

[« Return to article](#)[Print this](#)

The Straits Times

www.straitstimes.com

Published on Jul 14, 2013

## Younger victims a cause for concern

It is a chilling statistic.

Last year, a boy became the first child in the five-to-nine age group to commit suicide here in at least 10 years.

"There are rarely any deaths in this age group because children do not understand the concept of death," said psychiatrist Chia Boon Hock who has studied decades of suicide data in Singapore.

"Some of them might think that death means closing your eyes, but you can wake up tomorrow.

"The coroner must have found evidence beyond doubt that this is a suicide."

Seventeen teenagers aged 10 to 19 killed themselves last year, the second highest figure among this age group for the past five years, the Registry of Births and Deaths statistics also showed. In 2009, the figure was 19.

Teenagers usually experience depression because of relationships, negative self-image or family disputes, said senior social worker Tan Yi Ying from Ang Mo Kio Family Service Centre. "Many of them lacked affirmation growing up.

"Teens mask their pain behind self-mutilation or by running away from home. Lending a listening ear and having a trusted adult to go to is important," she said.

The centre has seen more cases involving cyber-bullying this year.

"Cyber-bullying spirals; it can really lead to mental distress," Ms Tan said, adding that study woes might also lead to depression.

Psychologist Natalie Lim added: "Some want to get into special programmes like the integrated programme and when they can't, they are harsh on themselves."

**Kash Cheong**

Copyright © 2014 Singapore Press Holdings. All rights reserved.