

MEDIA RELEASE

Taking Mental Health Education to Virtual Reality

SINGAPORE, 30 October 2018 – TOUCH Community Services today unveiled its Virtual Reality (VR) Immersive Experience on depression which will be used in its interactive mental health education programme, *Do You M.I.N.D.?* in schools.

With the aid of VR headsets, the experience allows users to look through the eyes of a youth with depression, and experience the symptoms associated with the condition.

Research has shown that VR training yields a 75% retention rate as compared to just a 5% and 10% rate for lecture-style learning and reading respectively¹. Hence, the VR Immersive Experience is expected to enhance learning and empathy in participants towards persons with depression.

The unveiling of the VR Immersive Experience was part of the launch of a mental health themed train commissioned by TOUCH.

Featuring information on four common mental health issues among the youth that TOUCH sees – Depression, Self-harm, Anxiety and Eating Disorders – as well as suggested coping methods, and short stories from individuals with those issues, the themed train aims to promote public awareness and education on mental health matters.

The four featured mental health issues are represented by caricatures in the campaign artwork to help commuters better understand and identify them. (*Please refer to Annex 1 for design artwork*)

The train is scheduled to run for 18 hours daily for four weeks, reaching out to some 840,000 commuters travelling between the Northern and Eastern regions of Singapore, on the 16-station North East Line.

Guest-of-Honour Mr Desmond Choo, Mayor of North East CDC, launched the themed train at HarbourFront MRT station with a ribbon-cutting ceremony after taking part in the VR Immersive Experience.

In the past three years, TOUCH has been a strong advocate for mental wellness. It has organised themed runs to promote mental health education and encourage the community to show their support for persons with mental health issues by running alongside them.

According to the World Health Organisation, half of all mental health conditions start by age 14². To address mental health awareness upstream, TOUCH launched the *Do You M.I.N.D.?* programme for schools in October 2017. Through this innovative and interactive programme which has since reached out to some 900 students, TOUCH educates and equips secondary school students with knowledge on mental health, instills in them empathy and acceptance towards persons with mental health issues, and empowers them to be an able source of support for their peers and individuals within the community. Like the themed train, the topics highlighted in *Do You M.I.N.D.?* are depression, self-harm, anxiety and eating disorders.

¹National Training Laboratory, "VRLearn: Virtual Reality & Learning", January 2017

²World Health Organisation, "Adolescents and Mental Health", 2017

In addition to conducting educational programmes in schools, TOUCH also provides support for youths at risk of or struggling with mental health conditions through personalised therapy methods. These methods aim to help youths cope with their conditions and emotions. Family members are also encouraged to be part of the counselling and therapy process to increase the support that youths may find at home. Apart from one-to-one counselling, a peer support group programme, The Upper Room, is also organised to provide youths with a community where they can interact with others and feel accepted in.

Mr James Tan, Chief Executive Officer of TOUCH, said, "TOUCH recognises that the youth of today are faced with stressors at home, in school and in their personal lives. Hence, we aim to strengthen the resilience of youths and the community by improving their mental wellbeing through education, support programmes and advocacy campaigns."

"While educational programmes and targeted support for individuals are important to improving the state of mind of our youth, we believe that change can effectively take place on a larger scale only with the community's support and understanding. To that end, TOUCH has been promoting mental health awareness in the community through talks, and themed runs and trains in the past three years. The feedback has been encouraging and we look forward to doing more to build up the mental health community."

- End -

For media enquiries, please contact:

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About the Mental Health Programme by TOUCH Community Services

TOUCH Community Services recognises that the youth of today are faced with stressors at home, in school and in their personal lives. To close the service gap in the area of public education and support for youths in the mental health landscape in Singapore, TOUCH takes an upstream approach by specialising in school programmes for youths aged 13 to 18 as a preventive measure.

Do You M.I.N.D.? is a programme by TOUCH that uses innovative approaches such as adventure-based experiential learning and virtual reality immersive experience to equip youths with knowledge to mind their mental health. The practical steps highlighted in the programme are:

- M – Moderate stress and expectations for a balanced and healthy lifestyle
- I – Include persons with mental health issues in their social circles
- N – Notice preliminary signs and symptoms of mental health issues in their peers
- D – Defend themselves by adopting positive coping habits

The programme also provides intervention services such as counselling and a support group to enable youths to manage issues affecting them.

About TOUCH Community Services

TOUCH Community Services is a not-for-profit charitable organisation, dedicated to meeting the needs of children from low-income or single-parent families, youth-at-risk, needy families, people with special and healthcare needs, and the frail elderly. Through its integrated network of services, TOUCH is committed to serving people of all ages, races, religions and backgrounds. Each year, its programmes and services meet the needs of more than 30,000 clients and 151,000 service users.

Annex 1

Small Windows

Anxiety



Depression



Eating Disorder



Self-Harm



Mid Strip

MENTAL WELLNESS
Matters

Need help?

CALL **TOUCHLINE**
1800 377 2252
WEEKDAYS
9AM TO 6PM

Suitable for youths and families
struggling with mental health issues

✉ mentalhealth@touch.org.sg

The campaign is brought to you by

TOUCH
Community Services

In support of

Beyond the Label
Let's unite against
mental health stigma.

NCCS
National Council on
Community Service

Empowered by

tote boart
Singapore's
National Council on
Art, Culture and
Heritage

30
years
of
service

Large Windows

Anxiety (Left)



100,000 PERSONS IN SINGAPORE SUFFER FROM ANXIETY DISORDERS DURING THEIR LIFETIMES. ON AVERAGE, THEY WAIT FOR 6 YEARS BEFORE SEEKING HELP.

SOURCE: SINGAPORE MENTAL HEALTH STUDY (2019)

Anxiety (Right)

sudden weight loss
racing heart
numbness
DIZZINESS
lumps in the throat
falling sensation
nausea
ANXIETY SYMPTOMS
shaking
headaches
CHRONIC FATIGUE
muscle tension

DOING DEEP BREATHING EXERCISES WILL HELP YOU TO RELEASE YOUR ANXIOUS FEELINGS AND FEEL BETTER.



- 1** INHALE THROUGH YOUR NOSE TO A COUNT OF 4
- 2** HOLD YOUR BREATH TO A COUNT OF 7
- 3** EXHALE THROUGH YOUR MOUTH TO A COUNT OF 8

Depression (Left)



HAVING DEPRESSION IS LIKE BEING CHAINED TO THE OCEAN FLOOR, AND NOT BEING ABLE TO SWIM FOR AIR.


Depression (Right)

Dear Diary,

I can't cope with this depression.
I don't want to live anymore, There is no purpose in life,
I don't have the energy to get out of my bed, nor do I want to.
I can't cope with all the exams and bullying at school.
The world does not need a burden like me.
I will never be able to get out of this rut,

Sincerely, Joan

THERE IS HOPE. SEEK HELP.



Large Windows

Eating Disorder (Left)

A graphic with a black background. On the left, a person in a green shirt is shown from the back, looking at a white board. Three thought bubbles are around them: "I NEED TO VOMIT WHAT I JUST ATE", "I'M NOT PRETTY ENOUGH", and "I AM SO FAT AND UGLY". To the right, the text reads: "I AM FAT AND UGLY. NO ONE WILL LOVE ME." IS THAT REALLY TRUE? A QR code is in the bottom right corner.

Eating Disorder (Right)

A graphic with a black background. On the left, a white scroll contains the text: "DO YOU KNOW ANYONE WHO REFUSES TO EAT, OR PURGES AFTER BINGE-EATING? YOU CAN HELP:" followed by the acronym H.E.L.P. with definitions: H: Highlight changes in mood, thinking, sleep patterns, appetite, social participation, and ability to cope with daily activities etc.; E: Encourage and provide support by sharing good coping strategies; L: Listen to their troubles and concerns with an open mind; P: Promote professional help such as counselling services. On the right, a hand is shown holding a knife over a white box containing a brown shoe.

Self-Harm (Left)

A graphic with a black background. On the left, a hand is shown holding a knife over a blue rectangular area. The word "HELP" is written on the hand. To the right, the text reads: "THE PAIN IS REAL. HELP ME." A QR code is in the bottom right corner.

Self-Harm (Right)

A graphic with a black background. On the left, a white box contains a social media post: "Liked by coolkidz2008 and 143 others John314 Cutting brings me relief. It reminds me that I am still alive. As I hurt myself, I watch my pain and worries flow away from my body. I feel a sense of peace and relief, even if it is for a short time." On the right, a white box contains the text: "SELF-HARM DOES NOT BRING REAL RELIEF. THERE ARE COPING STRATEGIES THAT WILL HELP YOU FEEL BETTER." Below this text are six icons with labels: EXERCISE (footprints), EXPLORING NATURE (trees), SPENDING TIME WITH LOVED ONES (heart), DEEP BREATHING (lungs), LISTENING TO MUSIC (musical note), and READING (book).

Interior Panels

DO YOU M.I.N.D.?

DO YOU M.I.N.D.? IS AN INTERACTIVE SCHOOL-BASED PROGRAMME TO STRENGTHEN YOUTHS WITH KNOWLEDGE ABOUT DEPRESSION, ANXIETY DISORDER, SELF-HARM BEHAVIOURS AND EATING DISORDERS.

DO YOU M.I.N.D.?

- M** Moderate stress and expectations for a balanced and healthy lifestyle
- I** Include persons with mental health issues in their social circles
- N** Notice preliminary signs and symptoms of mental health issues in their peers
- D** Defend themselves by adopting positive coping habits

TO FIND OUT MORE, EMAIL MENTALHEALTH@TOUCH.ORG.SG

TOUCH
Community Services

ARE YOU FEELING **TROUBLED**?
ARE YOU CONCERNED ABOUT SOMEONE WHO MAY BE IN **DISTRESS**?

LET US HELP YOU.
CALL **TOUCHLINE**
AT 1800 377 2252



-  COUNSELLING SESSIONS
-  SUPPORT GROUPS
-  MENTAL HEALTH ASSESSMENTS

FOR HELP, CALL **TOUCHLINE**
AT 1800 377 2252
WEEKDAYS, 9AM TO 6PM

TOUCH
Community Services

Ceiling Stickers



Connectors



MENTAL WELLNESS *Matters*

This train campaign
aims to raise
awareness of
four common
mental health issues:

- 1. Depression**
- 2. Anxiety Disorder**
- 3. Self-Harm Behaviours**
- 4. Eating Disorders**

This campaign is brought to you by



In support of



Let's unite against
mental health stigma.



Empowered by



Connectors



CALL TOUCHLINE
18003772252

WEEKDAYS
9AM TO 6PM

This is a helpline manned by counsellors from TOUCH Community Services to enable youths to be more effective in managing youth-related matters, including mental health issues.

If you are feeling troubled or know someone in distress, please call the TOUCHline.

Connectors

MENTAL WELLNESS *Matters*

**Help is
available
in our
community**

This campaign is brought to you by


In support of

Let's unite against mental health stigma.



Empowered by
 

DO YOU M.I.N.D.?

YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH EDUCATION




This programme uses innovative approaches such as adventure-based experiential learning and virtual reality immersive experience to equip youths with knowledge to mind their mental health.


M Moderate stress and expectations for a balanced and healthy lifestyle

I Include persons with mental health issues in their social circles

N Notice preliminary signs and symptoms of mental health issues in their peers

D Defend themselves by adopting positive coping habits

 **Adventure-Based
Experiential Learning**

 **Virtual Reality
Immersive Experience**

Enquiries: mentalhealth@touch.org.sg