

HEAL



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**being able
to feel what the other
person feels...**

President's address

The multiplication of good

Empathy – a word that has been used often enough in counselling circles – is a necessary prerequisite to becoming a successful counsellor.

Empathy means being able to put oneself in the position of another person ... to come close to being able to feel what the other person feels, that is, putting oneself in another person's shoes.

In this year's *Iftar* (breaking of fast during Ramadan), we got our non-Muslim friends to experience Ramadan fasting, so they get a chance to experience what it is like to have to go without food or water from dawn to dusk – what a needy person may in fact go through every day, having only 2 meals daily and being hungry constantly. All towards developing understanding and building empathy.

PMHI's and their caregivers are often misunderstood – few are able to empathise with them unless one has gone through a similar experience themselves.

This is why in Club HEAL we have support groups – for caregivers, for those with anxiety and depression

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and for those with psychoses. The support group participants share common experiences and learn from each other. One thing for sure – they learn that they are not alone. And that, by itself, is very comforting and promotes healing.

Theirs is a bond based on common experiences of challenges faced. New members of a support group join to seek solace and support, while others remain in order to serve and guide the newer members.

Alhamdulillah (God be praised), some go a step further and become ready to come out in the open and help educate and enlighten the general public about mental health issues. They have an inner drive and compassion

that is hard to match, having walked the thorny path that others can at best only imagine. Their testimonies ring true.

“For those who give in charity, men and women, and loan to God a Beautiful Loan, it shall be increased manifold, and they shall have a liberal reward.” – 57:18

What better charity is there than that of giving one's precious time to serve the helpless in their times of need? May God reward them generously!

About Club HEAL

Club HEAL is a charity that aims to assist and empower persons with mental health issues to regain confidence in themselves and others in their journey towards community reintegration. It also aims to eradicate the stigma surrounding persons with mental health issues thereby breaking unnecessary barriers to their recovery process. Services provided by Club HEAL include psychiatric rehabilitative services, home visits, public education, caregiver support groups, volunteer training and many more.

Support Groups Special

Down on my knees I will take you there.

Mr Sabri (not his real name), 45, a taxi driver was brought down to his knees when his son Adam (not his real name) fell ill 3 years ago and he was unable to help him because of lack of knowledge. Now he feels empowered to help himself, his family and others in a similar plight as him.

"It started with a phone call from school in 2012. My son Adam, 14, had been crying in the class and the teacher asked me to take him home. I thought everything would be OK.

But for days he had sleepless nights, when he woke up he cried, he had fever for 2 weeks, his weight dropped. We brought him to the polyclinic to check it he had a serious medical problem but they found nothing. He was declared medically sound.

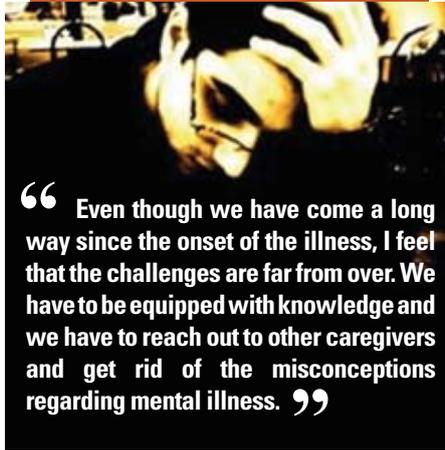
However his condition got worse. At that time I did not know about mental illness. As the news spread about my son's condition, extended family members suggested that it was *sampuk* (spirit possession) or black magic and that we should see ustaz's or bomoh's. Coincidentally, Adam had just gone to an isolated place. I approached four ustazs and all except for one said it wasn't a case of possession, so, we agreed with the majority.

My wife and I consulted a psychiatrist at the Child Guidance Clinic and a psychologist at the Khoo Teck Puat Hospital.

The moment of truth

We had a serious wake-up call one day when, after dawn prayers, Adam was talking to himself and he was holding fast to the window grille.

We decided to take the treatment one step further and admit him into the Institute of Mental Health (IMH). We had kept away from IMH because of the stigma. It was a big decision for me to bring him to IMH. Because he was talking to himself, we finally put him in IMH.



“ Even though we have come a long way since the onset of the illness, I feel that the challenges are far from over. We have to be equipped with knowledge and we have to reach out to other caregivers and get rid of the misconceptions regarding mental illness. ”

We put him in Sunrise Wing, a children's ward for those below 18. The ward was depressing, with many young people with serious mental illness and not enough staff to help them. So, we had him transferred to the private wing of IMH, the Sayang Wellness Ward. He was diagnosed as having depression with psychosis. At that time, he refused to bathe and I had to persuade and help him to do so.

With medication, he started to show progress. He did not complete Secondary 2 but he was promoted to Secondary 3 because his results in the previous exams were good enough. In fact he was not in school for most of Secondary 3 too. My mistake was not to tell some of his classmates what was going on. His classmates saw his online postings and wondered why he was having fun going here and there and that he was not sick in bed. We were advised to help him recover by allowing him to de-stress with short holidays. He became the target of cyber-bullying. One of them posted pictures of Adam's results (showing all as MC's- he did not take his final exams in Sec 2), among other things. I decided to transfer him out of the school he was attending. We sent him to a different school but did not get the support of the school which put the prerequisite that

he has to go through a 3-month probation period before being allowed to continue on as its student.

Back to school

Eventually I found a good place for him to continue his studies at a private college. He is in a small class with less than 10 students and the stress level here is less. He did well here. Adam is preparing to sit for his N levels.

Now it feels like the worst is over. In the beginning I was stunned, puzzled why this is happening to us. When he contemplated jumping from the window, it really brought me to my knees, I cannot accept it. But religion played a part and I understood this as my test.

So I researched about all there is to know about depression and psychosis. Knowledge is important. Ignorance makes it all worse. My wife who is Adam's main caregiver attended the Family Link Programme workshop for caregivers conducted by the Singapore Association of Mental Health. We also joined Club HEAL's monthly Caregivers Support Group. I know that we are not alone, that we have other caregivers like us who are struggling with similar issues and we are happy to discuss our feelings and share tips and share what is good.

From caregiver to mental health advocate

We try to help eradicate the stigma surrounding mental patients. If my son was suffering from cancer, we would have got a lot of moral support from others. I did my part to explain to my family by organizing for an expert from Club HEAL to explain to them his illness. I wrote to the local Malay newspaper and shared our story on television, as well as at a public forum on mental health issues to help reduce the stigma. However I cannot openly identify myself as I want to protect the privacy of my child, he is still young.

“ she sees lights and had a persistent delusion that she was Michael Jackson's girlfriend ”

Recovering through support groups

Ella, (not her real name) 22, a trainee at OT Reception at the Institute of Mental Health, supports fully, support groups that help heal those with mental health issues. Since late last year, she has been attending Club HEAL's monthly psychosis and schizophrenia support group and after 6 sessions she has reaped the benefits of the sharing with others like her about their illnesses.

White lights and Michael Jackson's girlfriend

Since 2012, Ella has been trying to overcome her illness which is schizophrenia. Although she does not hear voices, she sees lights and had a persistent delusion that she was Michael Jackson's girlfriend. She would go around asking people if they believe her strange beliefs. She had even sent a letter

describing the fact that she was MJ's girlfriend to his family and also contemplated getting inseminated with his sperm to create their child after his death.

Perhaps after being told for the umpteenth time by Club HEALians that she was not related to MJ she finally could understand the idea was just a delusion. The reason she went to this support group was because "I want to gain knowledge and understand other people's illnesses and also I want to socialise with people with other mental illnesses."

Started taking medicines on time and willingly

From this support group, Ella become convinced that she should take psychiatric medicines to help her "become mentally and physically strong."

"I learned a lot about self-esteem and knowing my own self. I also felt convinced that I can recover just like anyone else." Ella learned from the support group to be aware about the medicines and look out for side effects, and she worked with her doctor to have more suitable medicines.

"I also learned to listen to parents' instructions," said Ella who used to have issues with them. As for her visual hallucinations, Ella has come to terms with it. If she sees it she accepts it as a beautiful gift to her. "The lights are pure and white, and they remind me of angels," said Ella.

One by one her issues were dealt with and now Ella

is declared ready for work. Now she works as a trainee at OT Reception, IMH.

Mother who found staunch support

Lin, 34, housewife and mother of 3, attends the Club HEAL's Anxiety and Depression Support Group and even with just two sessions at the monthly sessions at Bukit Batok East, she finds that it had make a difference in her life,

She also attends the Club HEAL Day Rehabilitation but she says the support group is different. "The support group has more sharing with those with the same illness. We can talk to them more freely than at our Rehab Day Centre. Still, it is only 2 hours of support group each time and after that we contact each other on our own, those whom we can share more closely with."

Sharing how she felt before taking part in Club HEAL, Lin said "I used to feel very anxious and breathless and giddy and think that I am going to die. But this anxiety attacks hardly happens now - I feel much better with the advice of our psychologist Nabilah Bagarib who lead our support group. Indeed the participants of the support group, partnered with each other and share even outside the group."

"With Club HEAL and especially with the support groups I feel there is hope for my condition to improve and I have friends to support me," said Lin.

Past Events



Non-Muslims join in the fasting at Club HEAL's Iftar

It was a fasting with a difference, the Islamic way of fasting was introduced to 32 friends and well-wishers of Club HEAL in an event

called fast-a-thon. It was also a fundraising event with our major contributor being none other than our Guest-of-Honour Member of Parliament Dr Fatimah Lateef.

The oldest participant of the fast-a-thon was Mdm Fu, 73 who is an active grassroots leader from Geylang Serai CC. Another participant is Dr William Wan, the Gen-Sec of the Singapore Kindness Movement who shared the differences and similarities between the Christian way of fasting and the Muslim way.



Other fast-a-thoners came from the Rotary Club, the Singapore Association of Mental Health (SAMH), the Agency for Integrated Care (AIC), Silver Ribbon Singapore and personal friends of Club HEAL members.

The Fast-a-thon Iftar food - delicious by all accounts - was sponsored by Mr Mohamed Yusoff Bin Abdul Rahman and Islamic Restaurants Pte Ltd. The food was prepared at the Culinary Art Studio of Singapore Culinary Art Federation partly by our own staff, volunteers and participants of the rehabilitation programme.

There were other programmes for our guests at the Iftar. The early birds got engaged in a martial arts demonstration teaching the resilience of the mind. There was a talk on Islam by Ustadz Isa, and last but not least were tokens of appreciation given to our fast-a-thoners as well as the participants of the Club HEAL rehabilitation programme. Each were honoured for their signature behaviours like curiosity, politeness, diligence and more.

Said Club HEAL President Dr Radiah Salim "I am pleased with the response for this year's fast-a-thon. Last year we had only 5 participants, this year we have 32 and next year we would like to do this on a bigger scale."



A good launch

Club HEAL@AI-Wehdah was formally launched on 14 June 2014 by our guest-of-honour, Mdm Halimah Yacob. Mdm Halimah praised the collaboration of AI-Wehdah (The Arab Association) and Club HEAL to work together for the benefit of those with mental

health disorders. The full-house crowd was entertained by a pictorial presentation, poem recitations and a nasyid performance by Club HEAL@AL-Wehdah. The most touching moment was when four participants gave their testimony about their journeys with mental illness and their road to recovery with Club HEAL.



Product promotion at BBE Zone 2 RC Parents' Night

Club HEAL's Peer Specialist Mdm Junainah Eusope headed this effort in promoting the hand-made products of Club HEAL participants by manning a booth at Bukit Batok East Zone 2 RC's Parents' Night on 31st May. Zone 2 residents responded with warmth, support and hospitality. Junainah also helped Mdm Halimah select items for purchase.



Healing Friends Training

Club HEAL has conducted another two successful Healing Friends Training - first at the Bukit Batok CC on 10 May and later at the Jalan Kayu Zone 3 RC on 7 June. Expert caregiver, mental health advocate and Club HEAL ex-co Raymond Fernando was also present, sharing valuable insights at the JK3 event. A member of the Rotary Club of Singapore Mr Garry Taylor has this to say about the training:

"Dear Dr Radiah,

Congratulations to you, Mdm Hamidah and everyone concerned for conducting a very interesting and informative day's training yesterday. It was very clear that all the attendees were fully engaged throughout the day; Chi and I definitely learned a lot.

Such training days will help to ensure that people with mental illness, and their carers, seek appropriate advice.

The bio-psych-social model also provides a framework for treatment and support so that people stay on course with their treatment, and the myths around mental health can finally be laid to rest."

Sharing session with South West Mosque Cluster befrienders at AI-Mukminin Mosque 27 May

Dr Radiah, Saifudin, Yohanna and Basithah were at the AI-Mukminin mosque after maghrib prayers to have a sharing session with the befrienders of the South-West Mosque Cluster. After Dr Radiah's short presentation, many questions were posed by the enthusiastic audience. We answered to the best of our ability, and alhamdulillah, we gained their interest and support.



Rocking good time

It was an intriguing night of Latin Rock music at "A Night of Santana" on the evening of 10 May 2014. Held at The Singapore Repertory Theatre, it was conducted by Mr Nassir Khan and friends including Douglas Oliveiro. All the more interesting was the fact that it was a benefit concert for Club HEAL and helped raised \$5,000 for the Club.

Although it wasn't a full house turnout, the cheers and claps were deafening and many got off their seats to sway and dance in the aisles. In consideration of the Muslim audience, there was a Maghrib prayer break. Indeed, many left the theatre with happy memories of a Night of Santana, it was music for the soul.



Carnival at SPH

Club HEAL participated in the Singapore Press Holdings Charity Carnival 19 May 2014, 11 am - 3 pm. Our booth, with its unique batik and other handmade products attracted the attention of many visitors, who took their time to visit the booths and learn more about the charity organisations behind them. The carnival, though short was an eye-opening event with many participants from Bukit Batok East and AI-Wehdah adding to the crowd. They even made an impromptu visit to Berita Harian's office and was given a short talk by Farid Hamzah. Participants also met some of their favourite journalists such as Hanim Mohd Salleh and Dewani Abbas.



Reaching out to Geylang Serai residents

Club HEAL took part in the Mental Health Seminar that was organised by Geylang Serai CC and Silver Ribbon Singapore on 24 May by contributing a talk in Malay on the topic "Mental Illness - impact on the family and challenges" to an attentive audience. Apart from Dr Radiah, Kak Yang Chek and Mr Saifudin, Dr Fatimah Lateef also joined in giving very useful pointers on this issue. Dr Radiah also took part in the forum along with friends from Silver Ribbon, SAMH, HPB, the SOS and Caregivers' Alliance.



Past Events

Generous donors make mosque Friday collection a success

84 volunteers turned out in full force at Club HEAL@BBE and Club HEAL@Al-Wehdah on Friday 27 June to help collect donations at mosques island-wide. With the help of a taxi drivers' group, PADI, 25 taxi-drivers helped to send the volunteers to the mosques and return to the two centres. Pertapis and Madrasah Al-Maarif also helped in getting us volunteers. Alhamdulillah we collected a total of \$53,248 and cents 60! Thank you, Muslims in Singapore. You are indeed a generous ummah!



Creative Corner

A Nostalgic Hari Raya:

In celebration of Hari Raya Puasa 2014
Monday 28th July 2014

Dear Muslim Friends,

Listening to keronchong music of the 60s'
The melody gently flowing with the breeze
Oh! How it bring back fond memories
Listening to the lyrics of "Dondang Sayang"
A nostalgic celebration is about to begin
For the old, as well as for the young

Watching the glow of the buntings
And the coloured lights
In Muslim homes,
There is sheer delight
The kampong spirit is very much alive
For Hari Raya has arrived

Look at the kids— they are all so excited
So are those who made lots of sacrifices
Guests are served with dishes cooked with
delicious spices
The ladies are dressed in colourful Kebayas
For the children, it's time to receive Duit Raya
As Muslims worldwide celebrate Hari Raya
To all Muslims, "Selamat Hari Raya 2014"
I'm sure you will welcome anyone who comes to
your door
Have a great celebration and feast
Hey! But remember to stay healthy and trim

Sincerely,
Raymond Anthony Fernando
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Thrift Shop

Club HEAL operates a Thrift Shop at our BBE premises to serve as a platform to empower our participants with occupational and entrepreneurial skills.

We sell hand-made products, overseas products and donated items that range from paintings to women's accessories.

Do visit us at void deck of Blk 244, Bukit Batok East Ave 5 during weekdays from 9am till 1pm (closed on public holidays).

****NEWS* The Club HEAL Pushcart** has started operations at our Bukit Batok East premises during weekdays from 9am till 5pm. Our Thrift Shop has gone ONLINE! Now you can look for all you want right from your desktop. Visit our FB page Club HEAL Thrift Shop for more details.

Donations & Sponsorships

As Club HEAL is an Institution of a Public Character (IPC), all donors will be eligible for 2.5 times tax reduction. Donations can be made by cheque to 'Club HEAL' or by GIRO – form available at our website.

Please contact us at 68993463 for further details or email us at admin@clubheal.org.sg.

Be A HEALING Friend

"You see, the *Mu'min* in their mutual piety, love and affection, are like a (single) body. When a part (of it) has a complaint, the whole body is united with it in wakefulness and fever." – (Bukhari and Muslim).

As a member or a volunteer, you can contribute in a variety of ways, from assisting in Club HEAL events to conducting rehabilitative activities! We need people from all walks of life who can contribute their time and skills to fulfil our cause.

To become a member, please fill up the membership form available at our website (under Resources section) and email it to us at admin@clubheal.org.sg or mail it to: Club HEAL, Blk 244, Bukit Batok East Ave 5, #01-02, Singapore 650244. We look forward to hearing from you!

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