



WE CARE
COMMUNITY SERVICES

**20
25**

annual
report

Sustaining Recovery



A person with a backpack is hiking through a lush green forest. The path is covered in tall grass and small yellow flowers. The trees are tall and dense, creating a canopy overhead. The overall scene is peaceful and natural.

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Board & Staff

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Dr Munidasa Winslow	Member	Tina Doran	Director
Frances Cheang	Member	Lai Chin Yee	Director
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Jennifer Chan	Locum Counsellor
Stanly Leung	Locum Counsellor
Gowri Kirchberg	Locum Counsellor
Alex Lim	Locum Counsellor
Joyotee Ray Chaudhury	Locum Counsellor
Regina Wong	Locum Counsellor

Mission & Vision

Mission

- **Advocate** for persons with addiction, and their families
- **Provide** evidence-based clinical treatment for addiction
- **Deliver** community-based recovery programmes, in order to facilitate re-integration into society
- **Elevate** professionalism and expertise for addiction treatment

Vision

To be the leading community hub of addiction recovery in Singapore

Unique Entity Number (UEN)	200506089N
Bankers	DBS Bank Ltd
Corporate Secretary	Tricor Singapore Pte Ltd
Auditor	Fiducia LLP

WE CARE Community Services is a company limited by guarantee and registered under the Charities Act. As a charity with Institution of Public Character (IPC) status, we provide programmes and services for persons who are in recovery from addiction, as well as their family members and significant others.

A full member of the National Council of Social Service (NCSS), **WE CARE** is in its 20th year of operation in 2025.



“Two decades of unwavering commitment, compassion, and collaboration stand as a powerful testament to what can be achieved when individuals, families, and organisations come together for a common cause.”

Mdm Halimah Yacob
Patron

2025 marks a momentous milestone for **WE CARE** Community Services – their 20th year of serving the community. Two decades of unwavering commitment, compassion, and collaboration stand as a powerful testament to what can be achieved when individuals, families, and organisations come together for a common cause.

As they celebrate this anniversary, the work ahead remains as vital as ever. Singapore has seen a troubling surge in substance abuse among our youth, most notably with the rise of Kpods and vaping. What began as an emerging concern has rapidly evolved into a public health crisis, with young people increasingly drawn to these products without fully understanding their addictive potential and harm.

Recognising the severity of this challenge, the authorities appointed five agencies to spearhead efforts in tackling this crisis – with **WE CARE** being one of them. This appointment is a testament to the trust placed in them and their deep expertise in addiction intervention and community care.

Grounded in the belief that early action saves lives, they have expanded their focus beyond treatment to encompass prevention and early intervention. Through awareness talks, community outreach, and the training of peer support students and leaders, they are building the capacity of communities to identify and respond to warning signs of addiction. This upstream approach was especially critical in addressing the Kpods and vaping crisis – where timely support can make all the difference before dependency sets in.

Twenty years on, the impact of their work speaks for itself – measured not in numbers alone, but in the lives restored, families strengthened, and communities made more resilient. The dedication of their Board, staff, and volunteers remains the driving force behind every meaningful outcome they achieve.

I warmly invite you to read their annual report to discover the breadth of their initiatives and the lasting difference they continue to make in our community.

CONNECTION
HEALS



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Message

“ We are committed to ensuring that every individual who seeks help can find it in a timely, compassionate, and effective way. ”

It was a remarkable year for **WE CARE** in 2025. To mark 20 years of serving the recovering community, we organised a charity lunch fundraiser. Held at the Shangri-La and attended by more than 300 guests, the event raised almost \$600,000 in gross funds—making it the most successful fundraiser **WE CARE** has ever achieved. Beyond the funds raised, more importantly, it was a powerful reminder of what can be accomplished when a community comes together in support of recovery, hope, and second chances.

In 2025, Singapore faced a growing wave of kPod-related cases. **WE CARE** was honoured to be one of five agencies appointed to respond to this emerging crisis. Our team rose to the challenge, and besides offering counselling treatment, we conducted numerous awareness talks that reached over 800 individuals, many from institutions of higher learning. Over the course of the year, we connected with more than 4,000 people through over 90 public engagements, talks, and mental wellness fairs—our highest level of outreach to date. Each interaction represents an opportunity to raise awareness, reduce stigma, and encourage someone to seek help.

At the same time, space remains a pressing constraint at our centre. While we have installed additional pods to serve as counselling and meeting rooms, demand continues to outpace capacity. On many days, securing a private room for counselling is a challenge. Yet, this also reflects the growing trust in our services and the increasing number of individuals seeking support. It strengthens our resolve to expand our capacity, so that no one who reaches out for help is turned away.

As we look ahead, this growing demand calls us to do more. It challenges us to expand not only our physical space, but also our reach and impact.

With the continued support of our partners, donors, and community, we are committed to ensuring that every individual who seeks help can find it in a timely, compassionate, and effective way. Together, I believe we can continue to build a society where recovery is possible, and no one has to walk the journey alone.

Robert Chew
Chairman



Tham Yuen Han
Executive Director

“ We are seeing a broad-based rise in addiction-related concerns. Together, we can ensure that more people across Singapore receive timely, informed support when they need it most. ”

Message

2025 marked a watershed moment in **WE CARE**'s 20-year history – and one that filled our entire team with both humility and resolve.

For the first time, more than 1,000 individuals reached out for help – a 40% increase from 832 in 2024 to 1,162 in 2025. This translated into an active caseload of 917 cases (up from 690) and 4,513 counselling hours delivered, compared to 3,296 the year prior. Our Helpline also recorded a 57% surge in general enquiries, responding to over 4,800 queries across email, telephone, WhatsApp, and social media.

Behind every one of these numbers is a person – and often a family – reaching out in a moment of real vulnerability. I am deeply grateful to our volunteer and staff helpline managers, who show up with compassion and steadiness as the first voice many of these individuals hear.

As we look to 2026, we are seeing a broad-based rise in addiction-related concerns – with behavioural addictions, including problematic gaming, gambling, and online behaviours, outpacing the growth in substance-related disorders. This shift has not gone unnoticed. The National Council of Social Service (NCSS) has initiated discussions on strengthening early detection and brief intervention capabilities at the frontline, particularly through neighbourhood Family Service Centres and youth organisations.

WE CARE has answered that call. In collaboration with NCSS, **WE CARE** will design and deliver a series of structured, foundational training programmes for social service agencies, equipping social work professionals with the skills to identify early signs of addiction risk and provide timely brief interventions before behaviours escalate. This will be a major initiative in our FY2026

plan, and one I am personally excited about. It marks a meaningful evolution in **WE CARE**'s journey – a progression from being solely a direct service provider to also becoming a sector enabler.

With two decades of clinical experience behind us, we are well-placed to support fellow agencies through training, consultation, and ongoing clinical guidance. This is how we amplify our reach beyond what any single organisation can achieve alone – by investing in the professionals who stand closest to those at risk, and giving them the knowledge and confidence to act early. Together, we can ensure that more people across Singapore receive timely, informed support when they need it most.

At the same time, we remain deeply committed to strengthening our own capabilities. We will continue to invest in our staff and volunteers, refine our counselling frameworks, and improve care pathways – so that every individual who comes to us receives support that is not only accessible, but truly effective and evidence-informed.

To support this, we have applied for an NCSS grant under the Transformation and Sustainability Scheme (TSS). If successful, these funds will enable us to strengthen talent development, improve on learning and career progression pathways, and upgrade our HR and digital systems – laying a stronger operational foundation for our growth ahead.

This dual commitment – to our clients and to the wider sector – is what will define **WE CARE**'s next chapter. It is an exciting one, and I look forward to walking it together with our team, our partners, and the communities we are privileged to serve.

Review of 2025

1162 referrals
handled

2024 - 832
2023 - 734

402 recovery support
group meetings

2024 - 424
2023 - 720

917 caseload
served

2024 - 690
2023 - 621

123 volunteers

2024 - 148
2023 - 194

4,513 counselling
sessions
hours

2024 - 3,296
2023 - 3,073



Key Service Highlights

outreach
4,137
2024 - 2,608
2023 - 2,640

queries
4,800
attended to
2024 - 3,050

social media
followers

1,348 Instagram	768 TikTok	total followers 2,559
92 Facebook	351 LinkedIn	

Current Programmes

SOAR Substance or Alcohol Recovery

A structured therapy programme for individuals with substance, prescription medication and/or alcohol abuse problems. The therapeutic process is conducted in a safe, non-judgemental environment, through counselling and also support from the recovering community, to maintain motivation and effect lasting changes.

SPLA Sex, Porn and Love Addiction

This therapeutic programme is for individuals with sex, pornography and/or love addictions. Through a collaborative process of exploring triggers, providing psychoeducation, and assessing the present needs, the client will be better informed to identify their therapeutic goals and develop an individualised treatment plan under the therapist's guidance.

IGA Internet and Gaming Addiction

To help individuals with internet and/or gaming addiction, this programme works with the affected individual and their family members to help them understand the problem and collaboratively develop a treatment plan that not only focuses on reducing use but also encourages positive lifestyle habits.

GARI Gambling Addiction Recovery Intervention

To help individuals struggling with an uncontrollable urge to keep gambling, clients in this programme learn to identify how their urge to gamble comes about; the triggers, resources available to help manage it; and through that, develop a relapse prevention plan.

ATO Atypical Theft Offending

Through individual, group, and couples/family therapy, as well as workshops and self-help support groups, this programme works with clients and significant others to understand the behaviour, identify accessible coping resources and develop strategies that prevent further compulsive shoplifting.

ADAM Anxiety Depression or Anger Management

ADAM is a skill-based programme designed expressly to help recovering persons who struggle to manage their anger or express negative emotions effectively. Participants receive guidance in positive coping behaviours and develop skills to express themselves clearly so that their needs get communicated without escalating to volatile exchanges.



CSO Counselling for Significant Others

Providing care and support for individuals struggling with addiction can be challenging and may at times evoke feelings of loss and helplessness. This programme works with significant others to help them understand the recovery process and to identify the challenges they face, so that they can better manage, build healthy boundaries, and support loved ones.

SAFE

Support for Recovering Addicts and Their Families through Empowerment

An initiative spearheaded by NCSS in collaboration with Singapore Prison Service to treat former inmates and their families. The objective of the programme is to prevent drug relapse and re-offending amongst former offenders with a drug history.

SMART

Self-Management and Recovery Training

A self-empowering recovery support group for addiction recovery where participants raise and discuss issues and challenges; and where crosstalk is encouraged so that social learning can take place. The facilitator provides direction and contextualises the participants' sharing using evidenced-based tools while ensuring a safe space for expression and learning.

Mindfulness Mindfulness-based Relapse Prevention

An open group to learn and practise mindfulness, which helps participants to develop awareness of their physical and mental states, and learn to be comfortable with acknowledging or managing thoughts and feelings as they come. Mindfulness has been found to be effective for individuals with a history of addictions or reactive behaviours.

NOCOSO Non-Contact Sexual Offending Programme

The NOCOSO programme is developed to help clients abstain from non-contact sexual offending behaviours. Through the process, participants will increase awareness of their behaviours, learn about triggers, develop healthy coping mechanisms, establish accountability for their own actions, develop empathy for victims and other persons harmed, and prevent future offending.

SAGE Support and Awareness Group for Eating

This group programme is developed to help clients better understand their eating habits and behaviours. Through this process, participants will achieve better understanding of eating issues, increase awareness of their own behaviours, learn about triggers, develop a healthier relationship with food, establish healthy coping mechanisms and prevent future occurrences of negative eating cycles.

Current Programmes

QVP & MERP

Quit Vape Programme & Mandatory Etomidate Rehabilitation Programme

In response to growing concerns around vaping and Kpods, the Government appointed **WE CARE** as one of five agencies to support affected individuals. Persons struggling with vaping, including the use of etomidate-laced Kpods, may voluntarily seek help under the Quit Vape Programme (QVP).

The QVP provides a structured series of six counselling sessions, comprising four individual sessions and two group sessions. These are fully subsidised by the Ministry of Health (MOH) for Singaporeans, with additional sessions available at a highly subsidised rate when further support is required. Importantly, individuals who come forward

voluntarily do not face punitive consequences, encouraging early help-seeking and recovery.

Individuals apprehended for vaping may be placed under the Mandatory Etomidate Rehabilitation Programme (MERP), where they undergo individual and group interventions under stricter requirements.

Both programmes were developed in collaboration with the Ministry of Health (MOH) and the Health Sciences Authority (HSA) in response to the rising prevalence of vaping and Kpod use. **WE CARE** remains committed to supporting individuals affected by all forms of addiction, whether substance-related or behavioural.

F&F Family & Friends

A facilitated support group where family members and close friends of recovering persons share and learn from each other's experiences in providing support for someone with addiction. Facilitators also cover techniques and strategies they can adopt to take care of their own mental health.

12-Step Workshop Introduction to 12-Steps

The 12-Steps were created by the founders of Alcoholics Anonymous to establish guidelines to overcome an addiction to alcohol. Because of its success, the approach has been adapted for other addiction support groups.



in Focus for 2026

Uplifting the Social Service Sector with Addiction Training

WE CARE is in discussions with NCSS to provide training in behavioural addiction to professionals in social service agencies. This enables early intervention of high-risk behaviours by equipping Family Service Centres (FSCS) and non-specialist agencies to screen and detect signs of addiction.

Kpods and Vaping

Kpods and vaping first made the news in the middle of 2025, and with the intense media focus, every Singaporean got a glimpse of what addiction can do to those struggling with it.

On top of being appointed by the Government as one of five agencies to support affected individuals, we conducted more than 10 talks or workshops that covered Kpods and vaping at places like Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts, SLB Manufacturing and a public talk at **WE CARE**.

These talks were aimed at educating participants on everything to do with Kpods and vapes – what they look like, how they harm the body, the signs and symptoms of someone struggling with the issue, as well as what to do when they spot warning signs.

While the tougher laws have proved effective, the problem is by no means gone, and more awareness needs to be raised – especially among the youth.

WE CARE has more Kpods and vaping talks planned in 2026.

QVP & MERP

Both programmes - developed in collaboration with MOH and HSA - were implemented in Q4 2025 in response to the rising prevalence of vaping and Kpods, alongside tighter regulatory measures. As government-led initiatives, they required enhanced documentation and reporting processes, which were operationalised through coordinated efforts across our clinical and non-clinical teams. An initial surge in cases was anticipated, with a steady stream of enquiries coming in.

Most enquiries were initiated by concerned family members and loved ones. Where individuals are not yet ready to seek help, **WE CARE** extends support to their families, equipping them with strategies to better manage the situation.

In line with the nature of addiction, readiness for change often takes time, and regulatory measures alone may not immediately translate into help-seeking. **WE CARE** remains committed to supporting individuals affected by substance and behavioural addictions, as well as their loved ones.

Behavioural Addictions: Pornography, Gaming and Gambling

In late 2025, Senior Parliamentary Secretary Eric Chua raised the issue of problematic pornography use in Parliament, highlighting the need for greater awareness, public education, and enhanced support for affected individuals.

In response, **WE CARE** has continued to strengthen its capabilities in this area by investing in specialised training for our staff, while also providing consultation and capability-building support to community partners and social service agencies. These efforts aim to enhance sector-wide competency, ensuring that individuals affected

by these issues receive informed, sensitive and effective care.

With a continued rise in cases related to problematic pornography use and compulsive sexual behaviours, together with issues surrounding gaming, gambling and device use, behavioural addictions will take on greater focus in 2026.

Cases relating to pornography, gambling and gaming increased by more than 40% from 2024 to 2025, underscoring the growing prevalence and urgency of these issues.

Mindline

Launched in June 2025, Mindline is Singapore's first national 24/7 mental health helpline and textline, offering confidential support, counselling, and guidance to those struggling with any mental health issue, including addiction.

Trained counsellors manage the lines round the clock, and were trained on addiction by **WE CARE**, to familiarise them with the addiction landscape, available treatment options and the recovery process.

WE CARE is one of the resources recommended by Mindline, whenever the caller expresses that they are struggling with addiction.

Offering a safe, non-judgemental space is crucial for those struggling with mental health issues, and **WE CARE** is grateful for the opportunity to support this new national initiative.

We look forward to more collaborations with Mindline, as Singapore continues to remove the barriers to seeking help.

MSF Responsible Gambling Training

The Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF) appointed **WE CARE** in 2025 to provide training to staff from the casinos and other gambling establishments. This training is part of the Responsible Gaming Programme requirement stipulated by the Gambling Regulatory Authority (GRA).

The selected staff serve as Responsible Gambling Ambassadors alongside their primary roles, and engage patrons on responsible play, provide information on games, and offer support when assistance is needed. This work strengthens frontline awareness and helps create safer gambling environments.

As part of the training curriculum, **WE CARE** conducts a 45-minute sharing session where we talk about our services, the facilities we provide and the treatment process. A beneficiary with Gambling addiction also shares their story, highlighting how problem gambling develops over time, its impact on their family, and the warning signs to look out for.

The training has the aim of giving staff a clearer understanding of how to help those in need.

WE CARE will continue to provide this training in upcoming years.

Centre Highlights



WE CARE 20TH ANNIVERSARY GALA LUNCH

As part of our 20th anniversary celebration, we held a fundraising gala lunch, which was well-received. Both our vocal group, the Warblers, and our drummers from the Healing Beats performed.

18TH AND 19TH FINISHER AWARDS



Our signature event happens twice a year – in January and July. With more than 100 attendees at each occasion, we honour achievements in sobriety of 1 year and more.





BETHEL ASSEMBLY ELDERCARE ROADSHOW



WE CARE was invited to Bethel Assembly of God Church to raise awareness about addiction among its congregation. The roadshow was part of our outreach efforts to equip the community with the knowledge of resources available to those struggling with addiction.



VOCAL TRAINING

The **WE CARE** Warblers have been training regularly for more than a year, and have performed multiple times. Look out for more performances in 2026!

WE CARE X SUSS HUMAN LIBRARY EVENT

In partnership with students from Singapore University of Social Sciences, **WE CARE** hosted a Human Library event where beneficiaries, significant others, and counsellors served as "living books." Visitors listened to lived experiences of addiction and recovery, breaking stigmas one conversation at a time.



ORCHARD ROAD'S "CHRISTMAS ON A GREAT STREET"



A popular year-end outing to check out the Orchard Road Christmas light display and soak in the festivities.





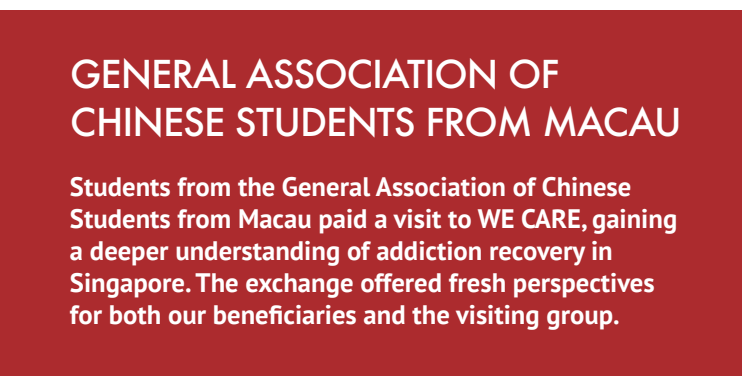
DRUMMING LESSONS

The Healing Beats, made up of beneficiaries and staff, have been training with Reverberance since the start of the year. Similar to the **WE CARE** Warblers, they have performed at important events, including at our Gala lunch.



IT CLASS AND SMARTPHONE PHOTOGRAPHY CLASS BY HCI STUDENTS

Students from Hwa Chong Institution volunteered their time to conduct IT and a photography class for our beneficiaries. The sessions helped participants build essential digital and photography skills while fostering meaningful connections between the students and those in recovery.



GENERAL ASSOCIATION OF CHINESE STUDENTS FROM MACAU

Students from the General Association of Chinese Students from Macau paid a visit to **WE CARE**, gaining a deeper understanding of addiction recovery in Singapore. The exchange offered fresh perspectives for both our beneficiaries and the visiting group.



SRI ARULMIGU MURUGAN TEMPLE TALK

WE CARE was invited to Sri Arulmigu Murugan Temple to talk about addiction and recovery to the Indian community. We also touched on matters relating to mental health and wellbeing.



RAINFOREST WILD ASIA



Beneficiaries and staff headed to Rainforest Wild Asia for a day of exploration and discovery amid lush greenery and wildlife. The outdoor adventure offered a refreshing change of scenery, a boost to mental wellbeing, and a reminder of the beauty that awaits beyond recovery.



THE CAFFEINE EXPERIENCE

Matthew Poh, Founder of social enterprise The Caffeine Experience, shared his remarkable journey from addiction and incarceration to entrepreneurship with our beneficiaries. His story of resilience and redemption resonated deeply, proving that second chances are always possible.



INSIDE ADDICTION: VAPES & KPODS TALK

Launched in June 2025, our Inside Addiction talk series tackled the growing crisis of vaping and Kpods. Parents, educators and community partners came together to learn about the risks, warning signs, and how to support those affected.



WE CARE participated at Tribex, which was part of the NCSS Social Service Summit at Marina Bay Sands. We engaged visitors, fellow social service organisations, students and technology innovators on how care and innovation can work hand in hand.

Outdoor walks are one of the most popular activities at **WE CARE**, with Chinatown, the MacRitchie Treetop Walk and Sembawang being some of the highlights.



CHINATOWN WALK, TREETOP WALK AND SEMBAWANG HOT SPRING PARK



SANDS FOR SINGAPORE CHARITY FESTIVAL 2025 AND HEARTSTRINGS WALK

In its 11th edition, the festival in 2025 revolved around the theme of 'Where Hearts Come Together'. Over 3 days, non-profit and other organisations as well as the public came together to make a collective difference to society. It culminated in the Heartstrings Walk around Marina Bay, jointly organised by Sands and ComChest.

It concluded with over S\$5.2 million raised for local charities, lifting the total amount raised to more than S\$45 million since 2013.



SINGAPORE GARDEN FESTIVAL ORCHID SHOW

Beneficiaries and staff took a refreshing outing to the Singapore Garden Festival Orchid Show at the Singapore Botanic Gardens. Surrounded by over 650 stunning orchid varieties, the trip was a gentle reminder of beauty, growth, and new beginnings.



MY COMMUNITY: MY BIRTHS AND REBIRTHS

WE CARE joined My Community's annual heritage festival, themed "My Births and Rebirths". We hosted two tours of our centre, welcoming curious members of the public who asked thoughtful questions about addiction and the power of recovery as a form of rebirth.



A non-profit addiction recovery centre open to all persons.

Contact us at:

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Inside Addiction: Understanding Vapes & Kpods

At **WE CARE**, we believe that recovery is not just a personal journey – it is a community effort. While our core mission remains providing evidence-based treatment, we are equally committed to outreach and public education.

In June, we launched Inside Addiction, a new in-person series of talks designed to break down complex issues around addiction. The series aims to equip the community with the tools and knowledge needed to respond to emerging trends in addiction, with each session offering practical takeaways.

The inaugural sessions tackled two pressing topics in the addiction landscape.

Session 1: What Family Members Need to Know focused on supporting loved ones who are struggling with addiction but unwilling to seek professional help. The session explored the science of addiction, practical communication techniques, and the importance of self-care and healthy boundaries for caregivers. It also provided a safe, non-judgemental space for over 40 attendees to ask questions openly.

Session 2: Understanding Vapes and Kpods addressed the growing concern over the issue. Informed by new laws and disturbing online content, this in-depth session covered the realities of addiction, health risks, and the latest legal developments. In addition to clarifying what vapes and Kpods are, our team offered guidance on how to support someone struggling with Kpod use and shared **WE CARE's** treatment approach.

In 2025, **WE CARE's** community addiction awareness efforts hit a record high – reaching over 4,100 individuals over a record 90 events.

With the vaping and Kpods crisis taking over news and social media, addiction fully entered the national consciousness. This resulted in more organisations reaching out to us to conduct addiction awareness talks, and participate in their mental health events.

Our outreach efforts continued to engage youths more than any other group, reaching 942 individuals in 2025, up from 887 the previous year. Vaping and Kpods was an issue many youths struggled with, and so the need to reach out to them increased in urgency.

Apart from continued collaborations with Institutes of Higher Learning (IHL) like NUS, Temasek Polytechnic and SUSS, we developed a partnership with Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts (NAFA), who proactively educate their students about vaping and Kpods.

Throughout 2025, we conducted 10 talks for students across all faculties in NAFA. In addition, we ran similar talks for Care Corner and SLB Manufacturing.

We were also invited by NCSS to be part of the Social Service Summit, held at MBS, by setting up a booth at TribeX. Over the course of two days, we spoke to a diverse group of visitors, from students, social service staff, to the general public who were there to explore what a career in Social Service looked like as well as professionals from other Social Service Agencies.

We highlight a few outreach efforts of note.

NCSS 2025 Social Service Summit

WE CARE was invited to be part of the NCSS 2025 Social Service Summit, held at the Marina Bay Convention Centre in July. Centred on the theme 'Transforming the Future of Social Service Through Talent and Technology', the two-day convention brought together 20 social service organisations, the Ministry of Social and Family Development, university students, and visitors to explore the integration of technology in the social service sector.

The summit's focus aligns with **WE CARE**'s commitment to embracing innovation to enhance our service delivery and our support for the community.

In addition to a booth at TribeX, a core section of the convention, where we engaged with attendees, we also tried out some interesting emerging technologies that were showcased

My Community Festival: "My Births and Rebirths"

WE CARE was invited by My Community – a non-profit organisation known for its free guided heritage tours and festivals – to participate in their annual August festival.

This year's theme, "My Births and Rebirths," focused on the vibrant practices and beliefs surrounding new beginnings. Since recovery is a form of rebirth and a new beginning, the theme resonated with our mission.

The two tours of our centre were a success, thanks to the coordination by our designated guide from My Community. Throughout the sessions, attendees asked numerous questions about **WE CARE** and listened attentively as a person in recovery shared their personal story. Smaller groups allowed for deeper engagement, reinforcing our belief that when it comes to outreach, "the more questions, the merrier."

We are grateful to My Community for this meaningful partnership and to the attendees who showed genuine interest in our work and the broader topic of addiction. Collaborations like these are vital for raising public awareness, and we look forward to participating in similar events in the future.



Events organised with students from SUSS NIE 301

As a Community Partner for students from Singapore University of Social Sciences (SUSS) undertaking their compulsory Service Learning module (NIE 301), we collaborated with two groups of students to organise two events in 2025 aimed at raising awareness of addiction.

The first event was a Human Library event at our centre on February 18, where the public were invited to interact with “living books” – a person in recovery, a counsellor and a caregiver – to gain insights into a topic that is often considered taboo.

The second event was an addiction-themed Escape Room, where participants had to complete challenges aimed at educating them about the various aspects of addiction.

Both events were successful and left attendees with a deeper understanding and awareness of addiction.

WE CARE will be serving as Community Partners again in 2026, and we look forward to more community- and youth-driven events.

Homelessness Learning Forum

On 25 October 2025, **WE CARE** organised a Learning Journey as part of the Homelessness Learning Forum by New Hope Community Services (NHCS), an organisation that works with the displaced and disadvantaged in our community. As an addiction treatment centre, **WE CARE** may serve clients who have found themselves unhoused, and our aim was to provide knowledge about resources and treatment for rough sleepers who may have addiction issues.

Staff from government ministries and social workers from Family Service Centres (FSCs) attended this event.

After a presentation about our services, two of our beneficiaries shared their journeys of going through addiction unhoused due to their addiction. This was followed by a guided tour of our premises and a Q&A session.

Feedback from participants was positive. Serena Tan appreciated how **WE CARE** “provides a space for beneficiaries to feel safe and secure,” while Lynette Tan was intrigued by the community approach that empowers clients to contribute with their talents and strengths. We are grateful to NHCS for this partnership and to all participants who left with a deeper understanding of addiction and homelessness.

Drug Victims Remembrance Day

From 2024, every third Friday of May has been designated Drug Victims Remembrance Day. Organised by the Inter-Ministry Committee on Drug Prevention for Youths, it serves as a reminder that the harm from drug use affects not only drug abusers but also their family members, loved ones, close friends, and co-workers.

Although mental health issues have entered the public consciousness, considerable stigma still surrounds one of its least understood manifestations – addiction. Initiatives related to Remembrance Day help initiate conversations around addiction and foster greater acceptance and support for affected families.

WE CARE supports Remembrance Day and has dedicated a wall in our lounge – featuring a brightly painted Tree of Life – where messages can be dedicated to commemorate those who have left us. We have also partnered with Temasek Polytechnic for two consecutive years to host online forums where drug use and addiction were discussed. During these sessions, a person in recovery shared their journey and the challenges they faced.

We are grateful to Temasek Polytechnic for this meaningful partnership and look forward to continuing our collaboration in raising awareness about addiction.

Community Partnerships

In 2025, we broadened our community partnership network while strengthening collaboration with existing partners.

We continued our valued partnerships with Singapore Prison Service (SPS), NAMS (National Addictions Management Service), Singapore Pools, Marina Bay Sands (MBS), the State Courts, and the Singapore University of Social Sciences.

New partnerships that were formed include those with Mindline, Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts (NAFA) and the Responsible Gaming arm of Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF).

One partnership we would like to highlight is the one we have with Absolute Internship, which has been in place since 2022.

As part of the partnership, they send interns to **WE CARE**. These interns are typically on their summer break, coming to Singapore from American or British universities. When working at **WE CARE**, they join the comms team and work on numerous tasks, including social media content and articles for our quarterly newsletter. They also join in on outreach awareness talks and mental health fairs, helping **WE CARE** to raise addiction awareness.

Each batch of interns has contributed well during their stay with us, and many leave with a memorable experience – from both work as well as the country. A few interns have written articles recounting their experience, and can be found on our website.

Davina, an intern in 2025 who came to us from the UK, wrote: “**WE CARE** was the beauty I witnessed in a world of despair and hardship. From my first day, one thing I felt was love. I have always felt welcome here at the centre – that will always stay with me.”

Another partnership of note is with NAFA, that was borne out of the Kpods and vaping crisis that hit Singapore in the second half of 2025.

Seeking to educate their students on the potential harms of Kpods and vaping, they approached us to conduct a series of talks. In total, 10 were done over the last 4 months of 2025, reaching over 700 students across all faculties.

The sessions were engaging and provided the students with in-depth knowledge about both the harms and laws surrounding Kpods and vaping.

The need to increase the awareness of addiction among

the youth is further underscored by the age breakdown of cases we served in 2025 – 45.5% of the people we treated were aged 13 to 34.

NAFA's initiative to arm their students with better knowledge about addiction mirrors that of other Institutes of Higher Learning (IHL). One way to combat the rise in youth addiction cases in Singapore is through more upstream work, and **WE CARE** looks forward to furthering our partnership with not just NAFA but all IHLs in Singapore.

2025 was also the year our partnership with another IHL, Singapore University of Social Sciences (SUSS), took another step forward. The e-learning modules that we co-developed with them, focusing on 4 addictions that are prevalent amongst youths – binge drinking, eating issues, internet /gaming and pornography – were released in Q1.

Discussions are also ongoing with SUSS to take on students completing their final year project, and that initiative is slated to begin in 2026.

Partnerships remain one of **WE CARE**'s primary focuses because without them, the work that we do would not be possible.



National Addictions Management Service (NAMS)

We continue our longstanding partnership with National Addictions Management Service (NAMS) where we visit the detox ward every fortnight to share with the patients the services that we provide.

NAMS also sends their patients to our centre so they are acquainted with our services, and know where to go for treatment after detox is completed.

NAMS also refers clients to **WE CARE**, after their detox at their facility is completed.

National Council on Problem Gambling (NCPG)

WE CARE collaborates with NCPG to work with referrals who have gambling-related issues.

The centre is also represented on the Committee of Assessors on Exclusion, which reviews applications for gambling exclusions.

Marina Bay Sands (MBS)

WE CARE collaborates with MBS in a number of ways. We conduct addiction awareness talks and introduce the services provided by the centre to newly hired MBS employees who are deployed at the casino. This trains their staff to look out for signs of problem gambling and to attend to patrons who may be in need of help.

We participate in the annual Sands for Singapore Charity Festival. The 3-day fest helps to increase awareness about **WE CARE**, and allows the centre an opportunity to raise funds.

As part of The Festival, we also participate in the Community Chest Heartstrings Walk, a 4-km trek around Marina Bay, which is co-organised by MBS. The 2025 SG60 version saw more than 3,000 participants, with proceeds from the registration fee supporting over 200 social service programmes.

Singapore Pools

The long-term relationship with Singapore Pools began with conducting addiction workshops for their newly hired staff to learn about problem gambling and gambling addiction.

It includes a referral process where Pools can refer patrons with potential gambling issues to **WE CARE** for counselling and treatment. Pools can also consult with **WE CARE** on matters related to gambling addiction.

Collaborative efforts are also made to raise awareness in the community about gambling.

Pools is also a valued supporter of **WE CARE**'s fundraising efforts.

Singapore Prison Service

WE CARE runs an ongoing programme SAFE with Singapore Prison where persons with a drug history who are on tagging can come to the centre for community-based counselling treatment and to participate in centre activities.

The programme also extends help to the partners and families of the prison offenders, and has shown good results.

NUS College of Peter and Alice Tan (CAPT)

The collaboration with the CAPT student hostel at NUS includes an addiction awareness talk at their premises, where students are encouraged to initiate discussions on matters related to addictions.

NUS students will also organise activities that involve the recovering community at **WE CARE**, so they can get a better appreciation of the issues and challenges that recovering persons face.



Community Partnerships

Hwa Chong Institution (HCI)

Each year, students from HCI organise and participate in activities alongside recovering individuals at the centre. These have included beach cleanups, language lessons, first-aid workshops, and origami classes.

Singapore Management University (SMU)

WE CARE has collaborated with SMU in a number of ways. We were involved in the Project X initiative, a university-wide programme which allows students to take on real-world challenges by working on projects with corporates, non-profit and government organizations.

The centre also conducts addiction awareness talks and trains peer support students in addiction-related matters.

Singapore University of Social Science (SUSS)

In partnership with SUSS UniLEARN, 4 e-learning modules on addictions and behavioural issues increasingly affecting youths were launched in the first quarter of 2025.

The modules feature interviews with recovering individuals, caregivers, and counsellors, offering learners deeper insight into each topic.

We also assumed the role of a community partner for the NIE301 Learning with Communities module, a compulsory module for students to graduate, collaborating with student groups to brainstorm, plan, and run events that raise awareness about addiction.

Additionally, we have hosted student groups from both SUSS and overseas universities visiting through SUSS, to help them gain a better understanding of addiction and the support resources available in Singapore.

Absolute Internship

Absolute Internship selects and recommends interns to WE CARE every year. These interns are typically on their summer break, while studying at American or British universities.

As part of the WE CARE communications team, they develop digital and newsletter content while assisting with public outreach events to drive addiction awareness. They also participate in centre activities and events, and are encouraged to connect with our beneficiaries.

Mindline

Before the June 2025 launch of Mindline – Singapore's first national 24/7 mental health helpline – WE CARE was asked to train its counsellors.

We equipped staff with essential skills to navigate the local addiction landscape and effectively engage distressed callers. Today, WE CARE serves as a recommended resource for Mindline callers struggling with addiction, furthering our shared mission to remove barriers to seeking help.

We look forward to continuing to train their helpline staff and counsellors.

Le Petit Croissant

We partnered with Le Petit Croissant, an authentic French bakery founded by Laura Dagoneau-Landry. They donate their pastries to WE CARE's drop-in centre at least three times a week, offering comfort and warmth through pastries to our beneficiaries. This partnership began when WE CARE staff reached out to Le Petit Croissant after visiting one of their outlets.



Fundraising & Donations



We ran 2 fundraising events in 2025:

1. the **One Day At A Time (ODAAT)** fitness-based event where fundraisers took on walking, running, or cycling challenges while their supporters pledged donations based on their achievements; and
1. the **Gala Lunch** fundraiser, which was held at the Shangri-La Hotel and simultaneously celebrated 21 years of WE CARE serving the recovering community

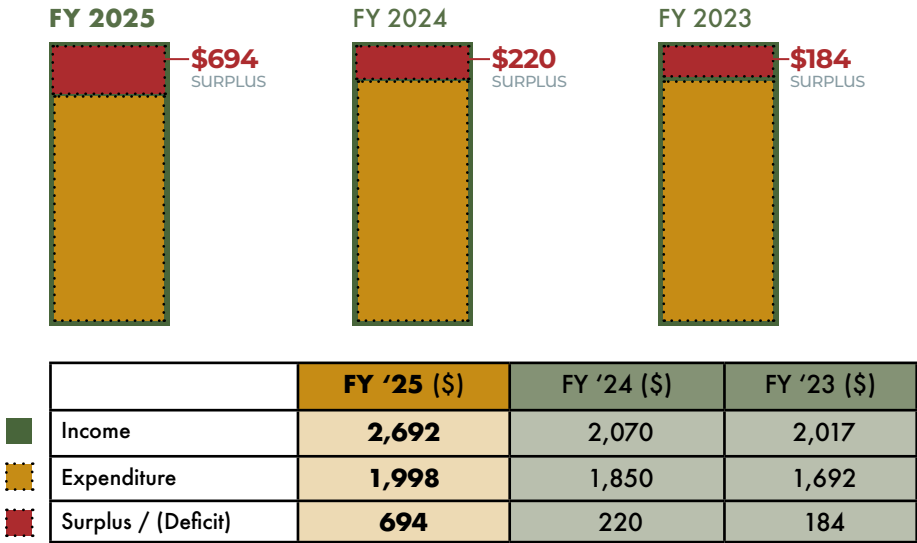
Fundraising for 2025 grossed **\$673,000**, before expenses and matching funds are tabulated.

Looking ahead, 2026 and future years look to be challenging for fundraising, as the 100% fund-matching provided by the Tote Board and the government-instituted when Covid first struck and induced a national shutdown - will be reduced to 50%.

Nevertheless, we gratefully acknowledge the support we have been given. We will continue to engage stakeholders through our social media, newsletter and events.

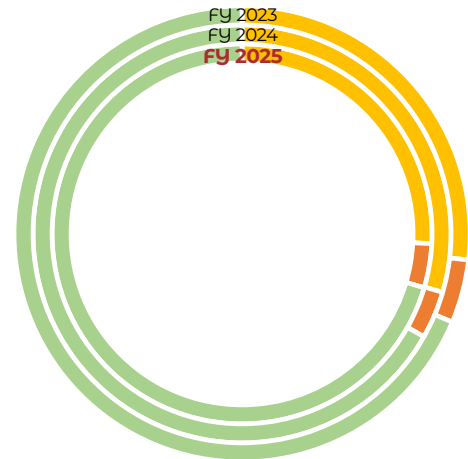
Key Financial Highlights

Income & Expenditure (SGD '000)



How money was spent (SGD '000)

	FY'25 (\$)	%	FY'24 (\$)	%	FY'23 (\$)	%
Admin and Governance	516	26%	546	29%	454	27
Fundraising	75	4%	68	4%	76	4
Charities Activities	1,407	70%	1,236	67%	1,162	69
Total	1,998	100%	1,850	100%	1,692	100%



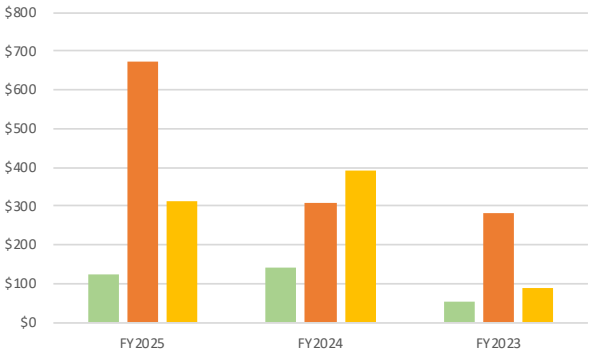
Reserve Ratio

FY '25	FY '24	FY '23
1.88	1.62	1.61

Source of Income

	FY '25 (\$)	FY '24 (\$)	FY '23 (\$)
A- Donations	125	142	53
B- Fundraising Events	673	307	282
C- EFR Matching Grants	312	393	88

Figures are in thousands (,000)



Governance

Governance Policies

Governance Evaluation Checklist

The Role of The Board

Term Limit of Board

Board Succession Plans

In matters of governance, **WE CARE** takes guidance from the Code of Governance guidelines set out by the **Commissioner of Charities (CoC)**.

WE CARE makes annual submissions via the Governance Evaluation Checklist through the online Charity Portal at www.charities.gov.sg.

The Board's role is to provide strategic planning and leadership and steer **WE CARE** towards fulfilling our vision and mission through good governance practices. One of its core duties is to provide financial oversight, including budget planning, services provision and safeguarding the reserve fund. The **WE CARE** Board is involved in:

- Approving and monitoring the annual budget and strategic plans
- Reviewing and approving quarterly management reports on financial performance and programme updates to track the progress of charity services

In alignment with the Code of Governance, we have expanded on this framework by creating a Governance Manual that outlines specific governance practices for the Board and Management Team, tailored to **WE CARE's** operations. The manual which incorporates CoC's requirements and guidelines, serves as a comprehensive guide for formalising governance principles and practices within **WE CARE** to ensure accountability, responsibility, and transparency in all aspects of the organisation.

To enable succession planning and steady renewal in **WE CARE**, the Board has a term limit of ten years. In particular, the Board Chairperson has a term limit of 2 years, renewable at each AGM, up to 10 years, in line with the governance criteria set by COC (Commissioner of Charities), whilst the Treasurer has a term limit of four years. In the current Board, Frances Cheang and Dr Winslow have served on the Board for more than 10 years. They have been retained in view of their long experience at **WE CARE**, their commitment and energy. The Board values Dr Winslow's expertise as one of the foremost authorities on the clinical treatment of addictions. It also recognises Frances' vast experience in compliance matters in KPMG, and in her roles in ComChest and **WE CARE**.

WE CARE believes that competent, experienced and committed Board members will ensure that we continue to be relevant and sustainable for the future. As such, we have to retain the services of such volunteer Board members for as long as they are able to contribute to our cause and mission, and willing to do so.

WE CARE remains mindful of succession planning to ensure the long-term sustainability and effectiveness of our board and organisation. In 2025, **WE CARE** collaborated with CNPL (Centre for Non-Profit Leadership) on the BoardMatch initiative to actively source for Committee members.

Ms Lai Chin Yee, a former CFO with wide financial expertise, was inducted as a Board member in December 2025.

Governance

Board Committees

Each Board Committee operates under clearly defined Terms of Reference and functions under the oversight of the Board. Every committee is led by a Director and supported by members appointed with Board approval. The table below outlines the summarised Terms of Reference and composition of the committees in 2025.

1. Audit Committee

Assists the Board to oversee the internal controls and risk management system, financial and regulatory compliance, appointment of external auditor, internal auditor and whistle-blowing.

- Frances Cheang, Chairperson
- Lai Chin Yee, Member

2. Human Resource Committee

Assists the Board in matters relating to human resource, recommends organisational structure, management development, succession planning, performance evaluation and compensation.

- Tina Doran, Chairperson
- Dane Anderson, Member

3. Fund-Raising Committee

Assists the Board in overseeing the overall fundraising activities, and advises the Board on matters concerning all fund-raising programmes

- Robert Chew, Chairperson
- Koh Kah Yeok, Member
- Jennifer Lim, Member
- Andrew da Roza, Member

A new committee member Zakes Quek was inducted into the fund-raising committee through Centre for Non-Profit Leadership (CNPL) in December 2025.

Executive Management

Tham Yuen Han,
Executive Director / Clinical Director
(Appointed since 18 Dec 2013)

Management Team

- Tham Yuen Han,
Executive Director / Clinical Director
- Cesar Balota,
Corporate Services Director (Jan 2025)
- Lim Bee Hong Corporate Services
Director (from May 2025)
- Yvonne Yuen, Senior Manager,
Drop-In Centre and Operations
- Leslie Goh,
Communications and Relations
Manager
- Anna Chua,
Finance and Administration Manager

Board Meetings

A total of 3 Board meetings and a Strategy Meeting were held in FY 2025. The table below shows the composition and attendance of the Board:

Board Member	Role	1 st Meeting	2 nd Meeting	Strategy Meeting	3 rd Meeting	Attendance
Mr Robert Chew	Chair	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	4 of 4
Mr Swapnil Mishra	Treasurer	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	4 of 4
Ms Frances Cheang	Director	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	4 of 4
Dr Munidasa Winslow	Director	No	Yes	Yes	No	2 of 4
Mr Koh Kah Yeok	Director	No	No	Yes	Yes	2 of 4
Mr Dane Anderson	Director	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	3 of 4
Dr Lee Cheng	Director	Yes	Yes	No	No	2 of 4
Ms Jennifer Lim	Director	Yes	No	No	No	1 of 4
Ms Tina Doran	Director	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	4 of 4
Mr Andrew da Roza	Advisor	Yes	No	Yes	No	2 of 4

*Ms Lai Chin Yee joined the Board in December 2025, and is excluded from this tabulation

Corporate Governance Statement

The Board accepts its role without remuneration, and pledges not to accept personal favours or gifts from any interest groups, so as to maintain the integrity of serving for public trust and community good.

All the members of the Board have also declared that during the period under review and while holding their appointment as directors, they have had no personal or vested interest in any of the business transactions contracts or joint ventures into which **WE CARE** had entered.

To support succession planning and renewal of the Board, **WE CARE** is constantly on the lookout for volunteers with diverse skill-sets to contribute in ensuring our service quality to the community we serve.

The Board conducts self-evaluation to assess its performance and effectiveness once every 3 years. It has participated in

a Board Pulse Survey undertaken by CNPL, where **WE CARE** scored higher than the sector average in the areas of board oversight and strategy, board culture and participation, as well as expertise in charity operations and publicity.

The Board ensures that there are different committees set up such as for Audit, HR, and Fundraising, to review performance and to monitor risks.

The roles and responsibilities of the Board Chairman and the Executive Director are kept separate in order to maintain effective oversight. The Executive Director and management team consult with relevant Board Members and the Committees where key matters are thoroughly discussed and reviewed.

Staff Matters

Arm's Length / Undue Influence

WE CARE discloses that there is no paid staff, being a close member of the family belonging to the Executive Head or a Governing Board Member of the charity, who has received remuneration exceeding \$50,000 during the financial year.

Conflict of Interest Policy

WE CARE has implemented a Conflict of Interest policy based on the Commissioner of Charities guidelines. All Board members and staff have read the policy and on a yearly basis, have signed the declaration form to renew their commitment and to acknowledge that they have understood the policy.

No Abuse Policy

Since 2018, **WE CARE** has put in place a policy where all staff and volunteers declare and commit to our policy of no substance abuse.

Disclosure of Remuneration

Disclosure of annual remuneration of three highest paid staff who each receives more than \$100,000, in bands of \$100,000.

Remuneration Band	No. of staff
Between \$100,000 up to \$200,000:	2
From \$200,000 and above	0

None of the above staff serve in the Board of the charity.

Reserves Policy

The charity has a reserve policy for long-term stability of the operations and it ensures that there are sufficient resources to support the charity in the event of unforeseen circumstances. As a general rule of thumb, the charity maintains 1.5 years of operational expenditure as reserves. The reserve level is reviewed yearly by the Board to ensure that the reserves are adequate to fulfil the charity's continuing obligations. The reserves that have been set aside provide financial stability and the means for the development of **WE CARE**'s principal activity. For details of the reserves, please refer to the complete set of financial statements that can be found on our website www.wecare.org.sg and on the Charities Portal www.charities.gov.sg.

Governance

Environmental, Social & Governance (ESG) & Cybersecurity

Environmental Consciousness

WE CARE is committed to being environmentally conscious and responsible in our operations. As part of our sustainability efforts, we have upgraded and fully digitalised our client management and record referral system to reduce the use of printed case notes, files, paper forms and templates paper usage. With the effective rollout of our enhanced client management system by Q3, we not only drastically reduced paper, printing and photocopying usage, clinical staff also achieved observable savings in time. By enabling real-time online submission of client registration forms, treatment progress forms, discharge forms, feedback forms, and standard assessment forms (such as the ORS, SRS and ACEs), clinical staff are able to devote more of their time on providing the essential clinical services and less time on basic administrative tasks

Aside from our client management system, the centre subscribes to the principle of reduce, recycle, reuse. The lighting in the centre now deploys LED lights in favour of fluorescent lighting.

Additionally, our hydroponics system, a key feature of our garden, is powered by solar energy and serves as one of the wellness activities offered enjoyed by many of our beneficiaries.

Information Technology, Data Privacy Management & Cybersecurity

WE CARE takes data security and digital safety seriously. In 2024, we achieved DSI Accreditation, affirming our commitment to maintaining high standards in information security. To further strengthen our cybersecurity framework, we engaged CyberSafe in the same year to support and enhance our protective measures. As part of this initiative, all staff underwent mandatory training in cybersecurity practices, ensuring that our team is well-equipped to uphold the integrity and safety of our digital systems.

We are subject to the MSF Secured Data Exchange Agreement (SDEA) and Data Security Instructions (DSI) Compliance Assessment. **WE CARE** is committed to upholding high standards of data and cyber protection in order to safeguard our digital assets and to maintain public trust in our agency.

Zul

Growing up, Zul (not his real name) faced a rough start in life after losing his father at the tender age of ten. At that time, support for single mothers was limited, and Zul described his secondary school years as a painful chapter.

Deprived of a father figure, he instinctively had to step up at a young age to help provide for his family. The demolition of his childhood kampung, which led to constant relocations, made the task that much harder.

Zul was first introduced to drugs by his peers at 14. Each time he accepted an offer, his cravings only grew stronger, until he found himself abusing drugs even when he was alone. His loss of control led him to drop out of secondary school, marking the beginning of a downward spiral that left him feeling completely consumed by addiction. Over time, the need for higher doses to feel any sense of relief deepened his dependence. Each payday, his salary would be spent on fulfilling his drug cravings. The cycle felt unbreakable until he was arrested for the first time.

Everything began to change when Zul was selected to be referred to **WE CARE** for his emplacement programme – Project SAFE 1.1, a collaboration between **WE CARE** and the Singapore Prison Services (SPS). For Zul, it marked the beginning of something new. As part of the programme, a **WE CARE** counsellor met with him during his time in the DRC, offering support and guidance even before his reintegration into the community had begun. These in-care sessions would evolve into regular check-ins, tailored to help him navigate both his rehabilitation journey and his practical day-to-day needs.

While the programme offered a glimmer of hope, Zul carried a heavy, decades-long burden in his heart. His wife and children were in Malaysia – far away, beyond reach. Each day spent behind bars was a reminder of the distance that separated them. The ache of being apart from his family was deep and constant. It was a silent fracture in his spirit that he felt nothing in the world could mend. In early recovery, many report feeling similar intense pain – a grim reminder that addiction is not just about the highs.

At **WE CARE**, the journey toward healing continued. Through regular counselling sessions and participation in recovery support groups – including self-help support groups and group counselling – Zul began to feel a shift within.

The darkness that once clouded his days slowly began to lift, replaced by flickers of hope and a reawakening sense of self-worth. Each session brought new insights. His counsellor didn't just listen – she guided him gently toward self-reflection, helping him understand the weight of his past and the possibility of a different future.

The road, however, wasn't always easy. In moments when loneliness crept in and the pressure of finding employment grew heavier, Zul was especially grateful for the support of his SAFE buddy. He still remembers the day when his SAFE buddy accompanied him to the Social Service Office (SSO), walking beside him, patiently helping him apply for interim financial aid. To Zul, it wasn't just about money – it was about being seen, about someone showing up when it mattered most.

During his recovery journey, Zul began to uncover strengths he never realized he possessed while under the shadow of addiction. Recognizing his own qualities of respectfulness, humility, and resilience has allowed him to view life not as a burden, but as a gift – something to be cherished, not taken for granted. While the lost time with his family and the damage to his health cannot be undone, Zul now believes he holds the power to create the life he has always longed for.

With unwavering determination, Zul, now 66, reached a major milestone in his recovery journey on 16th January 2025 by receiving the one-year award at **WE CARE**'s 18th Finisher Awards. Held twice a year, the Finisher Awards celebrates clients and beneficiaries that reach 1, 3, 5, 7 and 10 years of sobriety. Receiving this award filled him with a profound sense of gratitude and fulfilment – feelings that had long been missing during his years of substance abuse. Today, Zul uses this milestone and his newfound inner strength as motivation to walk firmly along the path of recovery.

Zul's story is a powerful reminder that no matter how dark the past, the future always holds room for light – and with courage and the right support, every new day is a second chance.

by **Zul and Alina**

*Alina recently completed her internship at **WE CARE**.*

When newcomers first walk into **WE CARE**, there is often a palpable sense of scepticism. Can this place really help me? What's the point of sitting in a circle and talking about my problems? Is there any value in sharing how I feel?

Eventually, though, most come around. Some unfortunately never do, but those that do reap the benefits.

Ewan was no different.

I had the opportunity to meet Ewan, and listen to his remarkable journey beyond addiction. Before drugs became part of his life, Ewan was working long hours in high-end retail.

The exhaustion from his demanding schedule pushed him toward substance use – at first in small doses, but gradually escalating to the point where he was injecting substances directly into his veins.

His addiction eventually caught up with him, and after being arrested, he was given the chance to join **WE CARE** for the CBP (Community-Based Programme) portion of his sentence.

As with most, Ewan was initially sceptical about the program. He expected **WE CARE** to be little more than a way of passing the time, offering him few real lessons. But what he discovered was very different.

The sense of community was what changed things for him most profoundly – being surrounded by people with similar struggles, sharing his innermost thoughts without judgment, and learning to trust others enough to lean on them in times of need.

One connection in particular stands out, and is one that he holds close to his heart: his friend Fandi, who used to be a Recovery Guide at **WE CARE** (Editor's Note: Sadly, Fandi

passed away in 2024 from a heart attack.)

Fandi made the effort to check in on him every single day. Those messages, simple but consistent, helped shift Ewan's perspective and gave him the strength to begin his recovery journey.

The early months were the hardest. For Ewan, the first six months of recovery felt like an uphill battle. His scepticism lingered, and being known as someone with a history of drug abuse was emotionally difficult. His relationship with his mother, already fragile, grew even more strained.

After half a year, he managed to secure employment in a hotel, but there too, challenges followed – it was not easy adapting to the demands of the job while wearing an electronic monitoring tag on his foot.

There are strict rules around the monitoring tag. Flout them, and it won't be long before you are recalled into **DRC** (Drug Rehabilitation Centre).

During this period, Ewan relied on coping strategies that gave him healthy outlets. Colouring became one of his favourite ways to quiet his mind, while hiking and exercise helped him release tension and reset mentally.

Most importantly, he had a **SAFE Buddy** – the late Fandi. Fandi was someone he could confide in whenever urges surfaced, an anchor keeping him from slipping back into destructive habits.

It's a big thing in recovery, and ultimately crucial, to have someone who has walked the same path before to confide in. That's how **SAFE Buddies**, who also have incarceration experience, help – they point out the potential obstacles and can share what worked for them when they faced those obstacles.

Project SAFE (Support for Recovery Addicts and their Families through Empowerment) is a programme WE CARE runs in partnership with Singapore Prison Service and Drug Rehabilitation Centre (DRC).

The waves of life in recovery are rarely calm, and with more than 10 years of clean time, Fandi was as strong an anchor as anyone could have.

Ewan believes recovery is about setting simple goals and taking small, steady steps forward. That approach has carried him far. Within two years of starting work at the hotel, he was promoted to manager, motivated by observing how his colleagues carried themselves and applying the lessons he learned from them.

A milestone achievement came in November last year, when he received the keys to his own home – completely free of debt. It's a rarity in a world where new homeowners take on huge debt to afford a home, but more importantly it was a symbol of the stable foundation he had worked so hard to build.

Looking at how far he has come gives Ewan the motivation to keep moving forward. He's built so much, and knows that he's one relapse away from throwing it all away.

He is proud of his ability to reject drugs even when confronted directly by old acquaintances who invited him to use again. In the past he feared relapse so strongly that he would avoid temptation by running away, but today, he faces those moments with confidence in his ability to say no.

The recent loss of his mother was another painful chapter, but this time he had support – friends at WE CARE checked in regularly, ensuring he did not spiral into despair.

It proved to him the importance of having a strong support structure in place. When something happens and rocks your world, you have a support system to keep you stable.

Thanks to the community he found at WE CARE, Ewan has not only broken free from addiction, but also reshaped his life and outlook. His journey is proof that recovery is possible with patience, support, and the determination to keep striving for better.

by **Ewan and Katrina**

Katrina completed her internship in August. She will be completing her undergraduate degree in Political Science at UCLA in the U.S. She intends to pursue a career in law.

“When something happens and rocks your world, you have a support system to keep you stable.”

Mika

“ It became clear to him that drugs brought no real peace – only a hollow, temporary reaction of the mind and body. ”

In August 2025, I had the privilege of speaking with Mika, a beneficiary at **WE CARE**, who shared his journey of recovery and resilience. I have written articles in the past, but never a recovery story. Interviewing him and writing it was an eye-opening experience, giving me deeper insight into the world of addiction.

His story began in 2013, during an extremely turbulent period that involved many major life changes.

Having left his teaching career with the intention of pursuing a master's degree in music, Mika soon abandoned that path not wanting his sense of fulfilment to be dictated by the expectations of others.

Without guidance or a clear direction, he turned to something that would provide immediate relief – drugs.

It first started as a distraction to pass the time, then as a way to dull emotional pain, and later as a fleeting source of pleasure.

Mika entered DRC (Drug Rehabilitation Centre) for the first time in 2017, but he admitted that back then, he believed he could “play the system” to complete the programme on paper without truly committing to change.

Of the few beneficiaries I've spoken to that have been sent to DRC, they seem uniformly to have the same thought – complete the programme cleanly so as not to ruffle any feathers and revert to their old lifestyle once the dust had settled.

They were unlucky the first time and just needed to be a little more careful so they would not be sent back to DRC.

It wasn't until his mother's passing that he confronted a turning point. Standing at a crossroads, he realized he could either allow the grief to pull him deeper into addiction or use it as the wake-up call he needed.

It became clear to him that drugs brought no real peace – only a hollow, temporary reaction of the mind and body.

The road to recovery, Mika explained, is neither straightforward nor short. Addiction rewires the brain to chase highs, and quitting is far more than a matter of willpower.

Since his first stint in DRC, he has picked up many recovery tools. He now acknowledges the cravings instead of denying them, and he focuses on strategies to manage those urges.

At **WE CARE**, he learned that identifying one's personal triggers – and knowing how to respond to them – is essential.

One of the most effective approaches, he found, is to stay meaningfully engaged in activities that build rather than destroy. Initially, these were his regular counselling appointments; gradually, he expanded that into volunteering, which gave him routine, purpose, and the joy of contributing positively to others. Today, he continues that path by pursuing postgraduate studies in counselling.

Alongside his academic goals, Mika's recovery has been marked by many meaningful moments: meeting a supportive partner who embraces him despite his past, building new friendships at **WE CARE**, and being immersed in the stories of people from all walks of life.

These connections, he says, have made him more open-minded, more compassionate, and more resilient. Though he carries some regrets, Mika sees his experiences as integral to the person he has become. His journey has not only been about overcoming addiction – it has also been about rediscovering himself, with greater empathy and acceptance for both his own story and the struggles of others.

by **Katrina and Mika**

Katrina completed her internship in August. She will be completing her undergraduate degree in Political Science at UCLA in the U.S. She intends to pursue a career in law.

Love in Recovery: When Matt Met Eve

Matt and Eve

Imagine giving up your morning cup of coffee or not indulging in your favourite bubble tea for a week. Sounds difficult? That's what Matt (not his real name) had to do – except on a far greater scale. For 10 straight years, he gave up something much more addictive and destructive: heroin.

Like many others with a history of substance use, Matt struggled with drug addiction from a very young age. His descent into drugs began at just 14 years old, and by his late teens, it had developed into a full-blown addiction. Eventually, his life spiralled to the point where it landed him behind bars.

It was during his time in prison that Matt encountered the message of recovery through Narcotics Anonymous. Reflecting on that period, he recalls candidly, "I was sick of doing the same old shit..."

That moment became a turning point. After his release, Matt found his way to **WE CARE** Community Services, where his journey of transformation truly began.

Today, Matt marks a decade of sobriety. What makes his story even more remarkable is the life he has built since.

Matt is now married to Eve, who is also in long-term recovery. Their relationship is a testament to the possibility of healing not just for individuals, but for couples, too.

Matt and Eve first met at a local Narcotics Anonymous 12-Step meeting. Their paths crossed again at **WE CARE**, where Eve regularly attended the Women's Therapy Group Programme.

At the time, Eve was 6 months clean, while Matt was 2 years clean. As they got to know one another within the recovery community, a mutual respect and bond began to form – one grounded in shared experience, personal growth, and the principles of recovery.

They spent the next few years greatly strengthening that bond, until in March 2021, they decided to take the leap and get married. At that point, Eve was 5 years sober while Matt was sober for 8.

They are now in their fourth year of marriage, and their bond is the strongest it's ever been. They continue to prioritise their individual recovery while supporting one another as life partners.

Recovery remains the foundation of their relationship. Both attend 12-Step meetings regularly and maintain accountability to their respective sponsors, emphasising the importance of personal accountability and open communication.

"We support each other's growth," they shared. "It's important for us to respect each other's space and be honest in every aspect of our lives." Strong recovery is dependent on someone's ability to be honest. A strong relationship is dependent on the couple's ability to be honest.

While their journey can be likened to a fairytale, being a couple in recovery has not been without its own set of challenges.

Eve shared that misunderstandings and judgement from others in the recovery community can be difficult to bear.

"It takes courage, responsibility, and commitment," she says. "But we've learnt to stand strong together, regardless of others' opinions." Matt echoes this, highlighting the emotional toll of facing baseless judgements.

What has kept them strong through the ups and downs are the core values they hold dear: honesty, accountability, compassion, mutual support, and respect. These values not only shape their relationship but also anchor them in their recovery.

Looking back on their time together, both reflect on how much they have grown. Eve speaks with deep appreciation for Matt's transformation over the years.

"He used to be very reserved. But now, he's open to suggestions, his anger has mellowed, and he's loving and responsible – both as a husband and a father. I'm especially grateful for how he continues to support me in my own recovery."

For Matt, it was Eve's spirituality and personal values that inspired him to commit to building a life with her. "She's been a part of my journey from the beginning," he shares. "That's why I opened my heart to marriage."

As they look to the future, both Matt and Eve dream of a life grounded in simplicity, service, and recovery.

Eve envisions growing old with Matt, surrounded by their children and grandchildren, while continuing to serve the recovery community. Matt shares this hope – to one day have their own HDB flat and to spend the rest of their lives together, clean and serene, one day at a time.

Their story is one of resilience, growth, and above all, love – the kind that is nurtured through honesty and shared purpose. They are an inspiration to us all, and **WE CARE** is proud to have played a part in their recovery.

by **Ernie and Manap**

Once He Was a Step from Death, Now He's on the Path of Recovery

Standing on the parapet, trying to muster the courage to jump, Thomas Koh found he lacked the courage to do so. If he could not take his own life, what then could he do?

One word came to mind, and that was “recovery”.

His journey into alcohol and drug addiction started when he was young. He came from a dysfunctional family, where his father was a gambler who would get violent when he lost a lot of money at gambling. Often, Thomas and his mother and siblings would have to run away at night and seek shelter in someone else's home.

When his father was incarcerated for criminal breach of trust, he and his brother had to work to supplement his mother's meagre income. Thomas started selling newspapers and with the money he earned, was able to buy the food he wanted. He associated money with power, and desired to be rich and independent. That way, he could also help his family get out of poverty.

At 11 years old, he had his first drink of alcohol and found he liked the feeling of oblivion it gave him. It also emboldened him, giving him the courage to speak up. At 15, he took his first illicit drug, and the feeling was headier and more intense. He loved the feeling of disassociation it gave him and he began to chase the “high”, not knowing it was becoming addictive behaviour.

Driven by his hunger to become rich and better than others, he worked harder than all his peers. After completing his National Service, he worked as a salesman and quickly rose to the rank of Sales Manager, and later Senior Sales Manager. However, when the stresses of the job got to him, he would disappear to take drugs.

Many times, he experienced blackouts and could not recall what had happened. These sprees where he drank and took drugs soon affected his performance at work. He did not know how to live life without the aid of alcohol and drugs. Thomas candidly admits that his relationship with his family members became strained, and his friendships were very transactional.

“I became a very self-centered person,” he shares.

He went for his first detoxification programme with NAMS (National Addictions Management Service) at IMH (Institute of Mental Health) and soon came to **WE CARE**

after he was discharged from NAMS. He describes **WE CARE** as a place where he sought shelter from the stresses of life and work. However, he continued with his drinking and use of drugs.

After completing his first detoxification, his idea of recovery was merely stopping the use of illicit substances through self-will and nothing else.

In the ensuing years, he went for three more detoxifications and shares that by the time he went for his fourth detoxification, he was a very broken man. He admitted he no longer had any self-confidence, was unable to speak well (a skill that is crucial to salesmanship), faced many health issues and had many pending police cases, plus he was going through divorce.

It was at this point in time, when after having lost everything, he contemplated suicide.

After his wife left him, he no longer had anyone to support him. Though he has the contact numbers of 200 friends on his phone, Thomas could not call a single one to tell them of his problems. He felt he could not connect with any one of them. He was drowning in pain and hopelessness, and this led to him standing on the parapet, contemplating the idea of ending his life.

But he could not muster the courage to jump off. It was then that the word “recovery” came to his mind.

He decided to go for his final detoxification. This time round, he shares he was “like a blank sheet of paper”, where he followed what was taught to him. He was truly at rock bottom and became very humble and teachable.

During his three-week stay at IMH, he met two volunteers who made a significant impact on his life. One was HIV-positive as a result of drug use, while the other had had his arm amputated due to gangrene brought on by drug use. However, despite their physical infirmities, they were happy people who invited him to join a support group for recovering addicts.

When he saw the joy and purpose in their lives despite their physical infirmities, he felt for the first time that his situation was not hopeless. Hope blossomed within him and he was eager to find out how people recover from addiction.

“ No matter how shameful your past, your journey can be an inspiration to others. ”

He committed to devoting his time to full-time recovery. He spent most of his time with recovering addicts — attending support group meetings and just hanging out together socially.

When he completed a year of sobriety, he attended **WE CARE**'s Finishers Award and was given the one-year medal. His father attended, went up to him and hugged him, despite their relationship being strained.

It was then he realised that with the right attitude, anyone could recover. Being clean for one year gave him the courage to continue on in his recovery journey.

While he was at **WE CARE**, he was incarcerated for his drug consumption. Although it was a short stint, he was amazed that some inmates could live for 10 to 20 years with just a small bag of toiletries. Thomas then realised that he did not have to accumulate wealth or rely on the praise of others in order to feel good.

After his release from prison, he volunteered at IMH, as he believed (and still does) that recovery is all about giving back and helping others get well. He was soon invited to be a peer support specialist and served in that capacity for five years.

After earning his Masters in Counselling from Swinburne University of Technology from Melbourne, Australia, Thomas became a counsellor at IMH.

Today, he serves as a counsellor and Centre Manager at **WE CARE**, and received his 10th year award at the 19th Finisher Awards on 17 July 2025.

In total, the eleven years since hitting rock bottom have been incredibly fulfilling. He got married again after dating his then-girlfriend for a year, and is now a proud father of two beautiful daughters. He has reconciled with his mother and siblings. Thomas has also come to understand that what he really wants in life are not the things he thought he wanted when he was young — wealth and making a name for himself.

Happiness comes from the inside, he shares, and living a life focused on helping others brings him great joy and fulfilment.

He stresses on the need to separate the person from the disease (addiction) and the importance of learning to be vulnerable and talking about our issues in recovery. “Once we share them with others and listen to others’ sharings, we soon realise we are not the only ones suffering from distorted thinking,” he says.

He is passionate about journeying with those who want to recover from addiction, as from first-hand experience, he knows all too well how lonely the life of an addict is. “No one can do it alone. It is easier to have a buddy.”

“No matter how shameful your past, your journey can be an inspiration to others,” he adds.

by **Ann and Thomas**

Ann is the pen name of a recovering person who first came to **WE CARE** in 2024. She has recently picked up swimming and rediscovered her love for writing.



“ But it was at **WE CARE** that she found the structure, support, and family-like environment she needed. Most importantly, she found hope. ”

Some stories aren't meant to be rushed — they need time to unfold, to reveal their depth. This article wasn't late because of oversight; it was delayed because something remarkable was still happening.

Back in July 2024, Enid and Joylis celebrated a powerful milestone at the 17th Finishers Award: 7 years of sobriety.

But I chose to hold off on writing then — not because their story wasn't ready, but because I felt it was still being written.

I wanted to take the time to truly witness what recovery looked like for them beyond the applause of that moment. As a couple, they've weathered the hard days, celebrated the wins, and carved out a life built on honesty, healing, and hard-won peace.

Today, their 7-year milestone deserves more than just a mention or acknowledgment. It deserves celebration.

And what a celebration it is.

Recently, Enid and Joylis took a giant step toward stability and security — they're on the verge of receiving the keys to their own home. For many, buying a house is a practical achievement. For these two women, it is a monumental symbol of transformation. It is proof that recovery works. That love heals. That growth is possible, even from the darkest of places.

Enid's Journey: Strength from the Storm

Enid's early life was filled with chaos. Raised in a cramped two-room flat with ten other people, including abusive relatives and addicted grandparents, her childhood was far from nurturing.

By age 5, she was drinking and smoking. By 7, she knew what it felt like to be drunk. Her schooling years were marked by feelings of inferiority, pain, and isolation. After a violent beating by an uncle in secondary school, Enid ran away with only 10 cents in her pocket.

Her life spiralled into crime, partying, and drug use - moving from cannabis to heroin. She tried to break the cycle at 23, working in a hair salon run by her then-girlfriend, but the environment was steeped in substance use. She relapsed quickly. The cycle continued, until something changed when she was thrown in prison the second time: she reconnected with someone she had met in her using days - Joylis.

Joylis's Descent and Rise

Joylis had a vibrant, unconventional childhood. Her father had four wives, and her extended family - nearly 80 strong - gathered often, creating warm memories of love and laughter.

But at age 16, her older sister introduced her to heroin, setting off a decade-long struggle. Working in nightclubs where drugs were readily available, she quickly became addicted.

Her health declined over the years, and eventually, she ended up in a wheelchair due to a hip injury caused by prolonged drug use. Trapped in a cycle of addiction and incarceration, Joylis hit rock bottom - but she also hit restart. Checking herself into a detox program at NAMS, she began her road to recovery.

But it was at **WE CARE** that she found the structure, support, and family-like environment she needed. Most importantly, she found hope.

A Love Rooted in Recovery

Enid and Joylis used drugs together for ten years. Now, they've been clean together for almost eight years. Their love, once entangled in the chaos of addiction, has evolved into a source of healing and strength. They've built a relationship based on accountability, growth, and deep emotional honesty.

At **WE CARE**, they are a beacon of hope.



Enid now serves as a Recovery Guide, gently walking alongside others as they take their first, often shaky, steps toward sobriety. As a fellow Recovery Guide, I've always admired Enid - not just for her courage, but for her honesty and the way she treats everyone with simple, heartfelt decency. Every time she shares her story, no matter how many times I've heard it, it hits home. Her words are real, heartfelt, and always remind us that recovery is possible.

Joylis, with her warm heart and open spirit, brings comfort to everyone around her. Whether she's whipping up a meal for Cook-in Thursdays or lending a listening ear, she makes people feel seen and cared for. As a certified barista, she also loves making coffee for anyone at the centre - serving each cup with a generous dose of sass.

Their presence at the centre reminds others that no one is alone, and that change is not just possible - it's powerful.

The Power of Home

Perhaps the most emotional part of their journey today is confirming their first BTO flat in Marsiling.

Home-ownership symbolizes far more than financial stability. For Enid and Joylis, it means safety, freedom and a future. Back when they were actively using, the idea of owning a home seemed laughable - an unattainable dream in the haze of addiction. But through recovery, they built lives they never thought they deserved.

A home means waking up without fear. A kingdom of their own where joy is allowed to grow. It means permanence in a world that once felt constantly shifting. It's a physical space that reflects their internal transformation.

Inspiration for the **WE CARE** family

Their story resonates deeply at **WE CARE**. Other recovering individuals see Enid and Joylis not as exceptions, but as possibilities. They prove that even with relapse, injury, family estrangement, and trauma, the recovery path is worth walking.

They teach by example: by choosing vulnerability, by working the program, and by staying committed to themselves and each other.

Their relationship, forged in the fire of addiction, tempered in the reality of recovery and thriving in the light of hope, gives others the courage to believe that they too can find peace, love and purpose.

A Legacy of Perseverance

Recovery is not linear. It's messy, raw, and painful - but also beautiful. Enid and Joylis are proof that when we show up for ourselves and for each other, we can transform our lives in ways we never imagined.

As they stand at the edge of a new chapter - key in hand, love in heart, and clarity in mind - their message is clear:

"We are not what happened to us. We are what we choose to become."

To anyone reading this who feels trapped in addiction - know this: You are never too far gone. You are never too late. And you are never alone.

Let Enid and Joylis remind us all that **with perseverance, love, and support—recovery isn't just possible. It's powerful.**

by **Ahmad**, recovery guide at **WE CARE**.

“ It does not matter how long you’ve spent in active addiction, or how many mistakes you’ve made. The only thing that matters is how you pick yourself up from those mistakes. ”

Being incarcerated is one of the hardest things a person can go through. While it takes a toll on their loved one(s), it takes an even bigger toll on the person serving the sentence. There’s pain, isolation, boredom, depression and anxiety – the list could go on forever, but you get the point.

These emotions and feelings sometimes lead to time feeling like it’s come to a standstill, and the monotony makes you feel like your day of release may never come.

Eventually, it does, and as the staff process your release and return the belongings you were arrested with, a decision needs to be made: Are you going to use the experience as motivation to make a change? Or are you going to submit, crumble, and revert to the lifestyle pre-incarceration?

For Jethro, the decision was clear as day. To supplement his newfound resilience from incarceration, he had the unconditional support of his family, who had visited him consistently throughout his two stints in DRC.

By the end of day that he was released from DRC, that resilience was tested.

After spending a full 9 months away from his newborn daughter, reuniting with her was one of the things he was looking forward to the most.

Instead, when he got home, she did not recognise him. The psychoeducation classes he attended while in DRC

had equipped him with tools to handle stressors after his release – he just never expected to have to use them so soon.

It was at that moment that Jethro realised this was bigger than him. He didn’t need to get his life back on track just for himself. He needed to get things together for his family.

With so much fuel for motivation, making the necessary changes to succeed in recovery seemed easy. They were drastic and hard, but those around him kept him honest and focused.

When someone gets into recovery, major changes in life need to be made. There are some non-negotiables, and one’s success in recovery is largely dependent on his or her ability and willingness to make those changes. One of the changes Jethro made was to take himself off social media.

Considering how almost every aspect of our lives exists virtually, it was shocking for me to hear – more so from someone in his early twenties. By removing social media from the equation, he’s removed a boatload of triggers: reminders of the lifestyle that led him to drugs, reminders of the “fun” his old circle of friends still have, and the inevitable social comparison that social media brings about.

He’s not bothered by what his friends are up to. The only thing he’s focused on is his recovery and loved ones – the things that matter.

Throughout the time we spoke, it was clear to me how much he cherishes his relationship with his loved ones. Through constant, open communication, he's managed to rebuild the bridges that were once burnt.

He lets his wife, his counsellor, or his SAFE buddy, know when he's triggered or when he's feeling a little off, and they almost always help to alleviate the pressure. They've been big pillars of support, and he gushes as he tells me how grateful he is to have such a strong support system to rely on.

Recovery takes a village, and self-will will never cut it.

After years of operating on sheer self-will, he knows that it's a recipe for disaster. He tried it after his first DRC sentence, and while it worked for about a year, it still ended in a relapse and subsequently a second stint in DRC.

These are just some of the changes he's implemented to strengthen his recovery. Thoughts of the good times he used to have come sporadically, but he's learned to manage those thoughts when they surface. He's conscious of the fact that those thoughts will never go away, and he's okay with that because of the tools he now has at his disposal.

Through counselling and support group meetings, he's picked up many tools that he can now call upon in moments of weakness. One of those tools is a badminton racket.

It's always been in his toolbox – just that for a few years, a variety of hard drugs had buried it. To him, badminton was his first love and still is. He had grown up with aspirations of playing professionally, which he's now converted into a passion for coaching which he does full-time.

Exercise, along with self-care and open communication, are the tools that he uses most frequently. They've gotten him to where he is today, and he sees no reason to stop. Through the healthy lifestyle he now leads – he's quit cigarettes and works out daily – he's nurtured a level of discipline that provides his life with a rock-solid foundation.

As with almost every other person starting out in recovery, discipline was sorely lacking at the start. The process of building discipline is long and arduous, but is integral in recovery.

Jethro speaks with a refreshing level of maturity that reminds me that age is really just a number. It does not matter how long you've spent in active addiction, or how many mistakes you've made. The only thing that matters is how you pick yourself up from those mistakes.

Like a professional badminton player playing in a championship final, he's laser-focused – on making good in life. With every day that he chooses recovery, he's not just staying clean, he's showing up for his family, his daughter, and for the future he wants.

After spending years chasing the dragon in dimly lit clubs, he's chasing something entirely different now. He's chasing a normal, peaceful life. And that, for him, is more than enough.

by **Jethro and Jat**

Jethro was a first year recipient at the 17th Finisher Awards held in July 2024.

*Jat is part of the **WE CARE** Comms Team.*

A barren desert with nary a cactus nor an oasis of water. This is how I'd describe the landscape of my soul before recovery.

Now, nine months into recovery, green shoots are springing up on that once mud-brown plain. Some flowers are even beginning to emerge. A sunflower here, a pretty pink gerbera there. Verdant grass grows, and this landscape is now lush with life.

This only came about when I decided enough was enough, and called **WE CARE** to seek help for my addictions.

Experiencing a couple of childhood traumas and not being able to speak about them locked me in a world of loneliness and isolation.

I experienced my first trauma when I was eight. Told by adults I could never speak of it, I withdrew into my own world. I no longer felt safe physically nor emotionally, and became a very timid, anxious child.

I experienced frequent chest pains, stomach upsets and bouts of intense fear. I stammered when spoken to. I became a people-pleaser. In my teenage years, I often found myself drowning in a sea of melancholy, with no way out.

As I was doing well in school and did not cause any problems for my teachers, no one felt there was anything wrong with me. However, to cope with my emotional pain, I would conjure up various imaginary worlds and escape into them. Rarely was I present in the moment.

I would also lose myself in novels, reading many beloved children's books voraciously when young. When I entered my teenage years, my reading repertoire included romance novels, and this soon became steamier the older I got. I was also exposed to pornography and was soon hooked.

An adult friend who worked as a counsellor suggested I see a psychiatrist when she learnt of my symptoms. It was the 1990s back then, and I had never heard of the term "mental illness". At the age of 20, I was diagnosed with depression and various anxiety disorders. The doctor prescribed some medication to help reduce the severity of the symptoms.

By the grace of God, I graduated from university and had a job in the corporate world. However, things at home grew worse. I saw no way out and wanted to die most of the time.

Those feelings intensified when the stress of being a supervisor at work got to me. I soon had a mental breakdown, and the dosage of my psychiatric medications increased. I was not able to function and saw a counsellor to help me get back on my feet.

That paid off, and I soon freelanced to support myself. However, I continued my "bad habit" of reading romance novels, watching porn and binge eating. I had no idea these were addictions. They got worse as the years passed, and though I wanted to stop, I found I was completely unable to. Despite being able to hold down a job, I was still depressed. Looking back, I can see how my addictive behaviours worsened my depression.

“ As I practised the tools of recovery, I could increasingly say no to those unhealthy coping mechanisms. I am learning to face life on life’s terms. ”

I finally sought help in February 2024. I came to **WE CARE** for counselling sessions. I hung out at the drop-in centre. I joined their activities. I also joined a 12-step programme. I began to learn about addiction, and how to deal with it.

What really helped was the love and acceptance I found at **WE CARE** and in my 12-step fellowship. I realised I was no longer alone. I had a bunch of sisters (from my 12-step programme) to journey with. They knew the worst I had done but loved me anyway.

For the first time in my life, I was learning to connect with people authentically. I could let my mask drop. I also had to do (and am still doing) the hard work of learning to deal with and regulate my emotions, instead of escaping into a fantasy world or numbing my feelings with food.

As I practised the tools of recovery, I could increasingly say no to those unhealthy coping mechanisms. I am learning to face life on life’s terms. I am also learning to face my character defects and depend on a Higher Power to do for me what I could not do for myself. As I stopped my addictive behaviours, my depression got better. I also experienced more peace, as I was better able to let go and let God in.

I am very much a work-in-progress as I learn a new way of life. It is certainly not easy – some days are so tough – but it is incredibly rewarding. I now live a life I could never have imagined – one filled with love, freedom and acceptance. The arid, barren places within me are beginning to come to life. And for this, I am so very grateful.

by **Ann**

*the pen name of a recovering person who first came to **WE CARE** in 2024. She has recently picked up swimming and rediscovered her love for writing.*

“When someone decides to embark on their recovery journey, it’s rare that they get it right on the first try.”

“CNB raided my house last night”. That’s the first thing Prince said to me when I sat down with him before writing this story.

While it was a major inconvenience – CNB turned his house inside out looking for drug-related items, and giving his statement took about two hours – he was not worried at all because he’s clean. He tells me that he handled the entire thing with composure, for which he is grateful.

That equanimity, and lack of worry, is a product of his recovery. The lack of worry when dealing with law enforcement officials, is likewise a product of recovery.

Speak to any person in recovery and they will happily tell you about the countless times they felt uneasiness when in the proximity of law enforcement officials. Some even go to the extent of avoiding the MRT completely just to avoid running into the police officers that patrol the stations.

Being in active addiction is like being on the run, especially in a country like Singapore, and Prince is glad he’s not running anymore.

He spent a good 15 years, since 2004, running – his drug journey started in Singapore but took him overseas, mainly around Southeast Asia.

It was around 2019 that he started to get the feeling that he was on his last lap. At his lowest, he described how he consistently spent 90-95% of his monthly salary on drugs, leaving him with peanuts for expenses like food.

“I didn’t need to eat much, anyway,” he says. His drug of choice almost completely removed the need for food, leaving him almost half the size he is now. He gleefully tells me how it’s a sign of recovery, for him at least, that he’s now of an appropriate weight and eating well.

It was also at this point where he thought to himself: I can’t continue like this anymore. Is this really how I’m going to live the rest of life?

Make no mistake – despite the flood of dopamine each puff brought him, he was struggling, and wanted the pain to end. He had wanted it to stop for quite a while but always gave in when temptation came calling.

The idea of a life without drugs scared him, because he was convinced that quitting drugs would suck the fun out of life. The drugs had provided much of the ecstasy that he experienced throughout life, so did he then have to live the rest of his life stuck in boredom?

At this point, a close friend brought up the prospect of recovery. The concept of recovery was completely foreign to him, but he agreed to it. He wanted the struggle to end and was willing to do whatever it took.

His recovery journey started at another recovery centre, and soon after, **WE CARE**. 5 years later, he’s still active in both communities.

When someone decides to embark on their recovery journey, it’s rare that they get it right on the first try – some may relapse once, others multiple times. Prince was no different, but thankfully his sole relapse only lasted a week.

A seed had been planted during his initial experience, and that's what brought him back into recovery. After his relapse, he committed to his recovery fully.

The fear of never being able to have fun again remained top of mind, especially so during the early days of recovery, but he gritted his teeth and trusted the process. Recovery was (and is) hard, but the pain of going back to his using days served as a strong motivation to stay clean.

This speaks to two things: The level of pain and suffering experienced during active addiction (that sometimes borders on trauma), and the wonderful life that's been built while in recovery.

As a person's clean time gets longer, piece by piece they build their life back together until they get to a point where they have too much to lose – as is the case for Prince.

In the 5 years he has stayed clean, a lot of things have fallen back into place.

A year into recovery, he met his partner who he credits as instrumental in his recovery. Being a partner to someone in recovery can get tricky, but it's a role his partner has embraced, even joining a recovery centre's caregiver group.

Together with his old friends and siblings whom he's since reconnected with, Prince has established a rock-solid support system that gives him the confidence to go out into the world to achieve things.

One of those things is career progression, and Prince proudly tells me that he recently attained a professional license he had tried multiple times (and failed) to get. Perseverance – another trait that's crucial in recovery.

It, however, hasn't all been rosy. Prince's father passed away in 2021, and while saying his final goodbyes, he promised his father, with the utmost confidence, that he would dedicate his life to caring for his now widowed mother.

Prince is steadfast in his belief that if he was using, absolutely none of the above would have been possible. And I believe him.

To Prince, the CNB incident was a renewal of his "sobriety vows" because it showed him what he does not want to go back to. Instead of being a setback, it became a turning point of sorts. It served as a stark reminder of the consequences of his past and solidified his commitment to recovery.

Everything that he has built – a loving relationship, a successful career, and a strong support system – is worth protecting, and is something he plans to do for the rest of his life.

Prince recently received his 5th Year Finisher Award and finds purpose in giving back to the recovery community. He always strives to do for the newcomers he meets, the same things others once performed for him.

by **Prince and Jat**

Jat is part of the **WE CARE** Comms Team.

Prince recently received his 5th Year Finisher Award and finds purpose in giving back to the recovery community. He always strives to do for the newcomers he meets, the same things others once performed for him.

Perspectives: Significant Other Person

My Messy Discovery in His Recovery

“ But this is not his story. This is what recovery looks like from the other side: The hesitation, exhaustion, confusion over whether I should feel hope, anger, or disappointment. ”

The Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) meeting was held on the 11th floor. I never made it past the first.

He was waiting downstairs for me, and it was clear that he was high. His words poured out in a slow, confused slur.

“Why are you angry at me?” Jat, my then-boyfriend, asked.

It was supposed to be my first AA meeting – not as a participant, but as someone who loves him. Who wanted to observe and hope I had convinced myself that this time was real. This could be the moment my boyfriend finally stopped compulsive gambling and abusing drugs for good.

Instead, I turned around and left. I didn't want to cry in public. Hours later, I frantically called a cab to pick him up anyway. I was worried sick that he wouldn't make it home on his own.

That was about three years ago. I still get a funny feeling whenever I pass by a Gastronomica outlet – the place I'd sent the cab driver to fetch him.

Today, my husband has been sober for three years. I've never been happier for Jat, or prouder of him.

But this is not his story. This is what recovery looks like from the other side: The hesitation, exhaustion, confusion over whether I should feel hope, anger, or disappointment.

What I held on to

It started with what I kept finding: Pills squirrelled away in the back pocket of his pants hung on the wall.

Then he had a seizure while we were watching *Everything Everywhere All at Once* in the cinema.

In the ambulance on the way to the hospital, I thought: This must be it. Surely this is rock bottom.

He didn't stop. I still found pills.

I was always suspicious, and always angry when I was proven right. I doubted everything he said. It was exhausting. I don't know how I stayed.

Then I discovered that was only part of the story.

Recovery Jat was – and still is – extremely open. Our conversations were never that honest when he was still using. He shared everything: What he did behind my back, but more importantly, why.

I thought I knew him inside out. We had been living together for about two years. Yet I never knew the scale of his struggle and pain. Right beside me.

In Jat's first year of recovery, I felt a confusing mix. I was proud of how far he'd come – but also uneasy.

Hearing him speak so openly about his struggles made me realise how much I had missed, living right beside him. How had I not noticed? What kind of partner doesn't?

What he gave back

It wasn't just guilt I carried in the first year. There was still a lot of distrust, especially in the early months. I wished that I could flip a switch and turn that off, but I couldn't.

Day by day, he started proving me wrong. He went to a meeting every night and spent his days at **WE CARE**. It slowly became our new normal.

Before writing this, I asked Jat how he lives with the guilt and shame of what he had done.

His answer was simple: "Stop. That's the only way. You have to keep trying to do better – and slowly, the good will begin to outweigh the bad."

He likened it to gambling debt: "If you don't stop, it will only keep increasing."

I hadn't realised that I was carrying my own kind of debt. Shame over not knowing his struggles. Guilt over wanting to leave him at times.

But I don't really blame myself anymore.

Learning to let go and live in the present is one of many lessons I've learnt from Jat. He's not the only one who has benefited from recovery.

The present is good. We have our own home now and are adopting a dog – things that once felt out of reach to both of us.

Jat says he never thought he could have this life; He assumed he would end up like his father. I never imagined it could be this good either.

Now he works at **WE CARE**, helping others find the footing he once searched for. He has shared his recovery journey many times: Standing at a traffic light in Geylang gambling online for money to buy drugs, running away to Johor Bahru with just 100 ringgit in his pocket.

We laugh at these stories; the same ones that once broke us.

Three years ago, I made my way to an AA meeting wondering if I was naive to even hope. Today, Jat walks through similar rooms – as much a person offering help as someone still recovering.

There are still days when I hold my breath if he's away from his phone longer than usual. But most days, I don't.

by **G**, the other half of Jat, who is now part of the **WE CARE** Comms Team.

Perspectives: Intern

Reflecting On My Internship with WE CARE

Davina



Writing this personal reflection has taken quite some time – there is so much to say about my time in Singapore, and my internship at **WE CARE**. The writing process has been somewhat of a marathon, one during which I have had to take time to stop and think at the occasional rest points. Now I am approaching the finishing line.

My journey to Singapore is somewhat similar to a test of endurance. I could relate it to the One Day At A Time campaign, the physical fundraiser that was taking place at **WE CARE**. When I first came across the opportunity to intern in Singapore, it felt like a dream – one that was close yet so far. To see myself in Singapore was like a distant reality.

One of the most transformative aspects of my internship was not just the professional skills I continued developing while at **WE CARE**, but also my own personal journey that led me to this opportunity. Before my internship began, I had to overcome a major hurdle: getting to Singapore. In the months leading up to my dream internship, I embarked on a fundraising campaign to support my programme fees. This was not an easy road, it was long and winding with countless steps and stumbles along the way. Reaching out to donors, editing videos or even finding time to balance it all alongside my studies. However, each small victory gave me the momentum to continue climbing. It taught me the value of perseverance, persistence and patience. I finally saw a dream become a reality and lived it in such a beautiful way.

WE CARE was the beauty I witnessed in a world of despair and hardship. From my first day, one thing I felt was love. I have always felt welcome here at the centre – that will always stay with me.

Love for one another was so evident, heartwarming and touching. Authenticity was embraced and encouraged here.

Working at **WE CARE** for the 4 weeks I was in Singapore is something I will always cherish. The team does not only dream about creating a safe space but makes a true effort to live in it and help others access this. There is a genuine commitment to holding space for growth,

vulnerability and exploring human complexities. People are always encouraged to show up as their true, full selves – without judgement. During my time there, I was honoured to engage with a wide range of people – ranging from recovering and sober individuals to volunteers and workers who all widened my perspective and outlook on life.

Celebrating each other is something we do not do enough as a society. This is what I noticed during my time at **WE CARE** – those little moments that pass us by are moments savoured by the community there. The Finisher Awards, the signature **WE CARE** ceremony to celebrate sobriety, was an event that touched me. We live in a world where addiction is very easy to get roped into – whether it is substance abuse or behavioural. Oftentimes, where I come from, society looks down on those who are addicts. It is uncommon to have much awareness about the length of sobriety or celebrations to mark it. For me to see this side of society was meaningful and perhaps it takes a bit of digging to uncover the hidden treasures we did not think we had.

Being part of the Finisher Awards preparation was exciting as we knew what kind of a gratifying impact it would have. It was an intimate and warming event that gave us insight into what it is like in addiction and recovery where heartfelt stories were shared and families saw the glow in their loved ones returning. Though it was an intimate gathering, I had never been witness to such evident pride in those who had travelled on this journey with the award recipients.

WE CARE is a centre which shows what society should be like. It brings together a community of people. Reframing lives through classes, support groups and counselling. I am grateful that I was able to dip my toes into what **WE CARE** offers: Art classes with Yen, Music, Playing the Chinese drums, Training sessions, University visits and having the comfort of expression in the main lounge room where I played the drums, guitar and piano – as well as making a connection with others through shared interests.

by **Davina**

Davina is currently pursuing an undergraduate degree in International Relations and Development at University of Birmingham. With a strong focus and passion for community development and youth empowerment, she aims to drive impactful change in marginalised populations. Outside of academics, she is passionate about creating—whether through art, dance, music, or playing the trumpet. She interned at the centre in July 2025.

Perspectives: Helpline Volunteer

Reflections of a WE CARE Helpline Volunteer

Christine Goh

“ My voice could be the first “human” voice from WE CARE to assure those in need that we are here to help. I need to do this well, and do this right. ”

“Our job on the helpline is to offer a helping hand and a glimmer of hope for the person who called. We cannot let them lose hope at the end of the call.”

Simon, the WE CARE Helpline Manager, uttered these 2 sentences to us. We were new to the Support Helpline, attending the post-call debrief of a case type we hadn't encountered before.

For a seemingly simple task of attending to the daily incoming calls to the WE CARE Support Helpline, it suddenly dawned upon me the magnitude of my words, the empathy and care in the tone of my voice that I need to mindfully embody when I am on the job.

This volunteer stint in the past 8 months has been a humbling journey, peppered with heart-aching stories that I hear through these calls. It became increasingly lucid to me – my voice could be the first “human” voice from WE CARE to assure those in need that we are here to help. I need to do this well, and do this right.

The last outbound call for the day is completed. As I finalize the paperwork for today's new referral cases, a moment of quiet reflection dawns upon me. Did I do this right for them today? Was I able to provide the information required? Am I empathetic toward their situation? Do they feel empowered to believe they can win this battle?

These are not merely new cases for WE CARE counsellors to work upon. These are real-life stories of personal struggles, the despair and desperation of loved ones looking for hope in the darkest valleys for their child, their spouse/ partner, their parent, their sibling or simply just for a friend.

Did I listen and hear them accurately? Did I transcribe their stories authentically?

I wish WE CARE clients the very best, when they start the journey with their assigned counsellor. It will be a long personal journey ahead. It will be a test of one's mental will, a test of the recovery method, the trust in one's counsellor, and ultimately, a celebration of one's personal resilience to rise above one's own personal doubt.

The struggle is real, the journey is hard, but we have to trust the human spirit and the WE CARE community to overcome this. I am thankful and privileged to have encountered this wonderful selfless WE CARE community, and to be a part of it.

I am heartened that in our busy Singapore society, we have a group of selfless individuals doing their best to help someone in need. The spirit in WE CARE truly reflects that Singapore cares, and no one gets left behind. WE CARE Community Services is an outpatient addiction treatment centre. If you would like to support WE CARE, reach out to them at wecare.org.sg.

by **Christine Goh**

Christine spends her days in the financial sector, yet her heart is with those in Singapore who often go unseen. She hopes her voice and efforts can help bring dignity, compassion, and support to people in need.



I didn't know what to expect when I first stepped into **WE CARE**.

Tucked quietly within the Kembangan–Chai Chee Community Hub, the space didn't feel clinical—it felt human. The cool air, the faint scent of coffee, and the warm layout of sofas and counselling rooms created a quiet sense of calm.

That Monday afternoon, after my interview, Ms Han, the Clinical Director of **WE CARE**, showed me around. The open-concept office surprised me—staff, volunteers, and beneficiaries were chatting over tea, arranging chairs, tending to plants in the backyard. It wasn't just a centre. It felt like a community.

I'm currently completing my clinical practicum here as a Master of Counselling student from Monash University. Out of all the placement sites, **WE CARE** stood out for its focus on addiction recovery, something I've encountered often in my work with psychiatric rehabilitation. Still, what I've come to learn here goes beyond theory or technique. It's about presence. About listening. And about walking beside someone—not ahead of them.

Shifting Gears: From Fixing to Listening

In the early months, I kept asking myself, "Am I doing enough?" Like many interns, I came in ready to help—but quickly realised that being helpful here didn't always look the way I expected. It wasn't about diving in with strategies or tools. It was about slowing down.

One day, while sitting in the counselling room after a session, I found myself reflecting on a moment of silence between me and a client. I had initially thought I needed to fill that space—but instead, I noticed the client softening, breathing a little easier, allowing the silence to hold what words couldn't.

That was the moment I realised: sometimes, the most powerful support we can offer isn't a solution—it's presence. I chuckled quietly to myself, realising how much I had to unlearn.

What They Don't Teach You in Class

Theory gives us frameworks. But **WE CARE** gave me stories.

I saw clients who showed up even when they were exhausted, discouraged, or ashamed—still choosing to keep trying. I witnessed the gentle strength of group facilitators who held space without judgment. I experienced the power of supervision, where I could reflect vulnerably and receive grounded, compassionate guidance.

Most of all, I saw that recovery isn't just about substance use. It's about people. Their losses, longings, traumas, and resilience. Every face I encountered reminded me that addiction is never just about the substance—it's about the pain beneath it.

A Moment That Stayed With Me

There's a client I worked with who shared his experience with Kpods. But what stayed with me wasn't just what he used—it was everything he was holding inside.

He was a young adult navigating immense pressure: his studies were falling apart, his relationship had fractured, his family life was strained, and unspoken childhood trauma quietly lingered beneath it all. On the surface, it might have looked like he was just experimenting. But in our sessions, it became clear that the Kpods were a coping mechanism—for stress, for numbness, for grief he hadn't yet named.

What struck me most was something he said quietly, almost like a confession: "I've tried other things before... but Kpods felt different. More dangerous. More addictive. I could feel how quickly it pulled me in."

That moment revealed not just self-awareness, but fear—a fear many might not see in someone so young.

He wasn't resistant—he was exhausted. And what he needed wasn't judgment or solutions. He needed space. Space to speak, to feel, to not be okay.

With the recent rise in Kpod use across Singapore, I hope this reflection offers insight to families, loved ones, and

the wider public—that substance use, especially among youths, is often a signal of deeper pain rather than simple rebellion. This doesn't excuse the behaviour, but it calls for us to respond with compassion rather than condemnation.

Recovery isn't just about stopping a harmful habit. It's about addressing the emotional wounds that made escape feel like the only option in the first place.

Where I Go From Here

As I continue this journey as a future counsellor, I carry **WE CARE** with me—not just in the theories I've applied or the sessions I've facilitated, but in the quiet moments that changed me.

The recovery journey is rarely linear, and neither is the process of becoming a counsellor. But what I've learned here will stay with me: to slow down, to listen more than I speak, and to never underestimate the power of simply being beside someone, gently and consistently, as they find their way back to themselves.

by **Zhang Yijian**

***Yijian** is a Master of Counselling student currently interning at **WE CARE**. He aspires to be a therapist focused on early intervention in addiction, supporting individuals before substance use becomes the only way to cope. He believes this work begins long before crisis — through presence, trust, and quiet understanding.*



“ Sometimes, the most powerful support we can offer isn't a solution—it's presence. ”

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