

issue 10  
MINDFULNESS



what's inside



# Peer Supporter Programme

Welcome to the tenth issue of Hope, SAMH's quarterly newsletter. We restructured our magazine to place a greater focus on the people we serve: persons with psychiatric illnesses. In a society that neglects them, it is important that these strong voices be heard, and our goal is for this newsletter to be one such platform.

However, it's not the only platform SAMH has at the moment. Creative MINDSET, a beautiful and spacious new arts centre, is due to open around the time of print (January 2016). Located on Jurong Point Shopping Centre's sixth floor, the centre will be open to members of the public, and persons in recovery. Anyone can enrol in the skill workshops, art therapy, music, and sports activities offered there.

SAMH is working on enhancing the current Peer Specialist program – persons in recovery, who are passionate about using their own recovery story as an inspiration to others in recovery. After conducting the 32 hour training program in 2012, we realized the need to have a more structured programme. We have since developed peer supporter training, with support from the National Council of Social Service (NCSS).

SAMH is also exploring ways to enhance the program further. One such way is the possibility of collaborating with external agencies, for future Peer Specialist internships. We are always open to more inclusive ways of reintegration, and we recognize job opportunities being one of them.

*Yours sincerely,*  
From the Editor's Desk

“ Learn from yesterday,  
Live for today,  
Hope for tomorrow ”

- YY, Jen -

(background painting by artist YY, Jen)

## HOPE NEWSLETTER

**Editorial Advisors**  
Assoc Prof Daniel Fung  
Dr Lee Cheng  
Ms Tan Li Li

**Editorial Team**  
Ms Lisa Goh  
Ms Debbie Foong

### Contents

1	Editorial	10-11	Recap of events
4	Success Story	12	FAQ
5	Inspirational Quote	13-14	Donation form
6-7	Services offered	15	Thank you also for
8-9	Special Feature	16	Back Cover

Have a comment, suggestion or feedback to share with the editorial team?  
Email us at [hope@samhealth.org.sg](mailto:hope@samhealth.org.sg)

The Singapore Association for Mental Health (SAMH), established as a voluntary welfare organisation in December 1988, provides community based mental health programmes and services to promote mental and social well-being and empower people with mental illness to rebuild their lives.



# Learning how to overcome anxiety

Shalinda

Shalinda was referred to YouthReach, SAMH's program specifically tailored to the psychological needs of 13 to 21-year olds. During the intake interview, Shalinda was observed to be frightened and fearful, and wanting to leave the place as soon as possible. As she refused to attend YouthReach, the social worker made several home visits to engage her. Initially, Shalinda would scream and shout in her bedroom when the social worker arrived. Shalinda would throw anything she could grab within her reach, at the social worker, demanding for the social worker to leave. Despite this, the social worker persevered, and after a few weeks, Shalinda was able to shake hands with the worker.

During the initial visits, Shalinda was observed to have symptoms of delusions and anxiety. Her social skills were poor and she had difficulties in maintaining a conversation. Over time, the social worker brought books for her to read or colour. Shalinda would take a book and read out loud incomprehensibly. Words and phrases would be repeated over and over again. She had trouble reading and understanding simple sentences, and could not quite understand verbal and non-verbal expressions.

The first intervention was to encourage Shalinda to step out of her room, into the living area. Shalinda had lived in her bedroom for a long time, refusing to leave her comfort zone. Gradually, she stepped out of her room for a little while. After some time, she started staying in the living room for at least 5 minutes, and the stay was slowly prolonged. Her

parents were relieved that there was a little progress.

A second intervention was to tackle Shalinda's hygiene issues. Shalinda would scream when the social worker and her mother took her to the bathroom, as she didn't want water poured on her. The social worker began giving simple information on hygiene, and even brought a book on hygiene, which was a visual treat for Shalinda. She started brushing her teeth and taking showers.

Next, the social worker practiced behaviour modification to teach Shalinda to act in ways she seldom behaved before. The social worker rewarded successive steps to final behaviour, using visual charts such as waking up an hour earlier than usual, brushing teeth, and taking a shower. Continuous reinforcement was also given, and followed by Shalinda's mother. An immediate reward was given after each act performed.

Using behaviour modification and CBT, Shalinda started to show changes in her thinking and behaviour. Shalinda grew happy to see her social worker. She began doing simple kindergarten English and Math worksheets, eventually progressing to Primary 5 worksheets.

After 3 years, Shalinda was finally able to step out of the house!

## Back to Her Studies

Shalinda mentioned that she wanted to go back to school to pursue her studies. A suitable school was explored and the social worker advocated for Shalinda to go back to school. During the initial period, the social worker sat in class to equip the teacher with some skills and knowledge in handling Shalinda, and guiding her to buy food during recess time. Subsequently, the social worker moved to sit in the canteen so as to allow Shalinda to be more independent as she adjusted to the new environment. After a month, Shalinda learned to cope better, and she felt a sense of belonging in class. Shalinda also made friends and her life became as normal as any other teenager.

Today, Shalinda joins YouthReach activities and also has enrolled for art activities at Creative Mindset.

*"Never give up on someone with a mental illness. When "I" is replaced by "We", illness becomes wellness."*—Shannon L. Alder

"At the root of this dilemma is the way we view mental health in this country. Whether an illness affects your heart, your leg or your brain, it's still an illness, and there should be no distinction."

MICHELLE OBAMA

## Workshops @ CREATIVE HUB

90 Goodman Road, Goodman Arts Centre, Block L, #01-47

### Approval Addiction

Addiction is a problem that can cause one to be frustrated and depressed. It can come in many forms and does not only apply to drugs or pornography. Overcoming an addiction is hard but stopping the addiction increases self-confidence and self-esteem. This one session workshop serves to help increase in awareness of approval addiction that you may not even realise that you have. It also explores tips on handling the issue.

Facilitator: Clarise Chew  
Time: 7:00 pm - 8:00 pm  
Date: 16 February, Friday  
Cost: \$10



### Art Experiential: DIY Tiny Chin-Up Box

Perhaps you are having a bad day, grieving over a loss, feeling down or healing and recovering? Join us to create a pocket chin-up box of favourite quotes, photos or comforting words that you can carry around with for comfort, encouragement and a little perk me up.

Facilitator: Loh Wan Ting  
Time: 7:00 pm - 8:00 pm  
Date: 19 February, Friday  
Cost: \$10



### Outdoor Landscape Sketching

The urban sketchers of Singapore have gone around the island making sketches. They have inspired many people to relook at our buildings and parks and appreciate the beauty of landscape. In these 3 sessions, participants will learn 2-point perspective and sketching in pencil. Come and appreciate sketching the landscape in the Goodman Arts Centre compound!

Medium: Pencil  
Facilitator: Tew Bee Lan  
Time: 11:45 am - 1:00 pm  
Date: 11, 18 & 25 February  
Cost: \$20  
Materials: A4 sketchbook,  
2B pencil and eraser.



### Art Experiential: Coffee Art

Enjoy your visual coffee break with us! Immersed in the delicious aroma of coffee beans and allow your senses to guide you to be in the present moment. Create an artwork inspired by the memories of the touch and smell of coffee beans.

Facilitator: Loh Wan Ting  
Time: 2:30 pm - 3:30 pm  
Date: 26 February, Friday  
Cost: \$10



## Workshops @ CREATIVE MINDSET

1, Jurong West Central 2, #06-01, Jurong Point Shopping Centre

### The Fluid Sensation

Sessions will cover a basic introduction to watercolours.

Medium: Watercolour  
Facilitator: Lily Chee  
Time: 6:45 pm - 8:00 pm  
Date: Every 2nd and 4th Monday  
(March - June 16)  
Cost: Complimentary  
Materials: Materials will be  
provided during  
sessions



### Creative Movement Through Hip Hop

Sessions encourage participants to find out their unique way of movement, and at the same time develop a strong sense of confidence and their communication abilities through body language. Basic knowledge and techniques would be introduced to allow the students to have a better understanding of the hip hop dance genre.

Facilitator: Agnes Lim Si Qi  
Time: 4:00 pm - 5:00 pm  
Date: Every Thursday  
for the month of  
February and March  
Cost: Complimentary



### Imagery in Mixed Media

Participants will learn and apply found objects and acrylic painting techniques in this art piece.

Facilitator: Liew Yeng Lin  
Time: 4:00 pm - 5:30 pm  
Date: Every 3rd Friday  
of the month  
Cost: \$60



### Enjoying the Golden Years

Enjoy the time of your life after retirement! Maintain and add more colours into your days as you embark on your journey of the Golden Years! Let it shine, even brighter than before. Simply because you are worth it.

Learn more about healthy lifestyle (physical, emotional and mental health) and making choices to enhance your daily living.

Facilitator: Linda Chua  
Time: 4:00 pm - 5:30 pm  
Date: Every 3rd Friday  
of the month  
Cost: \$10



# MENTAL MUSCLE

Nicholas Eu, Jonathan See, Stephen Hwang, Jon Tan



“ We hope to change things in this area, even if it’s in a small way. ”

People say, “You don’t know someone until you’ve walked a mile in his or her shoes.” And those belonging to persons with disabilities, mental illness, or the elderly, are the last pair of shoes most would choose. But four medical students are doing just that. They are Nicholas Eu, Stephen Hwang, Jon Tan, and Jonathan See, 22-year-old students in their final year at National University of Singapore (NUS).

Looking to run a marathon that would truly test their limits, they wanted to dedicate their run to something meaningful. During their posting to the psychiatry medicine department, Jonathan encountered one patient’s plight that would impact his group’s decision.

“Personally, this was the story I shared with my team. I was at a morning ward round in the hospital, where doctors and nurses review each patient’s progress and recovery. I saw the team struggling with their decision to discharge a patient from the hospital. Later, I found out that there was no caretaker for this patient. He had been abandoned by his family, with no one visiting him throughout his entire stay in the hospital and no home to return to. Despite numerous calls to his relative by the social workers in the hospital, no one was willing to care for him or even pay for the hospital bills. If this patient was discharged, he would be left homeless and social circumstances might worsen his existing condition, forcing him to be readmitted, with a worse disease prognosis.”

The four of them traded numerous stories such as

this one, over discussion. Many of these patients come from difficult socio-economic backgrounds, and are ostracised by their own family members. It is not uncommon for patients to be discharged and go home, only to be turned away at the door, or discover their only surviving relatives have moved. It is a heart breaking stigma with very real consequences, not only ‘being forgotten,’ but realizing the family has ‘chosen to forget.’

It became painfully apparent that social circumstances like this were too common for persons facing mental illnesses. This realization led them to form their group named Mental Muscle, in an expression of support and respect for the mental strength they have witnessed. They will run 250km in a desert marathon, in Namib Desert of Namibia, Africa. It’s one of the oldest and largest deserts in the world, with sand dunes overlooking the sea.

Through the marathon, the team aims to raise \$50,000 for Singapore Association for Mental Health (SAMH). SAMH is constructing a new vocational training school for teenagers and young adults affected by psychiatric conditions. It is also where the donations will be allocated to. SAMH aims to equip persons with mental illnesses with skills required in the workforce, enabling them to reintegrate into society.

Jonathan added, “We hope to change things in this area, even if it’s in a small way.”

To donate, please visit:  
<http://www.mentalmuscle.org/>

## RECENT EVENTS



### Christmas Party Celebration in Activity Hub

(Left) On the 15th December 2015, Singapore Polytechnic collaborated with Activity Hub to organize a Christmas party for the residents.

### MSF Minister visits Pelangi Village

(Right) Minister Tan Chuan Jin visited the Pelangi Village residents on 23 November 2015, as part of his new appointment as the Minister for Social and Family Development, the organization that funds Activity Hub.



### Ctrl + Shift

SAMH is working on a year long campaign with '50 for 50', a charity initiative by a group of communication professionals. It was named 'Ctrl + Shift,' in an effort to change the way people think about mental illnesses. A soft launch was held on 5th December, at LePark, a rooftop tapas bar in Chinatown. There was an interactive guitar performance from Shak'thiya, a film trailer featuring mental illness experiences, and paintings from SAMH clients.

#ctrlxshift



### Flamenco Dance (Aug, Sep, Oct 15)

In the months of August, September and October 2015, Flamenco dancers from Flamenco Sin Fronteras collaborated with SAMH to bring flamenco dance sessions into the community. After a few dance practice sessions at the various centres, participants performed in flashmobs in the community at areas such as Chinatown, East Coast, Hougang Mall, Toa Payoh, Tampines Mall and etc.

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Welcome to our new FAQ column!  
We welcome any questions about mental health that readers would like answered.

Drop us an email at: [hope@samhealth.org.sg](mailto:hope@samhealth.org.sg)  
SAMH Free Counselling Helpline: 1800 283 7019



## How do I persuade a loved one who might be having a mental health issue to seek help?

It is important to maintain small talk (i.e., general topics that will not agitate the person) as that can help to build the relationship. At the same time, practice good self-care instead of focusing entirely on the person of concern. When the person is calmer, you can begin by stating your observations of the person that made you feel concerned.

Use feeling words e.g. "I'm very worried about you." Ask the person to share more what he/she is going through. Spend some time to simply listen without suggesting any advice or treatment. Continue asking questions to find out more. After the person has shared for some time, you can suggest the possibility of seeking help. Offer to help arrange the appointment, or accompany the person if he/she finds that helpful.

However, it is equally likely that the person might still refuse to seek help or deny there is a problem. This is possible and be prepared for it. If this happens and the person's condition worsens, it may be necessary to take the person to the hospital for treatment. If you are unsure of how to proceed, you may want to discuss further with a mental health worker, such as calling our SAMH Counselling Helpline.

## Will my job prospects be affected if I see a psychiatrist?

We understand that this is a matter that most people would like to keep private, out of desperation that their job prospects will be affected. However, we need to understand that mental illness is just like any other physical ailment – it won't go away even if it is ignored.

For persons with mental illnesses, their work performance is often affected when they could not cope with its symptoms, e.g. a person who hears voices, or a person with depression, having trouble concentrating at work. In comparison, when they are on treatment and recovering, they are able to function better at work.

Mental health services typically ensure client's information is strictly confidential and not accessible by employers, however, it may be better for you to find out the limits of confidentiality from the clinic / centre you wish to receive services from. Alternatively, you could call our SAMH Counselling Helpline for more advice.



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69 Lorong 4 Toa Payoh #01-365  
Singapore 310069

We seek your support to promote mental wellness for all, including youths, the elderly and people with special mental health needs. We have made a difference to the community and over 8,000 people have so far benefitted from our programmes and services. Our public education, psychiatric rehabilitation programmes and other support services have altogether empowered people to live dignified and meaningful lives, and to contribute positively to society.

Won't you join us in promoting mental health and improving the mental resilience of our community?

**I WISH TO DONATE**

\$500    \$400    \$300

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If you wish to make a donation online, please visit  
<http://www.samhealth.org.sg/donation>

**PLEASE TICK**

I would like to be kept informed of key SAMH activities through e-mail.

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cut along the dotted line



THANK YOU FOR YOUR KIND GENEROSITY 

GLUE ALL SIDES FIRMLY

*Thank you!*

We'd like to thank all who have contributed to the lives of persons with mental illnesses, extending special thanks to the following donors:

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Singapore Association for Mental Health  
wishes all friends a  
Happy Lunar New Year!  
新年快乐，恭喜发财！

2016

Year of the Monkey