

YOU ARE NOT ALONE

By Yohanna Abdullah

Shirin, not her real name, 38, has gone through a most traumatic event where she lost both her husband and her only child at one time. The tragedy struck her when she least expected it and it brought her down completely. She was so angry and distraught that she renounced Islam.

Confided Shirin, "A police officer calmed me down and got me to repeat the Shahadah that there is no god but God and that Muhammad is the messenger of God. I was so angry with God that I said I was a Hindu and not a Muslim anymore."

Traumatised

Shirin who is a Permanent Resident of 14 years left Singapore for two years in India, her homeland, to recover from her Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder recently received an invitation to come to Singapore as the Housing and Development Board (HDB) asked her to occupy her flat. "I was not happy in India and I took it as an invitation from Allah to lead a new life in Singapore which I love."

"I am now staying alone in my marital home in Singapore. I redecorated the house so that it does not remind me of the happy days I spent with my husband and my son."

Now she is strong, having recovered from her illness and she wants to show her gratitude to Singapore society which helped her in the time of her loss. She went to a Muslim organisation to be a volunteer but she still felt that was not what she is meant to do.

HEALing Friend

She happened to know that there was a HEALing friends Training organised by Club HEAL and felt that working with Persons with Mental Health Issues is her true calling.

Said Shirin, "I wanted to know more about mental illness, I was not aware of many things related to this. The session was really an eye-opener. One thing I learned was that mental illness is caused by chemical imbalances and this can be balanced with the help of medications."

Shirin said that everyone should be knowledgeable about mental health issues as they never know when they or their family members could be affected.

“I want to help PMHI feel normal to be very positive in life. I can be a role model for them. I promised Allah that if I got out of my situation I will help the people of Singapore,” said Shirin.

Repaying Singaporean’s kindness

It is her way of returning the kindness of many Singaporeans who helped her go through her grief and depression. One of these good people is Speaker of Parliament Madam Halimah Yacob, her MP who often offered her solace and hope for the future. “She helped me in legal matters pertaining to my house,” added Shirin.

After languishing in India, refusing to be married off and disagreeing with her family especially on the issue of returning to Singapore alone, Shirin feels happy to make Singapore her home again and faces up to painful memories here bravely.

“I have been looking for a way to return to society what I had received from them and now I think being in Club HEAL as a HEALing Friend is exactly what I am meant to do now.”

Shirin now attends the Day Rehabilitation Centre at Club HEAL and helps the programme executive at Bukit Batok East. She is among the most cheerful and pleasant lady in the centre and she generously cares and shares.

Shirin is grateful she has triumphed a great adversity and found her voice to help others in need, as she like to say, “You are never alone as Allah and His angels are always with you.”