

WE CARE News

20TH FINISHER AWARDS



Recovering Eric



Rooted in Recovery



Join us for excitement and fun as you and your teammates race to solve puzzles and complete challenges.

Perfect for corporate CSR initiatives and team building. Adventurous individuals are equally welcome.

WE CARE is an addiction treatment centre that treats all forms of addiction including drugs, alcohol and compulsive behaviours.

WE CARE AMAZING RACE 2026

EVENT DETAILS

- 13 June 2026, Saturday
- 9am to 2pm (Lunch will be served after)
- Singapore EXPO and Changi Business Park

Prizes for the fastest and for the best dressed teams!

SPONSOR A TEAM OF 4-5 FOR \$3,000

- Enjoy recognition on our social media platforms for your support
- Enhance employee wellbeing through teamwork, communication and collaboration
- Entitled to 250% Tax Deductible Receipt

You can also make a donation, volunteer or participate in the event

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Scan the QR code or contact us at 9339 7741 or joyce@wecare.org.sg

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WE CARE's first fundraiser of 2026 marks the return of our signature **Amazing Race** event.

It's a wonderful morning of fun and excitement on Sat 13th June as teams of 4 to 5 persons race around Expo and Changi Business Park.

They will complete puzzles and physical tasks at 10 random locations.

Prizes will be awarded to the fastest, and to the best dressed team.

Come support us by sponsoring a team, volunteering your help, or participating in the event.

Highlights from the **2024** edition



Life Matters

In January 2025, I reached a point where life felt unbearable to continue.

I was going through a career transition, which I had planned for. At the same time, my relationship ended suddenly. Within a few days, both planned and unplanned changes came together all at once, leaving me no space to breathe. It felt like everything in my life was shifting at the same time, and I could not keep up.

The breakup brought up a lot of emotions. There was embarrassment, especially with Chinese New Year approaching at the end of January. There was also a sense of letting people down. I am the only grandson in my family carrying the surname, and I felt the weight of hope and expectations.

There was something deeper too. For a long time, home had not really felt like home. The relationship had become a place where I thought I could belong, something I was building towards as a home. When it ended, it was not just the loss of the relationship itself, but the loss of the possibility of a home.

Everything converged at once, and it became overwhelming. The situation escalated to the point where someone called emergency services, and both the Police and SCDF were activated and arrived at my house. My friends did not know I was overseas at the time of my suicide attempt.

Looking back, those thoughts were not really about wanting to die. They were about wanting the pain to stop. They came from feeling overwhelmed, from carrying too much for too long, and from not knowing how to move forward.

In the weeks that followed, I began the slow process of working through what had surfaced.

Part of that included showing up for therapy. Some weeks felt manageable, others did not. There were moments where old memories surfaced, including things I had long pushed aside. At times, I felt exposed in ways that were uncomfortable.

But therapy was not the only thing that held me.



I found myself returning to my body in simple ways. Running became one of them. I did not run to achieve anything. I just put one foot in front of the other and let the movement carry me when my thoughts felt too heavy.

I also spent more time in nature. Through forest therapy, I learned to slow down and notice. I would sit among the trees and listen, being in a space where nothing was expected of me. There was something quietly supportive about being in nature, where I did not have to explain myself or make sense of everything right away.

Mindfulness became another anchor. Not in a perfect or disciplined way, but in small moments. I noticed my breath. I noticed what I was feeling without trying to push it away. I allowed things to be present, even when they were uncomfortable.

Alongside all of this, there were people. Friends who checked in and stayed, even when I had little to say. Friends who did not try to fix anything, but were simply present with me. Their presence mattered more than I realised at the time.

Over time, something began to shift. I started to see patterns more clearly. My habit of keeping everything inside. My tendency to take on responsibility quietly. The way I would push feelings aside just to get through the day. These patterns had helped me cope at one point, but they were no longer helping me live in a sustainable and healthy way.

One of the more important shifts for me was learning to honour what I had gone through. Instead of pushing the pain away or trying to move on quickly, I began to acknowledge it. To recognise that what I felt made sense, given what had happened and what I had been carrying.

There was something unexpectedly liberating about this. The more I allowed myself to face the pain honestly, the less it needed to show up in overwhelming or unhelpful ways.

The process was not straightforward. There were setbacks. There were days when the emotional weight was so heavy that getting out of bed felt like a struggle. Days when it seemed like nothing was changing.

Through it all, I learned that I did not need to have everything figured out. Sometimes, beginning again does not require certainty. It only requires enough support to take the next step, and the willingness to be present in the now, and the now, and the now.

—

by **Long Yuan**

*Long Yuan currently works at **Samaritans of Singapore**, and is completing a Master of Counselling in November 2026*



Recovering Eric



"I see God."

This was his response in one of his earliest experiences with drugs, when he was asked "Hey Eric, what do you see?"

"So I always had this idea that drugs bring me closer to God. And I used to ask myself, what happens when I quit drugs".

In person, Eric is articulate and animated, and his darting eyes and hand movements add colour to what he is saying. He looks younger than his 50-odd years and one would be unable to tell that he has had a decade-and-a-half-long familiarity with drugs. As well as a somewhat shorter acquaintance with liver cancer.

As it turns out, the amazing thing is that after he did quit drugs, he still feels the same closeness.

"I have been told that sometimes when you feel an emptiness, or restlessness in your heart — that is God calling out to you. When He feels that you are avoiding him," he reflects.

"I never knew drugs was something to recover from. When I was actively using, I wanted to stop but I didn't know how to. But the fact is, I was conflicted. I am told that addiction is a disease, but I feel I am being persecuted for using something that helps me."

Since he was young, he always had problems focussing on tasks. "I took meth, because it helps me to focus. My psychologist told me that I may have ADHD*."

But he did not pursue an official diagnosis with a psychiatrist. "They wouldn't have been able to prescribe any medication because of my addiction." And he was concerned about the expense.

He was arrested twice. It was only after the second arrest that he truly decided to quit. He was needing more of it, and the effects were no longer the same.

He quickly realised that he could not do it on his own.

Consulting with his GP on his inability to sleep, he was advised to check himself into **NAMS** (National Addictions Management Service). Eric feels that “NAMS was a life-changing experience. I liked it there so much, I stayed for 2 months.”

Asked what he enjoyed about NAMS, he says he felt an immense peace there. And for the first and only time in his life, he saw Jesus Christ in a dream.

This was in 2024, and because he had a pending court case, he wasn't eligible to enter a halfway house. Instead, he was advised to go to **WE CARE**.

It had been a long while since he didn't need any substance to navigate life — though he longed for something to replace the drugs he had given up. His psychiatrist at NAMS prescribed him an antidepressant, and medication to help him to sleep.

To keep himself focussed, Eric relies on caffeine. This helps him to stay on track and complete tasks.

In 2025, Eric received his Finisher award for maintaining a year of clean time. The Awards are

a signature **WE CARE** event. Held twice a year, it celebrates milestones accomplished, à la the marathon finisher after which it is named, but with achievements made in maintaining clean time — whether it is 1 year, 3 years, or more.

His mother attended the ceremony with him, and he was congratulated by the Patron of **WE CARE**, **Mdm Halimah Yacob**. His cell group was also present at the awards, and Eric is deeply grateful for their support and presence on that meaningful day.

His recovery has been marked by emotional relapses. He admits that if drugs are presented before him today, he is not entirely sure of how he would react.

To protect himself, he ensures he is not placed into high-risk situations. He has chosen to live with his mother, as his old home holds too many memories and potential triggers. He recognises that meth also allowed him to cope with stress, and is the reason why he is careful not to take on additional stress today, knowing that it may well trigger him into meth use again.

He also limits his use of the internet and the phone. As part of his effort at repentance, he has also sworn off sex, and this also ensures he is not led back into drugs. In active addiction, drugs and sex were synonymous, he tells us.

“To those struggling with relapse, don't give up! I've seen folks relapse after 2 years, but are now 3 years clean, because they kept coming back. Kudos to your strength in fighting, and remember — we welcome you back with open arms whenever you are ready.”

R₁ E₁ P₃ E₁ N₁ T₁ A₁ N₁ C₃ E₁

Although he is grateful for his recovery, it is a state that he finds rather mundane. Gone are the highs that meth promises, but that also means he is not subject to the abject lows that descend once the dragon he chased flies away.

He is at a point of his life when he searches within himself to find out what he should do next. Not long ago he was diagnosed with liver cancer — a condition linked to his being a Hepatitis B carrier.

With his court case, he was subsequently conditionally discharged, not amounting to acquittal. The discharge was not solely due to his cancer diagnosis; the court also took into account his active recovery journey through IMH, **WE CARE**, and Narcotics Anonymous, as well as a mitigation letter submitted by his counsellor.

Knowing that his time on this earth is finite, he has asked himself if he should just spend his remaining months returning to drugs and constant bliss. He is glad to report that he has emphatically rejected that path, and has made peace with his condition.

“One of the good things that has happened during this period is that I have grown closer to my mum,” Eric says in irony. It was not easy, as they have many issues, but it has been rewarding as their relationship has improved and they are learning to get along. She knows of his cancer diagnosis and has accepted it. Eric is also aware that his mother can get help and support at **WE CARE** if she needs it.

Eric continues to receive treatment for his cancer. And he wants to remain sober here and now, and on his eventual journey back to God.

—
By **Leslie Goh and Jat Tan**,
in conversation with **Eric**

*The interplay between ADHD and the use of meth is complex. While the drug can have potential benefits, there is also great likelihood for meth use to spiral for persons with ADHD.

“Celebrating milestones is important because it shows your commitment in staying sober. Come May 2026, I will be celebrating 2 years of sobriety. I’m looking forward to more years.”





WE CARE Community Services 20th Finisher Awards

The Finisher Awards happen twice a year, and it never disappoints. Anywhere from 10 to 30 recipients step on stage, receive their award, and get a chance to look back on the journey they've made.

For us at **WE CARE**, there is always a huge emphasis placed on the event because it celebrates the crux of everything we do: **Recovery**. Every programme we run, every outing we organise, every cook-in we have, it's all for recovery.

For the 20th edition, **Senior Parliamentary Secretary (SPS) for MSF Eric Chua** was our Guest of Honour. Having championed the issue of behavioural addictions multiple times in Parliament, his presence was a fitting addition to the night.





Addiction is an enduring challenge in Singapore, and we are grateful to have leaders in Parliament advocating for the cause — we need all the help we can get.

Once the crowd settled after the drummers from **WE CARE's Healing Beats** completed their performance, the 20 recipients took the stage and received their awards from SPS Eric Chua. Amongst the 20 recipients were 11 first-years, 6 third-years, 1 fifth-year and 2 seventh-year recipients — each milestone a clear reminder of how far the road stretches, and how many are walking it.

As is the case with most Finisher Awards, this was the longest most of them had stayed clean. Their hard work and progress are celebrated to not only give them the recognition they deserve, but to also show the newcomers that the journey they have started on is **the right one**.

Repeated over and over again during the heartfelt shares that followed the award segment, as well as the conversations over dinner provided by Taste of India, is the refrain that **recovery is possible**.

The evening was beautifully documented by our long-time volunteer photographer, **Andrew Lim** — whose generosity and dedication to **WE CARE** deserves far more than a mention. So thank you Andrew for your service in the past, and more in the future.

By **Jat Tan**

*Jat is from the **WE CARE** Comms Team*



Some words from Jenny, a Helpline Manager, after attending her first Finisher Awards:



It was a great honour to be able to attend the 20th Finisher Awards Ceremony on 22 January. I started volunteering with **WE CARE** in April 2025 manning the helpline. After taking down each case I do not know what happens with each individual after that, I sometimes wonder about the progress of such individuals, hoping that I have played a part in helping someone to get back on track with their life.

Last night, I learned so much about their journey: how they benefitted from **WE CARE**'s programme, and how they have picked themselves up because of the support **WE CARE** has given them.

It is amazing to hear about these clients who came from all walks of life who have stumbled but now have achieved their milestones, from 1 year to 7 years of being clean.

I am so proud to be part of the community that makes a difference for people and their family members who have seen the recovery.

The fact that many of **WE CARE** staff members were former clients themselves means they can resonate with people who cry for help, they are able to speak their language, earn their trust and make them comfortable.

It was very touching to hear these award recipients who went on stage to share about their personal journey so openly. They were confident and sincere, and I felt the energy of a big family — the sense of belonging, and that everyone cares about everyone.

I have learned so much since the first day I started with **WE CARE**. I look forward to my continuous journey with **WE CARE** Community Services.

Jenny Chan

Helpline Manager

23 January 2026



The Art of Balance:

How Finding the Middle Ground Helps with Addiction Recovery

by Bryant Tang

Recovery is often imagined as a dramatic turning point — one life abandoned, another heroically adopted. In reality, recovery is quieter and more nuanced. It is less about swinging from one extreme to another and more about learning how to live in the middle.

Balance, not intensity, becomes the skill that sustains sobriety.

For some of us, addiction thrived in extremes: all or nothing, numb or overwhelmed, control or chaos. Recovery invites a different rhythm—one where steadiness replaces urgency and presence supersedes escape.

The art of balance is not about perfection; it is about learning to regulate, adapt, and respond rather than react.

Why the Brain Loves Extremes

“Addiction doesn’t just change behaviour—it changes the brain’s reward system, making artificial rewards far more powerful than natural ones.”

— Dr. Nora Volkow, Director, National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)

Over time, the brain adapts. Natural rewards — connection, rest, and meaningful work — may feel muted. When recovery removes the addictive stimulus, the nervous system must slowly recalibrate.

This is why early recovery can feel flat, restless, or emotionally raw. The brain has grown used to spikes, not balance.

But healing is possible.

“The brain is remarkably adaptable. With time and healthier habits, neural pathways can reorganise and recovery becomes biologically possible.”

— Dr. Michael Merzenich, Neuroscientist and pioneer of neuroplasticity research

Learning to tolerate steadiness is not weakness—it is **neuroplasticity at work**.

Balance as Nervous System Regulation

At its core, recovery is about regulating the nervous system. Addiction often exists in dysregulation—fight-or-flight responses, emotional shutdown, or constant hyper-alertness.

Balance helps bring the body back into what psychologists call the “**window of tolerance**”, where emotions can be experienced without overwhelming the system.

Simple daily practices can help restore equilibrium:

- Consistent sleep and wake routines
- Gentle movement such as walking or stretching
- Breathwork that slows the nervous system
- Predictable routines that reduce stress and decision fatigue

These habits may seem small, but repetition rewires neural pathways. Calm, when practised consistently, eventually becomes familiar.

The Middle Ground between Avoidance and Overexposure

In recovery, people often swing between avoiding discomfort and pushing themselves too hard in the name of growth.

Balance lives in the middle.

Psychological research shows that learning occurs best under **moderate levels of challenge**, not extreme stress. This approach — sometimes called graded exposure — builds confidence gradually.

Examples include:

- Attending social events briefly rather than avoiding them entirely
- Having honest conversations without overwhelming yourself
- Setting goals that stretch you without breaking you

Each manageable challenge teaches the brain: “**I can handle this.**”

Rewiring the Brain through New Experiences

When recovery feels stagnant, the brain may simply be under-stimulated. The absence of chaos can feel unfamiliar.

Neuroscience shows that novelty activates dopamine in healthy ways, encouraging curiosity, learning, and motivation.

New experiences do not have to be dramatic. They can be simple:

- Learning a new skill or hobby
- Taking a different walking route

- Creating art, music, or writing
- Volunteering or mentoring others

These experiences help form new neural pathways and create positive associations with identity, purpose, and connection.

Emotional Balance

Recovery does not mean eliminating emotions — it means regulating them.

Naming emotions activates the prefrontal cortex, the brain region responsible for reasoning and impulse control. Research shows that simply labelling emotions can reduce their intensity.

In recovery, emotions become information rather than instructions.

Balanced practices include:

- Acknowledging feelings without immediately reacting
- Allowing rest without guilt
- Celebrating progress without pressure

Balance is a Practice

Balance is not something you achieve once and keep forever. It is something you return to—daily, sometimes hourly.

Some days will tilt. That is not failure; it is feedback.

Over time, choosing the middle ground builds trust—in your body, your mind, and your ability to cope. The brain gradually learns a new rhythm, one that no longer depends on extremes to feel alive.

Recovery, at its most sustainable, is not about white-knuckling abstinence. It is about learning how to live with enough stimulation, enough rest, enough connection, and enough challenge.

That is the art of balance.

And in that middle ground, life becomes not just manageable — but meaningful.

—

By **Bryant Tang**

***Bryant** is a curious soul on an adventure to learn one new thing every day through travel, conversations or simply noticing the little lessons life offers along the way.*



Safety in Project SAFE

“When you know that someone is behind you, and will fight with you no matter what, you feel like you can conquer anything.”

A beneficiary said this to me in **WE CARE**’s pantry two years ago, and I remember it clearly because of how well it reflected my own experience. Compared with my previous attempts at recovery — where I tried to do it all on my own — one of the major reasons why I managed to finally attain any form of meaningful recovery was because I was not walking the journey on my own.

I had a whole army behind me — my family, my sponsor, members from the various recovery support groups I attended, as well as every single person in **WE CARE**.

Amongst this army were many people who could relate to what I was going through. They had either walked the same path or were at a similar stage of recovery. Whenever I felt like my strength was beginning to fail and the obstacles felt insurmountable, someone would always emerge to pull me out of the funk and keep me going.

And that was the difference. Most of the time I spent in active addiction was filled with frustration because no one understood what I was going through — I had support, but not the right kind of support — and that frustration of being misunderstood would inevitably lead me back to drugs and gambling.

I don’t blame those who tried to support me in those early days. I don’t even blame myself, because we all didn’t know any better. I didn’t even know about the concept of recovery until year 13 of active addiction.

One thing I do know now, however, is that recovery cannot be done alone.

Some of those who go at it alone may succeed, but most will fail. And the idea that recovery can go a lot smoother with someone journeying beside you is what **SAFE** (Support for Addicts and Families through Empowerment) buddies were born out of.

Who Are SAFE Buddies?

In the past few editions of our newsletter, there have been many mentions about SAFE buddies — especially in recovery stories — and that's because they often play a pivotal role in the recovery journey of those who come to **WE CARE** on Project SAFE.

SAFE buddies are clients and beneficiaries who have been to prison or DRC themselves, have a minimum of one year of sobriety, and are willing to journey with those who have been released from DRC for 6 to 9 months.

There are currently 13 active SAFE buddies, with most having been SAFE buddies since the start of the programme. The fact that many have remained throughout speaks to many things, above all the willingness of people with lived recovery to give back.

At the root of it all, that's what it is — the awareness that sharing one's experience can be hugely beneficial not just for the person themselves, but the person they are helping. And the willingness to pass those experiences on.

Hear from the SAFE buddies themselves why they agreed to be SAFE buddies in the first place, and why they continue to be one!



SC:

As a beneficiary of Project SAFE myself, I understand the importance of building new friendships in our recovery journey. Hence, when I was approached by one of the counsellors to join the SAFE buddy team, I gladly accepted the opportunity. The friendships and bonding built with our buddies are priceless and it motivates me to continue volunteering my time.

JW:

I agreed to be a SAFE Buddy because I have learnt and am still learning about the joy of recovery — the greatest joy is to share it with those who are new to this path.

I continue to stay on as a SAFE Buddy because my SAFE Buddies also (in their struggles) remind me of my own struggle — this keeps me grounded in my recovery.

A memorable moment was when one of them trusted me enough to talk to me about his personal struggles with whether to proceed with his marriage or not. It has taught me the importance of being a good listening ear and how, with our simple questioning, we can guide another person to come up with a solution for themselves.

EC:

Having experienced firsthand the solid foundations laid by Project SAFE during my early recovery, I believe in its mission. Whatever benefits I now contribute as a SAFE Buddy serve as a valuable multiplier for my ongoing recovery as well as that of others.

EA:

Having walked through that experience, I want to be there to listen and be present; reminding them that they are not alone. When they update me about their wellbeing and how they have reconnected with family and ultimately how happy they are — that is the greatest fulfillment I get from being a SAFE buddy.

KT:

During my own recovery journey, I learnt that the journey was difficult and there were many temptations and triggers along the way. With the help of my friends at **WE CARE** and my SAFE Buddy, I also found that recovery doesn't need to be a lonely process. Connection with the recovery fraternity is indeed very helpful. Now, it's time for me to give back. I too would like to make a difference to others in their recovery journeys.

—
By **Jat**

***Jat** is from the **WE CARE** Comms team*





Rooted in Recovery

“Some people talk to animals. Not many listen though. That’s the problem.” — Winnie-the-Pooh, A. A. Milne

The people who know me know that I’ve always loved animals and nature — not just the usual pets like cats and dogs, but everything: birds, insects, wild animals, trees, plants. I’ve always felt a quiet connection to the natural world. As a child, my parents often brought me to parks and the zoo, and over time, nature became my safe space.

I grew up in a fairly typical household, with parents who did their best with what they had. This writing isn’t so much about how I fell into addiction, but how my love for nature became a guiding force in my recovery. Being neurodivergent, I often found it difficult to connect with others. Expressing my feelings felt overwhelming, and fitting into social spaces at school or work was a constant struggle.

But I was never alone.

From a young age, I always had animals in my life — hamsters, dogs, cats, rabbits, fish, birds. Some were rescues. They became my companions, my quiet confidants. I cared for them, and in return,

they held my heart in ways people sometimes couldn’t. It was only later that I understood what loneliness really was — and how, through animals and nature, I had been slowly learning how to reconnect with the world.

Mother Nature as a Spiritual Guidance

Nature has always been a kind of spiritual guide for me. In recovery, I learned the importance of open-mindedness — of finding new, healthier ways to cope instead of falling back into old patterns like codependency, substance use, self-harm, drinking, or isolation. I learned about mindfulness, and how to be at peace in my own company.

For me, that peace often comes from being outdoors — walking, hiking, taking photos, or simply spending time with my pets. In those moments of presence, I began to see how deeply nature teaches us, if we’re willing to listen.

Take the seasons. They change, endlessly and without resistance. Just like life, there are cycles of growth and loss, joy and pain — one cannot exist without the rest.



Or consider how animals adapt. Monkeys have long limbs to move through forest canopies. Young Komodo dragons instinctively climb trees at birth to avoid predators. Manatees have long digestive systems to process the fibre they consume.

There is wisdom in this design. It made me realise that if I, too, was born with complex emotions, challenges, and depth, then I must also be equipped to navigate them. I am not stuck. I am not without options. I can be curious. I can adapt. I can find new ways forward.

That sense of wonder — the kind we have as children — is something I've learned to reclaim. It's how I practise open-mindedness in my recovery, even now.

Unconditional Love and Service

Looking after pets has also taught me about unconditional love and service. In recovery, I often hear the phrase, "I will love you until you learn to love yourself." For a long time, that felt impossible. Learning to truly love myself — not in an ego-driven way, but in a compassionate, accepting way — was one of my greatest challenges.

I had a dog named Scrappy. He was with me for ten years and passed in 2024. He saw me through my darkest days and stood by me throughout my recovery. To me, he was never "just a pet" — he was a companion who understood my emotions without needing words.

Losing him taught me how to grieve.

Addiction had left me deeply afraid of abandonment, but when Scrappy passed, I began to understand that love is not possession. Even though he is no longer physically here, he lives on in the memories that we created. That love didn't disappear — it transformed.

Not long after, I rescued a black cat from a highway tunnel in the middle of the night. I named her Midnight. She was severely malnourished — you could see her ribcage — and struggled with digestive issues that took months of care to stabilise. She was skittish, fearful, and fragile.

But over time, with patience and care, she began to heal. Today, she is healthy, though she still needs daily medication.

Caring for Midnight taught me something profound: no matter how broken something looks, with enough care and compassion, it can recover. She helped me learn to treat the wounded parts of myself with gentleness instead of criticism — to nurture rather than punish. She taught me resilience.



A Mirror to Self

Nature and animals often feel like mirrors of who I am. In recovery, we're taught to see others this way too — not as better or worse, but as reflections we can learn from.

I recently came across a line in an article about Singapore's relationship with nature that stayed with me: "It is no longer tenable to expect only the charismatic aspects of the wild to be kept while discarding the parts that inconvenience our urban sensibilities. After all, without the hungry caterpillar, there cannot be the beautiful butterfly."

That idea resonates deeply. As humans, we often prefer what is easy, attractive, or familiar, and reject what is uncomfortable. As someone in recovery, I used to feel like I didn't belong — that my flaws made me less worthy of acceptance.

But I'm learning that everyone has flaws. Not everyone is an addict, but everyone is human. We are different, but equal. And when I began to see others not as above or below me, but as mirrors, I found space for connection, growth, and humility.

Nature gives endlessly, often without asking for anything in return.

Today, I work in a role that allows me to learn about animals and share that knowledge with children — teaching them about conservation and care. It feels like a full-circle moment.

Animals and nature have been a constant in my life, and a quiet force in my recovery. They continue to teach me, guide me, and ground me.

There is always more to learn — if I am willing to listen to the voiceless.

By **Rina**

*Rina expresses her love for animals through her work, a passion rooted in her connection with nature. Outside of that, she nurtures her well-being through running, creative outlets in art, the **WE CARE** Warblers Choir, joyful karaoke sessions with friends, and spending time with her family and cat.*



Coffee Matters

On Friday, 13th March, **WE CARE** decided to go on a journey to the west — specifically Jurong.

Suzuki Coffee had invited us for a factory tour, and host Ariel Tan welcomed us warmly with delicious samples from a fresh batch of coffee brewed by barista and Quality Control Manager Andy Wong.

“Usually, we just get asked to do a tour, but it’s nice that **WE CARE** offered back something!” she mentioned behind the scenes. “**WE CARE** is the only organization that actually offered us a talk on mental health.”

We were also schooled on the company’s history, which traces back to 1944 when Grand Master Kiyoshi Suzuki opened his first roastery in Tokyo. He was a trailblazer for *Sumiyaki Roasting*, an incredible charcoal roasting technique.

From that small roastery, his skills were passed down from protégé to protégé, eventually expanding overseas. Suzuki Coffee now stands as one of the largest coffee roasteries in Singapore.

Though their methods originated from Japan, Suzuki sources their coffee beans worldwide.

“We get our beans from everywhere, Ethiopia, Colombia, Brazil,” Ariel said.

WE CARE was then introduced to Freddy Loo, Master Roaster of the factory, with a career spanning more than 40 years.

He guided our group through the factory, from showing us raw coffee beans as they moved through large whirring roasters to the special bean grinders, some of which were imported from Germany.



Visitors see first-hand how coffee beans are roasted.



A coffee roaster in its full glory

“The grinding of the beans is very important,” Freddy said. “It completely affects the taste of the coffee.”

Freddy revealed that he used to taste samples from every batch of beans roasted, which at one point reached 70 cups of coffee a day. This led to an elevated heart rate and gastric issues, and a diagnosis of caffeine poisoning. He now limits his coffee intake, and does random sampling.

WE CARE volunteer and barista-trained Joylis Chua agreed, saying: “If the beans are too fine, the coffee’s bitter. If the beans are too coarse, it’s diluted.”

So what kind of coffee does a Master Roaster drink daily?

“Kopitiam,” Freddy answered when asked. “I just buy from the kopitiam.”

He then showed us to the packaging site, where each bag of coffee is weighed and wrapped.

After the tour, we were given a free coffee-making workshop by Andy with their coffee bean of the day - Honduras Guara Azul beans straight from Honduras — with notes of chocolate and plum. Some of us even attempted to replicate the lesson with the factory’s coffee filter equipment, though our batches did taste a little different from the trainer’s brew.



Baristas in training at the brewing workshop.



26 of us are welcomed to freshly brewed coffee

We were also given a rundown on the potential job opportunities within the factory and the industry, by Andy and Sales Manager Lucas Heng.

“Some of us don’t have experience, and some even come from different backgrounds like IT and engineering,” said Ariel. Experience isn’t necessary - but rather, the energy, effort, and zeal for coffee.

Finally, we visited the factory’s café.

Suzuki Café is a minimalist, stylish coffee shop that spans two storeys, selling both café items and Suzuki products. Whether we bought coffee, pastries, or a bag of beans, most of us left the factory happy — and very caffeinated.

Missed the tour but want a taste? Not to worry — Suzuki Coffee's products are available on their website at <https://www.suzukicoffee.com.sg/shop/> and on Shopee.

Useful Tips from Freddy

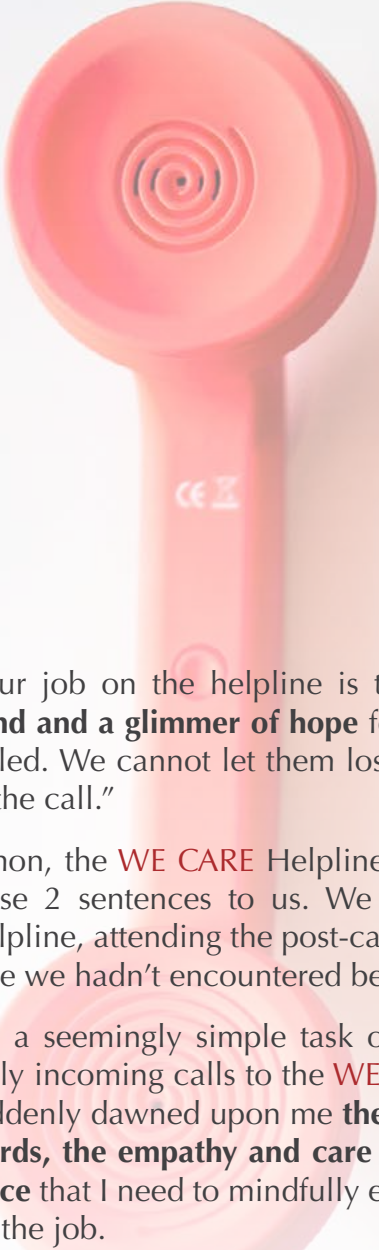
- After grinding your beans to make your cuppa, let the ground coffee sit for a minute or two, so that carbon dioxide and other gases have time to dissipate.
- If you intend to store ground coffee away for some time, the best place to do it is in the freezer. Otherwise, stick to buying small amounts (say 200g) for personal use.
- When getting coffee powder from the supermarket, take the packs at the back of the shelf. Customers like to squeeze and smell the coffee, forcing out the nitrogen gas in the pack which maintains the coffee's freshness.



Suzuki Café

By *Jillian Goh*





Reflections of a WE CARE Helpline Volunteer

“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 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 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.



Turning Pain into Progress

Wilfred started taking drugs as a way to cope with his suicidal ideations in 2024. For six years, he had been living with his mother who was suffering from dementia. She was often agitated and irrational, even violent. She rarely thought twice before hurling hurtful words.

Though he shared about his struggles with his three siblings and partner, they were not able to do much to help him. Over time, he found himself slowly withdrawing and isolating. He would be in his room with the door closed. He stopped interacting with his mother. He stopped interacting with his siblings too.

The social isolation took a toll on his mental health, and he soon started thinking of taking his own life. The mental anguish was intense, and as a way to cope, he started taking drugs to numb himself.

A few months later in February 2025, he was arrested by CNB (Central Narcotics Bureau) and placed in a medical ward. It gave him time to reflect on his life and he realised he needed help. With his sister's help, he found a counsellor and started attending counselling sessions before he was admitted into DRC in April 2025.

He was released in July 2025 and was sent to **WE CARE** to continue his rehabilitation journey. Deep-seated issues like childhood abuse and bullying surfaced during his counselling sessions, and he is now working through them.

A breakthrough happened when his first counsellor asked him to think of an episode where either his mother or father showed love to him. Through that exercise, he was able to reframe his narrative and realise that while his parents may not have loved him the way he wanted, they did love him to some extent.

He is now on the journey of learning to let go of the past actions of others and learning to take care of himself. "I was the eldest brother and often took care of others. In the process, I failed to take care of myself," he says.

He is also learning to go with the flow of things and be less rigid and perfectionist. "This has lightened my mental load and I worry less now," he says.

Even though he had to quit his job after 13 years of working in the same company, he was able to take it in his stride — something he otherwise would have struggled to do if he was not in recovery.

Recovery is not simply abstaining from taking drugs but taking steps to heal and build support structures in one's life. Through attending support group meetings and attending mindfulness sessions at **WE CARE**, he has found an avenue to share his stresses and challenges as well as to cope with negative thoughts and emotions. He finds the weekly mindfulness sessions very helpful and has never missed one to date.

“It is the close friends I've found at **WE CARE** that have really helped me on my road of recovery,” he says. “We are there to listen to each other and celebrate each other's victories. Without them, recovery would be very challenging.”

He is now in the process of rebuilding his relationships with his family members, especially his mother. After taking a course organised by Dementia Singapore which taught him how to communicate with and care for those with dementia, he now feels better equipped to reconnect with his mother.

He started interacting with her in February this year and is now working on the goal of taking her

for a doctor's visit on his own. In addition, he is taking courses in AI and marketing to better help him land a job.

In the meantime, he spends most of his time at **WE CARE**. He comes to the drop-in centre every weekday and participates in activities, from art lessons to talks and outings. He also organises weekly board games for other drop-in members at **WE CARE**. “I see it as a way to give back to the community,” says the board game enthusiast.

It's been about two years since Wing Tai was holed up in his room, thinking about ending his life. He's successfully turned his pain into progress, and today, he is not just rebuilding his own life — he is helping others rebuild theirs.

—

By Willfred and Ann

*Ann is a recovering person who first came to **WE CARE** in 2024.*



A close-up, slightly high-angle shot of a person's foot stepping onto a hopscotch grid painted on asphalt. The grid consists of yellow lines forming a series of squares and rectangles. The numbers 2, 3, and 4 are painted in white within the squares. The person's foot, wearing a white sneaker, is positioned on the square containing the number 4. The background is a blurred asphalt surface.

The First Step is The Trickiest:

Taking That First Step to Getting Help

I still remember that nervous email I sent asking for help. I didn't expect to get a reply but was surprised when I did.

At that point, I had only started to admit to myself that it was a problem that I needed help in solving. Before that I was simply getting high and ignoring all the underlying problems that led me to use in the first place, not knowing that by using I was making those problems worse.

I would time and again hit some kind of rock bottom, and promise myself, my loved ones and even those that I used with that it would be "the last time I will ever use".

I am even embarrassed that I am only about a week sober writing this* - I had another relapse - but I remind myself that recovery is a journey that one must choose every day.

So those "ultimatums" and "promises" just kept going on all while I drifted away from my family, my relationship with my siblings and my mum becoming more tense and estranged, until even texting them felt like a chore.

We used to be so close, but our exchanges thinned to the point where the only time I ever reached out was when I needed money to fuel my escapades. I made it their responsibility to take care of me because I had stopped taking care of myself.

It is not a question of empathy or people reaching out to me, I always had people who cared about me. But I was someone who always needed to have control, whether it be how people perceived me or in how I did things. I wanted people to still have a 'good' impression of me no matter what, even if on the outside it was obvious that I was going through a very difficult time.

I wanted to cry for help, but it was like my mouth wouldn't open.

And I knew that once I opened up, it would be floodgates and I didn't want to put that burden on anyone. Especially since I had been isolating and I didn't feel close enough to anyone to be comfortable sharing these heavy emotions, which honestly only made them weigh on me even more.

I recall this pattern of my school friends reaching out, pulling me aside to talk to me or even to just send me a rogue text asking how I was. Even though I had dark circles around my eyes and my usually cheerful demeanour had been replaced by this deadpan look that obviously said that there wasn't a soul behind these eyes. And even after a slew of concerned questions and palpable worry, I would just reply "I'm good."

To my numb self it was a lie that I wanted so badly to believe. When I was in heavy active addiction I couldn't tell day from night and I didn't care if I lived or died.

Honestly. In fact, I would meet these people precisely to hurt myself because I didn't feel like I was worth it or that I deserved to be punished for being bad or something bad that I did.

In the rooms of 12-step groups, you would often hear people share their experiences with illicit substances and how drugs are prevalent in and even common practice in sex work or the nightlife scene.

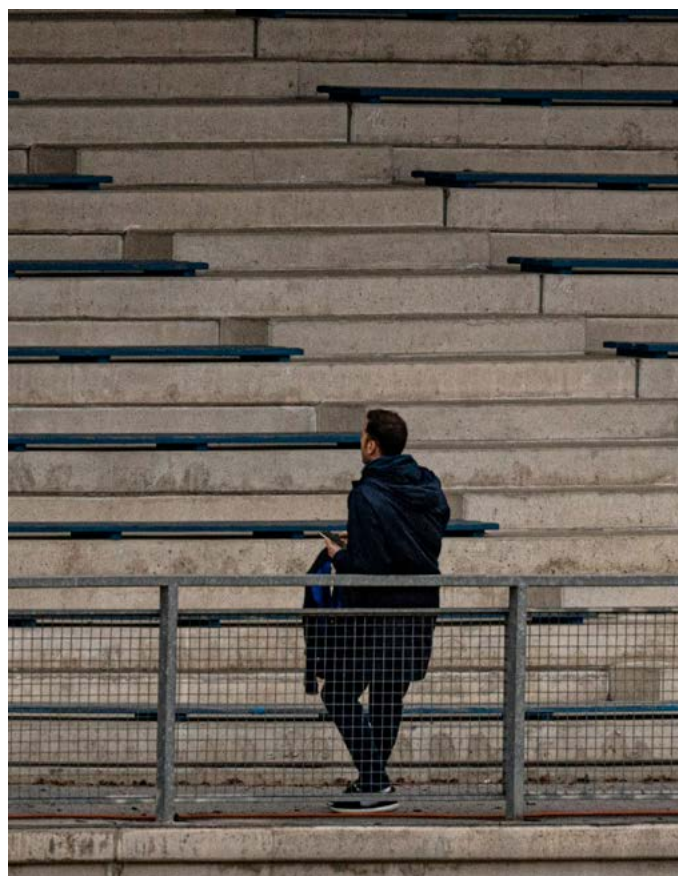
I recall one share that was particularly powerful, from a guy who worked decades in nightclubs saying, "You can use drugs, as long as you make sure that the drugs do not control you".

I have also had peers who have completely shied away from getting help because they mistook a situation or felt completely othered by the recovery community.

It's not that they did not want help, it is just that their first or only encounter with the community completely soured their experience even before they could give themselves a chance to "take a break" as we would say.

That's also why we say the most important member in a meeting is the newcomer because we can only keep what we have by giving it away. And it takes a whole lot of courage to go into these meeting rooms, to let go of some control, to admit that you need help.

Addiction can feel like a cage of our making, we are actively hurting ourselves without a way to stop. Our whole world view is warped and powered by drugs, all we crave, all we want is drugs and nothing else. But deep down, we are tired. So tired of the same cycle of feelings and of mistakes.



I know that stepping out of these cycles can be incredibly difficult. And reaching out, even more so. What helped me through it was realising that I am just a human being with emotions that I had refused to face.

If you are reading this, and if you happen to be struggling but don't know what to do, what helped me was watching a particularly touching movie or film. It might sound super funny that what gave me back the "will to live" was some Disney movie or something on Netflix but I think I just needed to be reminded that it is okay to have feelings.

That it is okay to cry, and cry really big.

That I was not the only person alive right now. Even if I wasn't talking to my family or I feel like everyone hates me, those shows remind me that no matter what someone will always be on my side. Someone will always be willing to lend a helping hand.

—

By **Friday**

Friday has taken the first step in getting psychotherapy treatment.

*This story was written right at the end of 2025.

ROCK BOTTOM

Hello Mr Edward, it's good to see you again!

There are a few outstanding charges we have to manage before we check you in.

Let's see here, you left your soiled underwear in the fridge and the message with the triage says that you assaulted Dr Henry.

Just a reminder that our policy is meant to establish a safe and respectful environment for all our patients and staff okay?

It is understandable that you feel upset however please use the washroom if you need to take a dump.

Mr Edward, I hope you have a pleasant stay.

What a beautiful tattoo that you have on your face! Is that a new one? I haven't seen it before.

And oh, will you need a taxi to drive you out to the halfway house? Dr Henry is here as well, he seemed a little worried about you.

Me? I'm doing great! Thanks for asking! I'm feeling so fine it's like I'm living on a pink cloud above a vacation island in my mind!

Oh, I'm sure it will work out this time! It's easy to say, harder to do but maybe it'll be easy just for you! When you come back, I'll have something special for you!

Mr Edward, for the seventeenth time we have no knowledge of an officer that is filming you from across the block. Those aren't officers, they're our patients and no, they can't eavesdrop from that far away and they aren't exactly sane as well. Those are the tremens you are familiar with.

It's just the tremens, would you cut me some slack? Would you like a valium and some milk? Perhaps there is someone we can call? Think in a proper way! What would Dr Henry say? You've made it this far. Don't show your teeth like that Mr Edward! You're out of control!





You've got to quit your 9 to 5 to drink full time, Mr Edward. I can't hold it down much longer, I gotta find something else to blame. Mr Edward, have you've pawned off everything? Even your old mother's wedding ring? I see it now, you've lost your grip. We've got no more tries, but all you need is just one more lie. You might get lucky this time, and it'll make you look smart. And just like that, oh! Everything disappears from in front of your eyes! But it's the last one now, I can promise you that! I'm gonna make more and when I get back, I'll have something special for you!

The old days are gone now, Mr Edward.

Yesterday slipped past us and we accomplished nothing. It feels like we live half our lives and threw the rest away. I'm tired, Mr Edward. I'll wait for you at the bottom of the bottle. I should go now but maybe you shouldn't drink alone. The only thing that's left is the deafening,

painful,

shameful

Silence.

—

By **Garvin**

Edward and **Henry** are the alter egos in Robert Louis Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. It is through this lens that recovering person Garvin expresses the multiple realities that characterise his relationship with alcohol.

The comic strip was created by the **WE CARE** Comms team.

RECENT EVENT HIGHLIGHTS



20th Finisher Awards



Dinosaurs Exhibition by Science Centre



Basic Financial Talk by
PFP PA Denise Tan



Pacing in Recovery with Dr Sandor





Transforming Lives. Restoring Families.

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



WE CARE
COMMUNITY SERVICES

We are located at:

**Kembangan-Chai Chee
Community Hub**

11 Jln Ubi #01-41, Block 5
Singapore 409074

Tel: 3165 8017

E-mail: help@wecare.org.sg

WhatsApp: 8391 3023

Telegram: 9664 0967



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

The first step in getting better is to ask for help

About This Publication

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*The views of the writers may
not reflect the views of the
centre*

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**

Counselling sessions are private and confidential.



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-community-services-limited;
- or
- Wecare.give.asia

