

NEWS RELEASE from Ebdaah

## **More Parents In UAE Seeking Help For Troubled Teens, Says Dubai Expert**

### **Dubai Seminar To Aid Teens To Fuller Lives**

**Dubai UAE, April 04 2016:** More parents in the UAE are seeking professional help for their troubled teenagers according to a leading Dubai clinical psychologist.

Dr. Thoraiya Kanafani of the Human Relations Institute and Clinics said the increase follows growing parental acceptance of the impact modern day living is having on teenagers.

“I believe there is a growing trend of parents seeking help for their teenagers due to their own increase in awareness of the difficulties that teenagers are experiencing. I believe that trend began when parents began to acknowledge and accept that their teenagers are having difficulties, mild or severe, that they have not been able to work through. This is a phenomenon that both expatriates and nationals are experiencing. However, the tendency seems to be that more expatriates are seeking help,” said Dr. Kanafani who is also adjunct professor of psychology at the Middlesex University in Dubai.

Dr. Kanafani, who is a licensed clinical psychologist in Canada and the UAE, was speaking ahead of a one-day, learning resource seminar planned for Dubai which will assist parents, teachers, health professionals and carers in ensuring the mental health and emotional wellbeing of their teenage charges.

The seminar – Ensuring Our Youth Live Life Fully – is being organised by Dubai’s specialist training and capacity building consultancy Ebdaah and will take place on Saturday, April 16 at the Media Rotana Hotel. It will be addressed by three prominent experts including Dr. Kanafani. The other experts are Dr. Jim Boylan, a UK consultant child and adolescent psychiatrist and Director of Medical Education at Tess, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust, one of the UK’s largest and most successful mental health providers and Dr. Madeleine Portwood, the British Psychological Society’s spokesperson on child development, neurodevelopment disorders and teenage dilemmas. It comes in the wake of a 2013 Dubai Health Authority study which revealed that about one in five teenage students in the emirate showed symptoms of depression.

“There seems to be a rise in stress, anxiety, and depressive feelings in teenagers. This is exacerbated by the lack of effective coping strategies as well as lack of proper avenues of emotional release,” explained Dr. Kanafani. “Parents should consider seeking help when they feel that their adolescent has difficulty opening up to them or when they feel unsure of what to do or how to help their child. It’s important parents recognise their limitations during this developmental stage and seek help when necessary.”

During the four-module Ebdaah seminar delegates will get a better understanding of mental health conditions and which diagnoses are needed; learn which trigger signs to look for and when to seek interventional help and leave with short-term screening tools and training and insights into long term school-based psychiatry.

Dr. Kanafani says there are some key tell-tale signs parents should watch out for. They include: persistent sadness, empty or irritable moods; diminished interest or pleasure in almost all activities and a loss of energy; appetite and sleeping pattern changes; inability to concentrate, over thinking, feelings of panic, fear and uneasiness.

“Teachers should watch for similar symptoms as well as notice changes in behaviour at school or academic performance,” she suggests.

Dr. Kanafani says there are many realistic strategies that can to help teenagers, depending on what they are experiencing and what is contributing to their difficulty. Some blanket techniques include: managing expectations; physical exercise; developing healthy appetites and sleeping patterns.

“It is important for people to remember that teenagers are human and it is counterproductive to hold them to impossibly high standards which leads to beating themselves up when they fail to meet them. Research shows that exercise can be as effective at treating depression as anti-depressants in certain cases. Physical activity boosts blood flow to the brain which moderates chemical balance and increases serotonin, dopamine, and endorphin levels as well as reduces stress hormone levels.

Equally food plays an essential role in maintaining an overall sense of well-being. Nutritional strategies are used to help improve mood and healthy brain functioning while sleep is essential for minimising stress, boosting mood, and improving performance. Parents need to help children organise their schedules.” Key to all strategies though, says Dr. Kanafani is patience. “Be patient and consistent during their developmental phase - they are changing and trying to make sense of their place in the world. DO NOT MINIMIZE their feelings in hopes of them “getting over it”. Their feelings are real and affecting them in ways that need to be addressed.

“Be gently vigilant but do not suffocate them - you cannot and should not shield them from all stresses and risks. You must set limits as well as consequences to what is acceptable and unacceptable at home, school, and elsewhere. However, avoid ultimatums and make sure to explain your decisions in a clear and concise manner.

The Ebdaah seminar comes as recent international reports confirm that adolescence is a time of high mental health and associated illness risk. Nine out of 10 teenagers admitted to experiencing stress in the past year with two thirds of cases leading to symptoms of stress-related illnesses, according to a new study by the UK’s National Citizen Service. In two thirds of cases the stress led to symptoms of stress-related illnesses, including insomnia, eating disorders and depression.

Dr. Kanafani says if help is not sought during this critical life stage, the symptoms will continue and increase in intensity and frequency. “Ultimately, this may cause dysfunction in different areas of an adolescent's life such as academically, socially, and cognitively. Seeking professional help will teach the adolescent self-advocacy skills, resiliency, and effective coping strategies needed to work through life stressors.”

An added bonus for teaching professionals is that seminar attendance qualifies them for four hours of CME credits.

**For more details:** [http://ebdaah.com/mental\\_health\\_well\\_being](http://ebdaah.com/mental_health_well_being)

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**Picture Caption:**

On April 16, Dr Jim Boylan, Ebdaah consultant and the child & adolescent psychiatrist, Dr Madeleine Portwood, Ebdaah advisor and the British Psychological Society's spokesperson on child development and neurodevelopmental disorders and Dr. Thoraiya Kanafani a clinical psychologist at Dubai's Human Relations Institute and Clinics and adjunct professor of psychology at the Middlesex University in Dubai, will conduct a ground-breaking seminar – Ensuring Teenagers Live Life To The Full – in Dubai.

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**About Ebdaah** – Enabling Opportunity UAE-based Ebdaah is a specialist training and capacity building consultancy, delivering support and solutions towards disability management to transform the lives of people with disabilities in the Middle East.

The Ebdaah team of specialists are geared to offering hands-on specialist consultancy, training and deployment to governments, key stakeholders, organisations and corporates to support and drive opportunities for people with disabilities across the UAE and beyond.

Ebdaah was established in Dubai as a partner company of TECOM's Knowledge Village, and has specialist knowledge in supporting special needs inclusion across Hospitality, Retail, Education, Transportation, as well as organisations of all shapes and sizes.

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