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## Communication, trust key to helping students speak out, forum told

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3-4minutes

KUALA LUMPUR: Communication and trust are key to helping students speak up about their struggles, a panellist said during a youth forum on teenage mental health and well-being.

Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM) faculty of leadership and management head of programme, Dr Izwan Harith, was responding to students who said many young people tend to keep their worries to themselves and struggle to express their opinions. He noted that without safe spaces and trusted adults, students may suffer in silence.

Several students shared their experiences during the forum titled "From Their Eyes Student Voice Matter - A Youth Dialogue on Safety, Stress and Support", held in conjunction with the Safe School 2.0 initiative at Tunku Abdul Rahman University of Management and Technology (TAR UMT) on Saturday (Dec 13).

Ng Jun Han, 18, said some students struggle inside but fail to show it or share it with others, while Yong Peggy, 18, said she usually deals with problems on her own, whether academic or social, unless the situation becomes unmanageable.

Arisudan Maheswaran, 18, also claimed that academic stress and domestic stress due to financial issues or broken families can escalate stress among students.

Izwan noted that without any communication, there is no trust established to create the communication.

"Maybe you don't know how to express your stress or share what you're feeling now. I think you need to trust your parents first, and then in school, you need to trust your teacher," he said.

"The teacher and parents shouldn't betray the student's trust to be able to have a complete conversation and reduce barriers to communication," he added.

Izwan also suggested that students should be encouraged to engage fully with their surroundings, rather than just passively using their phones or focusing on one thing.

"Students should experience the world through all senses, seeing, hearing, touching, or even exploring new activities, which can help them relax, express themselves and build trust with others as well.

"For example, spending time outdoors or taking part in cultural activities allows students to connect with their environment and peers in a more meaningful way, which can improve communication and emotional well-being," Izwan said.

The Safe School 2.0 research committee comprises multidisciplinary academics from TAR UMT, Universiti Malaya, Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman, USIM and HELP University, alongside professionals from practice-based fields such as law, accounting and clinical medicine.

The forum, organised by TAR UMT, featured two sessions: a youth dialogue followed by an expert panel discussion.