reported in the Channel News Asia news dated 12 July 2024 <sup>1</sup>, the key findings are as follow:

322 suicides were reported in Singapore in 2023; lowest in more than 20 years.

Suicide deaths also decreased across all age groups for the first time.

A total of 322 suicides were reported in Singapore last year, the lowest number in more than 20 years, said the Samaritans of Singapore (SOS) on Friday (Jul 12).

The number of suicides decreased by 32.4 per cent from 2022, with a drop across all age groups for the first time, according to data released by SOS in a media release.

Young people aged between 10 to 29 registered a decrease of 31.2 per cent in suicides last year compared to 2022.

However, SOS noted that suicide remained the leading cause of death for the fifth consecutive year for this age group - nearly 30 per cent of all deaths in this age group were suicides.

### Suicides by age group from 2019-2023

● 2019 ● 2020 ● 2021 ● 2022 ● 2023

Total deaths by suicide

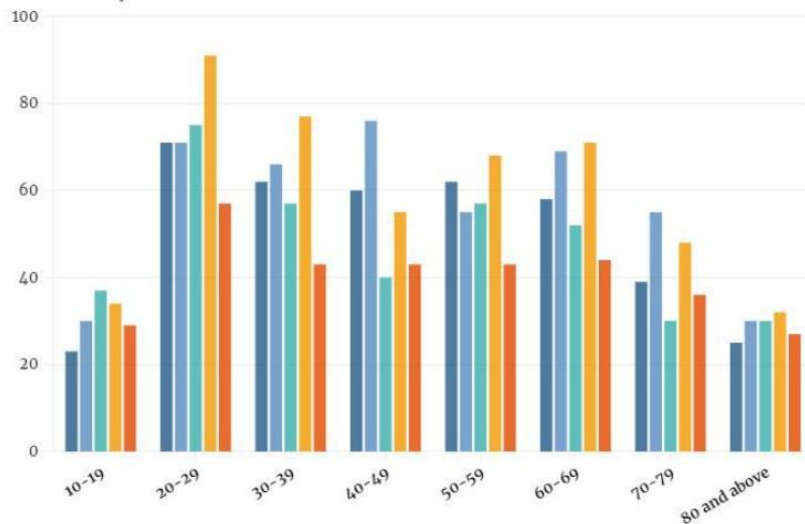


Chart: Clara Ho  
Source: Samaritans of Singapore, Jul 12, 2024



<sup>1</sup> <https://lnkd.in/gVDgH8M5>

In my years of clinical practice, I have looked after many cases of mental health issues.

Every life is precious, and every life lost due to suicide is a time to reflect on the internal and external influences that could have contributed to this sad decision.

Suicide is often an act of a 'cry for help' or an end to burnout from 'being over resilient' when times of compassion to self and others were lacking

Working on the bio-psycho- social model in approaching health, we acknowledge the biological predisposition one is born with that influences the wiring of the brain in mental health.

What we CAN continue to work on is the psychological and social aspects.

Preventive care in mental health is important; steps that include education on personal awareness of emotions, learning of safe ways for emotional regulation, mindset and situation reframing, applying compassion to one's self.

On the social aspect, accessibility to support and help when needed is necessary. Being kind in words and actions at workplaces, social groups and using social media responsibly are some ways we can help mitigate the social psychological harm an individual may encounter.

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Sustaining mental well-being is an important part of a healthy lifestyle.

Paying attention to the practice of the principles of lifestyle medicine can help with mental health and well-being.

In no particular order:

1. Stress management
2. Restorative sleep
3. Avoidance of risky substances
4. Social connection
5. Nutrition
6. Physical activity

Try applying the **OKAY** tips today:

**O-O**bserve your emotions

Take a pause and reflect upon how you are currently feeling by using The Feelings Tracker below as a guide for such daily self check-ins.

[chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://ch-api.healthhub.sg/api/public/content/119c6fd06e33462797c81e97d0244fa9?v=a1b1fefc&\\_gl=1\\*112qxr8\\*\\_ga\\*MTU5MjYxNDEzOC4xNzE5Nzk4ODE0\\*\\_ga\\_VQW1KL2RMR\\*MTcyMTAyOTYyOC4zLjEuMTcyMTAzMDg4Mi42MC4wLjA](chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://ch-api.healthhub.sg/api/public/content/119c6fd06e33462797c81e97d0244fa9?v=a1b1fefc&_gl=1*112qxr8*_ga*MTU5MjYxNDEzOC4xNzE5Nzk4ODE0*_ga_VQW1KL2RMR*MTcyMTAyOTYyOC4zLjEuMTcyMTAzMDg4Mi42MC4wLjA)

**K-Keep** a healthy lifestyle (refer to the above on lifestyle medicine principles)

**A-Adopt** coping skills

1. Better manage your time

Make a list of things that need to be done.

Plan your time in advance and block off time to complete each task on time.

2. Learn to think positive by reframing your thoughts

By reframing your thoughts from negative to positive.

Identify your strengths and review how you had managed to overcome your past challenges.

Make a list of things that you are grateful for.

Make the best out of the situation by focusing on things you can control.

3. Engage in activities to clear your mind

Try deep breathing exercises, practising mindfulness.

Take a bath or go for a jog to clear your mind whenever you feel stressed or anxious.

Set aside some 'me time' every day to relax or do things you enjoy.

**Y-You** can reach out

Reaching out is a sign of courage.

Stay connected.

Be there for others

Seek mental health resources and services

Try doing this simple mental well-being self-assessment tool to check your own mental health today.

The Singapore Mental Wellbeing Scale is a set of 16 questions that those **aged 18 and above** can use to assess their state of mental well-being.

**Please note this is a self-assessment and not a medical diagnosis.**

[https://www.healthhub.sg/programmes/mindsg/about-mental-well-being?utm\\_source=google&utm\\_medium=paid\\_search&utm\\_campaign=fy24mhao&utm\\_content=about\\_mental\\_wellbeing&gad\\_source=1#okay-you-can-reach-out](https://www.healthhub.sg/programmes/mindsg/about-mental-well-being?utm_source=google&utm_medium=paid_search&utm_campaign=fy24mhao&utm_content=about_mental_wellbeing&gad_source=1#okay-you-can-reach-out)

We can be mindful of the above towards ourselves and have the sense of awareness of the people around us that may need help.

Let us prevent suicide together.

Let us show compassion towards ourselves and others.

**Speak to your family doctor to explore your mental health and well-being as part of a regular health check up and at your next health screening.**

Where to get help:

- Samaritans of Singapore Hotline: 1767
- Institute of Mental Health's Helpline: 6389 2222
- Singapore Association for Mental Health Helpline: 1800 283 7019

### **Final Thoughts:**

The next time you have your health screening done, spare a moment to reflect on your lifestyle habits and discuss with your doctor on ways to improve the above towards a better and healthier you and our planet.

### **‘Towards better health outcomes’**

#### **About the author:**

Dr Chrystal Fong Chern Ying (MBBS Melbourne, FRACGP) is currently practicing as a family physician at Asia HealthPartners under the subsidiary of Singapore Institute of Advanced Medicine (SAM) Holdings, located at Lucky Plaza, Orchard, Singapore.

Dr Chrystal Fong is listed on the editors list of health screening providers on Health365, a healthcare, wellness and aesthetic medicine publishing agency in Asia. She has a special interest in health prevention and incorporates sports psychology and lifestyle medicine principles in her health screening and advocacy in health promotion.

She will be featured in the Britishpedia’s upcoming 6<sup>th</sup> edition of 'Successful People in Malaysia and Singapore'.

She is an active sports person who has keen interests in lifestyle medicine, medical technology and longevity themed medical care. She takes personal pride in living the lifestyle medicine pillars herself and advocating through her sports communities and social media platforms. She is a certified personal trainer and has a basic diploma in Jumping Fitness.

Her personal mantra being 'The world is changed by your example, not your opinion.'

She incorporates her consultations with health coaching methods and inspires behavioural change with sports psychology angles.

Her current professional memberships include:

Associate Member of the College of Family Physicians, Sg

Executive committee board member of the Society of Behavioural Health, Singapore

Member of the Singaporean Society of Lifestyle Medicine



<http://www.asiahealthpartners.com/>