Teenage depression in Malaysia

When you're young, everything feels like the end of the world because teenagers tend to think with their feelings. They do things according to their moods or emotions. But we all know that life is not always a fairytale or a bed of roses. Sometimes things don’t go our way and there is nothing we can do about it. When something bad happens, all those negative thoughts start to enter their minds and sometimes they just can’t take them and ultimately fall into depression. Depression is defined as a condition of mental disturbance, often experienced by an individual who lacks energy and faces difficulty in maintaining interest or concentration in life.

Depression is an illness often taken for granted by many people, especially teenagers. It is our human nature to deal first with problems which can be seen. For example, we are more likely to treat a pimple on our face rather than depression. Sometimes we neglect what we feel inside but rather care more about our outward appearances. Teenagers care more about what others think of them. However, dealing with emotional problems is equally important. Many teenagers fail to realise the danger of falling into depression as it can lead to suicidal thoughts. Depression is close to the top of killing-teens list and it has connection with alcohol, drugs and car crash (Nelson G. E., 2007). However, depression is not incurable. We as fellow human beings need to do our part in helping those who are in depression. According to the late great Mother Teresa, “if we can't feed a thousand, just feed one.” I strongly believe that this principle applies to teenage depression as well. Sometimes we wonder how we are going to help prevent depression among victims because there are so many out there who are facing depression. But saving one from depression ultimately means saving one life. Therefore the question that I am asking today is what can we do as parents and fellow peers to prevent teenagers from falling in depression?

Before we look at what we can do, let us look at some causes of teenage depression. Bullying in schools is one of the causes of depression in Malaysia. Bullying often occurs in Malaysian schools and it can be seen by the videos uploaded by students on Yahoo and Facebook. Bullying is usually done by a stronger individual to a weaker one. It can be divided into verbal or physical bullying, but regardless of which, it can rob the confidence of the teenage victims. However, the interesting fact about bullying is that it not only affects the victim but also the bully. Bullying leads to depression even among the bullies. The act can lead to violent and immoral behaviour such as smoking and dangerous driving later in life (Kopasz, 2005). The school authorities should have strict punishments for bullies in school. This will not only help to prevent causing depression among victims but also the bullies themselves.

Parents can also be a contributor to the causes of depression. Very often we see Malaysian parents placing too much pressure on their children to excel academically. They enrol their children to numerous tuition classes. Their stressful lifestyle can cause them to fall into depression. According to Hart (2008), the majority of depression is resulted from living or trying to adapt to a stressful life. In addition, when teenagers do not perform, their personal inclinations are suppressed or ignored. This leads to a low self esteem. They also