TikTok wants to train youth to create content for mental health

Ng Wei Kai

Young people here can now apply to join a training programme to learn how to support others with mental health issues through content creation on the video-sharing platform TikTok.

As part of its Youth for Good initiative, TikTok will be running an eight-week training programme from June 28 to Aug 22.

The programme aims to teach young people to create educational content and to provide support to their peers who are struggling with their mental health, said TikTok in a statement.

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18 May 2021

To provide the training, the app has partnered with local non-profit organisations including Campus PSY, Care Corner, Care Singapore, Fei Yue Community Services, Samaritans of Singapore, Silver Ribbon (Singapore) and Touch Community Services.

It will teach users which stigmatising words to avoid, how to notice and respond to early signs and symptoms of mental health issues in peers, how to tackle online harassment and cyber bullying, and also share tips on taking care of the trainees' own online well-being.

Applications opened last Friday and will close at the end of the month. They are open to Singaporeans between the ages of 19 and 34.

The programme was launched at a panel discussion titled Conversations Without Walls which was held live on the TikTok app last Friday.

The panel comprised Minister of State for Education Sun Xueling, TikTok's Asia-Pacific head of regional product policy, trust and safety Jamin Tan, Touch Mental Wellness assistant director Andrea Chan and TikTok user and mental health advocate Yanni Ruth.

It was moderated by TikTok user and Singapore Management University (SMU) student Ian Jeevan.

Ms Sun said: "We are placing a lot of emphasis on teaching students the telltale signs that their mental health is at risk... very importantly we are trying to normalise these conversations in schools."

Students here are hopeful about the new programme. SMU economics undergraduate and regular TikTok user Chng Lu Yee, 21, said: "I think this is a good idea because you can find both extremes of positive and negative content on TikTok."

"It is very influential especially among people slightly younger than me. Whatever is trending on the app has a real influence, which you can see in things like clothes and how people speak," she added.

The Youth for Good programme will be run with the support of the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth, the Education Ministry and the National Youth Council.