

# WE CARE NEWS



March 2025

## ONE DAY AT A TIME

5 MAY TO 21 JULY 2025

A WE CARE FUNDRAISING EVENT

**CHALLENGE**



# CHALLENGE YOUR LIMITS, CHANGE LIVES

## POWER EVERY STEP WITH PURPOSE



# ONE DAY AT A TIME Challenge 2025 WE CARE Fundraising Event

Fundraising is a big part of what we do at WE CARE and is something that needs to be done annually if we are to be able to run our treatment programmes.

We have 3 fundraising events planned for this year, the first of which is the **One Day At A Time Challenge** which will run for 12 weeks from 5 May 2025 to 21 July 2025.

**One Day At A Time** is a core concept in addiction recovery, and that's where the idea for this fundraiser was born. It's a reminder for someone to focus on the present and break down a challenge into manageable chunks.

One example is how the notion of staying sober for years can seem daunting – when a person in recovery gets overwhelmed by the idea, they're often reminded to focus on staying sober just for that day.

The days eventually add up, and before they know it they have a significant amount of clean time under their belt.

In this fundraising event, friends, beneficiaries and staff of WE CARE will stand in solidarity as they pledge to either walk, run, cycle or accumulate steps daily for 12 weeks. They are the Challengers.

While it sounds simple, this campaign is reflective of the actual recovery journey – keeping to a daily practice is harder than it looks, but immensely important.

Challengers will then rally supporters to support them and donate a recommended minimum of \$1 for each daily activity they complete. Daily activities Challengers can pledge to do are:

- 1km walk
- 2km run
- 5km cycle
- 1,600 steps

Additionally, each Supporter will be able to set a daily cap to ensure that they do not end up donating more money than they intended.

We hope this type of personal engagement between Challengers and Supporters can help facilitate a better understanding of addiction recovery, and to reduce the stigma that persons struggling with addiction face.

A donation would go a long way, providing much needed support to our beneficiaries in their recovery journey.

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*If you're interested to be a challenger, or to simply donate, get in touch with Tzao Shen, our fundraising manager at: [tzaoshen@wecare.org.sg](mailto:tzaoshen@wecare.org.sg) / 9121 0810*



**WE CARE**  
COMMUNITY SERVICES

# WE ARE HIRING

Challengers  
wanted to  
walk/run/cycle  
in support of  
addiction  
recovery



## QUALIFICATIONS:

- No physical fitness required
- Willing to support a good cause
- Wants to understand addiction recovery
- Keen to reduce stigma surrounding addiction



# WE CARE Community Services 18<sup>th</sup> Finisher Awards

*The Finisher Awards* is a **WE CARE** signature event and is held twice a year in January and July. Each of the previous Finishers has proved to be both touching and joyous, and the 18<sup>th</sup> edition followed suit.

In fact, this one felt extra special. It was one of the few times we had a Guest of Honour – Patron of **WE CARE** and the former president of Singapore, **Mdm Halimah Yacob** – at the Finisher Awards, and the number of attendees neared record levels.

A first-time attendee remarked how she was impressed that both counsellors and beneficiaries seemed to know each other so well despite some being newcomers and the others, veterans of the centre.

It did seem as if one big family had descended upon the *Lifelong Learning Institute*.

Held on the 16<sup>th</sup> of January 2025, we honoured 15 recipients – although 2 could not make it unfortunately – as they celebrated 1, 3, 5 and 7 years of clean time and sobriety.

The entire night kicked off with touching and thoughtful speeches by **Mdm Halimah** and our Chairman, **Robert Chew**, after which the awards were handed out to the recipients.

What followed is something those who have attended the Finisher Awards in the past remember the most – the sharing.

Sharers – from recovering person to caregiver to staff – get on stage, grab the microphone and tell the crowd about their journey. Being able to tell your story is a big step in recovery, mostly because for so long so many of us kept things inside, hoping to somehow suppress the pain into oblivion. Additionally, speaking in front of a crowd of 100 plus is never an easy task.

This portion never fails to tug at the heartstrings, and on the night, it was no different. Family members expressed their gratitude and pride for their loved ones' transformation.

When a person in recovery expresses gratitude for all the help they've received, they usually say they would not have made it if not for those individuals who aided them. That may be the case, but the majority of the credit must go to the individual.



They tirelessly attend recovery support group meetings, they diligently turn up for counselling sessions, and they fearlessly dig into their past to exorcise the demons that used to assail them.

Staying clean from an addiction is probably one of the hardest things to do, so it's only right that it's celebrated and recognised.

To all the recipients, congratulations. And to everyone else who was present at the 18<sup>th</sup> Finisher Awards, a big thank you. Without each of you, the work we do would not be possible.

The remark by the first-time attendee has been made before, and it speaks perfectly to the family culture that exists at **WE CARE**. We don't want there to be a barrier between beneficiary and staff, and when a beneficiary embarks on their recovery journey, we walk beside them, not in front.

When you first walk through the door, you've joined our family. And we mean it.

We hope to see you at the next Finisher Awards in July!

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*If you would like to join us in celebrating our beneficiaries reaching their clean time milestone at the next Finisher Awards in July, get in touch with us at [admin@wecare.org.sg](mailto:admin@wecare.org.sg).*

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*By Jat*

## 18th Finisher Awards

16 January 2025

*Celebrating  
Recovery*



# Recovery turns your horizon a promising green



A barren desert with nary a cactus nor an oasis of water.

This is how I'd describe the landscape of my soul before recovery.

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


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

Experiencing a couple of childhood traumas and not being able to speak about them locked me in a world of loneliness and isolation. I experienced my first trauma when I was eight. Told by adults I could never speak of it, I withdrew into my own world. I no longer felt safe physically nor emotionally, and became a very timid, anxious child. I experienced frequent chest pains, stomach upsets and bouts of intense fear. I stammered when spoken to. I became a people-pleaser. In my teenage years, I often found myself drowning in a sea of melancholy, with no way out.

As I was doing well in school and did not cause any problems for my teachers, no one felt there was anything wrong with me. However, to cope with my emotional pain, I would conjure up various imaginary worlds and escape into them. Rarely was I present in the moment. I would also lose myself in novels, reading many beloved children's books voraciously when young. When I entered my teenage years, my reading repertoire included romance novels, and this soon became steamier the older I got. I was also exposed to pornography and was soon hooked.

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

By the grace of God, I graduated from university and had a job in the corporate world. However, things at home grew worse. I saw no way out and wanted to die most of the time. Those feelings intensified when the stress of being a supervisor at work got to me. I soon had a mental breakdown,



and the dosage of my psychiatric medications increased. I was not able to function and saw a counsellor to help me get back on my feet.

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

I finally sought help in February 2024. I came to **WE CARE** for counselling sessions. I hung out at the drop-in centre. I joined their activities. I also joined a 12-step programme. I began to learn about addiction, and how to deal with it. What really helped was the love and acceptance I found at **WE CARE** and in my 12-step fellowship. I realised I was no longer alone. I had a bunch of sisters (from my 12-step programme) to journey with. They knew the worst I had done but loved me anyway. For the first time in my life, I was learning to connect with people authentically. I could let my mask drop. I also had to do (and am still doing) the hard work of learning to deal with

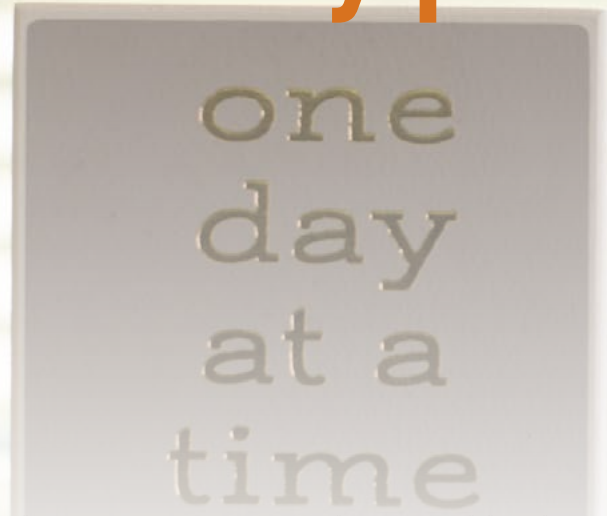
and regulate my emotions, instead of escaping into a fantasy world or numbing my feelings with food.

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

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

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

# I've made so many promises



"I made so many promises, but I couldn't keep any of them," shares Black, a recovering drug and alcohol addict at **WE CARE** candidly. "I was trying to be sober on my own, and it never worked."

Now in his fifties, Black was referred to **WE CARE** by **NAMS** and walked through our doors in January 2024. He started on drugs and alcohol from the age of 12 and has been in and out of prison many times.

Forty years later, he finally found a way to stay sober. And that was through the community. He attends **WE CARE**'s lunchtime support group meetings and **SMART** workshops, **NAMS**' Bridge meetings as well as **AA** meetings. In fact, during the first 90 days of his recovery, he attended more than 90 meetings, so intent was he in pursuing recovery and a new life.

"I'm no longer alone," he beams. "**WE CARE** is my family, my home. I can share my struggles with others. I can share how I feel."

Besides being sober, there are other changes in him too. For one, he is dressing sharper these days and shares that looking his best makes him feel good. He also takes pride in keeping his home clean and tidy, something he did not care about when he was drinking heavily.

Despite the difficulties and challenges he faces, Black is cheerful and has a ready smile. After a few months at **WE CARE**, he started volunteering to help cook meals for beneficiaries and staff at our weekly cook-ins. He would arrive early to help cut up the vegetables and cook the food. "I

have a keen interest in cooking," he shares.

Besides volunteering at **WE CARE**, he also volunteered once at *Willing Hearts* (a charity that serves meals to needy people), helping them chop vegetables. There is a look of pride and satisfaction in his eyes as he recalls his time there. "It is a pleasure to be able to serve others. I have received so much, it is only natural that I want to pay it forward."

Ten months into his recovery, he found a job as a hawker assistant and has been working there faithfully four days a week. Despite the long working hours and other challenges, he continues to show up and perseveres to do his best. On his off days, he comes down to **WE CARE** to attend support group meetings and has not stopped helping prepare meals at the weekly cook-in sessions.

On 16<sup>th</sup> January 2025, he received an award to mark one year of sobriety at **WE CARE**'s bi-annual 18<sup>th</sup> Finisher Awards. When asked how he did it, he shares, "I take it one day at a time. Before I know it, it's one year."

One day at a time. Ask any recovering addict, and that is the adage most live by. Just five simple words, but its impact can last a lifetime.

By **Black and Ann**

**Black** is a regular at the drop-in centre and **Ann** is the pen name of a recovering person who first came to **WE CARE** in 2024.



# Why We Keep Postponing Things:

## Procrastination May Be Linked to Mental Health Issues

We all procrastinate. It is normal human behaviour. We can be too tired or not in the mood. The task may require more time than we have at the moment. We may need more information and resources before we can start.

For whatever reason, you want to put it off to later in the day, tomorrow or next week.

It is a universal truth and reported throughout history that at one point or another, everyone has said they would attend to a matter later. And most of the time, it isn't an issue. You may feel some regret but as long as no major crisis erupts, you get on with your life.

But for some, this may become a pattern. They often procrastinate, then feel guilty because they missed a deadline or didn't reach a decision. In cases where you frequently delay tasks, feel bad, then repeat the cycle, there may be underlying reasons why this keeps happening.

### Why we procrastinate in the first place

The act of procrastination includes inaction, or postponing, delaying, or putting off a decision or task. It is a self-defeating irrational behaviour with immediate benefits, such as relief from stress, and long-term costs, like the inability to move forward.

Regardless of the level of difficulty or amount of time needed for a task, we put it off – even when it is a necessary one, with consequences if we do not complete it on time.

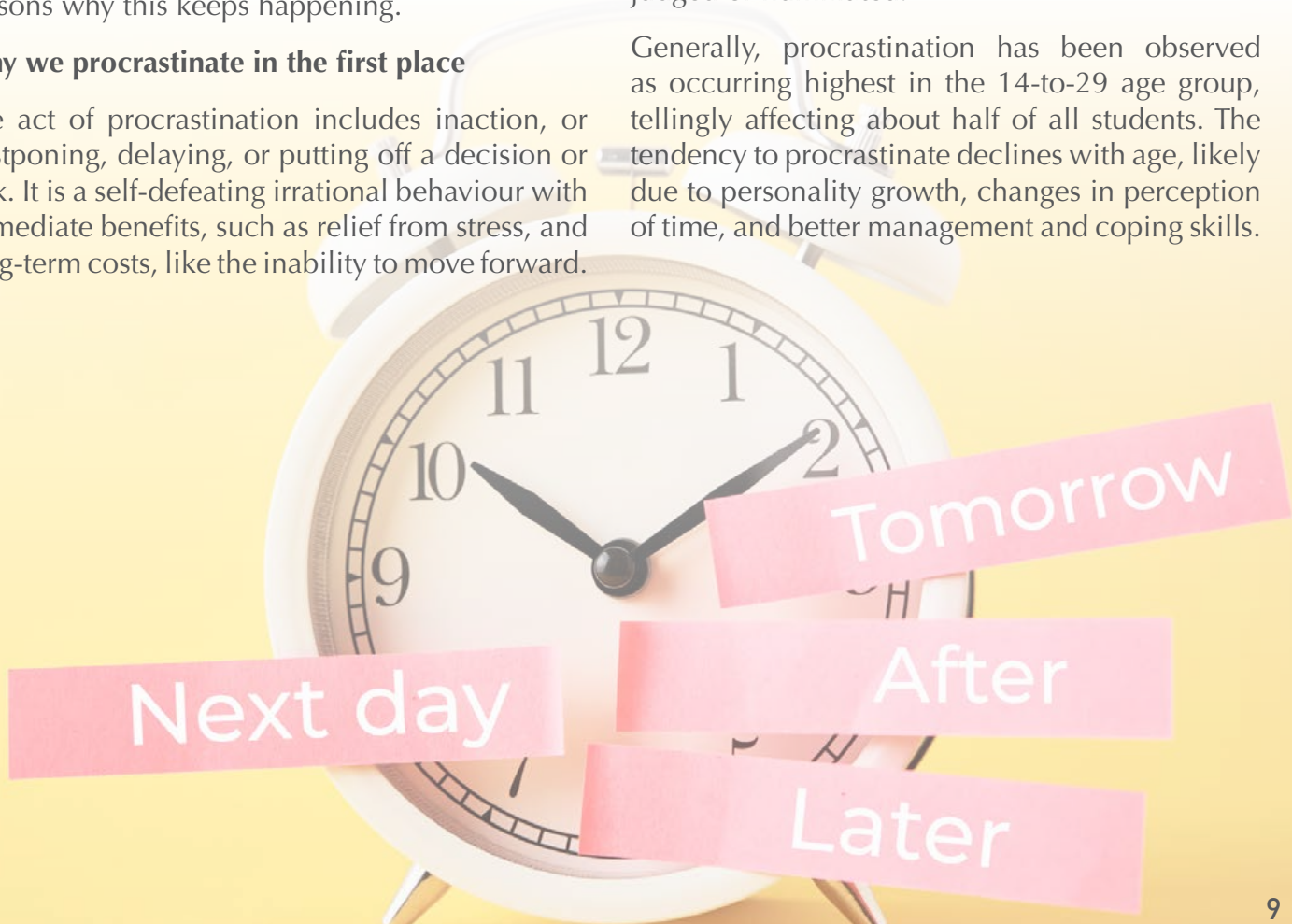
Procrastination has been widely researched with more than 2,000 studies conducted from 1990 through 2020.

There are many and varied reasons for procrastination:

Most of us put things off out of boredom or because we are easily distracted. Other reasons may be that we are not confident in our ability to complete a project or our perfectionist streak prevents us from going ahead until we are sure we can get things done.

Anxiety is also another reason why people delay making plans. There is also the fear of being judged or humiliated.

Generally, procrastination has been observed as occurring highest in the 14-to-29 age group, tellingly affecting about half of all students. The tendency to procrastinate declines with age, likely due to personality growth, changes in perception of time, and better management and coping skills.





## How procrastination is linked to mental health

A 2014 study found that 20% of adults worldwide are chronic procrastinators. Among this group of persons, conditions such as greater stress and lower self-esteem were common. The American Psychological Association has also pointed out the role procrastination plays in *attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)*, *obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD)*, *poor impulse control* and other conditions.

Procrastinators are also more prone to poor physical health and sleep deprivation due to the higher levels of stress and anxiety they experience because of procrastination.

One worrying trend across many studies is the increase in reported procrastination in recent years.

## Procrastination and Anxiety

*"I couldn't make plans. I wanted to, but as the time got closer, I got more anxious, and I just couldn't do it"*, explained Shaun.

Anxiety may also make it difficult to commence on a task if it is perceived as complicated, or when there is a lot of information to process. This can lead to a sense of feeling overwhelmed.

A sure sign of anxiety is the avoidance of a task out of fear of a negative outcome. We may delay taking a medical test because we fear the results, and when we do see to it, we will delay getting the results, not wanting to know or find out.

Many persons with perfectionism are also affected by anxiety, and this makes it more difficult to begin a project if they feel they cannot deliver their best. When they do start, they may stall and freeze when they fear their ideas are not top-notch.

## Procrastination and Depression

*"Depression comes from a place of no hope. When things are uncertain, there is fear and anxiety. You keep asking yourself what happens if you fail, and the easiest thing is to do is to procrastinate."* - Dylan

Persons with depression tend to ruminate and dwell on the negative. Because of their low self-esteem and lack of belief in their abilities, they are convinced that they cannot take on a task.

They cite the absence of interest and motivation and frequently cannot summon the energy to complete, much less initiate, a project.

Often, they do not see "the point" of attempting a task, and find it difficult to follow through, leading to the perception that they are unreliable and not dependable.

## Procrastination and ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder)

Persons with ADHD have difficulty with their self-control, regulating their attention and staying on task. They can get easily distracted and do not stay organized, which disrupts their ability to start or to complete a project. Some executive functioning may be affected, such as the ability to remain open to new ideas, to adapt and be flexible in problem-solving.

*"I couldn't focus and was easily distracted from what I was supposed to do. And when I couldn't get things done, the more I couldn't focus, and the more frustrated I became"*, related Anthony, whose psychologist suspects he has ADHD.

One sign of ADHD is hyperfixation, a complete obsession with or absorption into a particular task or interest. People who hyperfixate may tune out the world around them, forget to take breaks or meals, lose track of time and neglect responsibilities.



## **How to Tell if Procrastination is Affecting Your Life**

Here are a few simple questions you can ask yourself:

*Are you reluctant to accept a task, even if it is one you have completed before?*

*Do you often worry that you cannot complete a task or get the results you want?*

*Do you resent engaging in tasks that you used to be comfortable doing?*

*Are you procrastinating because you feel that others are holding you up?*

*Do you refuse help or advice because others may not deliver what you expect?*

If you have answered Yes to 1 or more questions, you may want to find out if the reasons for your procrastination are indicative of negative mental health.

Professional help does work.

Sarah recounts that when she was depressed: “There were some days when I couldn’t even get out of bed, let alone think about planning anything.”

With counselling and support from **WE CARE**, Sarah, Shaun, Dylan and Anthony have understood and accepted their condition.

For Shaun and Dylan, taking small steps, and setting themselves simple goals helped. With time, they were able to undertake more involved tasks and activities. Shaun believes that he has to “keep working on my anxiety” which Dylan agrees with, adding that even when not motivated “one needs to try.”

Being in a non-judgemental community where there are others with similar mental health concerns has also aided them in coping with and managing their condition, together with their procrastination.



## Saying No: Life as an SOP

Camping overnight at the front door with a baseball bat, in fear of illegal money lenders knocking on our door. Surviving an entire month on a diet of just Maggi curry noodles and luncheon meat. Lying in bed, wide awake at 3am because I could hear my father verbally abusing my mother.

Before I was an addict, I was a compulsive gambler and alcoholic's son.

There was a sense of unpredictability that plagued my household for close to 30 years which we, with every bet he lost and every bottle of Johnnie Walker Double Black he drank, learnt to get used to.

I did not enjoy life partly because I was constantly walking on eggshells. I did not ask for it, but whether I liked it or not, this was my life. And I hated it.

I did not know it at the time, but once I got into recovery it became clear as day that I was an *SOP* (Significant Other Person), too. What also became clear was the fact that addiction is something that's passed down through generations.

It may skip a generation or two, but trace the family tree of a person in recovery and you'll almost certainly find an ancestor who suffered from addiction.

Many studies have arrived at this conclusion, including one led by researchers from *Washington University* in St. Louis in 2023. After combing through genomic data of over 1 million

people, they discovered shared genetic markers underlying substance use disorders.

As I wrote this introduction, a line popped into my head – ***I am not responsible for my addiction, but I am responsible for my recovery.***

It's the same for an SOP. They aren't responsible for the family they're in, but there are things they can do to better manage the situation they find themselves in.

We lived in 3 different apartments in 5 years, and each move brought with it hope of a fresh start, even though the reasons for us moving weren't exactly kosher.

It did not matter, however, which neighbourhood or house we were in, because the person living inside of it never changed.

Between my mother, brothers and I, we have years-of-therapy worth of trauma to unpack. Even though I am 2 and a half years clean, and am supposed to have worked through my resentments from the past, I still cannot find it in myself to forgive my father.

I don't blame him as much today, thanks to the empathy I've learnt from working with newcomers in my various self-help support groups, but nonetheless there is still some blame and I am comfortable with the fact that it may never fade.

The levels of blame and resentment may not have been as high if I had gotten help. To be honest, I didn't even know that I could get help.

In fact, we find this to be the case for most of the SOPs we see at **WE CARE**: They call to enquire about seeking help for their loved ones, only to realise that they need help too. They are also comforted to know that it is not the end of the world if their family member, mired in addiction, does not want to seek help.

At **WE CARE**, the *Family and Friends* support group runs twice a month. It's geared to help the family and friends of those suffering from addiction to navigate the different challenges they face.

An example of a challenge, one that I never figured out how to navigate, is knowing where to draw the line between supporting and enabling.

If their husband or father is deep in the throes of a gambling addiction, what do they say when he goes to them begging for a financial bailout? If they don't help him, his creditors are going to come down hard, putting pressure on both their family and his job.

If they help – keep in mind that this probably isn't the first bailout to be given – he's not going to feel the pinch. Or rather, the pinch isn't going to be very hard. He would have gotten away again.

Next time he finds himself in a hole, he knows that they're going to be there to help and before anyone notices, they're stuck in a toxic and simply unsustainable cycle of enabling.

The solution to problems like these aren't usually black and white. There's often a middle ground that's mutually beneficial to both parties, and that's what we try to help SOPs find when they come to **WE CARE** for support.

Sometimes, the middle ground takes a long time to be found. Seeing a counsellor does not solve all the problems overnight, but with each session the SOP takes a step in the right direction until one day, they are finally able to say No.

Personally, it was only after 20 years that I managed to gather the courage to say No to my father. A year later, my brothers and mother said No. And since then, we haven't looked back. For the first time in my life I feel like we're a real family.

I managed to say No only after 20 years, with no form of help. I can't begin to imagine how different my life would have been if I had gotten help earlier.

The life of an SOP is tough, and extremely stressful. There are hundreds of thousands of addicts around the world, and even more SOPs suffering in silence. If they get the help they need, perhaps they won't have to wait 20 years like I did.

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By **Jat**

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



# A Renewal of Vows



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

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

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

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

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

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

It was around 2019 that he started to get the

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Together with his old friends and siblings whom he's since reconnected with, Prince has

established a rock-solid support system that gives him the confidence to go out into the world to achieve things.

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

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

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

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

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

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

point of view.  
**Recovery**

return to an ori  
original state.



# A Holistic and Consistent Approach to Recovery

I entered the rooms of a *12-step recovery* fellowship in September 2012 on the advice of a therapist. With no idea of what I was getting into, I was relieved to find a safe space where my acting out was neither judged nor condoned. Over time, I repeatedly heard the phrase, *“It works if you work it.”* This closing chant left me intellectually convinced, but emotionally, I struggled to grasp the importance of consistent action.

My tendency to procrastinate only made things worse. Time and again, I would start with good intentions, stay sober for a short period, then relapse. This pattern continued for 11 years. In that time, my sexual acting out resulted in massive emotional and financial losses.

In May 2021, I came across an article suggesting that I replace smoking - my cross-addiction that began in July 1992 - with some form of regular exercise. Clearly, my occasional tennis matches and rare swims weren't enough.

I decided to try running, an activity I absolutely dreaded. In the beginning, it was tough. I could barely manage 1.2 kilometers. But my mantra became, *“Slowly but surely,”* and echoing

the familiar phrase we hear in the 12-Step programme, *“One day at a time,”* I managed to run 5 kilometers by July 2021.

Alongside my new running routine, I attended daily support group meetings whenever I could, completed a 12-step workshop over two weekends, and reconnected with my sponsor in the programme, who was always there for me. I started what I called a holistic approach to recovery. I also gave up alcohol to curb the urge to smoke.

Over time, the urges to act out diminished, and the need to react impulsively to challenging situations became optional. Life, though often boring and quiet, felt like a state of normalcy - something I had never been able to relate to after years of addiction.

In September 2022, I took on a new role at work, one that carried more responsibility. By this point, I was a year and a half into sobriety from sexual acting out, cigarettes, and alcohol. However, with the added responsibilities at work, I began to make excuses, telling myself I didn't have time to work on my recovery programme.



# CONSISTENCY IS THE KEY

The frequency of my support group meetings, working the steps with my sponsor, and running all started to decline. I felt myself slipping back into dangerous patterns - resentments, negative talk about colleagues, and visits to massage parlours. This continued for 10 months until July 2023, when I relapsed.

The shame was overwhelming, and I swore I would never act out again. I convinced myself it was a one-off moment, and I would resume sobriety the very next day. This familiar thought process, coupled with a lack of a solid recovery plan, led me back into a series of relapses that continued until I wrote this article.

Now, I'm back to being grateful for just being sober for today, just as I once was when I had 2.5 years of sobriety. While it's disappointing, I feel more aware and hopeful that I can get through this.

The message I want to share is simple. When I worked the program holistically and consistently, I stayed sober. But when I cherry-picked elements of the program (like just focusing on running) and became inconsistent with other parts (occasional meetings, minimal step work with my sponsor), the desire to act out grew until it reached a point of no return.

I hope my experience serves as a reminder to fellow addicts in recovery:

*There are no shortcuts.  
Recovery only works if we work it -  
**consistently and holistically.***

-  
By **Aaron**

*Aaron is a devoted husband and father.  
He is currently seeking better career  
opportunities while focusing on recovery.*



# Thought Matters:

## What to do when your thoughts keep playing over in your mind

A quick Google search tells us that on average, human beings have as many as 60,000 thoughts a day.

Interestingly, it has also been suggested that 90 percent of these thoughts might be repetitive thoughts, meaning they are thoughts that we have had before, through the day or from previous days. Many of our human thoughts can be random, seemingly “coming out of nowhere”, and can be either positive or negative. Normally, these thoughts come and go, much like passers-by on a street.

What happens however, when we give too much weight to negative thoughts, and become fixated on them? When we start to repeatedly dwell on negative or distressing thoughts, obsessively thinking about them, their causes, effects and consequences? This is known as rumination. A more concrete definition of rumination is that it is a maladaptive thought process where one is trapped in a cycle of negative thoughts that endlessly loops in the mind.


Such a preoccupation with distressing thoughts has many consequences for our mental and emotional health. Rumination has been shown to be a risk or vulnerability factor for future mental health conditions, such as depression and generalised anxiety disorder. Quite a few of us would have been through such experiences before – where we feel unable to break out of a thought

cycle that loops over and over again, struggling to break free or just “stop thinking about it”.

Here is where the concept of thought defusion might actually come in handy. Thought defusion is a therapeutic technique that is part of a larger therapy modality called *Acceptance Commitment Therapy (ACT)* which is used to treat various forms of psychopathology. Broadly speaking, ACT focuses a great deal on acceptance – everyone goes through pain and hardships, but that should not prevent us from living a full and meaningful life. ACT prioritizes mindfulness, flexibility, and a committed focus on changing how we relate to our feelings, thoughts and emotions; and not by changing them. Within ACT, thought defusion is a specific technique that seeks to address ruminative thought patterns.

Think of what it means for something to be fused with something else – they become intertwined, inseparable. What happens to one thing, will inevitably affect the other. This is what it feels like with our thoughts when we are ruminating. Our thoughts feel so tightly attached to us that we forget that our thoughts are in fact, separate from us. When our thoughts become so fused to ourselves, they WILL influence and manage us.

Defusion is then the opposite of that. This does not mean we don't have negative thoughts anymore, nor is it about avoiding these thoughts. In fact, it is about accepting that they are present, but they



# Thoughts

are separate from ourselves. When we realise our thoughts are not us, and are actually a distinct entity, much like words and pictures, we can take a step back and “watch our thoughts” instead. Rather than looking at things “from” our thoughts because we are attached to them, we try looking AT them.

We can understand this a little better with a simple metaphor exercise.

Imagine you are sitting by a stream of water that is filled with leaves, gently flowing down the current of water. Now, imagine placing your thoughts on each leaf floating on the water. As you sit by this stream, gently imagine your thoughts flowing down the river on the leaves, watching them just go by after acknowledging their existence.

This is what it feels like to defuse from our thoughts. It is not about suppressing, avoiding, or pushing them away, but accepting them, recognising them as they are and watching them go by. It puts distance between ourselves and our thoughts and emotions, and it can be applied to our attitudes, beliefs, assumptions and even our memories.

It is when your inner experiences and thoughts have less of a hold and influence on you, that you can be present and are able to take effective action. This is the objective of defusion and ultimately you will be able to ask yourself questions such as whether a thought or belief is helping you, or preventing you from leading a more purposeful and fulfilling life.

Thought defusion is something that does take time and practice, especially when it sometimes

feels and seems counterintuitive. However, it does work better over time, and is ultimately a useful tool that can help us break free from cycles of rumination.

The next time you find yourself on the brink of getting trapped in a negative thought cycle, try these simple thought defusion exercises:

1. Pause and recognise you are HAVING these thoughts, but your thoughts are not you:  
I notice that I am having (insert thought here)
2. Slow down your thoughts – imagine hearing your thoughts in very, very slow motion
3. Practice the leaves on a stream exercise

Remember, what we are thinking about matters less than how we relate to these thoughts. Let's work on changing our relationship with distressing and negative thoughts that pop up, by accepting and defusing from them!

-

By **Tammy**

*Tammy is graduating from her NUS psychology course and aspires to be a clinical psychologist. Passionate about mental health issues, she hopes to be able to help as many as she can. She empathizes with those who are experiencing such struggles, as she herself has had to deal with ill mental health. Reading, dancing and going to the gym are activities that she enjoys, and she shares that her favourite carbohydrate is bread.*

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# WE CARE X SUSS

## Spill The Tea: A Human Library Event

**WE CARE** has seen an increase in the number of partnerships with *Institutes of Higher Learning (IHL)*, with a variety of collaborations.

Some examples include giving addiction awareness talks to students from the *Singapore Management University (SMU)*, conducting training for peer supporters from *Singapore Institute of Technology (SiT)* and creating 4 eLearning modules with *SUSS UniLearn* – some of which have already been released.

One recent partnership involves **WE CARE** taking on the role of Community Partner for a group of SUSS students taking the *NIE301 Service Learning* module – a compulsory module for those who intend to graduate.

Tasked with the objective of raising awareness of addiction, the students organised several brainstorming sessions, resulting in plans to organise a Human Library event that would be open to the public.

At the event, held on the 18<sup>th</sup> of February at **WE CARE**, “readers” would be invited to interact with 3 different kinds of “books” and ask any questions they had. It would provide them with insight into the world of addiction – a topic that isn’t talked about much and in certain communities even considered taboo.



The fact that it’s not talked about much or even swept under the rug may be a factor in the perpetuation of its stigma, which added impetus to the event.

One of **WE CARE**’s missions is *to advocate for persons with addiction and their families*, which is why the team felt that it was crucial for 2 of the 3 books to be recovering persons and caregivers of recovering persons.

A counsellor fulfilled the role of the third book, and just like that – we had a library.

As with every event, the planning stage was crucial. Over the course of multiple zoom meetings and WhatsApp messages, the details of the event were finalised.

We’re proud to report that the event was a success, with the “readers” coming away with a deeper understanding and awareness of addiction. They were engaged and the questions were thoughtful, which is more than we could ask for as organisers.

Here are some pictures from the day. At **WE CARE**, we were certainly encouraged by the success and plan to organise more Human Library events in the future.

It may take a long time before the stigma of addiction is erased, but it is not impossible. With more events like these we get closer to our goal – *one day at a time, one book at a time, one heart at a time.*



# HIGHLIGHTS

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



Vocal Training with Steven



Talk by Matthew Poh from The Caffeine Experience



Chinese New Year Celebration

University Health Fair @ NUS Medical Society





Chinatown Walk – The Temple Trail



Desistor's Network Community Collaboration Platform



Finisher Awards

WE CARE X SUSS Human Library Event



# 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

Fax : 6491 5338

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

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

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

Our core services are:

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

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

Counselling sessions are private and confidential.



## Help is just a phone call away

If you have a problem with addiction, or if you know someone who has issues, call us at **3165 8017** or email

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

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

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



## About This Publication

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