

HEAL



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Anxiety

“Our anxiety does not come from thinking about the future, but from wanting to control it.” – Khalil Gibran



Ehrman Photographic/Shutterstock

President's address

Anxiety is a normal human emotion ... all of us have got it.

I am sometimes called “Kan Cheong” and “Kiasu”, even by some of my closest friends ... and it is not said as a compliment. “Kan Cheong” is a Chinese term meaning nervous, harried or uptight. “Kiasu” is a Chinese term meaning “scared to lose”. What these two terms have in common is the state of being scared and nervous. While some may argue that being anxious is helpful in propelling a person towards success, too much of it can certainly backfire.

I remember the time that I started to learn psychiatry while serving as a resident doctor at the Institute of Mental Health back in 2008. That was where I learnt that anxiety is the usual starting point of mental illness. I learnt that if anxiety is allowed to spin out of control, one can in fact deteriorate to a full-blown anxiety disorder such as Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) or depression or psychosis. The individual stories of our peers testify to this fact.

Excessive worry about performance in school, about a potential loss of a job or income, about one's ability to pay bills, about the potential loss of a loved one ... the list is long and consistent. Sometimes anxiety about something is influenced by the pressure put upon the individual by his family members. Families, in turn, face pressure to live up to societal expectations, manifested, e.g., in the Singaporean definition of success, i.e., attaining the 5 C's – Cash, Car, Condo, Country Club membership and Credit Card.

This is why we need to manage anxiety at all levels – the individual, the family and the community. We can start by managing our expectations. Take stock of what the things that really matter are; perhaps even redefine success.

In Club HEAL, the acronym HEAL provides a clear framework for the management of anxiety. Having **Hope** that all will be well in the end lightens our burden, no matter what challenge we face.

Empowering ourselves with necessary knowledge and taking specific steps to handle challenges successfully lessens anxiety.

Merely **Accepting** our challenges and our limitations will make us less anxious.

Last but not least, surrounding ourselves with **Love** – be it in the form of family and friends, or even furry pets – provides us with support that alleviates anxiety.

For the Muslim, the yardstick for achieving success in this life and the hereafter – thus becoming less anxious – is easy; all we need is a return to the basics of believing, doing righteous deeds and establishing regular prayers and regular charity:

“Those who believe, and do deeds of righteousness, and establish regular prayers and regular charity, will have their reward with their Lord: **on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve.**”
(Qur'an 2:277)

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.

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embracing peace

By Yohanna Abdullah

I am working from home at my work station, in my comfortable long batik dress. I have just swept the floor and returned to my bright pink seat. My mum is in the living room having fried noodles and TV. My dad has just left our quiet home. Ayesha, my daughter, is still asleep, having slept very late after crocheting a hat for her friend's baby who turns one today. Mum grumbles away about dad. I listen with empathy. I feel at peace.

Peace is precious. It silences the endless stream of negative thoughts that your mind can set off, leading to minor, major and devastating worries. I know. I have lain catatonic on my bed for days with all my anxieties piled up. It was hell on earth.

The antidote to anxieties? For me, it is to break my time into seconds, each second filled with love and peace. I bar all thoughts of anything else for the moment and luxuriate in the moment. For instance savouring my cup of coffee, listening to a waltz by my namesake Johann Strauss, reading the Quran, sipping lemon water while happily typing away on my computer. And all the while I thank Allah for His bounty and grace.

It is possible to keep worries at bay if you are present in the moment. For sure, challenges will crop up. I may choose to worry about how to get to my cousin's house tomorrow, or I can choose to get directions. I could also choose to leave the issue until tomorrow. End of story. What if the challenge is something more serious, like my finances? Then I draw up a budget and I resolve to stick to it. And I strive to ensure my money is spent for good causes so that it is blessed. I have faith that Allah will provide in one way or another and my role is just to worship him and appeal for His love and mercy. No need to worry about tomorrow today.

I have struggled with mental illness and much of the struggle has to do with silencing negative thoughts and embracing positive ones. Managing your thoughts is a life skill; it is a skill that you can develop with practice and mindfulness and love.

When we are filled to the brim with love and peace, anxiety will cease and joy will overflow.



pop by our POP-UP STORE

POP UP STORE

AT CITYLINK MALL

Check out Club HEAL's Pop-Up Store at Citylink Mall near City Hall MRT station. It is full of unique and interesting gift items ranging from bags to cards, jewellery and décor items such as pottery and hand-painted porcelain and glassware.

Mdm Junainah Eusope, 61, Club HEAL's peer support specialist said, "Working side by side with SAMH and SACS sales people is good as they are experienced and can help our sales staff. Our peers can now make new friends as they work and the work itself is different from the pushcarts that they are used to; it is more high tech, with the Point-of Sales System which allows information on stock and sales to be uploaded on Cloud. Now, all three organisations can monitor their sales from different locations."

Do support us and pop by our store.

The store is a pilot project by MINDSET, an organisation that aims to make a difference in the area of mental health. On trial from November 2015 to April 2016, the Pop Up Store sees Club HEAL working alongside Singapore Anglican Community Services (SACS) and Singapore Association for Mental Health (SAMH).

road to recovery

By Yohanna Abdullah

Recovery
NEXT EXIT

Eza, 34, has been a full-time taxi driver for eight months. Nothing extraordinary in this, if not for the fact that she suffers from depression and anxiety disorder. She was diagnosed to have this condition in 2011 after five months of seeing *bomohs* (traditional Malay spiritual healers) and religious leaders.

Bomohs and Satan

"A *bomoh* who had tried to treat me without success asked me to consult a doctor. I think she was fed up of seeing me. The doctor told me that I was mentally not stable and my condition was not due to spirits in my body. Yet, I did not take his medication because I refused to believe the diagnosis – not even when I was driven to contemplating suicide. I wanted to jump off a building and was hearing all kinds of voices in my head."

She approached another *bomoh* and was told that Satan was inside her and would not leave her body. Her condition deteriorated as she saw even more *bomohs*. She partook of floral baths and lime baths and wore multiple amulets around her neck and waist in vain. Finally, she felt compelled to see a doctor again and took a step further by seeking help at Club HEAL.

Medication is the key

At Club HEAL, she was encouraged to take her medicine and she felt the change fairly quickly. Eza's mother was initially apprehensive of her daughter seeking medical treatment for her condition. Nevertheless, she was convinced that it worked when she saw the changes in Eza after complying with such treatment.

"After one-and-a-half years at Club HEAL, I felt I was ready to find a job. I worked at KFC. I broke down a few times at KFC, but they treated me well. Later, I decided to apply for a licence as a taxi driver since I could drive," said Eza.

Self-talk

"I still have symptoms but now I know that my problem is just an illness and that the symptoms will go away after a while. Initially when I started to drive a taxi, I had many panic attacks. The symptoms made me feel as if I was going to die, but I implemented what I learned at Club HEAL – I did a lot of positive self-talk, I frequented mosques to become close to God and gave to charity every day, with a sincere intention to help others, even if it was just a donation of 10 cents. I believe all these helped."

One day at a time

Being a taxi driver required a lot of courage. Initially, Eza got into minor road accidents because of her anxiety. "Even for a minor scrape, I would cry like it was a major calamity and everyone would look puzzled."

Nevertheless, the mother of one counts herself fortunate to be able to make a livelihood driving a taxi full time. "I have the support of my mother who still cooks and cleans and look after my son, and am married to an understanding husband. But my mom is tired and tells me I have to do more at home and take over her chores."

However, she takes her challenges one day at a time as she learns to be more positive about life. She is thankful that Club HEAL taught her how to cope with her illness. She knows now that there is a cure to every illness and that she is on the road to recovery. "Faith is the key and every day, I am getting better and better," declared Eza.

"Faith is the key and every day, I am getting better and better..."



Snapshots of past events

1. HFT@ Club HEAL (Club HEAL@BBE, 24 Oct)

This second HFT at our BBE premises was conducted in English. The audience was particularly touched by Peer Specialist Kak Junn's sharing on her personal journey with depression, and, in particular, the sacrifices her husband made as a caregiver.

2. Talk @ Club HEAL "Towards a Healthy Mind" (Club HEAL @ BBE, 25 Oct)

Dr Radiah spoke in Malay to an attentive audience gathered by the BBE MAEC on handling stress and building mental resilience. It was well-received and followed by requests for similar talks in the future, touching on other mental health issues such as dementia.

3. Club HEAL Ex-Co Retreat @ MERCU (1 Nov)

Club HEAL's newest Executive Committee met on Sunday morning to get to know one another better, to revisit Club HEAL's mission, vision and objectives, to receive valuable feedback from Club HEAL's Programme Head Mr Zainal Lee and to redefine our roles in the Club HEAL family.



4. Booth @ Healthy Minds Healthy Lives Carnival, CRSS (Jurong Spring, 15 Nov)

Mr Desmond Lee, Senior Minister for National Development and Home Affairs, and Member of Parliament for Jurong GRC, visited the Club HEAL booth which featured our books, *Shattered, We HEAL* and *Shattered, We Heal II*, and their Malay versions. Members of the public stopped by to know more about Club HEAL. The day was marked by several showers, but they only served to make the area under the tent cosier and merrier.

To purchase a copy of the book, please contact 6899 3463 / info@clubheal.org.sg.

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5. Booth @ MINDSET Challenge 2015 (MINDSET, 15 Nov)

Programme head, Zainal, volunteer Ramlah and programme executive Rishah spent a productive morning attending the MINDSET Challenge 2015 ceremony, graced by Mdm Halimah Yacob. They managed a booth showcasing our handmade products and publications.

6. Talk "Don't Worry, Be Happy" @ MWH (Muhammadiyah Welfare Home, 26 Nov)

Dr Radiah, Zainal and counsellors Fauzy and Hakim interacted with two groups of boys from Muhammadiyah Welfare Home after the talk. A few of the older boys later shared their personal challenges with the team. Hopefully, Club HEAL will be able to further assist the residents of MWH through other collaborative efforts.



7. Talk "Mencapai Minda Sihat" @ MKAC (Muslim Kidney Action Association, 27 Nov)

Dr Radiah shared tips on mental wellness with kidney patients at the MKAC, one of our community partners. They are a special group, and show much resilience in coping with the challenge of dialysis treatment.



8. Tree-planting @ BBE (Bukit Batok East Blk, 20 Dec)

Club HEALians Dr Radiah and Basithah joined Mdm Rahayu Mahzam and BBE residents one fine Sunday morning in planting trees in commemoration of SG50. We had fun getting our hands dirty doing our bit for mother earth.

Upcoming Events

1. Club HEAL Staff Retreat – 10 Jan 2016
2. HEALing Friends Training @ Club HEAL – 16 Jan 2016
3. Booth @ HEAL Me Club Launch @ Marsiling – 17 Jan 2016

NAMS @ Club HEAL

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

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!

Creative Corner

River By Sumaiyah Mohamed

Number one: Do not fight –
 not even the tears that spring from fears unfounded,
 crying without knowing its root cause
 ... chaos cacophony –
 you feel like a cockadoodledoo but
 you should not protest,
 though every pore in the body seems to burn you –
 no, actually you do not even feel the pain
 you just cannot seem to refrain
 from this endless choo choo train
 of thoughts so true to you
 and they go on and
 lead to what ifs about future absolute failures ...
 How do I make my thoughts stop?

Number two: Do not make this seem like agony,
 because you must think this is an exaggeration
 you do don't you
 I think you do
 why do you think so
 I think you think I think I am thinking
 a bit too much of myself ...
 Help?

Number three: Let these circles of cognitive
 thunderclouds float you by
 and wait until it passes in full,
 not forced under the carpets of your heart,
 forgotten until it overflows,
 causing you to later flail and then you die.
 Now there is pain but you will not die.
 There is screaming but you will try to be silent.

Number four: Look around you
 nobody likes anybody all the time
 but witness the grapes and apples and
 gerberas your beloved
 hand-holders have brought
 to help you be the girl that you were, are, will be.

Number five: Observe how you will heal
 with your quiet thoughts –
 you will learn to deal with your many faults
 and then your swollen eyes will uncloze
 and you will speak because the lump in the throat
 has disappeared,
 and you can say,
 "There is a river in me".

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