



PRESS RELEASE

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We Must Talk About Depression This World Health Day

AVOIDING talking about depression can leave people feeling “ashamed and embarrassed” to ask for help.

To change this people in Scotland are joining a global effort to start conversations on the condition, for World Health Day (today, April 7th).

This year the World Health Organisation are focusing on the devastating impact depression can have on people’s lives, with suicide now the second leading cause of death in 15-29 year olds globally.

See Me, the national programme to end mental health discrimination is joining the WHO in calling for more open discussions on depression, so people don’t worry about asking for help.

New research from the WHO found that between 2005 and 2015 the number of people living with depression increased by 18%, to around 300 million people. Around one in eight Scots currently take antidepressants daily.

See Me said that while it is vital that people are able to speak openly about how they are feeling and get help, there must the right help and support available when they do.

Lynne Fox, 26, from Dunfermline, started to experience depression in her early 20s, but she felt “ashamed” to speak about it.

She said: “Depression was almost like the elephant in the room that was better left unaddressed and avoided.

“Often it made me feel awkward, embarrassed, and ashamed. If there was an awkward silence, or it was apparent people were actively avoiding speaking about it, or avoiding me all together, that made me feel awful.

“I often felt like a burden, or like I had done something wrong, or even that I shouldn’t be speaking about it.

“Talking about it with people who listened and took me seriously helped. But if someone asked very probing questions, or made remarks like “you’ll get over it” and “pull yourself together” that made me feel even worse.

“Sometimes the risk of receiving hurtful comments can be too much and it doesn’t feel worth it to put yourself out there. I think because it’s quite rarely spoken about in society, among the public, in schools, in daily life, people don’t know how to talk about it.”

Tracey King, 49, from Glasgow, said when her depression is at its most severe she can’t speak to anyone, which can be difficult as she finds people don’t understand what she is experiencing.

She said: “The only way to change the misunderstanding is for everyone to be able to talk about depression in day to day life. It is important people can share their experiences, because depression is different for everyone. For me it is an emptiness, a complete absence of feeling which means I lack the ability to connect to people and the world around me, rather than the feeling of sadness. And that is difficult for people to understand.”

Calum Irving, See Me director, said: “Mental health is part of everyone’s day to day life, it affects all of us, but there is still a stigma around it. This is in part caused by a lack of open conversations, so the theme for this year’s World Mental Health day is vital.

“No one should ever be made to feel ashamed or embarrassed to tell anyone that they are experiencing a difficult time with their mental health. It’s okay not to be okay.

“If you’re going through a tough time, speak to someone you trust about how you’re feeling and try and get help. And if you’re worried about someone else, you don’t have to be an expert, just asking someone if they are okay and really listening can be a powerful thing.”

ENDS...

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

NICK JEDRZEJEWSKI [Communications Manager]

0141 530 1049/07710 387 517

Nick.jedrzejewski@seemescotland.org

NOTES TO EDITORS

1. See Me is Scotland's National programme to end mental health stigma and discrimination, enabling people who experience mental health problems to live fulfilled lives.

We do this by:

- Mobilising people to work together and lead a movement to end mental health stigma and discrimination
 - Working with people to change negative behaviour towards those with mental health problems
 - Ensuring that the human rights of people with mental health problems are respected and upheld
2. Follow See Me on Twitter @seemescotland or find us on Facebook: Facebook/seemescotland, <http://seemescotland.tumblr.com/>, <https://medium.com/@seemescotland>, or at www.seemescotland.org
 3. See Me is managed by SAMH and the Mental Health Foundation and funded by Scottish Government and Comic Relief
 4. We work in partnerships with VOX, the Scottish Mental Health Cooperative and the Scottish Mental Health Arts and Film Festival to bring about a meaningful change in behaviours.

