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**WE CARE**  
COMMUNITY SERVICES

# WE CARE News



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## Furiosa Charity Movie 2024

In a world where addiction often remains in the shadows due to stigma and misconceptions, **WE CARE** continues to stand as a beacon of hope. As a registered charity dedicated to helping individuals recover from addiction, **WE CARE** relies heavily on donations. However, garnering financial support for this cause can be particularly challenging.

Unlike causes related to the elderly, children, or animals, addiction is highly stigmatized. This stigma often leads to a reluctance or outright refusal from potential donors, as seen in a disheartening experience where an organization turned us away, unwilling to be associated with addiction.

Despite these challenges, **WE CARE** has found a successful and uplifting way to engage the community and raise funds: our charity movie fundraisers. These events have consistently attracted support from the public, as well as from members of our recovering community, volunteers and staff.

In the middle of May, we hosted our first fundraising event of the year, featuring “**Furiosa – A Mad Max Saga**,” the fifth instalment in the iconic Mad Max franchise. The premiere of “Furiosa” coincided with Vesak Day, a public holiday, which allowed a larger audience to attend the afternoon screening. Unlike our previous charity movies, this film was assigned an NC-16 rating, drawing a more mature audience.

Staying true to tradition, we extended complimentary tickets to our fellow Social Service Agency partners. This year, we were also able to show our appreciation of our valued volunteers by offering them complimentary tickets as a token of our gratitude for their collaboration and good neighbourliness.





Thanks to the generosity of our donors, we successfully reached our fundraising target for this event. Our deepest appreciation goes out to all our donors, with special acknowledgments to **Singapore Pools, Promises Healthcare, Mdm Pallavi and Mr. Madhav Aney, Mr. Kelvin Yeo, Ms. Frances Cheang, Ms. Lee Sze Yeng, Mr. Harry Tan, Mr. Richmond Tan, Ms. Clares de Cruz, Mr. Philip Ng, Mr. Dane Anderson, and Mr. Andrew Wong.**

We wish to express our gratitude to the **Tote Board** for their continued support.

Your contributions are invaluable in our ongoing mission to support those in recovery.

Addiction is a mental health condition that impacts not just individuals but their families and loved ones as well. The funds raised through this event will go a long way in helping **WE CARE** provide evidence-based treatment

and support. Each donation helps us offer critical services to those in need, allowing them to rebuild their lives and reconnect with their communities.

As we reflect on the success of the charity movie event, we are reminded of the power of community and compassion. Despite the stigma surrounding addiction, the support we receive from our donors and partners demonstrates that there is hope and help available.

Together, we can continue to break down barriers and ensure that those struggling with addiction receive the care and support they deserve.

Thank you once again to everyone who made this event possible. Your support is not just a donation; it is a lifeline for those seeking to overcome addiction and rebuild their lives.



22 MAY



# FINDING HOPE AND GIVING BACK

For many, the path of addiction can be isolating and filled with despair. Yet often amidst the shadows of struggle, stories of hope shine through. Shiloh (not his real name), a donor to **WE CARE**, shares his journey from addiction to advocacy, and why he continues to support the cause and the transformative work done by **WE CARE**.

Shiloh's story begins as a recipient of **WE CARE**'s services. Struggling with addiction at that time, he found solace and support in the compassionate guidance provided by his counsellor. "I am forever grateful," Shiloh reflects, acknowledging the pivotal role **WE CARE** has played in his recovery journey.

As a person in recovery, his first-hand experience with addiction fuels his commitment to ensuring others receive the same help he found within the walls of **WE CARE** at the beginning of his journey.

When asked what aspects of **WE CARE**'s work resonate most with him, Shiloh recounted that it was the holistic approach to recovery. He praises the organization's focus on recovery and its non-judgmental environment in their drop-in centre. Through counselling sessions, Shiloh was able to confront his addiction and regain hope for the future.

Shiloh's aspirations for **WE CARE** are simple yet profound – he hopes the organization continues to treat those battling addiction, providing a safe haven for recovery. His donations aim to foster growth and ensure that **WE CARE** remains as a

charity that serves individuals and families affected by addiction.

In a world where temptation and instant gratification run rife, Shiloh stresses the importance of supporting addiction awareness and recovery. He emphasizes that the heavy stigma surrounding addiction is ever-prevalent, often stemming from a lack of understanding of the complexities of addiction. Centres such as **WE CARE** offer a critical lifeline for those seeking to break free from its grip.

Shiloh acknowledges the profound impact **WE CARE** has had on him. Through their support, he regained hope and understanding that addiction is not insurmountable – a sentiment he hopes to share with others through his ongoing support.

Shiloh's story is a testament to the transformative power of empathy and support. His journey from addiction to advocacy showcases the profound impact of organizations like **WE CARE**, illuminating the path from struggle to recovery. Through his generosity, Shiloh continues to inspire hope and create change, one donation at a time.

—  
by **Shiloh**

*Shiloh believes in giving back what he has received. To him, in recovery, it's better to be late than never, and he continues to live his life in positive sobriety.*





# RECOVERY

## Confessions of a Recovery Guide

*Hello. My name is Ahmad and I am a Recovery Guide.*

These are words I would have never thought uttering just two years ago.

Two years ago. That was when my life changed.

Before I get to where we are now, allow me to just reel back to the time when my life's trajectory pivoted to a brand new course into uncharted territories.

You see, back when I was younger, there was a time when the allure of the unknown, the thrill of rebellion, and the whispers of escape led me down a path of darkness and lured me into the world of drug abuse.

It's often said that curiosity killed the cat, but for me, it was more about the claws of curiosity digging deep into my soul. The first time I experimented with drugs, it felt like an adventurous escape, a way to step out of the confines of my mundane reality and experience something extraordinary. However, what started as an occasional dalliance soon became an insidious companion that I couldn't shake off.

Fleeting curiosity soon transformed into a vice, turning me into a functional addict, someone who could manage to keep his life together while secretly being consumed by his addiction.

Being a functional addict meant that I could maintain a facade of normalcy. I held down a job and went about my daily life, all while hiding the truth behind closed doors.

To the outside world, I was the picture of normalcy, but inside, I somewhat knew that I was spiralling out of control. There was a sense of helplessness and hopelessness that eventually became all-consuming.

### **The Law's intervention: A Forced Wake-up Call**

As with any journey down a dark path, there comes a point when the road ends, and the truth catches up. For me, it was the law that finally intervened, pulling me out of my self-destructive cycle and forcing me to face the consequences of my actions. I still remember it vividly...



Monday, 1 Aug 2022.

*The day that would go down as the most embarrassing, humiliating and terrifying day I have experienced. At about 4.30 pm, there was a knock on the door and before I could process what happened, eight CNB officers barged in and proceeded to search the house. It was a helpless feeling as they handcuffed me, sat me down on my bed and barraged me with questions.*

*I was then led down to the car park, where I stood by and watched while they searched my car. In a state of unimaginable daze and utter shock, I was then squeezed into the van and brought to Cantonment Police Station. From that point onwards, everything felt surreal, an out of body experience. I have never felt so helpless. So alone.*

The arrest by CNB was a humiliating wake-up call, a stark reminder of the person I had become and the life I was throwing away.

Sentenced to DRC, I found myself at a crossroad. It was a chance for redemption, an opportunity to break free from the chains of addiction and rebuild my life. But it was also a daunting prospect, a journey into the unknown, riddled with fear and uncertainty.

### **A New Beginning: Finding Hope in Fellowship**

After three months in DRC, I was assigned to **WE CARE** Community Services as part of Singapore Prison Services' Community Based Programme. It was here that I was introduced to the concept of fellowship, a community of individuals who had walked the same path and understood the struggles of addiction.

As with any first-timers, I was sceptical, resistant to the idea of opening up and sharing my story with total strangers. But as I began to attend the meetings and engage with the group, something remarkable happened. I found strength in the stories of others, inspiration in their journeys of recovery, and hope in their messages of resilience and perseverance. The experience of being in fellowship turned my life around.

It was a transformative experience, a lifeline that helped me navigate the tumultuous waters of addiction and find my way back to shore.

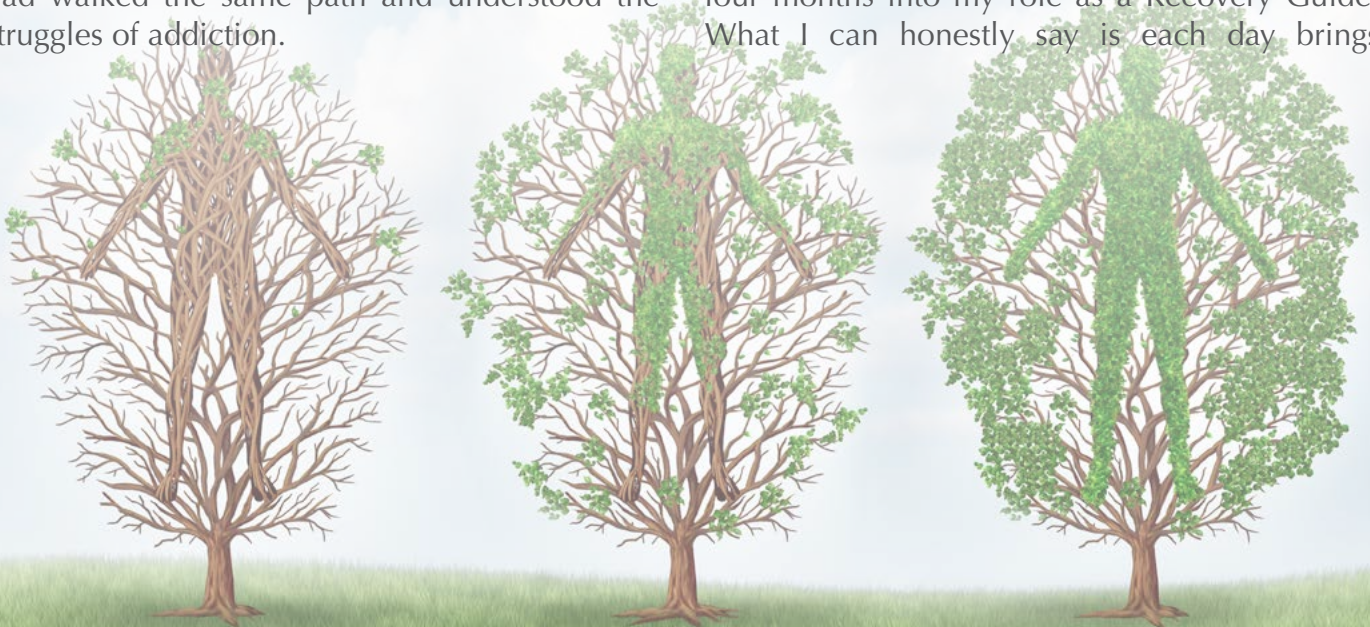
### **Paying it Forward: A New Purpose in Life**

Through the **WE CARE** fellowship and the various group sessions, life started making sense. The fear and uncertainty about my future gradually wore off as recovery took priority.

At the end of 2023, I was presented with an opportunity to be part of the **WE CARE** team, as a Recovery Guide. Despite my initial reservations and lack of experience, it didn't take me long to say yes. The reason being I needed (and found) a purpose, a calling that gives meaning to my life and direction to my recovery journey.

I am now able to pay it forward, helping others who are battling their own demons and seeking a way out of the darkness. It is a privilege to be able to give back, to use my experience and my story to inspire hope and provide support to those in need.

At the time this article was written, I was close to four months into my role as a Recovery Guide. What I can honestly say is each day brings





with it a new experience. Without the requisite experience nor the qualifications, I was quickly humbled by the generosity of the various staff and fellow Recovery Guides, showing me the ropes and inducting me into the **WE CARE** family.

The past few months have been a sharp learning curve for me. What I can glean from my experience so far is the importance of having an open heart and an open mind. Here are some initial takes that I have gathered. It is not exhaustive and most definitely evolving as the days go by. Here's my take, on fulfilling the role as a Recovery Guide (from a newbie's perspective):

### **Empathy and Compassion**

A Recovery Guide must be able to empathize with individuals struggling with addiction, understanding the complexities of their experiences without passing judgment. A compassionate approach helps create a safe and supportive environment where everyone can feel understood and valued.

### **Strong Communication Skills**

Effective communication is key to building trust and rapport with those in recovery. A Recovery Guide should be an active listener, attentively hearing and understanding the concerns, challenges, and needs of those they are supporting.

Being able to convey information, guidance, and encouragement in a clear, supportive, and non-confrontational manner is essential for helping individuals navigate the challenges of addiction and recovery.

### **Resilience and Patience**

Recovery is a journey filled with ups and downs, setbacks and triumphs. A Recovery Guide must demonstrate resilience and patience, providing steadfast support and encouragement, even during challenging and difficult times.



### **Knowledge and Expertise**

A good Recovery Guide should possess a solid understanding of addiction, recovery principles, and evidence-based treatment approaches. This knowledge enables them to provide accurate information, guidance, and support to those on their path to sobriety.

...and most importantly,

### **Personal Integrity and Authenticity**

A Recovery Guide should embody the principles of recovery, demonstrating personal integrity, authenticity, and a commitment to sobriety. Serving as a positive and inspiring role model, they can motivate and encourage individuals by sharing their own experiences, insights, and lessons learned from their journey to recovery.

For me, these are values and principles that not only make a good Recovery Guide, it is also the foundation of what makes us better humans. I am still a work-in-progress, as a Recovery Guide and definitely as a human, a person in recovery. Working at **WE CARE** allows me to discover myself and has been a healing experience for me, a chance to turn my past mistakes into a force for good.

Every day, I am reminded of the person I used to be and the journey I have taken to become the person I am today.

*Yes. My name is Ahmad and I am a Recovery Guide.*

These are words I would have never thought uttering just two years ago.

But today, I can say in full confidence that I am a changed person. My addiction recovery journey has been, and will continue to be, a rollercoaster of emotions, filled with highs and lows, triumphs and setbacks. But through it all, and being at **WE CARE**, I have learned the value of resilience, the importance of a loving and supportive fellowship, and the transformative power of recovery. I am grateful for the second chance I have been given, and I am committed to using it to make a difference in the lives of others.





## Perspectives of a Helpline Volunteer

# Giving hope on the other end of the line

I grew up with a brother who was addicted to heroin, alcohol, and cannabis.

I was 10 years younger than him, and his addictions had a huge impact on my parents, sister, and me. I never knew what mood he would be in when he walked in the door. Violence was common as he suffered from hallucinations and paranoia secondary to psychosis from the drugs.

I spent many nights unable to sleep, hiding under my bed and wishing for help from him and from the people who would turn up at our house threatening us because he owed them money. He got expelled from school so many times that eventually the education board banned him from school completely, at the age of 16.

He had a fabulous personality when he wasn't high and found interviewing for jobs easy. He was, however, never able to hold down a job once the employer became aware of his addiction.

I am happy to report that my brother eventually overcame his addictions - on his own - but it took 20 years and a lot of loss and suffering for him and everyone around him.

As a confused child, I often wondered why no one helped him or us. He had friends that were

also addicts so I knew it wasn't uncommon - so why were we not being helped? This was in the pre-internet era and there was a huge stigma surrounding mental illness and addiction. I realize there probably were places around that could have helped him, but my parents were too ashamed to ask around and thus there was never any help for us.


Our family remains to this day fragmented because of addiction. I still wonder from time to time if things would be different if help had been more accessible.

Fast forward to today - I am a doctor and a proud mother. I started practicing during the height of the methamphetamine addiction in Australia. Our emergency department was constantly half full - overdoses, people hallucinating from the drugs, and others who had reached rock bottom, begging for help.

**I spent a lot of time talking to them and their families and realized that being the first point of contact for a person seeking help was extremely important.**

My interaction with them could propel them forward, give them hope and begin to remove the stigma they were feeling or cause them to leave





and not seek help again. I regularly used the word brave to describe how I felt about my patients who had come to ask for help in a world where there remained a huge stigma surrounding addiction.

When I moved to Singapore 15 years ago and stopped practicing medicine, I devoted my time to having and looking after my 4 children. When my youngest turned 4, I realized I wanted to do something more with my time and looked for volunteering opportunities. I started asking friends and acquaintances for recommendations that might be a good fit for me.

I am usually quite fussy because integrity is important to me. I wanted to volunteer at a place that did good work and did it to high ethical standards. One recommendation was **WE CARE**, a caring and supportive organization both with clients and staff. And so, I emailed in, and the rest is history.

I started volunteering on the helpline and have really enjoyed the experience. Even though I am not seeing these people in person, the same theory from my time in the emergency department applies.

Often, I am the first person that the caller has voiced their concerns to and had the vulnerability to admit they need help. That takes courage. Being able to validate their feelings and encourage them to continue the process is so important.

I need to be able to gauge quite quickly how to approach the caller. Some have made up their minds about seeking help and they are moving forward no matter what - those are the easier calls. Some are calling to feel out the centre and they are the callers that need a lot more care. Surprisingly, my Australian accent is often an icebreaker. The caller is not expecting my voice and we spend a minute or two discussing my accent, where I am from, and how I ended up volunteering for **WE CARE**. This diffuses anxiety and allows the caller to feel comfortable before we move into a deeper and more vulnerable conversation.

I have now finished my *Masters in Psychiatry, Psychology, and Neurosciences* and am starting my *Master of Counselling*. I hope to continue on the helpline for some time before eventually moving into addiction counselling face to face.

**I am so grateful for the opportunity to work with an organization that provides the help that I wish was available to my family when I was young.**

—

by **Donna**

*Donna is a mother of 4 who worked as a Doctor before moving to Singapore, which she has been lucky enough to call home for 15 years. She recently completed a Masters in Mental Health due to a strong belief in the transformative power of therapy. In her spare time she likes to read, run, lift weights and contemplate the deeper meaning of life.*





## Gardening Gets Me Going

*My dreams often took unexpected turns, diverging from the paths I had once envisioned. Life's journey led me through twists and turns, straying from my initial expectations. Yet, amidst these deviations, I have found valuable lessons in acceptance, particularly in relationships, work, health, and spirituality.*

This story starts with the beginning of my professional career - as a chef.

In kitchens where I chased the adrenaline rush and recognition of a top chef, long hours accompanied my passion. It mirrored the rock-and-roll lifestyle glorified by Anthony Bourdain in "Kitchen Confidential", a book that captivated me very early in my life.

The pressure eventually took a toll, and the anxiety and exhaustion I experienced drove me to substances, a coping mechanism that offered diminishing returns. This approach was not sustainable, and I left working in restaurants to become a private chef. This continued to give me a sense of purpose, while my stress levels and reliance on substances became somewhat alleviated.

Gratitude fills my heart for the culinary skills I honed, paving the way for a significant chapter

in my life. In 2015, as a skilled migrant, I along with my then-pregnant ex-wife and our young daughter, embarked on a new beginning in Melbourne - a decision propelled by a quest for better work-life balance.

The frenetic pace of restaurants, however, no longer appealed. Fish filleting became my next chapter. To some it may seem like a simple and mundane job, but I found it to be an enjoyable, fulfilling, and therapeutic experience. Additionally, the foundations laid while I was a chef enabled me to pick the trade up easily. It also gave me more bandwidth for family time, but before long I was searching for something new.

Cue, an injured friend. One day, he asked if I could help mow his lawn - he had injured himself and could not do it on his own. I'm glad I agreed to help because a new passion was sparked. The physicality, fresh air, and satisfaction of a manicured lawn resonated with me on many levels.

I joined horticulture school, and gardening became my sanctuary. Weeding demanded mindfulness - a present-moment focus, a stark contrast to past anxieties. It also strengthened me physically, turning into a free gym with a generous dose of vitamin D.



Witnessing new shoots emerge from fallen trees offered a powerful lesson in resilience - finding a second, third or even fourth wind despite being knocked down. Moreover, the kindness of clients who offered fruits and delights from their gardens fostered a sense of community.

I loved my gardening job so much that I worked at it for the next 6 years. I would have never thought my path of being a chef would lead me to being a horticulturist. I owe so much to gardening - from the humility I felt from standing under trees that have been around for the last 100-plus years, to the kindness and warmth of my clients offering me fresh silver beet, lemons, oranges, olives, coffee as well as Greek and Italian sweets.

A devastating separation from my family in 2018 shattered my dream of a happy home. Gardening became my therapy, a way to maintain physical health that nourished my mental well-being. In the quiet moments of weeding, I discovered the connection between physical exertion and mental clarity. When my physical health is good, my mental health gets the support it needs to stay healthy too. Many times, when I was working in the garden, I entered a state of flow. Not trying to sound too new age or woo-woo but in this zone, I often gained insights about myself and of the world - all of which plays a part in nurturing my spirituality.

Autumn, with its falling leaves, became a metaphor for letting go. Just as trees shed leaves to survive winter, I too needed to release what no longer served me.

All the introspection led to a deep personal excavation. Unhealthy relationships, outdated beliefs, and destructive behaviours were identified and discarded – bagged up like the fallen leaves I had done with so many times.

One consequence of my separation was a belief in self-reliance. I saw myself as a lone wolf, afraid to open up or to trust people. Years of isolation had engendered resentment and a sense of victimhood. While my lone wolf belief helped me immensely by making me more independent and discerning, it also caused much isolation and pain. Ultimately, I became resentful towards God for what happened to my dream of a happy family.

However, my return to Singapore in 2022, initially driven by substance abuse and untreated bipolar disorder, marked a turning point. Facing despair, I sought help from a recovery fellowship and it was here that I truly began to understand the power of letting go.

The program emphasized spiritual principles, including surrender and community. This resonated deeply, becoming an extended autumn of releasing years of baggage. Most importantly, I learned to ask for help, a crucial step in relinquishing my self-sufficiency.







My first year of sobriety coincided with a new gardening job. While less prestigious and financially rewarding than my past roles, working alongside migrant brothers from India taught me the value of humility. Kneeling to weed, raking leaves, and greeting guests at the country club chipped away at my pride.

This newfound humility opened my eyes to past mistakes in my relationships. It allowed me to forgive myself and others, replacing victimhood with a willingness to learn and grow. It also softened my heart, allowing me to receive feedback with an open mind.

Recovery is an ongoing journey, one that requires a lot of letting go (and surrender). It's about embracing vulnerability, authenticity, and service to others. Coming to **WE CARE** allowed me to shed the mask of "being okay." Here, I found a safe space to share my struggles amidst a community of acceptance, love, and support. Counselling sessions, recovery meetings, and the camaraderie of fellow members help me to heal both mentally and spiritually.

Gardening at **WE CARE** has become a cornerstone of my well-being. It's a place to practice mindfulness, exercise, and connect

with nature. Most importantly, it's a collaborative system where maintaining plants, repairing systems, and beautifying the space are all shared responsibilities. We are an ecosystem, working hand-in-hand. This sense of belonging replaced the image of the lone wolf. I am no longer adrift; I am part of a pack, journeying together towards recovery. Sharing stories, offering support, and witnessing the growth of the garden mirror our own transformation.

As I write this, it is autumn in Melbourne - a poignant reminder of the transformative power of letting go.

—

by **Julius**

*Julius loves life and all it offers through people, places, and experiences. His growth mindset has opened many opportunities for him to meet people, understand their perspectives, and learn varied life skills. His deep interest in the cycle of life led him to a career in horticulture, where he learned about life, death, and the resilience of nature, mirroring the human experience.*

*He believes the highest form of art is human life and strives to inspire hope in those who are suffering, showing them how amazing life can be despite setbacks.*





# FROM RAVES TO RECOVERY

I won't mince my words. My story isn't a fairy tale of redemption, but a real-life fable of chasing the party scene, getting entangled with addiction, and eventually clawing my way back for the sake of my son.

It wasn't a dramatic rock bottom, with no single earth-shattering moment. It was a slow drift, a gradual accumulation of missed work deadlines, strained relationships, and a nagging sense of unease. At 16, what began as weekend clubbing and overseas raves with friends morphed into a regular escape. The initial social thrill wore thin, and weekends started to bleed into weekdays. Using and drinking became a routine, and the vibrant social life I once had, dwindled.

The consequences started stacking up and as I look back now, this period of active addiction is best described by one of the first words I heard someone utter in my first meeting - unmanageable.

The final straw came with a simple realisation:  
**I was losing everything.**

Work became a struggle and making rent felt like an exercise in survival. My friends and family, initially tolerant, grew distant. My mental health took a nosedive, and the loneliness that fueled my reliance on substance became a suffocating presence. I was letting everything slip through my fingers.

The decision to seek help came when I felt the most cornered, and lonely. I've come to learn that a primary trait of addiction is isolation, which is exactly what I had done - I had become an island. It was on this island, however, that I decided to completely surrender. Either my body was going to give way or I was going to give up.

Recovery was a rollercoaster, especially at the beginning. Life doesn't magically get better overnight - shame, guilt, and the constant fear of relapse were my unwelcome companions. However, as I somewhat reluctantly embraced the program's structure, a sense of control slowly returned. Therapy sessions helped me unpack a whole host of things: Decades worth of emotional baggage, the root causes of my addiction as well as the unhealthy coping mechanisms I had developed.

One of the biggest challenges is being a single mum. Make no mistake about it, raising my young son while battling my own demons is no easy task. Balancing recovery meetings, therapy sessions, and the constant needs of my son is a daily juggle. There are days, I admit, when all I want to do is crawl back into bed. But seeing my son's innocent face - he is the single most vital motivator to keep going.

Relationships were another hurdle. Rebuilding trust with my family was a slow, painstaking





process. A year of consistent effort finally yielded a tentative olive branch from my mum, which I nurtured with cautious hope. Friendships fared differently.

Some drifted away, with their lives moving in different directions, but a few true gems have remained a constant source of support for me even till today.

My recovery programme emphasises the importance of building a strong support network. I've found solace in the fellowship – a group of individuals bound by shared struggles and a common goal. These connections, forged in the steel of vulnerability and understanding, have really kept me going. Knowing that someone is just a phone call away, that I am never alone in this fight, is something that I will forever be grateful for.

All that said, the anchor that keeps me grounded is my son. Every day, the responsibility of raising him is a tangible reminder of the life I am fighting for. I am not fighting for myself, I am really fighting for us.

Of all that's happened in my recovery journey, the one event that sticks out is when I hit one year of sobriety. Celebrating a year sober with my family

and the people who had supported my journey wasn't a dramatic scene, but a quiet moment of immense significance. Looking around that room, I saw the relief in my family's eyes, the genuine joy on the faces of the fellowship, and the pride. It was a powerful moment, a validation that all the struggle, pain, hurt and tears, were worth it.

In that meeting, while I was sharing about my journey over the one year, it hit me. A year of sobriety brought me more than I ever could have imagined.

Today, I live my life with a renewed purpose - to be of service to other recovering addicts, to give back. I hope that in sharing my story, raw and unfiltered, I will offer hope to those still suffering.

To anyone that's struggling: **"One day at a time, never look back or think too far ahead."** These lines may be repeated countless times and seem super cliché, but there's a reason why they've endured.

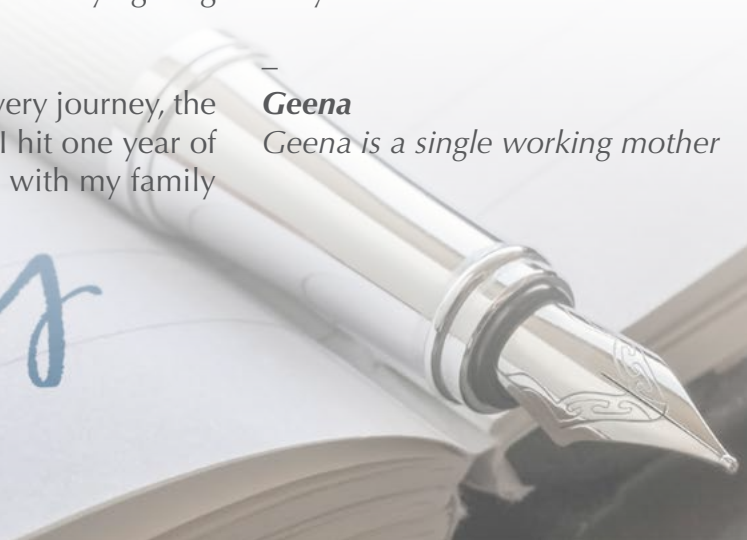
They work.

—

**Geena**

*Geena is a single working mother*

*My Story*





# Falling Into Place

## – Bobby's Story

He had come to the point when he thought that everything would be lost after DRC (Drug Rehabilitation Centre). But in the year since Bobby has completed his stint there, he is “amazed that everything is falling into place”.

Now in his mid-30s, he has started a new job with a travel company where he feels valued and useful. At his interview, he was aware that he would either have to be honest or hide his drug history. He chose to be candid. And was happily surprised that they offered him a position. He is aware that many organizations would not have been as open. The human resources department also makes a point of checking in with him regularly, and he feels that his wellbeing is taken care of.

5 years ago, Bobby tried drugs out of boredom when his coworkers introduced him to them. In the beginning it was a way to stay awake, but later and in some circles, he was offered drugs so he could relax with the company he was keeping. Becoming addicted, he continued using drugs until he was “caught by CNB and thrown into DRC”.

DRC itself was a wake-up call. He had never been in a situation where his freedom was so restricted. He likens it to “living out of a box”. Before he left DRC, he had sat in a talk which **WE CARE** had conducted. Up till then, he had never heard of the organization. But his assigned counsellor met

with him in the last 2 weeks before he left DRC on a Friday. The following Monday, Bobby showed up at **WE CARE**.

It was August 2023. And also a low point for him – he had lost his career, received a mark on his record, and faced an uncertain future. It was hard to accept his situation. There were times when he felt like giving up on life.

In the next few months he attended counselling sessions, on his own and in groups, and also participated in activities at the centre as his recovery was on its way. The purchase of his flat went through, and luckily, he found good tenants for it.

But he also lost his father.

He has met persons who have gone into DRC a second or third time, and he is determined not to go down the same path. “I will only be wasting my time, repeating the cycle again”. And long-term drug use would only harm his health.

One challenge he had was running into persons that he knew in his drug using days. “It’s not possible to avoid situations like these. Singapore is quite small”.

When that happens, he smiles, says hello and goodbye, and goes on his way. He does not want to maintain contact with characters from his past.



From the start of his recovery, in his free time, he has made a point to go out, visiting a park, trying out a new café, catching a movie, window shopping, or looking for furniture and accessories for his home. It is a habit he has inculcated to make sure he is unable to indulge in any potentially risky behaviour, because “you can’t misbehave when you are out in public”.

Although he no longer has to wear his tag, he still has the habit of getting home by 8pm, the curfew limit he used to observe. He intends to take his time before exploring night life again. “I am in no hurry,” declares Bobby.

Coming to **WE CARE** has helped him, and learning the stories of others too. Knowing those who are recovering stably inspires him, while the stories of peers who have returned to DRC makes him more resolved not to go down that path again. “I will be losing too much if that happens”.

He intends to get his driving licence and take up a mental health course of some kind, such as in counselling.

*“I want to tell others that it is not the end of the world. Which is what I myself felt before. Take it one step at a time. Do not give up. Everything happens for a reason. Remain positive. Have a positive mindset.”*

He feels lucky that things are now falling into place.

*“I no longer have to look over my shoulder. I don’t worry if anyone wants to look inside my bag”.*

Bobby wishes he had known about **WE CARE** earlier. He would have gone in on his own to get help instead of waiting for the law to catch up with him.

With more than a year of sobriety, and a career that is taking off, Bobby has gotten his life on track.





# Expanding Outreach to Diverse Communities: WE CARE's 2024 Initiative

In 2024, **WE CARE** has set a strategic goal to broaden our outreach to more diverse communities, with a particular emphasis on youth populations. This shift is driven by a noticeable trend within our centre: a growing number of young people seeking help for various addictive issues like substance abuse and compulsive behaviours. Aligning with the Singapore government's ongoing initiatives to raise mental health awareness, our expanded outreach aims to address these growing needs and foster a more informed, supportive society.

Traditionally, our outreach initiatives were centred around institutes of higher learning, hospitals, and the prisons. However, recognizing the evolving landscape of addiction and mental health, **WE CARE** has expanded its efforts in the first half of 2024 to reach a wider audience.

Here are some highlights of our recent engagements:

## Addiction Awareness Talk at Darul Aman Mosque

In a significant step towards community inclusion, **WE CARE** conducted a general addiction awareness talk at Darul Aman Mosque, located just a short walk from our premises.

The session was tailored for a group of female seniors, many of whom were not fluent in English. Therefore, the talk was delivered in Bahasa Melayu to ensure clear communication and greater impact. We were warmly welcomed with snacks and lunch which displayed their gratitude and fostered a sense of community.







## AMASE! Network Collaboration

As a member of the **AMASE! Network** (Alliance of Mentoring Agencies Supporting PIEs), **WE CARE** conducted an addiction awareness talk for fellow network members. The audience included professionals and volunteers from the social service sector, as well as individuals with incarceration experience.

With around 30 participants, the Q&A segment was particularly dynamic, leading to insightful discussions on understanding addiction. This interaction not only enhanced knowledge but also helped in addressing some of the stigma associated with addiction.

Our outreach initiatives for the first half of the year have been both diverse and impactful, setting a strong foundation for continued efforts.

Moving forward, **WE CARE** has numerous engagements lined up, each aimed at educating the public about addiction and challenging the stigma that often surrounds it. These initiatives are critical in creating a more supportive and understanding environment for individuals struggling with addiction.

## Anti-Binge Drinking Campaign with NTU (Binge Is Baad)

Collaborating with a student group from Nanyang Technological University (NTU), **WE CARE** contributed to an anti-binge drinking awareness campaign, a part of their Final Year Project.

Our role as a valued partner involved sharing expertise and insights on addiction and binge drinking. A unique aspect of this collaboration was the opportunity to conduct a panel discussion and presentation at a rooftop bar.

This informal and relaxed setting made it easier to engage with the younger audience, making them more receptive to discussions on the serious topic of binge drinking.

**If you or your community are interested in learning more about addiction and would like to have an educational talk conducted, please do not hesitate to reach out to our Communications Team at [admin@wecare.org.sg](mailto:admin@wecare.org.sg).**

**WE CARE** remains committed to supporting individuals and communities in addressing addiction and mental health issues, paving the way for a supportive, more inclusive future.







# Promoting Positive E-Gaming Habits with Kampong Glam Youth Network

With the surge in popularity of e-gaming worldwide, Singapore has become a notable hub for this digital phenomenon. The island nation's youth are deeply immersed in e-gaming, a trend bolstered by Singapore's impressive internet penetration rate. According to a recent study conducted this year, over 96 percent of Singapore's population has internet access, one of the highest rates in the world. This connectivity has undoubtedly contributed to the widespread engagement in e-gaming among young Singaporeans.

Recognizing the dual nature of e-gaming – its potential benefits and its possible downsides – the **Kampong Glam Youth Network** organized an e-gaming event in early March. The event aimed to engage local residents and promote positive gaming habits, highlighting the constructive aspects of e-gaming such as fostering teamwork, healthy competition, and strategic thinking. However, it also addressed the potential negative effects on mental health, associated with excessive gaming and negative online experiences.

The event featured a **Mobile Legends Big Bang (MLBB)** tournament took place at the atrium of Bugis+, a shopping mall favoured by youths,

attracting an audience of over 100 people, including avid gamers and the general public. A key highlight of the event also included a panel discussion featuring **WE CARE**, alongside other industry experts. The discussion was structured around three main topics:

1. **The potential effects of e-gaming on mental health:** The panel explored both positive and negative impacts, acknowledging how gaming can enhance cognitive skills and social connections but also noting the risks of addiction and exposure to harmful content.
2. **Strategies for promoting healthy gaming habits:** Experts shared methods to encourage balanced gaming routines and prevent mental health issues. This included setting time limits, promoting diverse activities, and fostering open communication about gaming within families.
3. **Resources available in Singapore for e-gaming challenges:** The panel highlighted various support systems, including counselling services and community programs, aimed at helping individuals manage gaming-related issues effectively.





The insights shared by the panellists were well-received, sparking meaningful discussions that helped dispel common misconceptions about e-gaming. For instance, the notion that online games incite violence or lack educational value was challenged, with experts providing evidence of the cognitive and social benefits that well-regulated gaming can offer.

One of the standout aspects of the event was the balanced perspective on the role of parents in cultivating healthy gaming habits. The discussion underscored the importance of parental involvement in understanding and managing their children's gaming activities, offering practical advice on how to engage constructively with their children's gaming interests.

**WE CARE** expresses our gratitude to the **Kampong Glam Youth Network** for the opportunity to share our expertise in working with clients that present with internet and gaming issues. This event was a significant step towards fostering a more informed and balanced view of e-gaming in Singapore.

As the digital landscape continues to evolve, **WE CARE** is planning to host an e-forum discussion in the coming months. This initiative aims to deepen the understanding of parents, caregivers, educators, and fellow industry practitioners about e-gaming, and provide better support for those encountering challenges related to gaming.

Follow us on social media @**wecarespore** to stay updated with our latest news and events.





[illegible]

Validation in therapy can look very different and is very structured. There are several nuances to it and layers embedded. That would require a scholastic discourse on its own, hence I will just leave it at that for now.

I practise validation with my children too. They know I may not agree with them in many of our discussions, but I do hear them out and will always validate their experience. In doing so, they have learned to do the same with me as well. We have created a system of communicating and learning to agree or disagree, but we have also learned to validate each other's experience and opinions. This makes for healthier discussions at home.

The same can be practised at the workplace too, where even if you don't agree with a person's style of working, you can validate their views by hearing them out. It conveys a sense of non-judgemental understanding. In a work situation, this could help ease out the tensions in the boardroom, between management and staff, and among colleagues.

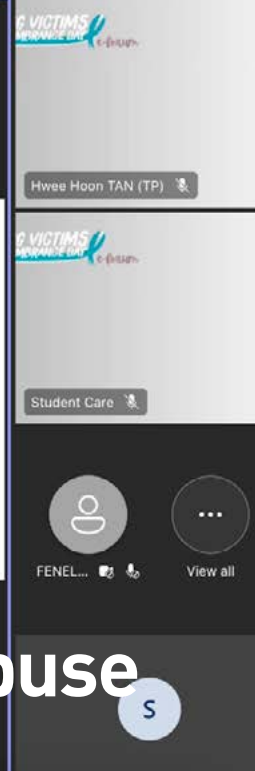
Validation seems to be the buzzword on everyone's lips and rightly so. It is the act of validation that makes everyone use it in their everyday lingo and I am sure as we move towards a more mutually respectful society, it will become something that we practise regularly. Initially there might have to be a conscious effort towards it, but slowly it will become our way of life, hence making for a healthier more understood community.

Ah well, I can be allowed my utopian daytime fantasies. Won't you validate that?

by **Joy**  
Joy (Joyotee) is an active volunteer at **WE CARE**, and lends her time and expertise in areas of counselling, manning the helpline, facilitating art-inspired workshops which also focus on breath work and laughter yoga.



# REMEMBRANCE DAY 2024



## Remembering All Victims of Drug Abuse

From 2024, every third Friday of May will be designated ***Drug Victims Remembrance Day***.

Organised by the **Inter-Ministry Committee on Drug Prevention for Youths**, it hopes to remind all of us that the harm from the use of drugs affects not only drug abusers but the people around them – their family members, loved ones, close friends, co-workers, etc.

The inaugural ceremony was held on Fri 17 May at the Ngee Ann Civic Plaza where **Law and Home Affairs Minister K. Shanmugam** invited guests to light candles and observe a minute's silence to remember the lives lost to drugs. A roving exhibition will travel from Ngee Ann City to 8 other mall locations.

The inter-ministry committee aims to increase empathy, understanding, and support for families and friends of loved ones affected by drug use. Although mental health issues have entered the public consciousness, there is considerable stigma surrounding one of its least understood family members – addiction. Initiatives related to Remembrance Day in the form of related public education and community engagements will help to initiate conversations around addiction and hopefully lead to greater acceptance and support of this mental health issue.

**WE CARE** supports Remembrance Day and has dedicated a wall in our lounge – which features a brightly painted Tree of Life – on which messages can be displayed to commemorate the ones who have left us.

We have also participated in an online forum, hosted by Temasek Polytechnic, where drug use and addiction were discussed. A recovering person also shared his journey and the challenges he faced in recovery. The engagement was good and several issues were raised and discussed.

To round off, we are including a testimonial to a colleague, who was recently retired and was sober for 13 years. He died recently of a heart attack, in the middle of enjoying his retirement, and still living a clean and sober life till the end.

We end with a poem written by a father to his son, who was troubled by addiction issues and was struggling to cope. Sadly the son is no longer with us. But this poem, and the note from his girlfriend, poignantly describe the love of those around him, and the tragic loss of a life taken too early, too soon.





# Remembering Fandi

- Friend, Colleague, Brother in Recovery.

**Afandi B Ahmad**, more affectionately known as **Fandi** or **Mr. More**, was a pillar in the recovery community in Singapore. He was part of the **WE CARE** team for close to 10 years, having joined us in April 2014, and was very often the first person someone would see when they walked into the centre. His warm, jovial nature neutralised any awkwardness - usually felt by newcomers or people returning from a relapse - and played a very big part in helping someone settle in.

His colloquial catch phrases soon caught on with many of our members, often becoming the butt of jokes that helped members break the ice. The comical exclamations of *"Your name hot"* and *"I have seen you before,"* accompanied by his booming laughter and distinctive hoarse cough, frequently reverberated through the office - much to the eye-rolls of his colleagues.

A few beneficiaries I talked to spoke very fondly of the times they spent in our creative room, picking Fandi's brain about his wealth of recovery experience. Fandi was not a fixture in the art room by choice - he loved art, and even contributed to the mural that sits in our fitness area.

On the mural, the lines *"This too shall pass"* and *"Don't quit before the miracle happens"* can be found. They're repeated often in 12-step meetings, and are usually said to help get someone through a tough period.

That's what Fandi did - he got many people through the toughest periods of recovery. There were even instances where he would accompany someone on their way to detox at NAMS. When you're going through a difficult time, sometimes all it takes is a little encouragement, which Fandi always offered.

The tributes that have been pouring in show just how big an impact he had on so many people's lives - from his sponsees to his smoking buddies, to even just someone who was sitting in the same recovery meeting as him but never had an actual conversation with. It is because of the footprint he left that there is now a void that many say they will struggle to fill.





The impact he made was perhaps best revealed by the sheer number of people that turned up at his burial. It was a sombre occasion as many struggled to come to terms with his sudden passing, but between the hugs and tears, it was clear to see how much he meant to everyone.

We'll miss his uplifting spirit and brutal honesty. His memory endures in the lives he touched, and we will always keep his light bright in our collective hearts.

He was a helping hand gone too soon.



### Excerpts from Fandi's friends

"With the heaviest heart, I bid farewell to the man who walked with me on the toughest journey of recovery. He was the first person who welcomed me with open arms and was also the first man outside of my family to cry for me when I came back from a relapse."

- Jasmine

"So this is the good news. My character defects will never end, but gradually such defects will become an asset when God turns weakness into strength for purpose in life." (*Afandi bin Ahmad, in his own words, 14th March 2023*).

With his own blend of serious purpose and sense of humour, Afandi did not quit before the miracle happened."

- Emrys

"As He said, i worked in recovery Centre for 11 years... The reason is because "I love all Addicts" he said...

*"Don't play-play you know! We all love one another you know!! Because the therapeutic value of one addict helping another is without Parallel!!!"*

He left a very huge impact to me because he passed away while giving back..."

- Azmi

"Afandi was my ex husband's sponsor in 2015. I remember he would always call him. And when I dropped in at WE CARE like 2 years ago he really took care of me.

Gave me so much advice. Will always remember his voice shouting my name every time I stepped into WE CARE... he was the first person to make me feel at home. Always welcoming me."

- Yanty

Rest in peace, brother.



## On a Gossamer Wing

You come into our world  
A petal on a breeze  
Fragrant, airy intimation  
of a life of beauty and ease

You bless us so lavishly  
with love and affection  
Your hugs, your tears  
Your joys, your fears.

We'll always remember  
your winsome smile  
the raucous laugh  
the cheeky gags  
The mooncalf —  
a mere disguise  
for a sensitive soul within lies.

We'll always cherish  
your bold brush strokes  
on the canvas of our lives  
wrought by genius and passion  
An artist's divine inspiration...

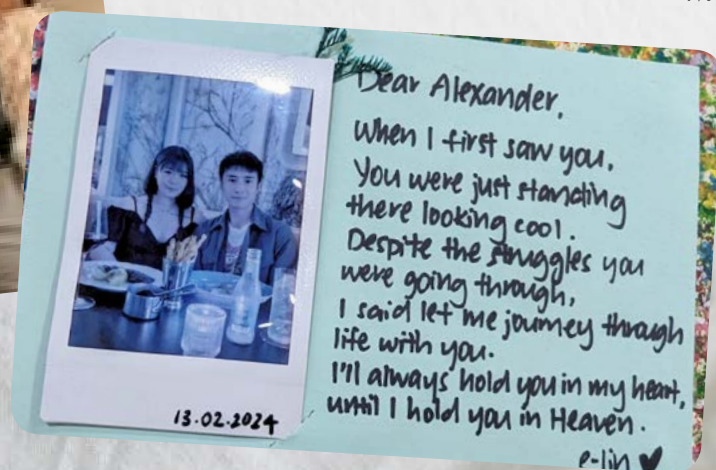
Haunting strains on the guitar  
beckoning to a distant star  
Gentle hand on furry paws  
in tenderness and empathy  
A pencil moves, a wondrous image draws  
of flight of mind, ethereal ecstasy

But the anguish, the hurt, the sorrow  
As angels and demons battle for the morrow  
Of body mortal wracked by pain  
And spirit thirsting for succour  
We reach out — hand outstretched — in vain  
Our guts wrenched, helpless, knowing you suffer.

And then you're gone  
so suddenly, Hon  
Dropping it all  
bidding freedom's call  
On a gossamer wing  
as choirs of angels sing.

Hon, we miss you so  
with every fibre of our being  
But we'll let you go  
knowing and seeing  
that we'll never be apart  
even as God seeks your soul to leaven  
For we'll always hold you in our heart  
until we hold you in Heaven.

~ *Leong Yan Hoi,*  
March 2024





# HIGHLIGHTS

Discovering new joys in recovery.  
Exciting events and activities from  
the recent past.



Addiction Awareness Talk at Temasek Polytechnic



Beach Cleaning with Hwa Chong Institution



Asian Civilisation Museum visit



Furiosa - Charity Movie 2024



Hari Raya Celebrations 2024





Kampong Glam Youth Network  
E-gaming Event



Microsoft Excel Class with Min



OSSEA Orchid Show 2024 @ Tanglin Mall



Remembrance Day 2024



Visit from Macau Social Services



Visit from Changi General Hospital



Visit from Imperial College London



Photographic Society of Singapore



# Transforming Lives. Restoring Families.

Counselling | Therapy Programme | Drop-in Centre | Recovery Support Groups | Events & Activities



We are located at:

**Kembangan-Chai Chee**

**Community Hub**

11 Jln Ubi #01-41, Block 5

Singapore 409074

Tel : 3165 8017

Fax : 6491 5338

E-mail: [help@wecare.org.sg](mailto:help@wecare.org.sg)

**WE CARE** aims to be the leading community hub of addiction recovery in Singapore.

We treat all forms of addictions, including alcohol, drugs, pornography, sex, gaming, internet and compulsive behaviours like shoplifting.

Our core services are:

- Counselling for recovering addicts and their families
- Educational and therapy programmes
- A drop-in centre
- A hub for recovery support groups
- Community outreach

For more information on what we do, please go to: [www.wecare.org.sg](http://www.wecare.org.sg)

Counselling sessions are private and confidential.



## Help is just a phone call away

If you have a problem with addiction, or if you know someone who has issues, call us at **3165 8017** or email [help@wecare.org.sg](mailto:help@wecare.org.sg)

*The first step in getting better is to ask for help*

## About This Publication

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## WE CARE needs your help.

**WE CARE** Community Services Ltd is a registered charity.

We provide treatment for all forms of addictions and our services are open to persons of all races, cultures and religion.

To fund our programmes and services, we depend mainly on donations from individuals and corporations.

Your support enables us to provide quality care to individuals and families affected by addictions and compulsive behaviours.

As we are an approved Institution of Public Character (IPC), donations to **WE CARE** are tax deductible.

To make a donation:

Write a cheque payable to **“WE CARE Community Services Limited”**. Alternatively, go online to make a donation at:

- [Giving.sg/we-care-comunity-services-limited](http://Giving.sg/we-care-comunity-services-limited); or
- [Wecare.give.asia](http://Wecare.give.asia)

