

Alternative to Counselling

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The New Paper, 1 January 2014

The suicidal and the terminally ill may be attracted to the Death Cafe model of gatherings, but counsellor Tan Lay Geok sees it as a positive thing.

"As long as the gatherings encourage the celebration of life, those people could have a new avenue to re-evaluate their thought process," said Madam Tan, the principal at the ACC School of Counselling and Psychology.

"It could help re-direct their focus."

Sociologist Tan Ern Ser agreed but pointed out that death is a taboo topic in Singapore, although not as much as in the past.

He said: "Like it or not, people need to deal with death in face of an ageing population, the possibility of terminal illnesses and shrinking family size."

"So I think it is healthy to be open about death and to see it as another timeline in a journey."

Madam Tan said such gatherings could help those not ready for individual counselling with a professional counsellor to "view life from a different perspective".

"Many may even realise that what they are going through are not unique to themselves and they can and should celebrate their precious life," she said.

"These gatherings could help to educate on the importance of seeking wise counsel and that there is no stigma in seeking help from professional counsellors."