

HEAL



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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)

About Club HEAL

Club HEAL is a charity that aims to assist and empower Peers (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 Peers thereby breaking unnecessary barriers to their recovery process. Services provided by Club HEAL include psychiatric rehabilitative services, home visits, public education, support groups and volunteer training.

1. **A Message of Love from Allah**
By Sumaiyah Mohamed

Today I faced a difficulty. I felt anxious at work, fearful that I was doing a bad job and dreading that something bad would happen – perhaps I would get scolded, or maybe my colleagues are secretly unhappy with me, or maybe I was not doing work as best as I should. And I felt that this anxiety, these challenges I was facing, was nothing for others. They seem to be able to face and manage their anxieties easily, maa shaa' Allah. So I thought, what was the point of overcoming this when it is so onerous for me but so normal for others? Nobody would think me brave or appreciate what I was feeling.

Yet I knew I had to calm myself down, so I tried to do so with the remembrance of Allah, as my loved ones always advise me. SubhaanAllah, I read this in the Quran today:

"O my son!" (said Luqman), "If there were (but) the weight of a mustard-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). [Qur'an 31:16]

SubhaanAllah, I realised Allah had blessed me through the Quran. He had answered me with a message of love – that Allah knew, knew how much it took for me to get over what I was feeling and press on. Allah knows everything. Allah is Al-Latif, Al-Khabir, The One Who understands the finest mysteries and is Well-acquainted. And Allah is As-Syakur, the Supremely Appreciative. That gave me so much comfort, subhaanAllah. I suddenly felt like I could overcome my anxiety, because even if nobody else understood what I felt, Allah did. And I felt I could do it – for Allah's sake. Alhamdulillah.

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 with what is perceived as a flaw, that is only because we do not know. Allah might reward that person for his endurance, or He might have blessed that person with more goodness in another area. Allah, He is indeed the Most Just, and Most Wise, and He will take everything into account. He will. He loves us, so let us not lose heart!

2. **Straight from the heart**
By Yohanna Abdullah

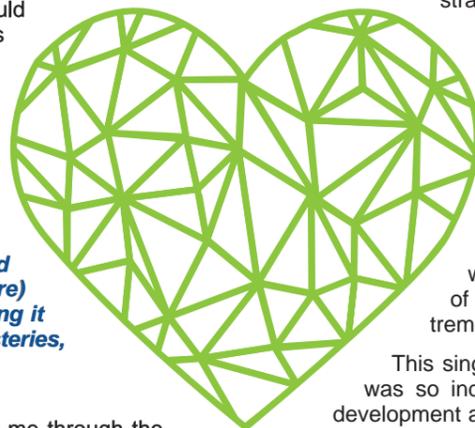
Never in her wildest dreams did Naserimah, 35, think that one day she would become an artist. She freelanced in the performing arts – first in theatre, then in television. Canvasses, palettes and paintbrushes were, however, not tools of her trade.

What brought her to a promising new career as an artist was her illness – epilepsy, which caused her to have fainting spells. Beginning 2008, she began fainting in public places, waking up to strange faces full of worry and concern. Then, after her diagnosis 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 always be accompanied by another person on public transport. "I cannot drive, I cannot swim, I cannot operate heavy machineries 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 wielding a paint brush as a means to earn an income for her young family. She discovered, to her relief, that there was a demand for her artwork among family, friends and acquaintances.

Naserimah is still grappling with her illness, and strives to raise awareness, and break the stigma, of having 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 Expressive 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. Naserimah has not only volunteered her time, but she has also donated art materials and pledged 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.



www.clubheal.org.sg/media/videos/

3. **On Love**

The film "Amirah" in the series of Club HEAL short films produced by Sanif Olek depicts the helplessness and mental anguish of parents of a teenager who has bipolar disorder. Amirah's sudden change in character from an obedient, lovable daughter to a rebellious teen is attributed to her being possessed rather than due to a mental health issue. The situation is worsened by quacks such as the traditional healer in the film, who convinces Amirah's parents that she can help their daughter.

This film invites many questions such as the following: What happens to a family when they see changes in their loved one that signal mental health issues? Why do many still tend to seek the help of faith healers rather than mental health professionals? What support and understanding does a Peer need from their family members? What support does the caregiver need from the Peer that will help them both? What support do caregivers need from the community? How do we get the community to understand and empathize with Peers and caregivers?

The ignorance displayed by Amirah's father can be rectified through access to proper information. Club HEAL offers not only psycho-education to caregivers, but also organises caregiver support groups to allow more experienced and knowledgeable caregivers to share their experience with new caregivers.

Parents and other caregivers who understand what their loved ones have to endure when they have symptoms are more likely to be able to not only cope with the challenges presented but also to provide better care. They realise the importance of giving unconditional love, the importance of not putting pressure on their loved ones to recover in the shortest possible period, and the best ways to provide support and care. This creates a positive atmosphere that assist in the recovery process of Peers. When Peers believe they have the support and loving care of their caregivers, they are more motivated to recover.

4. **Five Love Languages of Gary Chapman**
By Lubna Shah

As a nurse working in the mental health field, I am frequently exposed to my patients' group sessions. Out of the 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 renowned counsellor, 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 in their recovery is the verbal encouragement from a loved one. Often, these words are left unsaid and thus, sadly, unheard. Remember 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 love one another" (Hadith from Bukhari). Gifts make a person feel loved and valued, especially when it is personalised or made from scratch. Hence, 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 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 quality 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 ways to provide reassurance to someone undergoing anxiety. It may not solve problems but the gesture shows you pledge to stand by your loved one.

Conclusion

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!



Snapshots of past events

1. **Long-stay Raya (IMH, 29 Jul)**

Our second Raya with the long-stay inpatients of IMH was an afternoon of food, laughter and music. We were joined by IMH staff and nursing students who made the event a wonderful success.

2. **Joint National Day cum Hari Raya celebrations (CRSS@BBE, 5 Aug)**

At this event, Mdm Halimah sportingly joined us in singing national songs and Hari Raya classics.

3. **National Day Observance (ITE College Central, 8)**

The half-day ceremony, organised by SG50 KITA, was graced by the Prime Minister and Malay-Muslim leaders. Club HEAL's booth showcased Peers' glass paintings.



4. **Club HEAL Hari Raya (BBE Pavilion, 15 Aug)**

The Club HEAL family's own celebration allowed us to honour our volunteers and Peers. With yummy food and joyful songs, it was a happy day indeed!



5. **Public talk (ITE Simei, 21 Aug)**

Dr Radiah's talk "Don't Worry, Be Happy" to a group of 250 engineering students and the teaching faculty was well-received.

6. **Healing Friends Training (HFT) (MUIS, 25 Aug)**

For the first time, Club HEAL was invited to conduct HFT as part of asatizah (religious teachers) accreditation. Teachers felt the training equipped them to respond to distress calls on mental health issues.

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At Club HEAL, we also have Peers who have "come out" and shared their stories with the public, such as Yohanna Abdullah and Kak Junn. They serve as role models to other Peers who then become more open to the idea of sharing their stories. This brings them up close and personal with the public and helps the public to understand better and care better. In order for the wider community to be able to support Peers and their caregivers, the community needs to be well-informed.

Further, advocacy groups such as Club HEAL help bridge the knowledge gap that still exists among the masses. Club HEAL not only organises talks at mosques and schools, and conduct volunteer training (the HEALing friends training) for grassroots organisations, we also partner with many groups to spread knowledge in various ways. "Teater kami" is one such organisation. It has partnered Club HEAL in producing a play that discusses mental illness in a creative way. Further, through our publications such as this newsletter and the Shattered We HEAL books, we have also been able to reach out to many. As a result, more segments in the community are lending their support. Peers and their caregivers benefit ultimately.



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



(Photo credit: Amalus Barakna)

and sing songs of their own compositions. Renowned actress Seri Jaes 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 muslimaats 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 has 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).

Editorial Team
Publications Executive
Ms Yohanna Abdullah

Chief Editor
Ms Noorunnisa Ibrahim Kutty

Editorial Team Members
Ms Lubna Shah
Ms Sumaiyah Mohamed
Dr Radiah Salim

Designer
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