

NO SHAME TO SEEK COUNSELLING IF YOU'RE DEPRESSED – LECTURER

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KUCHING: Sharing troubles with unknown experts is no longer a taboo for many with professional counsellors being highly sought after these days.

Depression and psychological disorders are common in today's society due to the stress of living in the 21st century.

Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (Unimas) Cognitive Sciences and Human Development Faculty senior lecturer Dr Amalia Madihie said as humans, we need to interact since no one is an island in the world we live in.

"Everyone has to let go of problems before they can move on, and they need the right support to do so.

"Counselling is one of the ways to do this. Many people are now open to the idea of discussing their problems with counsellors compared to 10 years ago."

Amalia highlighted this at the International Seminar on Professional Counselling 2016 (International ProCoun 16)

held at Hilton Hotel here recently. It was attended by 247 delegates.

The faculty is working closely with the Chief Minister's Office in providing counselling service to those in need of psychological and emotional counselling.

Amalia said there is no general cure for depression. There is a cause for each problem and like doctors, counsellors have to identify the symptoms of depression.

What causes a patient to become suicidal? Is it a broken heart or financial problems?

"People are depressed for reasons best known to themselves, and our job is to uncover them for us to guide them to find solutions.

"People have different levels of resilience. Some can easily ride out or deal with problems within a short space of time, while others take years to bounce back to their normal self," she said.

Amalia's team has assisted family members of MH370 and MH17 tragedy by providing counselling services.

She described the experience as "the most challenging task" in her career.

"There was a clash of culture. We not only had to deal with grieving family members among Malaysians but also with those of different nationalities where language and cultural barriers were hurdles," she shared.

She said the experience showed how fragile the human mind was when it came to a crisis of such proportions.

“Crises not only impact immediate family members but also those around them, including volunteers and even hotel staff. Treatment should not only deal with the physical but also emotional wellbeing.

If left untreated, the patient could end up in a worse state of depression, which will affect his/her daily life,” Amalia said.

Depression may present as refusal to move on in life. Thinking the whole world is against them, the patient may see everyone and everything at fault.

Unimas offers four niche counselling programmes catering to family, rehabilitation, mental health and organisational.

The approach used in school counselling differs from that in the work environment where organisational counsellors play a role.

There has been increasing interest in the programme which has the support of the Chief Minister’s Office.

“The government aims to enhance the people’s well-being through counselling,” she said.