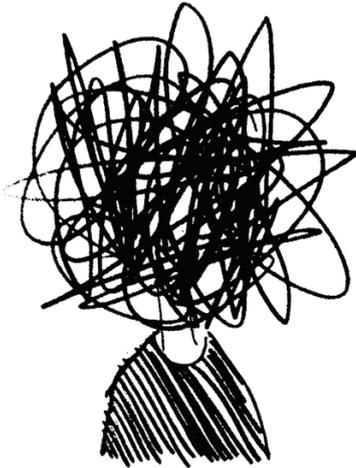


HEAL



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Schizophrenia Solutions

“ALLAH HAS NOT SENT DOWN A DISEASE WITHOUT SENDING A CURE FOR IT.” – HADITH FROM AL-BUKHARI.

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

Schizophrenia can be a devastating illness for both patients and their families. It affects 1% of the general population. However, if you have a relative with it, your chance of getting it is greater – for example, if you have an uncle with schizophrenia, then the risk is 3%, while if you have a parent with it, that goes up to 13%.



Schizophrenia affects
1% of the general population



Parent with
schizophrenia
RISK 13%



Relative with
schizophrenia
RISK 3%

It is an illness that has as its major element psychosis, i.e. disordered thought (such as delusions) and/or perception (such as hearing voices).

The biggest hurdle to overcome is the astonishing ignorance and prejudice towards this illness that results in denial on the part of both sufferers and their families when it happens. Even in this IT age, many still fail to seek help early from professionals, preferring instead to turn to faith healers and charlatans, resulting in delays in treatment that makes it that much more difficult to treat.

Can schizophrenia be treated effectively?

As in other mental health conditions, a holistic approach that adopts the bio-psycho-social model can be very effective in treating the illness. These days, we have better medicines with less side-effects; there are effective psychological methods such as psycho-education, counselling and CBT; and more and more in the community are coming forward to show moral support for

patients and their families. The peer movement in Singapore has also seen more people with schizophrenia coming forward to share their stories to help demystify the illness – and this lends to the reduction of stigma and greater community support.

What can be done for a person who is severely disabled by schizophrenia?

Here in Club HEAL, we have a never-say-die attitude. Our psychiatric rehabilitative program involves not just talk therapy but a lot of hands-on approaches such as the making of handicrafts items, culinary activities, relaxation techniques such as brain gym, as well as physical exercise - including gardening, taking refreshing walks and cycling. This allows our peers who have residual symptoms such as delusions and auditory hallucinations to focus better on other things apart from the troublesome thoughts and voices. In fact, some have discovered new talents and strengths. This not only helps reduce their troubling symptoms ... they achieve a new 'calm' in their lives ... they gain confidence ... they shine ☺

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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Registration No: T12SS0028K



A BLESSED JOURNEY – COPING WITH MENTAL ILLNESS WHILE PREGNANT

By Sumaiyah Mohamed

I remember anxiously anticipating my pregnancy ever since I got married. When I found out that the pregnancy test was positive, feelings of excitement and happiness overtook me maashaa'Allah. I had been attending talks and classes on parenting before I was even married and I was aware of the importance and blessings, as well as the responsibilities, which this journey ahead of me held.

There has been worries as well, as a mother-to-be with a mental illness. I was diagnosed with schizophrenia and depression nine years ago. While I have not suffered a relapse since my first episode, I am still on medication and regularly visiting my doctor. From time to time I even experience triggers that I take as warning signs to take action and take care of myself better.

The first concern I had while pregnant was about my baby's health and if my illness would somehow pass through to my child. Should I be taking medication while pregnant? Would it affect my baby? Alhamdulillah, I consulted my doctor at IMH as well as my gynaecologist and they assured me that the medication would, inshaa'Allah, not affect the baby. In fact, it is important for me to continue with the medication as, if I did not, my poor mental well-being would impact my child even more adversely!

I also wondered if my child would be negatively affected by being nurtured by a mother like me – someone who is occasionally weak, someone who could break down easily in tears by stress, perhaps by reasons others would not find so overwhelming. It was at this point that my mother advised me that the health and well-being of my child is in the Hands of Allah, the Almighty. I needed to have faith that Allah blessed me with this pregnancy because He knew I had the strength, patience, love, and courage needed to go through this journey of motherhood and give my best

to my child, inshaa'Allah. There was no point in worrying about "what-ifs" and doubting myself.

Throughout this pregnancy, I have experienced bouts of sadness and feelings of inadequacy. I understand pregnancy to be an important phase in the child's development. Am I reading as much of the Holy Quran as I should, so that I may grow closer to Him and find comfort through it, and so that my child, likewise, will grow up loving the words of Allah? Am I doing enough good deeds and putting a stop to my bad habits? Someone wise told me I was placing too many expectations on myself – that I was trying to be the "perfect" mother-to-be. While putting in effort to grow closer to God is good, doing so in a way that stresses myself out is not.

I now tell myself to do what I can, and not burn out by taking on more than I can handle. And I need to remind myself, when I make mistakes or feel bad about myself, not to dwell on them until I drown in negative feelings. Instead, I pray to Allah for mercy and guidance, and move on. Move on and believe that things will be good, inshaa'Allah. I do something small to give myself a sense of achievement, be it mopping the floor to make my house cleaner or reading just one page of the Quran with the translated meaning.

Above all the negativity, what I feel the most is hope. Here I am – someone who was once hospitalised with schizophrenia; someone who, once in psychosis, believed she was Satan – and now I have developed skills and strategies to manage the illness, gotten married and even conceived a child, praises all be to Allah, the Most Kind. Life is a journey, and there may be much to fear and worry about, but also so much beauty and joys to experience. Let us not give up on ourselves – Allah is going to give us more. And may He reward all of us for our forbearance and patience with pain and affliction, and grant us something even better. Amin.



EMPOWERMENT CAMP - ACCEPTING ONE ANOTHER

Acceptance isn't easy but it definitely makes life easier. Acceptance is a crucial ingredient for peers to recover and it was also the theme for the recent Empowerment Camp held at Aloha Loyang, from 16 to 19 May 2016. Twenty-two peers and seven staff took part in the camp and lived together in one bungalow in a tranquil setting. The camp is held twice a year, the previous one being in November 2015 and the next in November 2016.



The camp has a long list of objectives which includes bonding, nurturing independence and strengths, and spotting talent. Said Mdm Junainah Eusope, peer support specialist who is in charge of peer empowerment, "The camp also nurtures self-esteem and allows the peers to work as teams, helping one another."

The peers were motivated by speeches on the topic of acceptance made by counsellor Mr Sebastian Seet, Club HEAL President Dr Radiah Salim, and programme executive Mr Muhd Ridzuan Bin Yunos. The insightful sharing on BBQ night was informal – while we tucked into a delicious spread of barbecued chicken wings, satay, fried rice and spaghetti.

Mdm Junainah declared that the camp was a success. In the spirit of acceptance, camper and peer Daryl Tan, 30, said, "We are among our own community within the community out there and here we feel we actually belong."

"THE CAMP ALSO NURTURES SELF-ESTEEM AND ALLOWS THE PEERS TO WORK AS TEAMS, HELPING ONE ANOTHER." - JUNAINAH EUSOPE, PEER SUPPORT SPECIALIST



FROM PEER TO PEER LEADER

By Yohanna Abdullah

Step into Club HEAL's new Pasir Ris Day Rehabilitation Centre and you will find a tall, pleasant programme executive who inspires the peers. With longish, wavy hair, neatly oiled and combed Muhd Ridzuan Bin Yunos, 33, appears earnest and determined to do his job, if just a tad anxious.

Ridzuan learnt about Club HEAL and joined as a participant in January 2016 after he picked up glass painting at Simei Care Centre with our peer support specialist, Kak Junn. Last year in October he attended a Healing Friends Training and was intrigued by the work of Club HEAL. He then attended an Empowerment Camp in Changi as a peer. Little did he know that, by the time of the next Empowerment Camp (held in May this year), he would be bearing the responsibilities of a programme executive. Ridzuan joined Club HEAL officially as staff on 21 March and has since trained in Peer Employment and Resilience Learning (PERL) conducted by renowned trainers from USA, Chris W Martin and Lori Ashcraft. The valuable course organised by Caregivers' Alliance teaches resilience skills for getting and keeping a job.

A voice hearer

Ridzuan says he is trying his best to serve Club HEAL and looks forward to doing more for his peers. Like the people he works with every weekday, from 9 am to 1 pm, he has a mental affliction – paranoid schizophrenia, no less. "I have had schizophrenia for 15

"MY DAD IS VERY SUPPORTIVE OF MY JOB AND I AM READY TO OPEN UP AND SHARE MY LIFE STORY, MY EXPERIENCES AND MY STRUGGLES."



Ridzuan at the Peer Employment Resilient Learning (PERL) graduation ceremony with Dr Sally Thio and trainers, Lori Ashcraft and Chris W Martin

years, since 2001, and I hear voices. I was unwell for most of this period. The voice that I hear is usually that of a little girl about five or six years old."

He had his last episode in 2012 when he worked at a restaurant as a part-time waiter. With his interest in cooking, he looks forward to lead the home economics component of the Pasir Ris centre. Ridzuan has embraced the idea of being a mental health advocate. He feels happy sharing his knowledge with peers, caregivers, volunteers and the public.

"My dad is very supportive of my job and I am ready to open up and share my life story, my experiences and my struggles. As much as I would like to do work full-time with Club HEAL, I am aware that I am still healing and sometimes when I am tired at the end of the day, the voices will come back – my paranoid symptoms also surface," Ridzuan shared candidly. He added that the voices he hear are not necessarily negative. "The little girl voice that I hear is positive; she urges me to move forward."

SNAPSHOTS OF PAST EVENTS

1. HFT – 2 April, Marsiling

We conducted our first ever Healing Friends Training at our Marsiling premises to a small but enthusiastic group of 20 potential Healing Friends.

2. NUSMS Mental Health Forum "Handling Stress" – 8 April, NUS

It was the stressful examination period and the National University of Singapore Muslim Society organised a talk on handling stress by Dr Radiah Salim. The students also learned how stress can lead to mental illness. Peers from Club HEAL, Yohanna and Fiza, also shared their mental health challenges and received many queries from the audience about their recovery journeys.

3. Joint exercises cum HEAL Me Talk "The Joy of Caregiving" – 10 April, Marsiling

Club HEAL spent a wonderful Sunday morning with the Marsiling Women's Committee and some Marsiling residents. Noorhuda, our volunteer conducted joint exercises that help improve osteoarthritic knees, shoulders and other joints in the body. This was followed by a talk on the joys of caregiving by Dr Radiah and peer Daryl in 3 languages to an enthusiastic audience.

4. Club HEAL Branch Opening and COMIT Launch – 23 April, Marsiling

Club HEAL's second centre at Marsiling was kindly opened by Mdm Halimah Jacob, Speaker and Member of Parliament. It was full house with guests from among the Marsiling grassroots and Club HEAL's community partners. The program included some wonderful sharing by our peers and mass singing of the song by Sami Yusuf, "Healing".



5. Talk "Mental Wellbeing in a Highly Stressed Social Environment" – 7 May, Bukit Timah CC

Dr Radiah spoke to a captive audience from the Mayfair Neighbourhood Committee on Mental Wellbeing and Stress. This was followed with sharing of her PTSD experience by our peer Salamah. This talk was supported by AIC.

6. Booth @ Pasir Ris East CC cum joint exercises – 8 May

Our first public outreach experience at Pasir Ris East was in the form of a booth at the Pasir Ris East monthly Sunday morning walk organised by Pasir Ris grassroots leaders. Residents took our flyers and some even purchased copies of our books, Shattered We HEAL (vois 1 and 2).

7. Booth – 9 May, Singapore Press Holdings

Club HEAL successfully engaged SPH staff through the sale of our hand-made items and books at the annual SPH charity carnival.

8. HFT – 14 May, Marsiling

Club HEAL conducted our second HFT at Marsiling, this time to Marsiling grassroots leaders who found it to be both enlightening and beneficial indeed!

9. AMP Golf Charity in aid of Club HEAL – 17 May, Orchid Country Club

We are humbled by the generous act of our friends at AMP in adopting us as a beneficiary in celebration of their 25th year anniversary. The committee worked very hard to organise a successful AMP Charity Golf 2016 in aid of Club HEAL. Proceeds from the fundraiser will help our participants to continue to receive rehabilitation, counselling and empowerment services at Club HEAL. Kak Junn spoke from her heart during the dinner, making "Golf and HEAL" a meaningful experience indeed. A huge THANK YOU to all our donors, especially AMP, for making a difference in the lives of those with mental health issues.





10. Nature walk with FITree – 2 June, Guilin Park

An enriching walk at Bukit Batok Nature Park on a fine Thursday morning with FITree and the family of Club HEAL seemed like a return to our fitrah (natural state).



11. Iftar 2016@ Marsiling – 10 June

Iftar at Club HEAL@Marsiling was a simple affair compared to previous years, but it was full of joy and blessings as it was held at our own premises for the first time. Muslims and non-Muslims alike shared their experience of fasting and many peers stepped up to receive awards just for being who they are.

12. Talk on “Signs & Symptoms of Mental Illness and Effective Communication with PMI” at WINGS – 13 June

Dr Radiah and Yohanna had a lot of fun sharing with a very responsive audience consisting of 26 women from WINGS on these topics.



Creative Corner

OUR VOICES

By Yohanna Abdullah

*I hear voices in the dark
I hear voices in the light
Sometimes I hear voices day and night
That makes me unique
I'm in a special league*

*Voice Hearers unite
Learn what the voices have to say
Understand the content not the form
And discern the truth from the lies
The good from the bad
The negative from the positive
Embrace your real and imaginary friends*

*There is no shame in hearing voices or seeing things
We are all unique
Love variety
Celebrate differences
Be happy being you
You are one in a zillion
Perfect in all your imperfections*

23 May 2016



UPCOMING EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Upcoming Events

1. Longstay Raya @ IMH – 14 July
2. Hari Raya Celebrations @ BBE – 21 July
3. Official Opening cum Hari Raya Celebrations @ Pasir Ris East – 23 July
4. Friday Mosque Collection – 29 July
5. Mental Health Workshop for Asatizahs Part 1 @ Al-Ansar Mosque – 11 August
6. Mental Health Workshop for Asatizahs Part 2 @ Al-Ansar Mosque – 20 September
7. “Don't Worry Be Happy – On Anxiety and Depression” talk @ Clementi CC – 25 September
8. Presentation of paper on Empowerment Programme @ WMHD 2016 – 7 October
9. “Don't Worry Be Happy” Day @ BBE – 16 October
10. Book Launch of “Mind at Peace” – Venue TBA – 10 October

Announcements

Club HEAL has commenced operations at our third centre at Pasir Ris East since 1 June 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 & 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!

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