

January 2020

WE CARE NEWS



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

The game is on again!
The Amazing WE CARE Race 2020



THE AMAZING WE CARE RACE 2020

**It's a competitive race again
(but brains highly recommended)**

Sat 28 Mar 2020

The fun unfolds from 8.00am

Details out soon

TeamWork!
Speed!
Contest!
Smarts!
Creativity!
Initiative!

8TH FINISHER AWARDS
VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION
GAMBLING IN GAMING
RECOVERY STORY
MEET OUR VOLUNTEERS
ABOUT WE CARE

Finisher Awards 8th Edition 3rd Jan 2020



THE 8TH EDITION OF THE
FINISHER AWARDS TOOK
PLACE ON FRIDAY 3RD
JANUARY 2020.

WE CARE CELEBRATED
A YEAR OF SOBRIETY
FOR 4 RECOVERING
PERSONS, AND 3
YEARS OF CLEAN TIME
FOR 1 RECOVEREE.





THE NEXT EDITION OF THE AWARDS WILL HAPPEN IN JULY THIS YEAR.



OUR THANKS TO DANE ANDERSON WHO REPRESENTED THE WE CARE BOARD. KUDOS TO NUDEL, ENID AND BRENDA FOR HOSTING THE CEREMONY.



ALL PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF ANDREW LIM

Volunteer Appreciation Event Sat 7th Dec 2019



Celebrating the volunteers that lift the recovering community — Rain or shine

Thirty-four individuals were honoured for their contributions on Sat 7 Dec 2019, at **WE CARE**'s inaugural celebration of active volunteers. The event was held at Wisma Geylang Serai and saw staff, friends and family coming together to recognise the hard work of the volunteers.

"In our suffering state, when we are in active addiction, to just have the warm embrace of volunteers means a huge amount," said chairman Andrew da Roza. "Fandi was the first person to hug me, and he said, 'We're going to love you until you love yourself.'"

To boisterous encouragement, volunteers received certificates and tokens of appreciation.

Among them were art teacher Barry Yeow; yoga instructor Marn Lim; counsellors Oliver Ackermann and Sofia Tian; recovery buddy and food connoisseur Nudel Lam; as well as Nicole Liu and Robert Abe, both of whom organise IT and coffee brewing classes at **WE CARE**.

Decked out in the bright red **WE CARE** t-shirt was Osman Hon.

WE CARE executive director Tham Yuen Han, shared, "Osman is a buddy under Project SAFE (Support for recovering Addicts and Families through Empowerment), coming with us into the Prisons."

Karina Lee was one of **WE CARE**'s very first tutors, and she started by working with someone who spoke very little English.

"My first thought was – this guy looks a bit scary! But I then found that he's really quite a nice guy, and we worked together for almost two years, after which I started a new job which took me long hours. But I still come back for **WE CARE**'s Amazing Race which I look forward to." she related.

Isa won an award for his outreach work into the prisons, and for coaching greenhorns how to do outreach.

Participants also enjoyed a nice spread for lunch, catching up with old friends and the latest happenings.

Talented singers shared their vocal gifts with everyone as well. Dressed in trendy black, 16-year old Diana sang for the crowd with her rendition of 'Never Enough' from the film *The Greatest Showman* — the accompanying music seemed to recede into the background as her melodious voice took centre stage and as enthusiastic applause followed.

Stylishly outfitted Puspa also entertained us, but perhaps the most meaningful moment was when Razak took the stage, and accompanying himself on guitar, sang a song that he had composed

himself. It was a heartfelt piece which summarised the event perfectly, and is suitably entitled 'Rain or Shine'.

Indeed, rain or shine, **WE CARE**'s volunteers try their very best to share their gifts with those who might need a helping hand.

Story and photos by Andrew Lim

RAIN OR SHINE – by Razak

There I was
Standing all alone
In a new beginning
With worries and confusion
Just when I thought that everything is gone
And you came along and held out your hand
I feel love is everywhere
To ease away the fear and pain
It's nice to know you're always there
When I fall, you held me up again

And you gave it all, so selflessly
You never have so much but still you show me
the way
Just like a guiding light

FANDI SAID, "WE'RE GOING TO LOVE YOU UNTIL YOU LOVE YOURSELF," RECALLS CHAIRMAN ANDREW DA ROZA.



Diana entertains with a show tune from *The Greatest Showman*



Christelle shares her volunteering experience

WE CARE helps you to quit smoking



Here are the 6 easy steps:

1. Sign up with the 'I Quit 28-Day Countdown' programme at: <https://www.healthhub.sg/programmes/88/IQuit>
2. You will be provided with a list of pharmacies where you can take the Smokerlyzer test. Take a photo when you are doing the test.
3. Buy patches or gums or lozenges. Remember to retain your receipt.
4. To get reimbursement, go to Yvonne. Show her your patches/gums/lozenges, your receipt and your Smokerlyzer photo.
5. Once you have finished your patches/gums/lozenges, return to Step 3.
6. At the end of 3 months, go to Yvonne to declare you have been smoke-free. Claim your \$50 cash incentive.

Gambling in Gaming

In our last newsletter in Oct 2019, we looked at what constitutes gaming addiction. Here we talk about a dangerous trend in game development—the use of gambling mechanics to hook gamers into heavy playing.



Video game designers increasingly include gambling techniques within their games, as a method of ensuring that their games continue to be profitable long after launch. This takes the form of a “loot box”, which allows the player to exchange real money for a random in-game reward. Loot boxes facilitate the exchange of real money for a random reward, which may then be sold to other players. This game mechanic is an extremely profitable one; even ‘free’ games with loot box systems can consistently bring in millions of dollars for video game companies.

Counter Strike: Global Offensive (CS:GO) is a first person shooter game with such gambling elements. The game has ‘skins’ or textures that players can apply to their weapons to make them look distinctive. Usually a player is rewarded with a case containing a random skin at the end of a match. These cases, and other containers won in-game, can only be opened with keys. To buy a key costs about US\$3, depending on demand.

Some skins are rarer than others, with the rarest skins appearing at an almost impossibly low chance of 0.0002%. Due to their scarcity, the rare skins are used as status symbols, and can be sold around US\$1,600.

How loot boxes work

In most cases when a player buys a key, the rewarded skin will be worth less. Just as with casino gambling, the amount of money spent will always outweigh the value of the rewards.

Games designed in this way always result in profits for the game owner.

In another similarity to casino gambling, the visual design of the system mirrors the way roulette works. When a case is opened, the skins move past in a sideways scroll, building up anticipation. If the scroll finishes on an unfavorable result, it can entice a player to spend money on another key, especially when the visualization makes it look like you only just missed the biggest prize.

It is clear from how this system was designed both visually and functionally that the developers intended for players to become hooked on this aspect of the game. These mechanics exploit naïve players – who have incredibly unfair odds of winning – using psychological tricks to get them to continue playing.

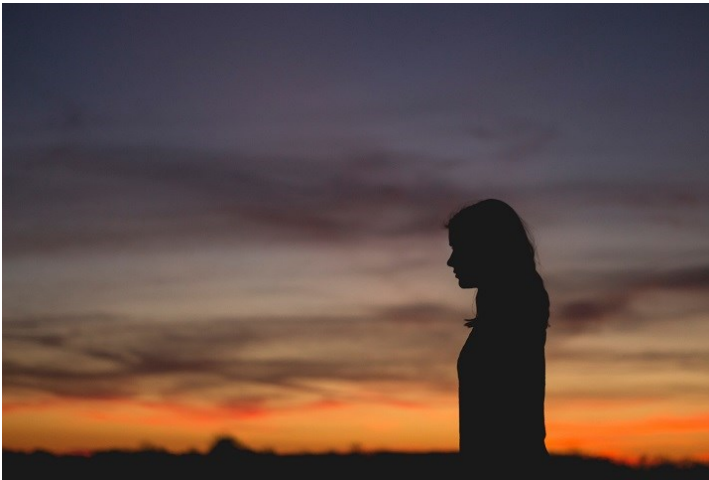
The link to problem gambling

A 2018 study by Drummond and Sauer found that of 22 popular games with loot box mechanics, 45% or 10 of the titles met the criteria to be considered psychologically similar to gambling.

The study also suggested that even if these loot boxes are not harmful by themselves, they pose a danger of conditioning players to gamble, and creating potential problem gamblers.



Recovery Journey



Linda shares her recovery

5 years ago, when her sister suggested that she should take an online quiz on alcohol drinking, Linda did it without giving it much thought.

The result surprised her. It told her she was very likely an alcoholic.

She asked herself if she was denying she had an alcohol issue.

As a marketing professional in the software industry, Linda was expected to entertain clients. Drinking was part of the job. Since she enjoyed drinking and drank regularly at social events, it became a source of pride with her that she could keep up with her clients.

It soon progressed to drinks after work with friends at pubs. Still, life went on, she was coping with work, her personal life was fine and her health was good.

Even when she found herself capable of polishing off 2 bottles of vodka in 3 days, Linda did not find that strange.

Then she started drinking at home. Friends who were asked to help her buy liquor at the airport duty free shop noticed that she was making more frequent requests. They began to question her drinking habit.

At the same time, work pressure was building.

Her work day now began with a drink.

One morning a colleague asked if she had been drinking – they could smell the alcohol on her. She admitted that she was.

So when she completed the online quiz that her sister had suggested, she couldn't bring herself to believe she was becoming an alcoholic.

Her sister arranged for her to see a counsellor at **WE CARE**. Her counsellor confirmed what she had started to realise: She had an addiction to alcohol.

She resisted going to the National Addictions Management Service (NAMS) or the Institute of Mental Health (IMH) for fear of being stigmatised. Instead she began to attend the lunchtime meetings at **WE CARE**.

4 months and a few relapses later, she was admitted to NAMS, when her health began to take a toll. This began a cycle of NAMS visits, followed by relapse, with each recovery period lasting shorter than the previous one. In the end, she was in and out of NAMS no less than 8 times.

She stole from her mother, and as Linda puts it. "I broke the hearts of my family members."

She had 3 close calls on her health.

She stole from her mother, and as Linda puts it: "I broke the hearts of my family members."

First it was a bout of gout, followed by a near collision with a car. Finally a year and a half ago, she felt numbness spreading to all her limbs, her veins were shot and she physically did not have enough strength to actually get up.

She ended up spending 6 weeks in hospital and was informed her liver had lost almost half its functionality.

She realised that she had to stop her drinking.

Strengthening her conviction was her sense that her higher power was telling her to get it done.

For her recovery to be effective, she broke off a 3-year relationship with a fellow alcoholic.

She also renewed her programmes and counselling sessions at **WE CARE**.

And this time, she feels that she finally "understands recovery".

"I get it now."

She wants to thank her counsellor for help in her recovery journey and for providing a different perspective to look at things. She also acknowledges the help that “a safe place and sheltered environment” that **WE CARE** has provided has aided her.

Linda is now employed full-time in the service industry. She wants to move on with her life, and put 2 decades of drinking behind her.

Today, Linda is sixteen months sober.



Stock photographs are not of Linda

What WE CARE Does

WE CARE AIMS TO BE A LEADING ADDICTION TREATMENT AND EDUCATION CENTRE.

Here are the main treatment programmes offered by **WE CARE**:

Your donations directly support counselling treatments, programmes and provide support for individuals and families affected by addiction.

SOAR

This programme treats substance and alcohol addicts and their families.

GRIP

Gambling addicts and their families benefit from this programme.

IGA

Those with problem Internet and gaming issues get help here.

SPLA

This treatment is for sex, porn and love addiction issues.

ATO

This programme treats Atypical Theft Offending, more commonly recognized as Shoplifting.

Family & Friends

This support group helps the families and close ones of recovering persons to better support their loved ones. It also covers issues such as self-care and defining boundaries.



WE CARE accepts persons of all races, cultures and beliefs.

We are particularly mindful of helping those in lower and middle income families.

To find out more about **WE CARE** and our programmes, go to our website at www.wecare.org.sg

Gambling in Gaming

Another study in 2019 by Zendle and Cairns found a link between problem gambling and the amount of spending on loot boxes: the more a person spends on loot boxes, the more likely they are to be a problem gambler.

This finding remained even when participants were aware that the study was measuring their spending on loot boxes. This study implies that game companies using loot boxes are profiting primarily from problem gamblers, people who will become addicted to using their system.

Regulation

In most countries around the world, regulations exist around traditional gambling. In the US, it is illegal to gamble under the age of 18 at a licensed casino. Utah and Hawaii have a complete ban on gambling altogether, and many states have restricted gambling to controlled areas in major cities.

Despite studies finding similarities between loot box mechanics and gambling, games containing loot boxes remain entirely unregulated in most countries where the games are sold. The largest case of regulation exists in Belgium and The Netherlands, where authorities ruled in 2018 that some games with loot boxes violated national gambling legislation, and imposed a ban on them.

However, many countries around the world have not responded similarly. In 2018 the Australian senate ruled that no games including loot boxes should be considered illegal under gambling law. Regulation continues to be extremely sparse throughout the world, in the face of this mechanic becoming more prevalent.

Conclusion

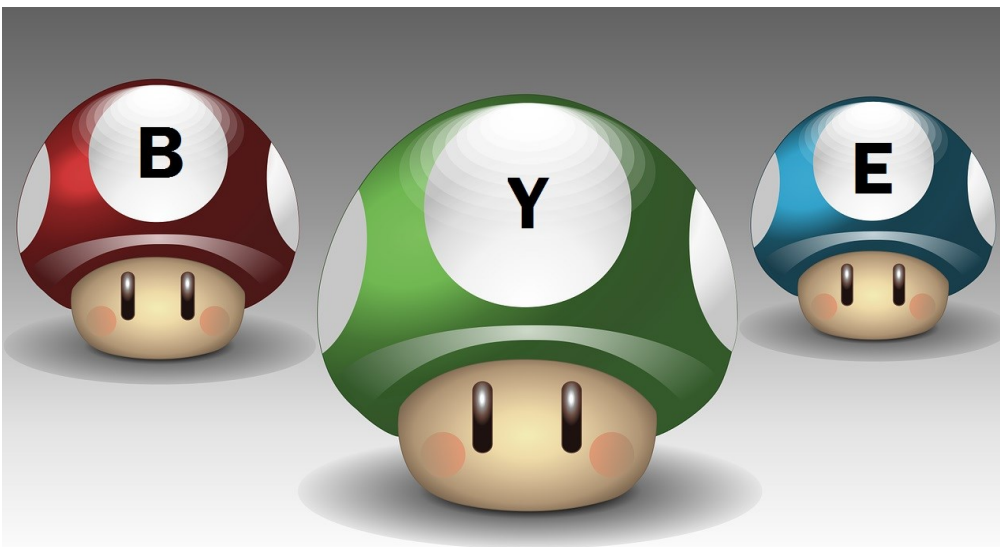
In summary, loot boxes have the potential to be a very harmful force in videogames. Many games with loot boxes convert gamers into gamblers, in the process causing them to spend large sums of money. The concern is that many of these games are targeted at youths and children, and they represent a dangerous opportunity for this group to gamble. As these and newer mechanics are extremely profitable for game companies and remain a viable business strategy, it's unlikely that they will be discontinued without regulation by national governments and gambling authorities.

Research and writing for this article was done by volunteer Cian Delahunty

References

Drummond, A and Sauer, J, *Gaming or gambling: Study shows almost half of loot boxes in video games constitute gambling*, The Conversation, The Conversation Media Group Ltd, Australia, 28 June (2018) [Newspaper Article]

Zendle D, Cairns P (2019) Loot boxes are again linked to problem gambling: Results of a replication study. *PLOS ONE* 14(3): e0213194. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0213194>



Meet Our Volunteers

Cian talks about his volunteering experience at **WE CARE**



Cian leads the Pavlova baking session

One of the most enjoyable parts of my experience at **WE CARE** was that I was able to take part in the activities at the center with the staff and recovering persons. **WE CARE** organizes activities and events to promote creative and physical health, and recoverees can make new friends through this, leading to holistic recovery.

I joined the Badminton sessions, Art Club and Yoga class. There, I was happy to meet so many new people, and speaking to them not only taught me more about the journey of recovery, but also about Singaporean life and culture in general.

I found that despite the fact that the people of Singapore live in such close proximity, they are incredibly diverse; and I could see this diversity represented in the **WE CARE** community. The range of religions, races, and sexualities really makes the community feel completely accepting. One feels that mental health support at **WE CARE** is totally unbiased, as it should be.

Lunch was always an important part of my day. I experienced the full force of the Singapore weather, the hawker culture, and was able to spend time with co-workers. Here I also learnt more about Singapore through the conversations I had, especially on its food culture. At the Durian party that was held in conjunction with National Day, everyone around me seemed very keen to see me eat some durian to prove myself.

By the end, I had eaten so much for this cause that I felt quite sick. (Although the quantity turned out to not be so much compared to anyone else there!)

I'm very glad to have experienced this kind of affection, it was a great display of how willing everybody was to let me take part in the Singaporean culture. I also very much enjoyed the trips to Gardens by the Bay and the Jurong Bird Park, and the baking class that I conducted on Pavlova. Outings and events like these bring people together, and set **WE CARE** apart as a center for recovery; it points to a philosophy which prioritizes recovery in all respects, including social life.

WE CARE sometimes receives referrals from medical clinics, recommending patients who may be suffering from addiction. I compiled a list of all clinics and sent letters to them with information about **WE CARE**. This was done to increase the awareness among medical practitioners that they could refer patients to **WE CARE**, if they are displaying signs of addiction. In addition to this, I wrote articles on gaming, helped out at charity events and with many other tasks in the office. My work always felt purposeful and fulfilling.

My time at **WE CARE** has been very positive. I met so many new people while working here, and the knowledge I have gained on addiction recovery and Singaporean culture will be invaluable to me in my future. I have thoroughly enjoyed volunteering for a charity such as **WE CARE**; one that I have seen through my time has had truly positive impacts on the lives of addicts.



Cian shares a meal with his friends

Transforming Lives .. Restoring Families



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



We are located at:

Kembangan-Chai Chee
Community Hub
11 Jln Ubi #01-41, Block 5
Singapore 409074
Tel : 6547 5459
Fax : 6547 5458
E-mail: help@wecare.org.sg

WE CARE aims to be a leading centre for the transformation of persons with addiction.

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

Our core services are:

- Counselling for recovering addicts and their families
- Educational and therapy programmes
- A drop-in centre
- Recovery support groups
- Community outreach
- Preparing & helping recoverees find work

For more information on what we do, please go to:
www.wecare.org.sg



You can now donate or make payment to **WE CARE** with



Scan this QR code to
donate with PayNow

WE CARE Community Services Ltd is a registered charity organisation. We provide treatment for all forms of addictions and our services are open to people of all races, cultures and religion.

We depend mainly on donations from individuals and corporations to fund our programmes and services. Your support enables us to provide quality care for 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-community-services-limited](https://giving.sg/we-care-community-services-limited)

You can also use PayNow with the QR code on the left.



Scan this QR code to
donate at giving.sg

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 6547 5459. Or email help@wecare.org.sg

You are not defined by your relapses. You are defined by your decision to remain in recovery in spite of your relapses.