President’s address

The fourth letter in HEAL spells Love.

What makes a person with mental illness heal?

Is it hope that he or she WILL heal? Is it learning about the illness and its treatments? Or is it acceptance of the illness?

While all of the above contributes to healing, a person can never fully heal on their own. Knowing that others care and want them to heal — that is the main impetus for many to heal.

No man is an island.

How many of us have truly been alone?

Even people who live alone are not truly alone. They have family and friends that they keep in touch with ... or they keep pets — excellent house companions they make indeed!

Contrast this with the Peers — some live with their family members but remain isolated and alone: when family members do not understand, and worse still, do not even bother to try understanding what the Peer is going through.

On the other hand, a Peer who has supportive family members or friends who are willing to journey along with them — that really contributes to healing.

In Club HEAL, we have seen some champion caregivers: the single mum who uses two weeks of her precious annual leave to accompany her daughter to our rehabilitation centre; another who is willing to engage a private psychiatrist to get the best care for her son; and yet another who joins Club HEAL as a volunteer so that he can understand our programmes better and help us in making the activities more interesting and engaging.

These are manifestations of true love.

Among volunteers, we have people from all walks of life give of their time, energy, finances and talents towards our mission of helping Peers gain the needed confidence to heal — these are the people who give their hearts to the cause.

Love in Club HEAL is never unrequited. One gets back in abundance what one puts in.

Even from amongst our staff, we see love and passion in action. We need to educate families and communities so that they come to know and to love.

“Love must be as much a light, as it is a flame.”
— Henry David Thoreau

“**Allah, the Most High, has said, ‘My love is due to those who love one another for My sake, who sit together for My sake, who visit one another for My sake, who bestow things on one another for My sake.’”** (Hadith from Malik)
On Love

The film ‘Amirah’ in the series of Club HEAL short films produced by Sanil Olek depicts the helplessness and mental anguish of parents of a teenager who has bipolar disorder. Amirah’s sudden change in character evokes a sense of sadness and concern among her colleagues. Amirah’s mother, who feels that she cannot do anything to help her daughter, is depicted in this condition. Due to its similarity to mental illness in some ways, she has empathy for Club HEAL Peers and now volunteers her expertise in the Expresive Therapy sessions held at Club HEAL’s two-day care centres. Her own healing comes from sharing in these activities – acrylic painting, drama, singing and dancing – as she feels they promote love for oneself and others. Amirah has not only volunteered her time to Club HEAL, but also made a portion of her earnings from the sale of paintings to Club HEAL.

“I just love to make people happy,” said Naserimah with a radiant smile that infuses love and positivity.

A Message of Love from Allah By Sumaiyah Mohamed

Never in her wildest dreams did Naserimah, 35, think that one day she would become an artist. She freelanced in the performing arts – first in theatre, then in television. Canvases, palettes and paintbrushes were, however, not tools of her trade.

What brought her to a promising new career as an artist was her illness – epilepsy, which caused her to have fainting spells. Beginning 2006, she found herself fainting in public places, which she describes as strange faces full of worry and concern. Then, after an operation in July this year, she not only lost her job, but also her freedom to move about. The law does not allow her to drive and she must be accompanied by another person on public transport. “I cannot drive, I cannot swim, I cannot operate heavy machinery and I cannot go out alone.” Contemplating her condition, she fell into depression and developed psychosis and panic attack. “It was a struggle to take medications because of the side effects – lethargy, drowsiness, tremors and memory loss,” she admitted.

This single mother of three further noted, “Before I was so independent – I was doing sales, business development and driving wherever I wanted to go. Now, I cannot do all these things.” She then took to painting a brush as a means to earn an income for her young family. She discovered, to her relief, that there is a demand for her artwork among family, friends and acquaintances.

Naserimah is still grappling with her illness, and strives to raise awareness and appreciation for what she is going through. “I read this in the Quran. He had answered me with a message of love – that Allah knows, knew how much it took for me to get over what I was feeling. SubhaanAllah, I realised Allah had blessed me through the One Who understands the finest mysteries and is well-acquainted (with them).”

And I remembered also that my sister once shared with me how Allah is the Most Just. As she pointed out, if a person is created in the heavens or on earth, Allah will bring it forth: for Allah understands the finest mysteries, and is well-acquainted (with them).

SubhaanAllah, I realised Allah had blessed me through the Quran today: “O my son!” (said Luqman), “If there were (but) the weight of a measu-seed and it were (hidden) in a rock, or (anywhere) in the heavens or on earth, Allah will bring it forth: for Allah understands the finest mysteries, and is well-acquainted (with them).”

Five Love Languages of Gary Chapman

As a nurse working in the mental health field, I am frequently exposed to my patients’ group sessions. Out of many topics discussed during these sessions, “The Five Love Languages” is an all-time favourite. Based on a book of the same title written by Dr Gary Chapman, the renowned counselor, Gary Chapman, ‘The Five Love Languages’ depict five ways in which people most commonly experience and express love.

While we all know the importance of love and emotional support in the mental health recovery of a person, we may not know exactly how to convey that love. Knowing about the following five love languages can therefore do wonders.

Words of Affirmation

“A kind word goes a long way.” One of the many driving factors that influence individuals is the verbal encouragement received from a loved one. Often, these words are left unsaid and thus, sadly, unheard. However, “that it is not enough to know in your heart that your brother is an ‘amazing person who is strong and resilient’. Gather the courage to say it to him; you will be surprised at how that one verbal encouragement from you can keep your loved one going.

Acts of service

For many people, actions speak louder than words. While your loved one may appreciate an encouraging message from you, your actions will create a larger impact on them. Make a list of ways you can show your loved ones you care for them. Accompany her to her next appointment, make a home visit to check on how she is doing or help out with the household chores. With the right intentions, you will discover many different ways you can care for your loved ones.

Receiving gifts

It is human nature to enjoy the act of receiving and knowing that someone has obtained something just for you. Prophet Muhammad (saw) said, ‘Exchange gifts – you will give one another’ (Hadith from Bukhari). Gifts make a person feel loved and valued, especially when it is personalised or made from scratch. In fact, once you do not have to burn your pockets to give a meaningful gift. What is more important is that it is spent with thoughtfulness and love.

Quality time

Not just time, but quality time. You may be in the same living room with your loved one but if one person is engrossed over a game of ‘Candy Crush’ while the other is watching TV, you are not spending any quality time together. What you need to spare is your undivided attention. Ask your loved one about their good days and bad days. And when they share, listen attentively. Additionally, engage in an activity of common interest and make it part of your routine so that time is always available.

Physical touch

Appropriate physical touch is a powerful symbol to show you care. A pat on the back, a comforting palm over hand and a warm hug are ‘Candy Crush’ while the other is watching TV, you are not spending any quality time together. What you need to spare is your undivided attention. Ask your loved one about their good days and bad days. And when they share, listen attentively. Additionally, engage in an activity of common interest and make it part of your routine so that time is always available.

People respond differently to the five love languages and it takes time and effort to understand which one appeals to your loved one most. So, say, show, spend, spare and symbolise – embark on your love languages today!
7. Healing Friends Training (HFT) (BBE, 29 Aug)
Another first for Club HEAL – conducting HFT at our own premises. Julia Abdullah and Yohanna shared their experience with OCD and Bipolar Disorder respectively.

8. “Yok Peduli” (MUIS, 30 Aug)
At this joint public health outreach effort (central north mosque cluster, Club HEAL, Geng Sihat, MHPA, NKF, HPB), Dr Radiah delivered the lecture “Mencapai Minda yang Sihat” (Achieving a Healthy Mind).

9. Silver Ribbon World Mental Health Day Carnival
(Geylang Serai CC, 27 Sep)
Dr Bibi Jan (Exco member) joined staff at our booth. We won the Fatimah Lateef Award for “Original Concept Booth” (consolation).

10. “Small Change” Festival (NUS University Town, 1 Oct)
Short films “Putri” and “Zul” were aired, followed by a riveting discussion with the NUS fraternity. Dr Radiah and Yohanna Abdullah sat on the discussion panel.

11. World Mental Health Day Celebrations (TTSH, 9 Oct)
Dr Radiah and Hafizah spoke to 30 mental health professionals on the work of Club HEAL.

12. Book Launch
(Woodlands Regional Library Auditorium, 10 Oct)
Some 120 people gathered to celebrate the launch of Club HEAL’s second book Shattered, We HEAL II and Berkecai, Kami Pulih II, written by Yohanna Abdullah and Dr Radiah Salim. Mdm Halimah Yacob delivered an impassioned speech appealing for greater understanding of those blessed with mental illness and their caregivers. The audience – which included prominent faces in the mental health community, the Club HEAL community and members of the public – had an entertaining yet enlightening programme. Peers Ajid, Amalina and Mano Esperanza came out in full force to read poems and sing songs of their own compositions. Renowned actress Seri Jais performed a monologue about a schizophrenic young woman. There was also an interesting and light-hearted Q&A session. The books are selling fast; come get your copy now!

13. Talk (Darussalam Mosque, 11 Oct)
Dr Radiah spoke on how mental health issues affect women and their loved ones. Yohanna Abdullah shared about bipolar disorder and how it colours her life. The 40 muslimaat in the audience asked many questions about kin who suffered mental illnesses. Some long-time caregivers confessed they were at their wits’ end. Indeed, we can do more to empower our sisters on vital issues affecting their daily lives.

Donations and 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 6899 3463 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 healingfriends@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!

“Conversation With ...”
By Mano Esperanza
I called you up again today, Just to tell you I’m not ok, It’s been so hard for me these days, And even harder to find ways, To put my mind at ease, It’s been so hard I’m begging, please, Could you help me ease my mind? (She said) ‘Just close your eyes and breath in and breath out, Don’t worry too much things will work out, The overwhelming feeling will go away, You have made it so far, make it thru’ the day.’ Is there a mystery to life, cause I’m struggling to survive, The sound of your voice eases my mind, When finding peace is hard to find. Please put my mind at ease, It’s been so hard I’m begging, please, Could you help me ease my mind? (She said) ‘Just close your eyes and breath in and breath out, Don’t worry too much things will work out, The overwhelming feeling will go away, You have made it so far, make it thru’ the day.’

Before you put down the telephone, Before you leave me all alone, I want to thank you for your time, For giving me a peace of mind.

Upcoming Events
1. HFT (Club HEAL@BBE, 24 Oct)
2. Talk “Towards a healthy mind” (Club HEAL @ BBE, 25 Oct)
3. Booth (Jurong Spring, 15 Nov)
4. Booth (MINDSET, 15 Nov)
5. Talk “Don’t Worry, Be Happy” (Muhammadiyah Welfare Home, 26 Nov)

NAMS@Club HEAL
National Addictions Management Service of IMH is a clinic at Club HEAL every Tuesday (from 8 September) for existing and walk-in patients with addiction issues. No charge required to speak to a NAMS counsellor. To make an appointment, call 6RECOVER (67326837).