

## Forum: Minimise scourge of love scams by addressing loneliness

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I refer to the report that Singaporeans lost \$633.3 million to scams last year, more than double that of the previous year, and that job, investment, impersonation and love scams were among the biggest contributors to the rise ([Scam victims in S'pore lost \\$633.3 million in 2021](#), Feb 20).

While speaking to a number of victims of love scams and their family members who were emotionally affected, the Silver Ribbon team observed that loneliness due to a period of social isolation during the pandemic was a possible cause of people falling for such scams.

In view of this, it is helpful to review and enhance our communication with loved ones no matter how busy we are.

If we are not paying sufficient attention to them, they are likely to turn to someone else or even a stranger online when they are lonely and coping with personal struggles such as a failed relationship, limited social support and the loss of someone.

In addition, although it is commonly reported that the elderly, women and the less educated are more prone to love scams, we should be mindful that the younger generation, men and those who are better educated may be susceptible as well.

Tips such as "spot the signs", "stop and think" and "slow down, don't rush" are certainly beneficial. We understand that there is no one-size-fits-all solution and propose to have further discussions on how our community can:

- Start addressing loneliness, which is recognised as a genuine concern across the world. A loneliness minister has even been appointed in Japan and Britain.
- Identify warning signs when speaking to a scammer, such as someone who creates a bogus profile to approach victims on social media; expresses romantic interest in victims and makes them feel special; or proposes an investment or asks for financial information, intimate photos and money (to support their medical bills, legal fees, debts and travel expenses to fly over and meet victims in person).
- Support our loved ones and friends who have been scammed by being non-judgmental through active listening.
- Create a safe space for victims and their family members to share their encounters and get help.

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