



**MAKE MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING
FOR ALL A GLOBAL PRIORITY**

World Mental Health Day **10 October 2022**

WMHD EDUCATIONAL MATERIAL

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Message From Our World Mental Health Day 2022 Patron

HRH PRINCESS IMAN AFZAN AL-SULTAN ABDULLAH

World Mental Health Day 2022

Make Mental Health & Well-Being For All A Global Priority

When I first wrote a message for World Mental Health Day in October 2020, the world was eight months into the pandemic. Some of us were experiencing the extremities of Covid-19, while some of us were rejoicing as lockdown restrictions eased. Little did we know then that we would be in limbo for the next two years – countries would “open” and “close” as new variants come and go, with repercussions that all of us around the world are still grappling with.

As I wrote then in 2020, the pandemic has been a silver lining for mental health. Awareness has steadily risen, and I like to think that stigma has slowly decreased – albeit a lot of work still needs to be done, slowly but surely.

Today I write about World Mental Health Day not only against the backdrop of a tiring two and a half years, but also against a war in eastern Europe, a climate emergency and a cost of living crisis that is deeply felt around the globe.

World Mental Health Day means a lot of things to a lot of different people.

It celebrates the milestones achieved towards mental health awareness; it symbolises togetherness and unity to push barriers and break the mould on prejudice and discrimination; it



offers support to those who are struggling and reminds our fellow brothers and sisters they are not alone. But most of all, World Mental Health Day simply marks our commitment to say more and do more for mental health.

The challenges that lie ahead of us are two-fold.

First, we must ensure that awareness on mental health does not plateau now that we are learning to live with Covid-19. Mental health cannot and should not be dismissed as a “hot topic” of the pandemic. Indeed, mental health problems were not borne out of the pandemic. On the contrary, mental health problems were only exacerbated by the pandemic, highlighting gaps in policies, skills and resources along the way. I don't think any country was prepared for the mental health crisis that ensued.

Second, awareness on mental health must translate into action for mental health. And I am a big believer that everyone has a role to play in taking action. I say with conviction that the action we take collectively and individually will no doubt lead to more positive outcomes for our communities. I witnessed this first-hand at the 23rd World Federation for Mental Health Congress in London earlier this summer.

I was privileged to learn of the various efforts that are being undertaken to raise awareness on mental health. I was humbled to meet champions and game changers of our cause, and to hear of the journeys that everyone has undertaken to contribute what they can, in whatever capacity that may be. I left more sure than I have ever been before that the future is bright indeed.

World Mental Health Day 2022 – with the theme of “***Make mental health & well-being for all a global priority***” – is not only testament to the seriousness of the global mental health crisis that we are working to support. It is also evidence to the fact that we must now work in unison and we must do so with urgency.

From capitalising on traditional methods of advocating and educating, to utilising technology and innovation in mental health – solutions are already at our disposal.

We must encourage people to start linking mental health and well-being to every aspect of their lives – particularly those who are not yet aware of the importance of mental health. Making mental health and well-being for all a global priority will not mean much if we ourselves do not prioritise our own mental health. It starts with us.

This is the essence of the programmes that my platform the Green Ribbon Group is piloting in universities and schools. Learning how to support ourselves and manage our own mental health are skills that can be taught and learnt, so our children are prepared to navigate the future in all its complexities.

For myself as a mother, wife and working woman, juggling between my roles would be impossible if I were unable to manage everyday stressors.

I have learnt that to better take care of my family – to be more present and attentive, to offer everything in my heart, and to be the best Mama to my children – I have a duty to firstly take care of myself. My mental health is a priority both for myself and my children’s well-being.

It is my hope that we all do some self-reflection and ask ourselves some of those tough questions we know we tend to avoid. Difficult but necessary; an example of the action that we can all take to do our part for mental health. I do promise you there is beauty to be found in looking inwards.

I thank the World Federation for Mental Health for the opportunity to offer some words of support once again.

My good wishes to all for World Mental Health Day 2022.

HRH Princess Iman Afzan Al-Sultan Abdullah

Kuala Lumpur

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