



**WE CARE**  
COMMUNITY SERVICES

SUPPORTED BY:



Giving Hope  
Improving Lives

# WE CARE News

June - August 2025

## ONE DAY AT A TIME CHALLENGE

**12 MAY TO 3 AUGUST  
2025 WE CARE FUNDRAISING EVENT**



**WE CARE**'s first fundraiser for 2025 is

## The One Day At A Time (ODAAT) Challenge.

**ODAAT** is a theme which recurs frequently in addiction recovery stories, where persons in early recovery are encouraged to take things a day at a time so that the journey of recovery is more manageable and less daunting.

Applied to our fundraiser, this concept sees participants taking on daily challenges (challengers), or supporting challengers by making donations to them (supporters).

Donations can be made on a one-off basis, or are based on an accumulated amount depending on how many days challengers complete their challenges.

The challenge period started on Vesak Day on 12<sup>th</sup> May and will complete by 3<sup>rd</sup> August. We will continue to accept donations until 30<sup>th</sup> September. Challengers and supporters can come on board any time and continue until 3<sup>rd</sup> August.

This ODAAT Challenge is supported by ***the Tote Board***, and will receive matching funds from the Tote Board and ***the government***. Effectively every dollar donated to **WE CARE** will double!

*For more information on ODAAT, go to [odaat.wecare.org.sg](https://odaat.wecare.org.sg).  
You may also ring our helpline **3165 8017** or Joyce at **9339 7741**.*





# ONE DAY AT A TIME

12 MAY TO 3 AUGUST 2025

CHALLENGE

A WE CARE FUNDRAISING EVENT

The **One Day At A Time (ODAAT)** Fundraising Challenge is a **12-week campaign** inspired by the recovery principle of taking things **one day at a time**.

*Show your support for addiction recovery either by taking on the challenge or by donating to encourage others on their journey!*

## CHALLENGERS

Challengers take part in daily physical activities to raise awareness and funds for addiction recovery. Activities include walking, running, cycling, or clocking steps.

The goal is progress, not perfection—complete and log activities on your own terms.

**Join the challenge:** [bit.ly/CHASUP](https://bit.ly/CHASUP)

## SUPPORTERS

Supporters pledge donations for each day a Challenger completes an activity. You can pledge from \$1/day or make a one-time donation via the leaderboard.

**Sign up as a supporter:** [bit.ly/SUPPSUP](https://bit.ly/SUPPSUP)

**Make a one-time donation:** [bit.ly/LEADB](https://bit.ly/LEADB)  
(Search name & click on donation button 💰)

**GOT QUESTIONS? REACH OUT TO JOYCE OR  
CHECK OUT OUR FAQ PAGE [BIT.LY/ODAATCH](https://bit.ly/ODAATCH)**

📞 9339 7741

✉️ [joyce@wecare.org.sg](mailto:joyce@wecare.org.sg)



SUPPORTED BY: **tote board**  
Giving Hope  
Improving Lives

# ONE DAY AT A TIME

12 MAY TO 3 AUGUST 2025

**CHALLENGE**

A WE CARE FUNDRAISING EVENT

## TWO WAYS YOU CAN SUPPORT

### 1 BE A DAILY SUPPORTER



As a Supporter, you may pledge to donate a minimum of \$1 for each day the Challenger completes their daily activity.



Head to [odaat.wecare.org.sg](https://odaat.wecare.org.sg) and click on the Supporter Sign Up tab (circled above) to sign up.

### 2 MAKE A ONE-OFF DONATION

You can also make a one-off donation, to show your support for a Challenger.

Run (km) :	Cycle (km) :	Steps :	Total Fund Raised :	Donate :
0	0	0		
112.756	0	0	1\$	

Tap the red “Donate” symbol on the Leaderboard and follow the instructions!



**FOR THE FULL FAQ, VISIT  
[BIT.LY/ODAATCH](https://bit.ly/odaatch)**

SUPPORTED BY:



**HAVE QUESTIONS? CONTACT JOYCE AT:**

 **93397741**

 **JOYCE@WECARE.ORG.SG**

# ONE DAY AT A TIME

12 MAY TO 3 AUGUST 2025

**CHALLENGE**

A WE CARE FUNDRAISING EVENT

## HOW TO BE A CHALLENGER

As a Challenger, pledge to complete daily physical activities to raise awareness and funds for addiction recovery.



Head to **[odaat.wecare.org.sg](https://odaat.wecare.org.sg)** and click on the Challenger Sign Up tab (circled above) to sign up.

**Challenger Sign Up**

**Email Address**  
 Type your email address

---

**Password**  
 Type your password 

---

**Confirm Password**  
 Confirm your password 

---

**Nickname**  
Type your nickname

Answer a few questions and voilà you're officially a Challenger!



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## Enid and Joylis:

### A Life Forged in Recovery, Still Going Strong

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

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

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

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

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

And what a celebration it is.

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

#### Enid's Journey: Strength from the Storm

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

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





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

### Joylis's Descent and Rise

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

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

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

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

### A Love Rooted in Recovery

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

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

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

Joylis, with her warm heart and open spirit, brings comfort to everyone around her.



Whether she's whipping up a meal for *Cook-in Thursdays* or lending a listening ear, she makes people feel seen and cared for. As a certified barista, she also loves making coffee for anyone at the centre - serving each cup with a generous dose of sass.

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



*Recovering  
Royally*



## The Power of Home

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

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

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



## Inspiration for the WE CARE family

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

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

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

## A Legacy of Perseverance

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

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

***“We are not what happened to us. We are what we choose to become.”***

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

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

-

**by Ahmad**

**Ahmad** is a Recovery Guide at **WE CARE**



# Social Service TribeX: Empowering Communities through Talent and Technology

*The Social Service Tribe* is a movement led by the **National Council of Social Service (NCSS)**, designed to unite like-minded professionals in the social service sector. This initiative focuses on rallying around the shared purpose of empowering individuals in the community to live with dignity and pursue growth.

The tribe comprises over 20,000 social service professionals (SSPs) working across more than 500 social service agencies (SSAs).

As part of its annual Social Service Summit, NCSS will host **Social Service TribeX**, an exhibition aimed at raising awareness about social service careers, showcasing technology solutions that support SSAs, and celebrating the achievements of social service professionals within the sector.

With the theme **“Future of Social Service – Transforming Through Talent and Technology,”** the Summit will bring together leaders and partners in the social service sector. The two-day event is expected to attract approximately 1,000 attendees,

including SSPs, **Institutes of Higher Learning (IHLs)** students, working adults, and the general public.

TribeX will feature four main zones, with one zone specifically dedicated to showcasing various job roles within SSAs. This zone will also highlight the technology used to support these roles and enhance service delivery.

The **WE CARE** booth will be featured in the Mental Health and Community sub-zone, where visitors can experience firsthand how talent and technology are integrated in services provided by our Helpline Managers and Peer Support Specialists.

For more information, follow us on social media at @wecarespore!

## **Event Details:**

**2 - 3 July 2025**

**Sands Expo and Convention Centre**



# A Journey of Growth and Compassion: My Experience as a Helpline Manager at **WE CARE**

I came to **WE CARE** carrying my own experiences of loss within my family, where addiction and mental health struggles had left their mark. As a beginning mental health practitioner, I saw this as an opportunity to deepen my understanding and contribute to a cause that is deeply personal to me.

Initially, I expected my role to be largely administrative—registering new clients over the phone. However, I quickly realised that the role is not just about paperwork; it is about holding space for individuals at some of their most vulnerable moments.

“Could you call my son but not tell him I reached out?” A mother once asked me, her voice raw with worry. “He’ll hang up if he knows.” When I finally connected with her son and he cautiously agreed to hear me out, I felt the weight of what we do here. **It wasn’t just about adding another name to our system—it was about offering a lifeline to a family drowning in helplessness.**

Not every call goes as planned. The man who spoke in urgent whispers about being watched left me rattled. His reality was so different from mine, yet his fear was palpably real. We never got to discussing services; he wasn’t ready. But as he thanked me for believing him when “no one else would,” I realised that sometimes just being truly heard is its own form of help. I still wonder how he’s doing.

Then there are the calls that break your heart in quiet ways. “Actually, I’ve already been struggling with this for many years,” an elderly man told me after we’d discussed treatment options. “I’m just hoping someone can hear me out.” We spoke for nearly an hour. His addiction was real, but so was his isolation—each making the other more

unbearable. Sometimes loneliness amplifies addiction in a cycle that’s hard to break. When he thanked me simply for listening, I was reminded that beneath the clinical terms and intake forms are people desperate for connection. **These moments of genuine human contact can be as therapeutic as any formal intervention we offer.**

What keeps me coming back is watching shame dissolve, even if just for a moment. When someone shares their narrative construct of failure and self-blame, I get to remind them that their addiction began as an attempt to solve unbearable pain, not create it. The relief in their voice when they feel seen as a whole person—not just their struggle—reminds me why this work matters.

To those supporting **WE CARE**: You should know that our callers look like everyone and no one in particular. They are your neighbours, your family members, your colleagues. They call from corner offices and homeless shelters. From college dorms and retirement communities. What unites them isn’t their circumstances but their courage to reach out when everything in them wants to hide.

What we offer isn’t just services. It’s a moment of dignity in a world that too often looks away. And for me, it’s the privilege of saying, “I hear you. You matter. And you’re not alone in this.”

-

By **Colin Toh**

*Colin is a newly practicing therapist whose appreciation for the richness and complexity of the human experience inspires his curiosity for integrative therapeutic approaches to support personalised healing and growth.*



# Game, Set, Recovery:

## Jethro's Story

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

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

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

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

Within a day of being released from DRC, that resilience was tested.

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

Instead, when he got home, she did not recognise him. The psychoeducation classes he attended while in DRC had equipped him with tools to

handle stressors after his release – he just never expected to have to use them so soon.

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

It's always been in his toolbox – just that for a few years, a variety of hard drugs had buried it. To him, badminton was his first love and still is. He had grown up with aspirations of playing

professionally, which he's converted into a passion for coaching that he now does full-time.

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

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

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

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

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

***Jethro** was a recipient of the first-year award at the 17<sup>th</sup> Finisher Awards held in July 2024, and is currently a badminton coach*







# No Matter How Dark It Gets, There's Always Room for Light

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

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

Zul was first introduced to drugs by his peers at 14. Each time he accepted an offer, his cravings only grew stronger, until he found himself abusing drugs even when he was alone. His loss of control led him to drop out of secondary school, marking the beginning of a downward spiral that left him feeling completely consumed by addiction.

Over time, the need for higher doses to feel any sense of relief deepened his dependence. Each payday, his salary would be spent on fulfilling his drug cravings. The cycle felt unbreakable until he was arrested for the first time.

Everything began to change when Zul was selected to be referred to **WE CARE** for his emplacement programme – **Project SAFE 1.1**, a collaboration between **WE CARE** and the *Singapore Prison Services (SPS)*, funded by NCSS.

For Zul, it marked the beginning of something new. As part of the programme, a **WE CARE** counsellor met with him during his time in the *DRC*, offering support and guidance even before his reintegration into the community had begun.

These in-care sessions would evolve into regular check-ins, tailored to help him navigate both his rehabilitation journey and his practical day-to-day needs.

While the programme offered a glimmer of hope, Zul carried a heavy, decades-long burden in his heart. His wife and children were in Malaysia — far away, beyond reach. Each day spent behind bars was a reminder of the distance that separated them.

The ache of being apart from his family was deep and constant. It was a silent fracture in his spirit



that he felt nothing in the world could mend. In early recovery, many report feeling similar intense pain – a grim reminder that addiction is not just about the highs.

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

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

The road, however, wasn't always easy. In moments when loneliness crept in and the pressure of finding employment grew heavier, Zul was especially grateful for the support of his SAFE buddy. He still remembers the day when his SAFE buddy accompanied him to the *Social Service Office (SSO)*, walking beside him, patiently helping him apply for interim financial aid.

To Zul, it wasn't just about money — it was about being seen, about someone showing up when it mattered most.

During his recovery journey, Zul began to uncover strengths he never realised he possessed while under the shadow of addiction. Recognizing his own qualities of respectfulness, humility, and resilience has allowed him to view life not as a burden, but as a gift — something to be cherished, not taken for granted.

While the lost time with his family and the damage to his health cannot be undone, Zul now believes he holds the power to create the life he has always longed for.

With unwavering determination, Zul, now 66, reached a major milestone in his recovery journey on 16<sup>th</sup> January 2025 by receiving the one-year award at **WE CARE's 18<sup>th</sup> Finisher Awards**. Held twice a year, the Finisher Awards celebrates clients and beneficiaries that reach 1, 3, 5, 7 and 10 years of sobriety.

Receiving this award filled him with a profound sense of gratitude and fulfilment — feelings that had long been missing during his years of substance abuse. Today, Zul uses this milestone and his newfound inner strength as motivation to walk firmly along the path of recovery.

I am Alina, a SUSS counselling undergraduate, who enjoys running and exploring new places. As an intern at **WE CARE**, my four-month internship journey has been both raw yet deeply heartwarming. For someone who works for a non-profit organisation that helps cancer patients, having this new experience has been invaluable towards my personal and professional growth in my counselling journey.

Witnessing **WE CARE's** 18th Finisher Awards and having the privilege to write Zul's story were two of the many experiences that opened my eyes to a level of sincerity, genuineness, and togetherness I never knew existed until I met the recovering community at **WE CARE**.

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

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By **Zul and Alina**

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

# Le Petit Croissant

## It's Hard to Find Good Pastries in Singapore

At least three times a week, when the drop-in centre opens, the first thing that greets you when you walk in is the scent of pastries in the oven. It's something we've started looking forward to here at **WE CARE** – having pastries with that first cup of coffee for the day.

Food is something that's a constant in the drop-in centre. We're firm believers in food's ability to bond people, as evidenced by our weekly volunteer-led cook-ins, or the potluck parties that are held to celebrate the 4 major religious holidays. If you need convincing, turn to the end of this newsletter to see how our Hari Raya celebration in April went!

Of the different kinds of food and snacks we have at **WE CARE**, pastries rank high on the list of people's favourites. They're quality, and we only get the opportunity to enjoy them because of the kindness of Laura, owner of **Le Petit Croissant**.

It all began when a colleague visited their Joo Chiat outlet and subsequently asked if they were willing to donate their unsold pastries to the centre.

After just a weekend, she said yes – we were hoping she would, having tried the pastries that were brought back from our colleague's initial visit.

For a social media post done earlier this year, Laura said: "I am grateful that our unsold pastries don't go to waste but instead bring comfort and joy to those in need."

Today, our beneficiaries get treated with counselling, and tasty pastries. It's yet another example which proves that addiction recovery does not need to be gloomy!







We try to share with our neighbours, APSN and MINDS but they often go down so well and quickly, there's hardly any left!

We cannot express enough the level of gratitude we have for Laura and ***Le Petit Croissant***.

As a charity in Singapore, much of what we do relies on the generosity of donors and funders – this line applies not just to money, but bread, too.

***Le Petit Croissant*** first opened in Hong Kong in 2017 and expanded to Singapore in 2019. Initially starting as an online business and a central kitchen, they now have three outlets across the island:

- 338 Changi Road,
- 79 Lucky Heights, and
- 16 Collyer Quay.

Visit them to experience a bakery with a heart that matches its confections!







# Love in Recovery: When Matt met Eve

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

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

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

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

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

Matt is now married to Eve, who is also in long-term recovery. Their relationship is a testament to

the possibility of healing not just for individuals, but for couples, too.

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



# Breaking the Chains of Shame

"I'm a failure."

"I'm unlovable."

"I don't deserve to be happy."

"I'm defective."

These are some of the repeating thoughts and self-beliefs of a person suffering from toxic shame. Children who grow up in dysfunctional homes, who have been physically, emotionally or sexually abused, or who were subject to constant belittling, criticism and even neglect often internalise the messages sent by their caregivers and see themselves as unloved, unworthy, inferior or even inadequate. A deep sense of shame permeates them as they believe there is something very wrong about them. Their self-esteem plummets.

To cope with this isolating pain, some may become perfectionists, constantly having to prove to the world and themselves that they are worthy, that they are deserving of love, acceptance and belonging. Others may resort to various fawning and people-pleasing ways to derive a sense of self-worth, basing their happiness on other people's view and acceptance of them. Those

with a low self-esteem may end up having a superiority complex and talk down to people, or they may idealise others as they feel so lowly about themselves.

Whatever form shame takes, it leads to a lot of self-sabotaging behaviours as the person feels he is unworthy of success or love. While guilt is an emotion produced when we are aware that our behaviour is wrong, shame comes about when we believe there is something wrong with us. Guilt can motivate us to correct our behaviour, but shame just makes us want to hide and separate from others and even parts of ourselves.

Some people turn to drugs, alcohol or other destructive behaviours to numb this debilitating pain. Others develop depression and other mental illnesses. Research has shown there is a strong correlation between shame and the presence of mental illnesses and addictions. Shame may also prevent people grappling with a mental illness or an addiction from seeking help, keeping them stuck in a vicious cycle. It can also affect an addict's recovery journey as he comes to face the truth of what he has done.

While all this sounds dire, there is a way to heal from toxic shame. It may not be an easy journey, but the rewards are well worth it.

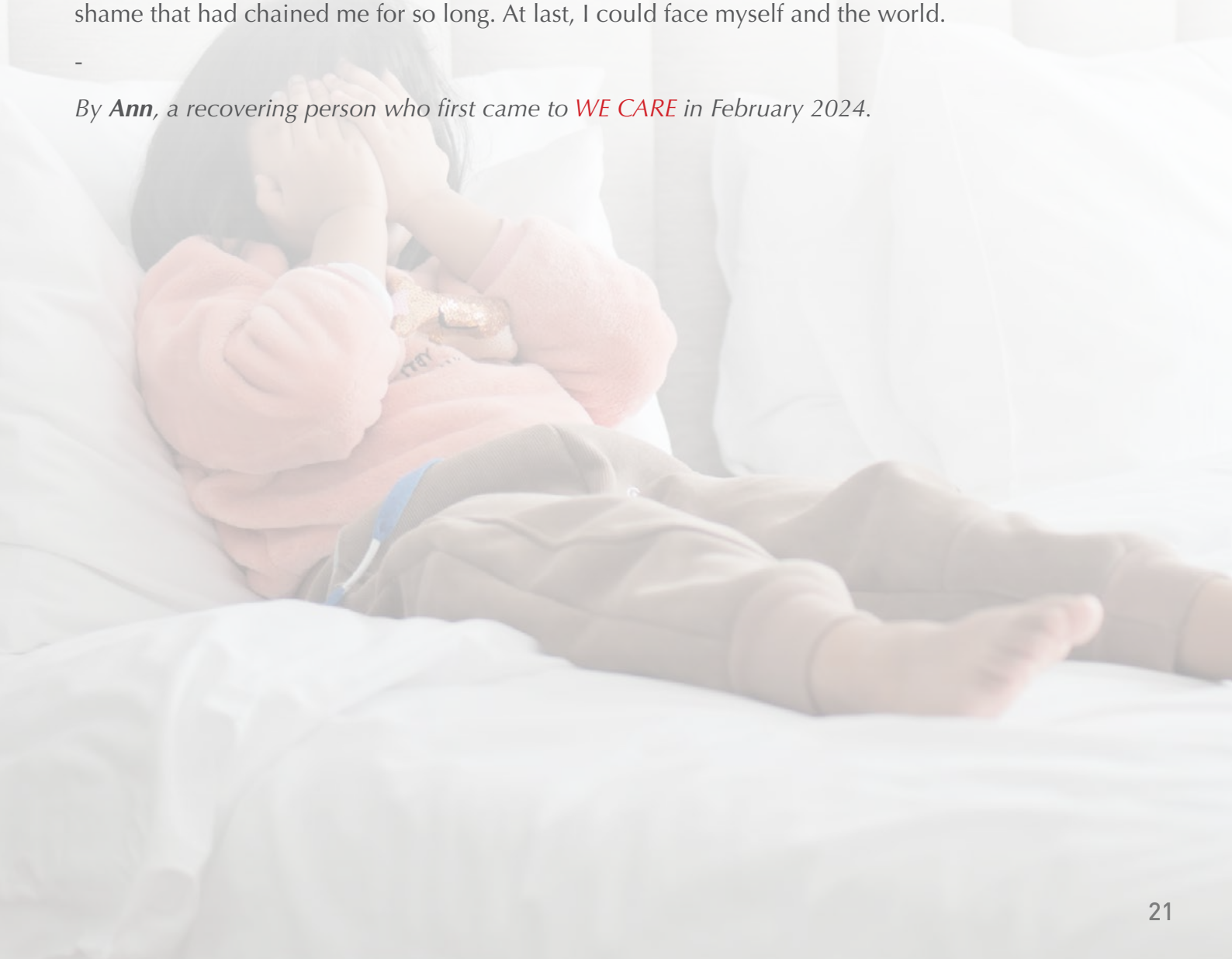


Here are some tips to help you heal from shame:

1. Recognise and be aware of how shame is affecting you.
2. Be kind to yourself. Accept yourself as you are. Pay attention to and call yourself out for your negative self-talk. Write them down in a journal and challenge those beliefs. Write down your new truths and use them as positive affirmations.
3. Find a safe space. Surround yourself with people who have walked this path and will support you in your recovery journey. Whether they are your family members, friends or fellows from a 12-step group, their acceptance and empathy will go a long way when you are vulnerable before them.
4. See a counsellor or psychotherapist who can help you process your experiences and emotions and help you see the beautiful truth about yourself.

As a recovering perfectionist, codependent and addict, I only began to understand shame and its power in my life when I listened to a TED Talk by Renee Brown. In my 12-step group, I chose to “give away” my first step to my home group — a group of women who had known and journeyed with me for seven months. I shared the worst I had done, the powerlessness I felt and the unmanageability of my life. I wanted to be done away with the shame that was holding me back from so much. These women listened as I shared and did not judge. They showered me with their love, acceptance and empathy. By the end of the meeting, I felt a thousand pounds lighter. I was no longer held down by the shackles of shame that had chained me for so long. At last, I could face myself and the world.

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*By **Ann**, a recovering person who first came to **WE CARE** in February 2024.*





# Burnout in Recovery

## What is Burnout?

Fundamentally burnout is a state of chronic physical and emotional exhaustion. It can happen to anyone – a parent, a worker, a student, or a caregiver. More than just feeling tired at the end of a long day, it is basically a cumulative buildup of fatigue and detachment that manifests through a feeling of demotivation, ineffectiveness and lack of purpose. Overwhelm, irritability, isolation, lack of proper rest, low energy levels, headaches, digestion issues are all hallmarks of burnout.

In addiction recovery, burnout begins when the time, effort and commitment needed to stay clean/sober becomes unsustainable. The energy you constantly need to stay vigilant in your recovery journey begins to take a toll on your well-being. The pressure to maintain recovery, the anxious questioning of whether you are doing enough, the stress of making sufficient effort, the constant vigilance to attend meetings – your self-confidence may begin to wear down. Add to that the need to negotiate the emotional tasks of coming to terms with your past behaviours, reconciling with loved ones, and working through guilt and/or shame.

It is at this point that the risk of relapse is greatest. It is remarkably easy to cope with the tensions of having to maintain sobriety by just slipping a little. One small sip, one little puff, just enough to deal with the situation, and then one can return to the business-as-usual maintenance of sobriety. This temporary escape may just be a minor slip, but it may also open the floodgate to a full-blown relapse.

## How to Prevent Burnout

### *Self-care to prioritise physical, mental and emotional well-being*

Self-care covers a myriad of activities you can undertake to relax and take the pressure off. The important thing to note here is consistency – engage in some self-care regularly before you start feeling drained. It could be as simple as getting an ice cream, going for a run, or window shopping. Don't judge the activity by how meaningful or serious it is. Measure it by how you feel after it is done.



## ***Setting boundaries and managing self-expectations***

Even Superman couldn't do everything. Manage the things you can be responsible for and tell yourself you are good enough. You are not expected to manage things which you cannot control.

When the pressure intensifies, the mental and emotional resilience needed to combat cravings and resist triggers will diminish. Before this leads to impaired decision-making, before making choices that will jeopardise sobriety, and before any underlying mental health issues are aggravated, take preventive steps before you burn out.

## ***Get help from your support system or professionals***

Share your feelings and concerns with trusted friends, family, or fellow recovery members. They may in fact have noticed changes in your mood or behaviour before you yourself were fully aware, and may offer a fresh take or perspective on your issues.

Meeting with your counsellor or therapist will help you identify signs of burnout and help you to take preventive steps before matters escalate.

## ***One Man's Story about Burnout***

Eight years into recovery and five years sober, the term "burnout" started to feel increasingly relatable.

Admittedly, the rigorous routine of consistent support group meetings, outreach calls, and 12-Step programme work can sometimes feel more like a grind than a gain.

My journey of recovery, like that of many others with addiction, began with a rock bottom in my early 30s. At the time, I had no idea what addiction truly was - let alone accept that I had one.

It was a rude awakening, to say the least, when I discovered that this "disease" would be with me for the rest of my life, and that I would need to "keep working the programme", as they say, if I wanted any semblance of sobriety.

Today, as I cross my fifth year of sobriety, I'd like to share some personal reflections on a seldom discussed aspect of the journey: ***burnout***.

We're all too familiar with the effects of burnout in the context of work or studies. Recovery, being a full-time commitment, can bring about similar experiences. In my early years of recovery, my approach was to go hard or go home. Unbeknownst to me at the time, that was my addictive mentality manifesting itself.

I would attend as many 12-Step meetings as I could and devour every piece of recovery literature I could get my hands on. Podcasts, speaker tapes, more meetings - I was living and breathing recovery.

However, midway through the journey, I began to notice a different kind of craving creeping in - not a craving to use, but a craving to stop trying. I found myself questioning: *Is all this really necessary? How much longer can I keep this up?*

Then came the guilt and shame - for not being more grateful, or not doing "better". Unsurprisingly, these low moods would lead to big triggers. In response, I would double down on recovery work, fearful of a potential relapse.

Eventually, I brought this up with my peers in recovery. A veteran in the journey shared a piece of wisdom that struck a deep chord: *"Stop focusing on doing recovery right, and start focusing on doing recovery well."*

This flipped a switch in my mind. I realised how obsessed I had become with ticking all the boxes. All or nothing had always been my approach - and if that wasn't enough, I had to do it all perfectly.

From that moment on, I began to understand the value of heart work over hard work. Ironically, the fire was reignited when I stopped trying to control every aspect of recovery - be it routines, emotions or triggers.

"Less is more," I was told. Less control, more connection. Less perfection, more peace.

I may not have all the answers, and that's perfectly fine. After all, I'm only five years sober - and I've got the rest of my life to figure this recovery thing out, one day at a time.

-

By ***Simon Ling***



# Stress

has acquired a bad reputation,  
but the right kind will make you more **resilient**

At the age of 8, Sharon Bergquist and her family fled from Iran. The year was 1979 and Iran had just lived through the Islamic revolution, which saw Shah Pahlavi going into exile, and cleric Ayatollah Khomeini creating the new Islamic republic of Iran.

According to her new book, *The Stress Paradox*, these early experiences have actually made her more resilient. Despite struggling in school, she went on to become a valedictorian, eventually earning her medical degree at Harvard.

Today she is a physician as much as a researcher. She focuses her work on exploring the different factors that influence our wellbeing and longevity, including novel biological markers and lifestyle habits. Too much stress is harmful for us, she agrees, but she counters that not enough is just as bad.

Certain types of stress produce a biochemical profile that is health-promoting. It is now known that our response to stress is more complicated than the typical fight-or-flight response, when cortisol and adrenalin are released into our system, and our heart rate increases to prepare for our survival.

With good stressors, when we are able to cope and accomplish what we need to do, our bodies will release dopamine, serotonin as well as oxytocin as a reward. This is when we can start to develop resilience like a muscle so that over time, we can handle stress better, and be able to take on the more chronic and persistent stresses that are harmful to us.

Dr Bergquist emphasises that choosing small exposures to stress, whether mental or physical, followed by a period of recovery, is the best way to exercise and build our resilience muscle.

In the last 2 decades, medical science has been able to look at what happens at the human body at the cellular level. There are 7 types of stress responses our cells can activate, and these trigger our ability to moderate inflammation, fight disease, etc.





Day to day, the same stress that we encounter may feel different. Some days we are able to cope well, on other days it is a struggle to get through, and once so often, we may find things overwhelming.

The main difference in our ability to handle things lies in our recovery, and she emphasises strategic recovery, where we have sufficient time to repair and reconfigure our bodies and minds to handle future stress better. The book also reveals ways to optimise five key stressors to maximise mental, emotional, and physical resilience

In stress mode, we miss the opportunity to actually grow, if we are not allowed the time to recover. Our bodies will start to wear out when we overuse our stress response, resulting in ulcers and other health problems.

Ultimately the process of stress-recover-repeat can act as the blueprint for a healthier more resilient person.

How does this translate at the biological level? With low amounts of stress, when the amount of cortisol in our system is small, our brain signals to our synapses to make stronger connections. However, at high levels of stress, when we are confronted with higher quantities of cortisol, the binding of receptors is compromised, resulting in weaker synaptic connections; and as a corollary, inhibiting the formation of long-term memories and learning.

When asked how we can detect bad stress, she says that most of us would intuitively know. Bad stress makes us feel we are functioning ineffectively, burned out, depleted and we want to escape from the situation (by drinking or doing drugs, for example). She cites surveys that show that symptoms like headache, IBS and other ailments are manifestations of the harm caused by stress.

When it is good stress, the so-called Goldilocks amount of stress, that is when we feel energised, motivated and creative.

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*The Stress Paradox* is written by **Sharon Bergquist MD**  
and published by HarperCollins with an official release in May 2025.



# HIGHLIGHTS

Here's what we've been up to so far, in **2025!**



Bethel Assembly Eldercare Roadshow



IT Class by HCI Students



Smartphone Photography Class by HCI Students



Drumming lessons



Hari Raya Celebration







Rainforest Wild Asia



Sri Arulmigu Murugan Temple Talk



Vocal Training with Steven



Treetop Walk



# 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

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

## **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:

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

