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KUALA LUMPUR-- A flashback into the suicide cases reported by the media since early this year reveals that increasing number of Malaysians are terminating their lives prematurely.

It is more shocking when professionals like doctors and lawyers also end their lives prematurely, leaving the society baffled over their decision.

Cases of people consuming poison or jumping down from buildings are nothing new. The latest, on November 19, a 38-year old woman in Kuala Terengganu attempted to immolate herself and her eight-month old baby.

On the same day, in Penang, a standard six pupil ended her life by hanging herself using a blanket at her home. The poor outcome in UPSR drove the girl to her impulsive decision.

In February, in Sarawak, a standard five pupil from poverty stricken background hanged himself after being scorned by his friends.

They all succumbed to the pressures and conflicts of life. When adults can no longer bear the pent-up pressure and desperation, what else teenagers and children.

WHY THIS HAS TO HAPPEN

These are the individuals who should seek assistance to overcome their state of despair that they are trapped in.

Unfortunately, for these people it's already too late. As they had no place to vent out their concealed emotion and desperation, for them their only solution was to end their lives.

But whatever the reasons, can any reason for committing suicide be justifiable?

According to Prof Dr Azhar Md. Zain, Senior Psychiatrist and Psychotherapy Consultant at the Universiti Putra Malaysia's Medical and Health Science Faculty, the underlying reason is the pent-up emotions that rages beyond control.

"The education level of a person is not the yardstick on whether a person will be able to face the problems or pressures of life. It is never the factor in deciding the ability to face pressure.

"Whether they are educated, hold professional career or otherwise, stress and despair can drive a person to suicide," added Prof Azhar.

FACING PRESSURE IS DIFFERENT

Not all individuals are able to handle the pressures of life. And how much a person can take varies on the individuals.

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Written by Administrator

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"/> "May be for individual A, the problems faced by B are trifle, but for B that is not the case. And vice versa," he explained.

 The ability to face the trials and tribulations of life is dependent on several factors that include the personality, whether there is a good role model like their parents or idol, family members and also peers.

 Prof Azhar also did not rule out the present stressful lifestyle as a factor that puts pressure on everyone, and provided examples of developed nations like East Europe and Japan that recorded high number of suicides.

 The pressure can appear in any situation and from anywhere, from family members, at the workplace and friends and a highly challenging environment.

 The earliest warning sign is the change in the temperament that often leads to depression.

 DON'T TAKE IT LIGHTLY

 According to Prof Azhar, there are many reasons for depression but what is important is that how to handle it. The closest person is the individual responsible in identifying the cause.

 "One of the ways is to find time to play a role as a good listener. The individual who has attempted suicide is normally the one who has pent-up his/her feelings. There is a possibility that the one who does not succeed in terminating his/her life at the first attempt will try again. Even if the person has undergone treatment, the person still needs to be under observation," explained Prof Azhar.

 Apart from that, if the person has good support especially from the concerned family, the situation can be easily reversed.

 Maybe there are some who are shy to admit that they need counselling fearing the society would see them as lunatics.

 What more, when the family and the society sideline them. Thus the level of emotional stress increases and what starts as a slight depression may lead to actions that can endanger them and the others.

 Prevention is the most effective remedy. Sometimes the suicide attempt may fail, but it may leave permanent damage to the individual that may cause them and those close to them to suffer further.

 We have to seek and re-evaluate the causes. Is the pressure due to the break-down of the family institution, poor mental health and the spiritual void the real cause? Or is it because of the challenging lifestyle of today that is putting tremendous pressure on individuals?

 When it involves teenagers and children, all parties especially the parents, family, teachers and colleagues must assist. Remember it can happen to

anyone.

DETECT FROM EARLY

In fact, early assistance can be provided to any individual who shows early symptoms of depression. Among them:

- * Is the individual getting on with his daily routine without feeling stressed.
- * Does the individual suffers from significant weight loss or gain, or a change in the sleep pattern.
- * Is the individual losing his friends or having new friends who are of negative influence
- * Complaining of diseases that are baseless
- * The level of self-confidence comes down suddenly
- * Whether the individual complains of fatigue
- * The individual feels he is of no use to his friends, family and life.
- * Whether the individual has previously contemplated or attempted suicide
- * Did the individual suddenly started smoking, consuming liquor or drugs.

A CAUSE OF CONCERN FOR EVERYONE

Suicides can be prevented if the society is aware of the assistance readily available and learn how to cope with problems that are part and parcel of life and they are only temporary.

In Malaysia, major hospitals have psychiatric clinics that help those who can no longer cope with their pent-up feelings.

Apart from that, the health clinics in the districts can help identify those in need of psychiatric assistance and refer them to the nearest psychiatric clinics.

Prof Azhar also emphasised that the spiritual fulfillment is also pertinent in building self-resilience, a vital characteristic in avoiding suicide.

The National Suicide Prevention Programme introduced in 2003 also plays a role in creating awareness that suicide is not the solution to your problem and help is available.

WHERE TO SEEK HELP

For those who feel that they, or someone

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close to them, are suicidal, other than the government hospitals, the NGO hotlines below may be helpful:

* The Befrienders Kuala Lumpur - 03-79568144/5

* The Malaysian Mental Health Society - 03-77825499

-- BERNAMA