



CMHA HK MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING BULLETIN Q&A

Aaron Stadlin-Robbie is the founder of Talking Mental, a website which features a podcast series of frank discussions with specialists about different aspects of mental health. He also runs the 'Walk and Talk' initiative and is an ambassador for Movember this year.

Welcome Aaron, can you share with us your personal journey and how Talking Mental came about?

Seven years ago I started dealing with anxiety and panic attacks and for the first year, I went to a hospital where I was misdiagnosed. They told me it was a vitamin B12 deficiency. I was later introduced to a psychiatrist in Hong Kong and he told me that I actually had anxiety and panic attacks. It was the way that he was so calm and it was so common that it was kind of a relief for me, because I had been dealing with a problem on my own and not really knowing what it really was.

After a few years of understanding it and learning how to deal with it, I realised talking about it really benefited me. I challenged myself to do it on a public forum, do something where you have the opportunity to speak to people you wouldn't usually have the opportunity to speak to, because getting help in Hong Kong is not easy to find and it isn't affordable. This is an opportunity for me to speak to a lot of these people and also help myself to get better.

This is how Talking Mental came about. It is a

digital content platform working to fill the void in resources within the realm of mental health. Our scope of work ranges from working with corporates to create engaging material for their employees, to creating external campaigns that can raise awareness in the community. At the end of the day, our main goal is to create relatable content to raise awareness and increase education around mental health, which by nature is a difficult subject.

Why do you think it's so important to speak up about the topic of mental health in Hong Kong? In particular why is it so important for men?

I feel as men, we always want to feel like we are in control. And because of that, we have trouble talking about a subject where we can be perceived as losing control. But the more we talk about it, the better we become, and by sharing our experiences, we have more chance to break down the barriers.

We need to change the narrative on how mental health is perceived. With physical health, men talk about their injuries all the time as there is a certain strength to battling

through an injury while performing. And also there is no shame in taking time off to heal from that injury. Once we see mental health in the same light, we'll see men talk about it just as much.

What in your opinion should workplaces in Hong Kong be doing in order to support the mental health and wellbeing of their employees?

I feel with workplaces in Hong Kong, everything has to start from the top down. I feel managers should not only be trained with Mental Health 101 training, but also trained in how to show empathy. If managers are

able to demonstrate their difficulties and vulnerabilities, then it would set a precedent with employees that they can be trusted to talk about these issues. If I had a boss that talked about their stresses and mental health issues, then it normalises it and also stops me from fearing that this topic might put my job in jeopardy. And for managers who have difficulty expressing themselves, they must realise that everyone deals with mental health illness at some level, it depends where you are on the spectrum. So, once you realise that, you can find something that your employees can relate to you with.

You are an ambassador for Movember this year. Can you tell us more?

I am proud to now be working closely with the Movember campaign, which is also raising awareness around the issues of men's mental health, with its annual campaign to encourage men to grow a moustache or move for Movember and raise funds to help stop men dying too young.

The Movember approach has always been to encourage men to talk about common male health problems, but to have fun doing it! It's the best way!

How can workplaces get involved in Movember this year?

There are many ways for workplaces to get involved in the Movember campaign.

- To start with, they can form their own corporate team, register with [**Movember**](#), and encourage men to **Grow a Mo** and join other men across Hong Kong to raise funds and awareness for Movember.
- Workplaces can involve men and women by organising a **Move for Movember**, where staff commit to running or walking 60kms over the month. That's 60kms for the 60 men we lose to suicide each hour, every hour across the world.
- Corporates can also **Host a Mo-ment** and do something fun. Hosting is all about having a good time for a good cause. And you can always put a virtual spin on your plans. The best part? Virtual events are easy to organise, cheap to run and you can go in your slippers. Think an online gaming tournament, Mo Bingo or a virtual trivia night.
- You can also check in to the [**Movember HK**](#) website to learn about activities taking place across town to support Movember.

What's coming up for you?

One of the projects I want to run over here is a campaign driven by Movember called Speak Easy, where we encourage men to gather in a room (more like a bar) to casually get people to start opening up. I've seen Movember run these amazing programs and it really gives men a strong network and helps them to demonstrate that they certainly aren't alone.

For further information:

www.talkingmental.com

www.hk.movember.com

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The City Mental Health Alliance Hong Kong is a collaborative venture founded by city businesses. Championed by senior leaders, the Alliance is business led and expert guided and aims to create a culture of good mental health for workers in the city of Hong Kong, share best practice and increase mental health understanding.