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'Ah Boys To Men' actor Tosh Zhang shares about his experiences with mental health

by Esther Lam (Writer) | Sep 11, 2020

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The 31-year-old believes the most difficult thing about overcoming mental health struggles is being able to let go of the pain.

Local actor and musician Tosh Zhang, more popularly known as Tosh Rock, found it difficult at times to be open with his own mental struggles, even with his loved ones.

The 31-year-old was sharing his experiences with mental health as part of a mental wellness programme, [Difference in YOuth](https://www.youth.sg/Peek-Show/2020/9/Learn-how-to-better-tackle-mental-health-concerns-with-three-day-programme-Difference-in-YOuth) (<https://www.youth.sg/Peek-Show/2020/9/Learn-how-to-better-tackle-mental-health-concerns-with-three-day-programme-Difference-in-YOuth>), via Facebook Live on the North East Community Development Council's [Facebook page](https://www.facebook.com/NECDC/videos/1205986929779499/) (<https://www.facebook.com/NECDC/videos/1205986929779499/>).

Speaking to host Irene Ang, Tosh recounted about the trials he went through while supporting someone with mental health issues and how he has grown since his adolescent years, when he knew nothing about mental health issues or how to handle them.



"I think the worst times are when the person is alone then they are at home, they have a lot of free time to like dwell."

PHOTO CREDIT: NORTH EAST CDC'S FACEBOOK PAGE

He recalled how he noticed how one of his close secondary school friends started wearing long sleeves t-shirts, when he had been wearing short sleeves all the time. They were in the same dance crew and it was during one of the times when they were dancing when Tosh noticed the cut lines on his friend's wrist.

He then realised his friend had been self-harming.

"It came to a point where I once asked him to show me then he pulled up his sleeve and it's basically like a checkered design of cuts on his arm. So when I saw that I was traumatised. I asked him what's going on and everything but he also found it very hard to tell me because he was afraid that I would judge him or go and tell his mum," explained Tosh.

He encountered depression again when one of his family members was diagnosed and also described that experience as "traumatic".

He explained: "Being there for someone who is going through depression is very difficult, even for the people around them, because sometimes they hurt you and they might not even realise it.

"I was just like 16, 17, I didn't have the experience or capability to understand or be there for them the whole time and me fearing the experience of depression, I always ran away from home. I was always outside with my friends just to escape.

"It's really not easy seeing someone you love spiralling down and suddenly they are not like who they used to be."

Despite his young age, Tosh was one of the eldest children amongst his family and felt the responsibility to be present for his loved ones, as difficult as it was.

"But now I look back, if there were people there to support [us], it would have been much easier to support [the person]," said Tosh.

As a public figure that is constantly in the limelight, the local star has faced societal pressure in maintaining his image too.

Tosh said: "I think people have an expectation about my public persona to be very outspoken and loud because I do rap music and in my vlogs I was very animated, but actually, all this is like a stage persona. In real life, I'm super reserved."

"Sometimes it's very hard to live up to that expectation of what people expect you to be."

Exemplifying his point that actors are not always carbon copies of their on-screen personas, the local star used the comparison of Irene to her character Rosie in *Phua Chu Kang* and how people might expect her to always be funny and comedic, even off-screen.

Talking about the challenges he faced after his schooling days, such as dark days and the entertainment industry's impact on him personally, he added: "Before being in the entertainment industry, I was somehow more confident because I didn't have the experience of so many eyes watching you, scrutinising everything you do, everything you say."

"After experiencing fame and everything, I think there are definitely a lot of times you doubt yourself."

"Self doubt is constantly there, even now. In fact, sometimes I feel that I doubt myself even more than last time."



With Phase 2 of the circuit breaker in effect, Tosh gladly shared that his workload has slowly begun building back up.

PHOTO CREDIT: NORTH EAST CDC'S FACEBOOK PAGE

Diving into his own mental health, Tosh said: "I found it very difficult to say how I feel and why am I depressed, even to the closest people to me."

Eventually, he managed to open up about his thoughts and mental health to his parents, the kind of people who loved him undoubtedly.

Having endured and overcome various encounters with mental health issues, Tosh emphasised the importance of seeking professional help.

"They'll be able to listen to what you say and advise you. They can diagnose you and you'll know actually what you're going through then they'll give you steps to recover.

"The most important thing is you have to ask yourself what is the root of what is causing you that pain. Sometimes you might not even know until you really go and think deep and you see a professional that can help you.

"I think that's the hardest part because the person has to be able to let go."



"Invest in your mental health because health is wealth."

PHOTO CREDIT: NORTH EAST CDC'S FACEBOOK PAGE

Tosh also shared his two cents on how to maintain strong mental health.

He said: "Be very wary of the content you consume, not just the diet.

"Avoid looking at toxic news and articles, dwelling on drama and everything because social media is extremely toxic to mental health and a lot of people feel you have to live up [to expectations].

"Just basically watch uplifting content because the things that we eat will affect our body but the things that we watch and listen to will affect our minds."

BANNER AND TEASER PHOTO CREDIT: TOSH ROCK'S INSTAGRAM

Want to avoid the crowd outside but unsure what you can do at home? Hop on to [Cr8studiosg](http://https://www.facebook.com/Cr8studiosg/) (<http://https://www.facebook.com/Cr8studiosg/>) to watch chat shows, stand-up comedy and music performances! Or visit [MehGoWhere.SG](https://mehgowhere.sg/) (<https://mehgowhere.sg/>) for more resources or things to do!

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