

# THE AMCHAM POST

A joint initiative of the American Chamber of Commerce in Madagascar and L'Express

Saturday, October 12, 2019

n°.0330

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4 pages every Saturday

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## MENTAL HEALTH

# The rise of "eco-anxiety": climate change affects our mental health, too

Feeling overwhelmed by the existential challenge of climate change? You are not alone. The 16-year-old Greta Thunberg, who was made famous after her speech at the United Nations, founded the school strike for climate movement in 2018, and said, "Adults keep saying, we owe it to the young people to give them hope. But I don't want your hope, I don't want you to be hopeful, I want you to panic." And, it seems, some people are indeed panicking, but, overwhelmed by the magnitude of the issue and mindful of their position as just one person on a planet of billions, they feel powerless.

**Eco-anxiety:** described by Psychology Today as "a fairly recent psychological disorder afflicting an increasing number of individuals who worry about the environmental crisis".

The case of Australia: youth is being exemplary at voicing their despair and eco-anxiety around the foreseeable deterioration of our planet.

**What solutions?** More than just raising awareness about it, investing in areas where mental health services are under-resourced is highly important, especially in rural areas where health effects of climate change are likely to be most severe.



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## EDITORIAL

By Dr. Holitiana RABARISON  
ANJA, Clinical Psychologist,  
Psychotherapist

## Mental health concerns all of us



In Madagascar, the harshness of daily life, which is faced by most Malagasy households contributes to the increase in cases of mental disorders. A study conducted in 2001 by MINI (Mini International Neuropsychiatric Interview) estimated that 47% of the population are affected by mental disorders in the country.

Indeed, since the dawn of time, "insanity" has raised questions. Its mysterious and enigmatic nature has given birth to the most implausible explanations: acts of witchcraft, possessions by ill-intentioned spirits, non-respect of the duties due to ancestors, transgression of taboos, etc. Therefore, when mental illness occurs, we first call on traditional healers, or turn to the church; the doctor comes last ... only if we think about it.

It must also be recognized that the country is desperately short of specialized institutions and health personnel who can take care of the sick people. And let's face it: the management of mental illnesses is clearly not a priority in Madagascar.

We also note that people with mental illnesses are often victims of many prejudices. For example, one may mistakenly think that these people are unpredictable, violent or lazy or perceive them as a threat. And we all know that prejudice leads to stigmatization and discrimination against sick people. In other words, people judge these people negatively and reject or avoid them. As a result, mental illness still arouses fears and shame in some people today in Madagascar.

I would also like to warn that for many people with mental illnesses, stigma and discrimination are more difficult to live with than the symptoms of the disease. In fact, prejudices discourage sick people from asking for help. However, a rapid management of their needs, as soon as the first symptoms appear, is decisive in the success of their care.

In addition, it should be noted that in Madagascar, some mental illnesses are still associated with false beliefs, such as: "people with schizophrenia are violent"; "depressive people lack will"; "anxious people have a weak personality"; "Bipolar people are difficult to manage." Faced with all these preconceived ideas, some members of the entourage reduce their contact with the sick, which has the effect of increasing their isolation. As for the professional life of the sick, some employers make discriminatory choices towards these people. For example, an employer may decide not to offer a job promotion to a deserving person who has a mental illness.

To conclude, let us be aware that the society's reactions to mental illness have a heavy impact on the daily lives of patients. This affects their self-esteem, their adherence to the proposed treatments or even drives them to lock themselves away and isolate themselves from all social life.

De-stigmatize, break the barriers that divide, tear the labels up, again and again, without ever stopping, so that one day all our differences complement each other, enrich us, and that to tend towards unity, such is the I call on this World Mental Health Day.

## MENTAL HEALTH

## The rise of "eco-anxiety": climate change affects our mental health, too



Parents sometimes worry about how climate change will affect their children's lives in the future. From shutterstock.com

Climate change has been recently declared by the Australian Medical Association a health emergency. Climate change has impacts on physical health but if we refer to the World Health Organization's statement, describing climate change as "the greatest threat to global health in the 21st century", an important issue related to mental health tends to be forgotten.

Extreme weather events that the world is experiencing now oblige thousands of people to get displaced from their homes, and those people are put at even higher risk of mental illness. People who are feeling distressed about the state of the planet may find themselves in a spiral of what's been termed "eco-anxiety".

Fiona Charlson, from the University of Queensland, wrote that unseasonal drought, fires and floods in some areas of Australia are having devastating impacts on the mental health of Australians. Farmers see their sense of place and identities under threat; rates of suicide

among rural communities are increasing.

The reality of climate-induced social instability is already tangible across numerous countries, and the Asia-Pacific region is considered at high risk. In Australia for example, youth is being exemplary at voicing their despair and "eco-anxiety" around the foreseeable deterioration of our planet. For those too young to have a voice, parents are feeling anxiety and distress on their behalf. Mums and dads are under pressure to instil values such as caring for the environment, while worrying about the future of the planet they are leaving their children.

If we take a look at data from South Australia, extreme heat is associated with increased hospital admissions for mental and behavioural disorders. Other research has found spikes in temperature were associated with increased suicide rates in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Hobart. Then, Fiona Charlson adds that there is the strong link between nutritional status and mental health, which is less obvious. Climate-

related impacts on agriculture lead to reduced availability of nutritious foods, and poor nutritional intake can affect mental health.

## What solutions then?

Fiona Charlson states that doing everything we can to reduce the progression of climate change is one clear way to address this issue. Increasing awareness of the mental health effects of climate change across the community, private, and government sectors should be included in the process of preparing the health system for climate change.

Investing in areas where mental health services are under-resourced would be important too, especially in rural areas where health effects of climate change are likely to be most severe. No single solution is available to solve the issue; a broad perspective and a range of actions will be necessary. Globally, this will require strong leadership and some innovative thinking.

Source: The Conversation AU (Fiona Charlson)  
Edited by Kenny Raharison.

About the American Chamber of Commerce in Madagascar :  
AMCHAM in Madagascar is a non-profit association of American, International, Local businesses and business people, and is affiliated with the US Chamber of Commerce, the largest business organization representing the interests of more than 3 million businesses of all sizes, sectors and regions.  
For further information about the benefits of membership, please don't hesitate to contact us either via email or phone.  
Email: es@amcham-madagascar.org  
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American Chamber of Commerce in Madagascar

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**MADAGASCAR OIL**

**YOUTH**

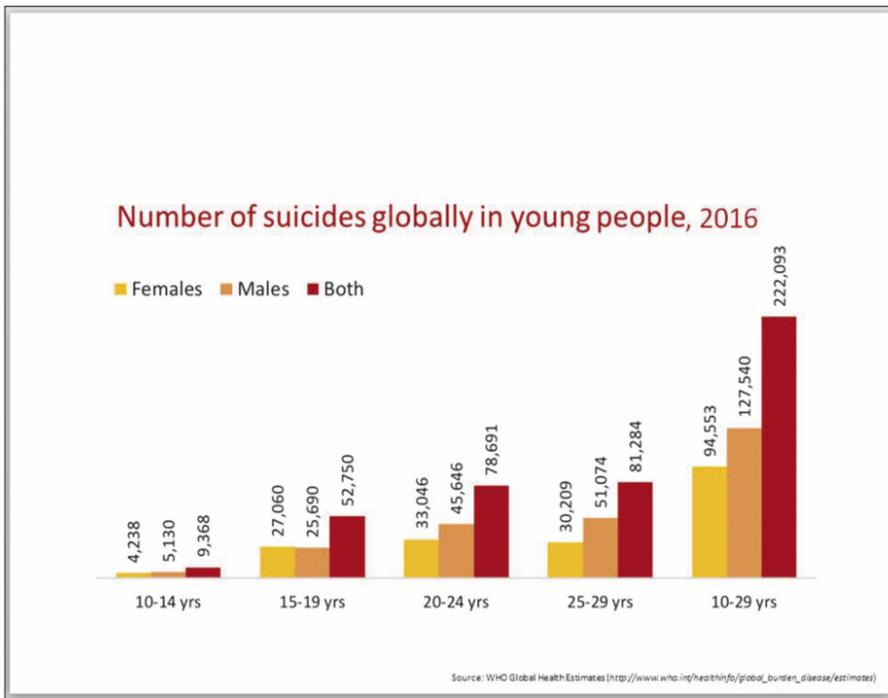
# What to ask a loved one to help screen for suicide risk?

**O**ctober 10: World Mental Health Day 2019 celebration is focused on suicide prevention. According to the World Health Organization, 1 person dies every 40 seconds from suicide. Every suicide is a tragedy that has long-lasting effects on the people left behind. This year, we focus on what can be done to prevent suicide.

Pr. Andres Pumariega, Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Florida, gives 6 questions to be asked to people aged 8+ to detect if they are at a high risk of suicide.

Datas show that suicide rates in the United States have increased by 25-30 percent since 1999, particularly for young people aged 12-24. What are the causes? Mental health professionals know that depression and other mental and emotional disorders contribute to deaths by suicide and having thoughts or plans for suicide. Moreover, what we commonly call "life stressors" are among the biggest causes, especially when young people do not have access to mental health, or do not feel the need to seek help. Life stressors can be relationship problems, substance abuse or life crises. One thing to know is, in the United States, suicides take approximately twice as many lives as homicides but do not get as much attention.

Pr. Andres Pumariega approached Dr. Posner, from the Columbia Suicide Severity Rating Scale (C-SSRS), and proposed to



Number of suicides globally in young people 2016.

develop an abbreviated screening version. After Dr. Posner's approval, here are the six questions to be asked to people aged 8+. It is recommended to hold an empathic conversation indicating concern for the person, and to ask the questions in a nonalarming, matter-of-fact manner.

1. Have you wished you were dead or wished you could go to sleep and not wake up?
2. Have you actually had any thoughts about killing yourself? If the loved one answers "yes" to question 2, ask questions 3, 4, 5 and 6. If the person answers "no" to question 2, go directly to question 6.
3. Have you thought

about how you might do this?

4. Have you had any intention of acting on these thoughts of killing yourself, as opposed to you have the thoughts but you definitely would not act on them?

5. Have you started to work out or worked out the details of how to kill yourself? Do you intend to carry out this plan?

6. Always ask question 6: In the past three months, have you done anything, started to do anything, or prepared to do anything to end your life?

Examples you could mention would be: Have you collected pills; obtained a gun; given away

valuables; written a will or suicide note; held a gun but changed your mind; cut yourself; tried to hang yourself.

Anyway, the potential of this work has only touched the surface of this critical problem. The screening C-SSRS has to be combined with training on risk surveillance for implementation by teachers, counselors and student organization, ranging from middle school through the college levels. Statistics show that minority and culturally diverse populations are more likely to be tempted to suicide.

**Source: The Conversation US (Pr. Andres Pumariega) Edited by Kenny**

**FOCUS ON U.S. CITIES**

## Phoenix, Arizona: the "Valley of the Sun"



Arizona's capital city is nicknamed "Valley of the Sun" just because it is where we see more sunshine than any other metro area in the country. With its relatively low cost of living and a thriving job market, and all that the city has to offer, Phoenix is ranked #26 in Best Places to Live and #35 in Best Places to Retire, out of 125 metro areas.

**Affordable living:** The average annual salary in Phoenix falls below the national average, but the cost of living is more affordable compared with San Francisco or New York City. The region is a touristic area, which helps residents alleviate their taxes, up to \$1,000 a year. Housing costs seem to be higher than the national average though; but Phoenix offers a better value than similarly sized metro areas when you compare housing costs to median household income.

**What's the weather like?** 20 million visitors flock to Phoenix yearly for one reason: the weather. In the winter, daytime highs are mild, and springtime hits as early as late January, with cactus blossoms and wildflowers blooming. Summers can be too hot for newcomers though.

**You need a car.** Phoenix residents most likely need a car to get around the city. Fortunately, a network of highways makes it easier for them to escape traffic during rush hours. Valley Metro provides bus service throughout the entire metro area. The light rail system connects downtown areas with the eastern suburbs of Tempe and Mesa. You can also rent a bike from one of the Grid Bike Share locations from your smartphone and pedal to your destination. When it comes to air traffic, Phoenix Sky Harbor Airport is a hub for Southwest Airlines and offers a high volume of daily domestic and international flights.

**A Mexican heritage.** Until the mid-1800s, Arizona was part of Mexico, Hispanic culture then remains a strong influence in the area – especially in architecture, festivals and cuisine. Greater Phoenix is home to Arizona State University, which draws a lot of younger people in the area. Note that more than a quarter of the population is under 20. Roughly 22 percent of Phoenix residents live at or below the poverty line though.

**What is there to do in Phoenix, AZ?** A lot! Hike trails in the Phoenix Mountains Preserve, kayak or paddleboard on Tempe Town Lake or enjoy desert wildlife at the Desert Botanical Garden. Dozens of museums with themes like Native American history, musical instruments, toys and firetrucks provide respite from the sun.

Phoenix residents enjoy sport, from the MLB's Arizona Diamondbacks, to NFL's Arizona Cardinals, the NBA's Suns, WNBA's Mercury and the NHL's Coyotes. Each January, more than half a million golf enthusiasts descend on the area to watch the Waste Management Phoenix Open. Downtown Phoenix offers a collection of concert venues and nightclubs, as do the nearby cities of Scottsdale and Tempe.

Even though Phoenix' downtown area is characterized by ultramodern office buildings, the city center is not all about work. New sports stadiums, arts and shopping districts, and area's finest eateries also make up the identity of the metro area.

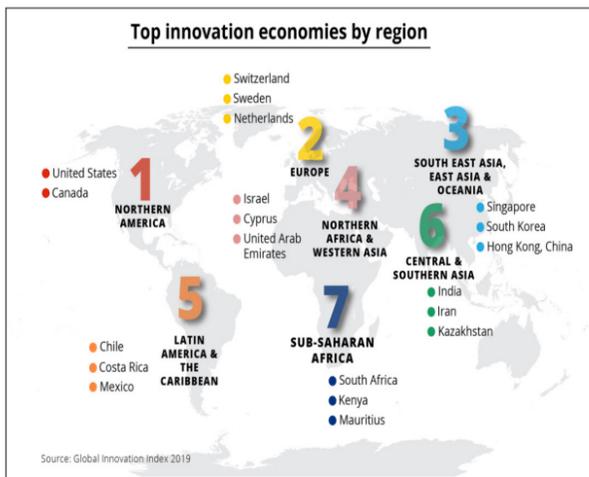
**Phoenix, AZ, Quick Stats :**

- Metro Population : 4,561,038
- Median Age : 36.2
- Unemployment Rate : 4.1%
- Average Annual Salary : \$49,500
- Median Home Price : \$234,183
- Median Monthly Rent : \$1,032
- Average Commute Time : 26.2 minutes

**Source: Real Estate / U.S. News Edited by Kenny Raharison**

**GLOBAL INNOVATION INDEX 2019**

## United States is a leader in global innovation



The United States continues to rank as a top destination for businesses to invest in or start new companies, a United Nations report shows.

Northern America — consisting of the U.S. and Canada — is the top "innovation" region in the world, according to the U.N.'s

Global Innovation Index 2019.

The index drew on 80 indicators in making its innovation assessment, including access to a skilled workforce, high-tech infrastructure and credit. Another factor: strong intellectual property laws that allow entrepreneurs and inven-

tors to own their ideas and have the exclusive right to use them to make money from their hard work.

The United States ranked first in market sophistication, which looks at availability of credit; investment; and trade, competition and market scale.

The annual report from

the U.N.'s World Intellectual Property Organization looks at the regulatory and private sector environments in 129 economies to evaluate their level of innovation and business potential.

**Source: ShareAmerica / Global Innovation Index 2019**



## ANNOUNCEMENT

### AmCham English Discussion Seminars

The American Chamber of Commerce (AmCham) is pleased to announce the opening of the

**4th term of its Tuesday - Thursday sessions, which will start on Tuesday, November 5th, 2019.**

If you want to improve your English skills, come join the AmCham's English discussion seminars, consisting of 100% practice in a friendly and welcoming learning environment.

#### Class descriptions:

- Each class is limited to 10 participants to give you the best possible opportunity to learn quickly and accurately.
- Sessions are led by fluent English speakers having extensive experience in teaching the English language.
- Each session focuses on a variety of topic of interest to the participants.

#### Calendar & Venue:

Seminars are held at the AmCham Office, Bâtiment C1, Explorer Business Park, Ankondrano - **all at the same time: 12:15pm-1:45pm.**

Participation fee is **100,000 Ariary** per person for all 10 sessions

(10,000 Ariary per session), or 15,000 Ariary per session for those attending "a la carte".

Anyone with basic conversational English is eligible to attend. However, preference will be given to individuals registering for the full 10 session block, and within this group, AmCham members.

Registration: Class size is limited to 10 participants, so to secure your spot, please submit payment to the AmCham office by

#### > Monday, November 4th, 2019

Special formula: Companies may have the English discussion seminars held at their offices on one condition: the client has to provide 10 participants for each class.

Another possible option under this special formula: Companies that cannot gather 10 participants but located in the same area (e.g. downtown) can make a joint session at an agreed location (e.g. in the premises of one of the participating companies). Interested parties are invited to contact AmCham in the below contact details. Registration deadline for this special formula is open-ended.

**For further information, contact AmCham at [es@amcham-madagascar.org](mailto:es@amcham-madagascar.org) / [info@amcham-madagascar.org](mailto:info@amcham-madagascar.org) or at 020 26 410 34..**

#### MANAGEMENT CORNER

##### Can Everyone Speak Up in Your Meetings?

*If you want your culture to be more inclusive, start with the way you run meetings. Some employees don't feel comfortable speaking up in meetings, or they're likely to get interrupted when they do. That's why leaders need to make sure everyone feels welcome. Send an email before the meeting that invites all attendees to be ready to share as well as listen. As people arrive, welcome them by name and make sure everyone has a (literal) seat at the table. Let people know they can speak honestly and offer dissenting opinions without fear of retribution. During the meeting, keep track of who's talking — and who's not. If someone hasn't offered their thoughts, call on them and ask what they think about the topic at hand. And if someone is interrupted, step in quickly: "Wait a minute, I want to hear more of what Alejandra has to say." Leading meetings this way creates room for everyone to contribute and sets a standard for respect across the group.*

*This tip is adapted from "To Build an Inclusive Culture, Start with Inclusive Meetings," by Kathryn Heath and Brenda F. Wensil*

*Source: Harvard Business Review*

## ANNOUNCEMENT

As a reminder, the American Chamber of Commerce is non-profit organization based in Madagascar and dedicated to both US and Madagascan businesses. AmCham started working in November 2008 and was officially recognized by the Government of Madagascar in February 2010.

AmCham's missions are to:

- Strengthen trade relations between United States and Madagascar
- Support the establishment of high-quality standards of commercial practice
- Support the expansion of an English-speaking, Anglophone business community in Madagascar

The American Chamber of Commerce in Madagascar is pleased to welcome in 2019 YOUTH INITIATIVES among its members.

As an AmCham Youth member, your organization will have the opportunity to:

- Develop a high level network
- Reinforce your credibility as an organization
- Upgrade your international visibility
- Receive technical support from the AmCham team

Ready to apply? Please verify that your organization:

- Supports at least one SDG goal
- Is led by (a) young person/people aged between 18 and 35 years old
- For startups, is less than 5 years of fiscal activities.

The membership fee is **100 000 Ariary per year**

**No individual application allowed**

**For further information, contact AmCham at [info@amcham-madagascar.org](mailto:info@amcham-madagascar.org) or at 020 26 410 34.**

#### THE AMCHAM POST

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