

# WE CARE News





# 金手指

編劇·導演  
莊文強  
FELIX CHONG

監製  
黃斌  
RONALD WONG

領銜主演  
梁朝偉  
TONY LEUNG

劉德華  
ANDY LAU

出品人  
楊受成  
ALBERT YEUNG

鄭志昊  
PETER ZHENG

## WE CARE Charity Movie: The Goldfinger

*A long awaited Hong Kong production, The Goldfinger is an upcoming action crime thriller film written and directed by Felix Chong. Starring acclaimed Hong Kong artistes Tony Leung and Andy Lau, the film is set in the 1980's and is based on the story of the Carrian Group, a Hong Kong corporation which rose rapidly before collapsing after a corruption scandal.*

Budgeted at HK\$350 million, this highly-anticipated production will be released in local cinemas on 30 December 2023.

Andy plays an anti-corruption investigator at ICAC (Independent Commission Against Corruption) while Tony takes on the role of the chairman, who undergoes an ICAC-led investigation of 15 years. The character is based on the founder of the Carrian Group, George Tan, who is interestingly a Singapore citizen. The scandal involves cut-throat moves by Hong Kong's business elite, billions in value wiped out in a stock market crash and several murders.

Felix last worked with Tony and Andy in the Infernal Affairs trilogy – widely considered the best crime saga in Hong Kong cinema history – when he was responsible for the scripts of all 3 Affairs films. For Goldfinger, Felix will be writing as well as helping the movie, and this production reunites all 3 of them since the trilogy. The title of the film is Cantonese slang for a snitch.

Catch this exciting crime thriller this holiday season with your friends and loved ones. Your contribution enables us to deliver quality care and treatment to individuals and their families recovering from the plight of addiction.

We wish to express our gratitude to Tote Board and lead sponsor Singapore Pools for their generous support. See you on Sat 30<sup>th</sup> Dec at Lido 1 at 3pm.

Tony himself, together with Felix, will be in Singapore and Malaysia in the last 2 weeks of December to promote the film.



# WE CARE Charity Movie



Supported By



Giving Hope. Improving Lives.

## SHAW THEATRES, LIDO 1

30 DEC 2023, 3:00PM

\$50 PER TICKET

Tax Deductible Receipt of 250% will be issued.

Giving.sg



<https://bit.ly/CMGoldFinger>

PayNow



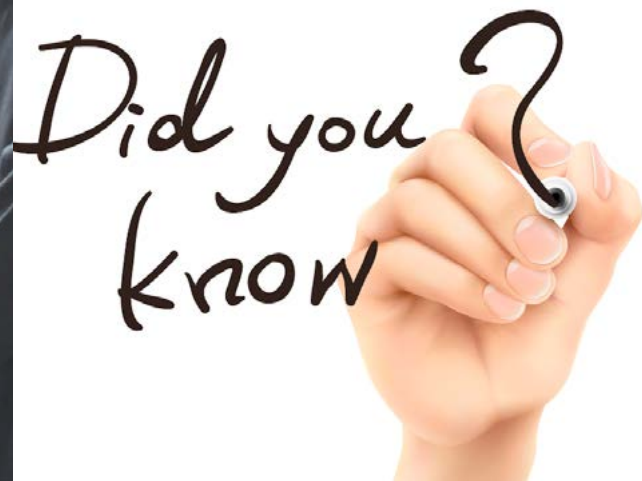
UEN 200506089N

Type: "CMGF mobile number" as ref



Contact: 3165 8017

Email: [events@wecare.org.sg](mailto:events@wecare.org.sg)



## Conversations on Youth 2023

*Conversations on Youth (COY)* is a biennial symposium that brings together stakeholders for a dialogue on supporting youths-at-risk and youth offenders. It is organized under the auspices of the National Committee on Prevention, Rehabilitation and Recidivism (NCPR).

This year's theme *"YOUths Matter Amidst Change"* explores the multi-faceted influences that youths in Singapore face amidst our dynamic and complex world. Three key areas of focus outlined were:

1. Preventing substance abuse among youths;
2. Breaking the cycle of intergenerational offending; and
3. Preventing youth sexual offending.

Held at One Farrer Hotel, the event saw over 600 attendees from various stakeholders including, educational institutes, law enforcement, social service agencies (SSAs) and governmental bodies.

**WE CARE** had the privilege of participating with a booth at the event together with fellow SSAs who work with our local youth population. Our booth at the event served as a vital point of connection between our organization and the attendees at the symposium. We engaged with several educators from various schools, and it was very encouraging to learn that educational institutes are actively seeking early interventions for their students' overall well-being.

We look forward to upcoming collaborations with schools and youth communities that participated in this event, ensuring that the conversations on youth extend beyond the symposium and lead to tangible, positive change for young people in our communities.

In line with our national mental health and well-being strategy, **WE CARE's** focus remains centred on supporting our youth population through preventive approaches including awareness and education talks on the importance of mental well-being, as well as intensive clinical interventions for those in need.

If you would like to have a talk on mental health and / or addiction matters for your school, organization or community groups, contact us at [help@wecare.org.sg](mailto:help@wecare.org.sg) or [simon@wecare.org.sg](mailto:simon@wecare.org.sg)

Many thanks to the organizers for a successful event and we look forward to being a part of Conversations On Youth 2025.







## Reaching Out – Sharing Hope of Recovery

Back in September, I had the opportunity to join the **WE CARE** team when they did a talk at the **Community Rehabilitation Centre (CRC)**. Tucked away in a compound along Jamaica Road, CRC is a step-down centre from the Drug Rehabilitation Centre (DRC) and is dedicated to helping young male drug offenders aged 16 to 21.

According to their website, CRC seeks to provide a structured living environment for the resident youths, helping them kick their addictive habits while carrying on with school or work outside.

Personally, from the age of 16 to 21, seeing friends drop out from school was not uncommon. Granted, they dropped out for a variety of reasons but one thing that was common amongst all of them was the resulting sense of disenchantment. They had no idea what to pursue in life or what their next step was, and when you combine that with a lack of guidance from perhaps an absent father or older brother, the disenchantment almost always led them down an undesirable road.

***Then again, how many of us had it all figured out at 21?***

It was thus easy for me to understand the rationale behind CRC's chosen method of rehabilitation. A structured regime that allowed the youths to maintain a sense of integration in society was ideal, because any form of disruption could have

long lasting negative effects. It also, however, got me comparing things to my own experience in DRC.

I've served two sentences in DRC, with my first one at the age of 23 - not much older than some of the youths at CRC. My sentence, however, was served in the Changi Prison cluster, where conditions were worlds away from what I saw at the CRC compound. I'm bringing up the difference in conditions not to complain, but because the comparison led to a nagging question that remained in my head for a few days - What is the most appropriate punishment for a youth drug offender?

If conditions are too cushy (for the lack of a better word), then it runs the risk of the offenders feeling like they got off "lightly" for an offence that's considered pretty serious in Singapore. On the flip side, subject youths to conditions that are too harsh and there's a possibility that they come out of it traumatised and possibly even more negatively influenced by peers they meet. It's not my place to debate policy, but I think the question bears some discussion.

Rather serendipitously, I got the answer to that question a few days later when I had another opportunity to accompany **WE CARE** on another outreach, this time at the Conversations on Youth 2023 (see Page 4). At one point during the biennial



symposium, participants were split into breakout rooms with each room addressing a different issue concerning youths.

I had a little pocket of time that allowed me to sit in the room where they were discussing “Working with Stakeholders and Systems that Impact Youths-At-Risk” and during a panel discussion which included District Judge Eugene Tay, he commented that with youth offenders the initial approach is always: Rehabilitation. His answer, combined with other things he shared while on the panel, gave me a little more insight into the considerations made when a youth runs afoul of the law which I found to be really enlightening.

Coming away from the outreach at CRC and COY2023, I was able to make my own conclusions. Youths, with their whole lives ahead of them, don't deserve to be punished too severely for a mistake made so young and should instead be given the chance to mend their ways. Often when they make bad decisions, it's due to things like a lack of guidance or peer pressure - things that in some way take away the agency for their decisions. Yes, they aren't completely blameless, but those things need to be factored in. Very often there's more than meets the eye.

Punishment is a necessity, but it should also come with some inquiry into whether the youth is facing any difficulties at places like school or at home. As I look back on my own experiences, I could definitely have benefitted from some form of guidance that would have served as a guardrail against the mistakes I made. Many times I felt the

need to act out because the anger and frustration I felt from the dysfunction at home needed to go somewhere. I needed an outlet. Very often it's a listening ear that's needed - I know I could have definitely used one.

I try to take this approach with my youngest brother, who's 10 years my junior (and fits right into the age demographic of the youths at CRC). There are definitely instances where I'm unable to get through to him, but in the ones where I succeed - I do see a marked improvement in his actions and thought patterns.

I try to use my own experiences as a guardrail for him, because I don't want him to make the same mistakes I did. Perhaps if more people took the same approach, instead of going straight for the rod, then the chances of their loved ones falling into a vicious cycle of offending would lessen. The propensity towards addiction and crime is often an inter-generational thing, so the most I can do is try to make sure that the buck stops with me.

**Jat**

*former client,  
current volunteer and  
soon-to-be employee at WE CARE .....*







# WE CARE Charity Golf 2023

A biennial event, the **Charity Golf Event** is our most significant fundraiser and our first since the pandemic restrictions were lifted. This year's event was held at the picturesque Orchid Country Club – acclaimed as a club where people from all walks of life can come together to enjoy a game of golf.

The event brought together over 130 enthusiastic golfers consisting of corporate-sponsored teams and individuals. The day began with great excitement as golfers arrived eager to hit the course. After a quick registration, the players enjoyed lunch at the Vanda Terrace before gearing up for the game!

However, Mother Nature had her own plans and the weather took an unfavorable turn. Although the rain was light, the threat of lightning was a non-negotiable risk, forcing a delay to the start of the tournament. Despite the damp conditions, most golfers remained undeterred and patiently waited for the weather to abate. We eventually commenced play at 4.00pm with just enough time to complete a 9-hole game.

It was quite a sight as rows of golf buggies zoomed off into the course. Soon enough, as the sun began to dip below the horizon, the game came to a close and the golfers gathered for a delightful banquet dinner at the Club's elegant Emerald Suite. The atmosphere was filled with camaraderie, laughter,







and a sense of accomplishment, as participants and supporters reminisced about their game.

The dinner was more than just a meal, it was an opportunity to honour our supporters for their generosity and for the centre to share about the importance of addiction treatment and recovery. With a strong show of support, including from our Board, the evening's programme started with a prize giving ceremony for the top 3 runner-ups.

Amidst loud cheers from fellow golf enthusiasts this was soon followed by a moving sharing from one of our recovering clients.

The delightful emcee, Adeline, who was brimming with energy even after playing a round of golf herself, tickled and engaged the audience with candid jokes and conversation. Naturally the lucky draw prizes added to the fun alongside music from a very talented 4-piece band drawn from members of the Reverberance wind percussion ensemble.

The event was not just about playing golf; it was a day of togetherness, compassion, and giving. **WE CARE** is extremely grateful to **all our supporters, sponsors and donors** who through their collective generosity, give testament to the incredible impact a community can make when they come together.

We would like to extend our gratitude to the **Tote Board** and the **Government** for their continued support.

Here's to future rounds of golf and comradery. Until we tee off again, keep swinging and see you on the green!







## Recovery Story: Keith

### Rebuilding My Life One Step At A Time

I was serving my second stint in DRC in 2022 before I heard of **Project SAFE (Support for recovering Addicts and their Families through Empowerment)**. During my last month inside, I was informed I would receive 9 months of support from **WE CARE** as part of my aftercare. In my mind, I told myself I have nothing to lose. I have tried many times to break my addictive behaviour on my own and I have failed time and again.

I was determined to break the habit once and for all and I told myself any help would be good.

I contacted **WE CARE** shortly after I left the Drug Rehabilitation Centre (DRC). I met up with my counsellor and started my sessions with **WE CARE** under Project SAFE. As I used to work in a professional job before I was arrested by CNB, it was tough for me to return to my last job while under tagging. After realising my ability to secure a job would be challenged, I felt defeated and rejected.

However, my counselor helped me to pick myself up and I started filling my days with visits to **WE CARE** to ensure I was gainfully occupied during that period of time. I started becoming very active at **WE CARE's** drop-in Centre and also contributed my time as a volunteer leading the peer-led Lunch

Meetings. I was also actively participating in the weekly Bread Run, which is a programme where volunteers collect unsold bread from a number of cafes and re-distribute them to charities.

Our collection day is Friday, and we usually collect enough to share with other charities.

During that period of my life, I encountered numerous low points. Each time, I was able to process them with my counselor. I was also able to learn new and better ways of coping which was critical in helping me overcome those issues instead of running back to drugs which was my go-to escape previously. Despite the challenges I faced with re-integrating back into the larger community, I found strength and support through my second family in **WE CARE**.

**WE CARE** is instrumental in my recovery journey. The non-judgemental nature of the centre made it easy for me to feel safe, connected and supported despite feeling rejected by the community at large. The activities at **WE CARE** are diverse and comprehensive and that allowed me to build new healthy relationships with other recovering addicts at the centre while I was actively cutting ties with my previous friends, some of whom continued using drugs. Eventually, I started to



overcome my own personal demons and traumas and when my DRC sentence was ending, this enabled me to get ready to look for active employment.

Eventually, my tag was cut in May. I started to attend job interviews in June and was fortunate to quickly secure a job. I returned to my previous profession in the education sector in July. This would not be possible without the support and encouragement from the staff at **WE CARE** as well as the support from other recovering persons there.

Since my return to my previous industry, I am glad to report that I have been doing well at my job. Also, I continue to go to **WE CARE** weekly for their evening Mindfulness Sessions. Because of what **WE CARE** has taught me, I am also actively volunteering at another social service agency which focuses on equipping ex-offenders with the skills and means to set positive goals to change their lives so that they can give back to society eventually.

I am very grateful to have been introduced to **WE CARE** during this difficult period of my life. I have definitely become a stronger person and a more empathetic individual while recovering from my addiction habits which had become entrenched over the years.

Because of **WE CARE**, I am hopeful that recovery is possible even for the most hardcore of addicts.

One just needs to start with the yearning to quit drugs for good.

***Keith has since returned to his field of work as a psychologist and continues to volunteer his time and experience in helping ex-offenders in their reintegration journey. In his free time he hangs out with the recovering community he now calls family.***







## Learning about **Addiction** from *Succession*?

**Succession**, which is an Emmy-winning American drama, hooked many viewers with breakthrough performances, the complexities of family dynamics, and its dark sense of humor. In the series, the Roy family owns a huge media and entertainment company and there is a constant sibling rivalry between Kendall and his other two siblings, Roman and Siobhan, to impress their father, Logan, who is struggling with deciding a successor to his empire, Waystar Royco.

In the opening credits, the four siblings are lined up side-by-side and when the camera pans over their feet, we see that Kendall has the tidiest and most disciplined posture and assumes a ready stance.

Throughout the series, Kendall is presented as a sophisticated character who frequently battles for his father's acceptance. In the same way that a kid may try to win over a parent, he tries to show that he is deserving of his father's regard, admiration, and trust. This need for approval from his father is a complicated interaction between wanting to imitate his father's success, recognition, and power and also feeling the desire to develop his own identity and independence.

However, maintaining his self-esteem and living his potential is not an easy journey for Kendall under the shadow of an entitled, egocentric, and manipulative father. Each time he steps forward, his father reminds him that he is not good enough. In addition, throughout the series,

we learn that Kendall's mother lacks the ability to show empathy with his feelings and that the Roy children did not have a chance to establish a deep and affectionate relationship with her.

At the very beginning of the series, we also find out that Kendall has a history of addiction problems and attended a rehab program. In the first episode, his father refers to rehab as "the nuthouse" and treats him disrespectfully although Kendall succeeds in maintaining his sobriety. In further episodes, Logan plants stories about Kendall's relapse to the media when he is sober. Moreover, his wife, Rava, does not believe him and insinuates that he is still using drugs.

Labeling is one of the most important problems for individuals dealing with addiction problems. Labeling someone can cause stigmatization and prejudice. This stigma, which frequently results from misunderstandings and unfavorable perceptions, makes it more difficult for people to access support and assistance. Those labels have an impact on how people view themselves and their identities. Internalizing the label may further deepen their addictive behaviors and obstruct their efforts to heal. The cycle of addiction may be reinforced by this categorization, which can become self-fulfilling.

In the first season, Kendall faces his father's humiliation and rejection, being ousted from the company, and strained relationships within the family, particularly with his siblings, as well as



with his ex-wife. Despite these struggles in his life, we see that Kendall avoids alcoholic beverages. In Episode 7 “Austerlitz” which takes place in a bar, he orders sparkling water. The bartender recounts a sad tale about his brother and a dog, which disinterests Kendall. However, upon hearing that the dog he paid to be cared for was shot dead, Kendall’s mood shifts, and he orders a stronger drink- a double Smirnoff rocks, highlighting his sense of disappointment and disillusionment. He then goes to the barman’s home and is about to inhale some meth for the first time.

Kendall’s journey away from sobriety starts at this point and continues with adverse consequences due to failures in his decision-making process. Therefore, this series offers the audience an opportunity to understand the lifelong and fragile nature of addiction. Individuals having difficulties with addiction problems live their entire lives surrounded by potentially triggering stimuli that would be of little importance to anyone else. Therefore, the emotional support of those close to them provides an important foundation for building and maintaining this resilience. In a parallel *Succession* world, if Kendall had been supported and accepted by his family members and loved ones, the lapse might not have turned into a relapse.

A relapse is a longer-lasting and more substantial return to the prior pattern of behavior, whereas a lapse is a brief, isolated episode of engaging in an undesirable activity. Relapses frequently point to the need to reassess and enhance one’s recovery strategy. Failures can act as early warning flags, giving people the chance to reflect on what happened and make changes to avoid a full-blown relapse.

Besides, *Succession* highlights a significant theme that challenges the common belief that wealth and power act as buffers against addiction. The show underscores that, despite immense wealth, individuals in privileged and powerful positions can still grapple with addiction and its associated challenges. Academic studies often emphasize that individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds may face more pronounced addiction risks due to various socioeconomic factors. However, the characters in the show, particularly Kendall, embody this struggle, illustrating that addiction is a complex issue influenced by multiple factors, including personal experiences, familial dynamics, and psychological pressures.

As Johann Hari said in his illuminating TED Talk, **“The opposite of addiction is not sobriety, the opposite of addiction is connection.”**

**Merve Denizci Nazlıgöl**  
*Clinical Psychologist, PhD*

*Merve is a volunteer at WE CARE. She is a clinical psychologist and academic researcher focusing on behavioral addictions. She also finds joy in immersing herself in popular culture, analyzing characters, plot dynamics, and the underlying themes presented in these narratives. She thinks that it is a unique lens through which she brings psychological theories into daily life, fostering a deeper understanding of the complexities of the human experience.*





# Seeds of Recovery. Growing Together.

Gardening, often viewed as a leisurely hobby, has been proven to have a positive impact on mental health and well-being. The therapeutic benefits of gardening extend far beyond just growing beautiful flowers or fresh vegetables. The act of nurturing plants and witnessing the growth from seed to mature plant enhances one's well-being in varied ways.

As an addiction treatment and recovery centre, **WE CARE** adopts a holistic approach to addiction recovery, and that often includes addressing underlying issues such as depression and anxiety, as well as exploring healthy ways to cope and enhance one's mental wellness.

Gardening stimulates the brain to release feel-good chemicals like serotonin and dopamine. These neurotransmitters are associated with improved mood and serve as natural mood enhancers.

The connection with nature and the satisfaction of nurturing and caring for plants can also boost self-esteem and provide a sense of accomplishment – something that I personally find very true in my own journey of recovery and resilience.

In August 2022, **WE CARE** was fortunate to connect with an experienced gardener, Mr Sabapathy. Well-known in the local gardening scene, Mr Saba generously donated his **NFT (Nutrient Film Technique)** and **DFT (Deep Flow Technique)** hydroponics systems to our centre. Amazingly, these systems were personally constructed from scratch by himself.

With close to zero knowledge about urban farming, let alone hydroponics, our staff and beneficiaries were taught the theory and basics of hydroponics by Mr Saba. He then oversaw the entire move and installation of the first (NFT) system which proved physically challenging, and although we experienced many teething issues initially, we managed to get it up and running.

Harvesting our first batch of red spinach, known locally as *Bayam*, gave our gardening team a real sense of accomplishment. Imagine growing a 30cm tall plant from a seed that's smaller than a grain of rice with just water and nutrients, all within a month!



Encouraged by the success of the NFT System, we took on a the second (DFT) system a few months later. This system brought about a new set of challenges as it was run entirely on solar power. Fortunately, some of our drop-in members who were experienced in electrical works gave us





much-needed assistance in troubleshooting and connecting the wiring. This echoes our experience in recovery; **“what we cannot do alone, we can accomplish together”**.

The DFT system is designed for larger plants and creepers such as cucumbers and ladies’ fingers. The sheer size of these plants requires the watering pods to be on ground level with a 6 – 8ft tall frame to support these massive climbers.

To date, some of our humble harvest includes, ladies’ fingers, brinjals, Japanese cucumbers, kang-kong, sweet basil, various species of bok choy, red spinach and other leafy greens. This produce is a welcome contribution of fresh ingredients to our weekly cook-ins at the centre and to the homes of staff and members alike.

Exciting plans are also underway to extend the DTF system to its full potential with six more pods to grow tomatoes and bitter gourds. As we grow in recovery, so too is our passion for gardening. As one of our regular gardeners puts it: “I never thought growing plants would be so much more satisfying than smoking them”.

If you are like us and are unintentional plant killers, here are a few helpful gardening tips:

- **Get good quality seeds.** Our go-to is *Ban Lee Huat*.
- **Prevention is better than cure.** Be consistent in your pest and disease prevention regime.
- **Start small.** Begin with tiny steps and simple plants, and expand as your experience grows.
- **Don’t give up.** Enjoy the process of learning and discovering how to better care for your plants.
- **Have fun.** As they say, take some time to stop and smell the roses.

**Ironically, these tips apply just as well to recovery!**

To visit or contribute to our gardens, contact us at **3165 8017** or email us at **[help@wecare.org.sg](mailto:help@wecare.org.sg)**



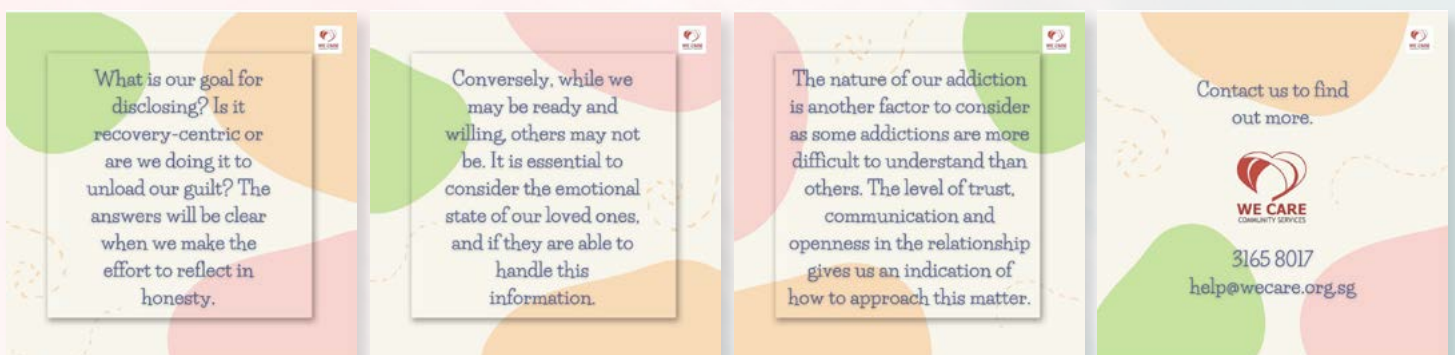
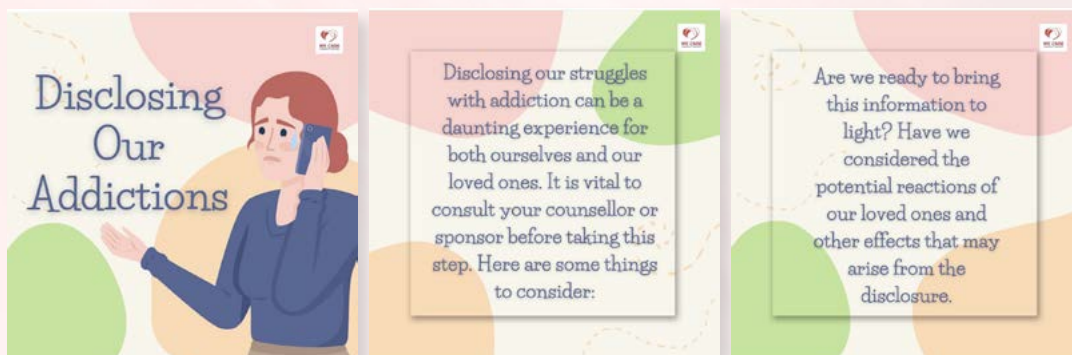


# Our Top 3 Picks from Social Media

Today's social media landscape is a dynamic and ever-evolving digital ecosystem that shapes the way individuals, businesses, and communities connect and communicate. Platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok have become integral parts of daily life, offering diverse channels for self-expression, information sharing, and networking.

Individuals and communities have also begun to leverage on the power of these platforms to share personal narratives, coping strategies, and valuable resources relating to mental health and well-being. This plays a crucial role in destigmatizing and normalizing conversations surrounding mental health and recovery.

Here at **WE CARE**, our social media team comprises staff and volunteers alike who come together to create meaningful and educational content to help raise awareness and address stigmas around mental health and addiction recovery. With over 140 content posts created this year, in no order of merit, here are the top 3 picks from our team.



*I personally like this post because it is a topic close to my heart. I have friends who disclosed their addictions way too early in their recovery journey and it ended up causing more harm to themselves and their loved ones.*



17

## Healthy Connection in a connected world

WE CARE COMMUNITY SERVICES

While technology and globalization have brought people closer together, they also create new complexities that can hinder the development of genuine and meaningful relationships.

WE CARE COMMUNITY SERVICES

Smart devices and social media can be a form of distraction rather than connection. They reduce face-to-face interaction as people spend more time with screens than with one another, limiting deep and personal connection.

WE CARE COMMUNITY SERVICES

Online connections can often be superficial or fictional as they centre around curated images and trendy status updates. When people only see an idealized version of each other, this leads to a lack of authenticity.

WE CARE COMMUNITY SERVICES

The plethora of options in dating partners, friends and social events fuels a comparison culture that incites people to hold out for something or someone better. This may give rise to commitment issues.

WE CARE COMMUNITY SERVICES

Overdependence on social media may border on potentially addictive behaviour such as compulsive internet or social media use. The cycle perpetuates when false connections cause a person to feel more alone, depressed or anxious - they then intensify their online activity to scour for more connections.

WE CARE COMMUNITY SERVICES

Connect with us today.

Call 3165 8017 or email [help@wecare.org.sg](mailto:help@wecare.org.sg)

*Being more connected doesn't mean being better connected. On the contrary, many have shared with me that they feel more alone now than ever in this digital age.*

What's the drama with

# TRAUMA

WE CARE COMMUNITY SERVICES

A study done in 2015 across 24 countries found that out of 68,894 respondents, over 70% had experienced trauma at least once in their lives.

Courtesy: Buij et al. (2015)

WE CARE COMMUNITY SERVICES

The 3 main categories of trauma: Acute, Chronic and Complex. Acute trauma refers to one-time distressing events. They have a sudden impact and long lasting effects. Causes include:

- Physical or sexual assault
- Car crash
- Major injury

WE CARE COMMUNITY SERVICES

Chronic trauma comes from repeated and prolonged exposure to highly stressful events. Examples include:

- Child abuse
- Bullying
- Domestic violence

WE CARE COMMUNITY SERVICES

Complex trauma results from traumatic experiences involving multiple events with interpersonal threats such as:

- Childhood abuse, neglect or abandonment
- Ongoing domestic violence or abuse
- Repeatedly witnessing violence or abuse.

WE CARE COMMUNITY SERVICES

No matter how minor, no trauma should be ignored. Leaving it unprocessed increases the odds that these issues may crop up:

- Substance abuse / compulsive behaviours
- Higher risk of self-harming
- Depression / anxiety

WE CARE COMMUNITY SERVICES

Each traumatic event you experience leaves an indelible impression. It may affect how you behave in matters such as relationships and reaction to stress. The good news: There is a way through trauma, one can heal from it.

WE CARE COMMUNITY SERVICES

Get in touch with experienced trauma counsellors today

3165 8017  
[help@wecare.org.sg](mailto:help@wecare.org.sg)

*This is my favourite post because it elaborates on the concept of trauma and how something that happened many years ago can have an effect on me today. People think that with time, trauma and all its negativity just kind of fade into oblivion but I've come to learn that's not the case. The post was a good reminder that some trauma does require processing and I urge everyone who has experienced trauma to do so.*



*As we step into 2024, our social media team aims to curate the delivery of our content to feature more short-form video formats to stay on trend and cut through the clutter to better reach our audience.*

*Raising awareness, addressing stigma, and carrying the message of recovery.  
One like and one share at a time.*

*Scan the following QR code to give us a follow.*



**WeCareSpore**



# Childhood Trauma and Addiction



**Sam** (not his real name) is in his 30's and is currently seeking support at **WE CARE** for recovery from long-term drug use. In recollecting his childhood, Sam shared, "Growing up was hell. My siblings and I had to manage on our own. My parents were not home a lot. When they were, they were fighting. Shouting, hitting, throwing things - it was all normal for me." Sam's childhood experiences echo the childhoods of many individuals who struggle with substance use.

Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) are defined as traumatic events experienced in the first 18 years of life, including, physical or emotional abuse or neglect, parental substance use and household violence. Research spanning 20 years has shown a strong link between adverse or traumatic experiences in childhood and addictive behaviours in adulthood. For example, individuals who report experiencing multiple adverse events in childhood are three times more likely to struggle with alcohol problems (*Dube et al., 2002*) and engage in problem gambling (*Poole et al., 2017*) in adulthood.

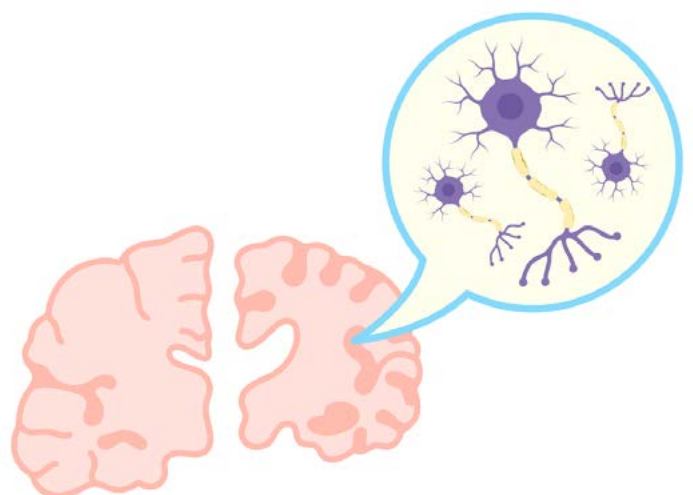
Exposure to traumatic childhood events has been established to be widespread both in developing and developed countries. Gomez and colleagues (2018) found that around 46.5% of the adolescents in their study sample from a national addiction treatment population in Singapore had experienced at least one ACE. Exposure to multiple ACEs was linked to drug-related substance use disorder, earlier drug initiation and more severe drug use.

Research on the relationship between traumatic childhood events and substance use highlights that addiction-related issues have much larger developmental and societal implications. It is so much more than the personal choice of one individual.

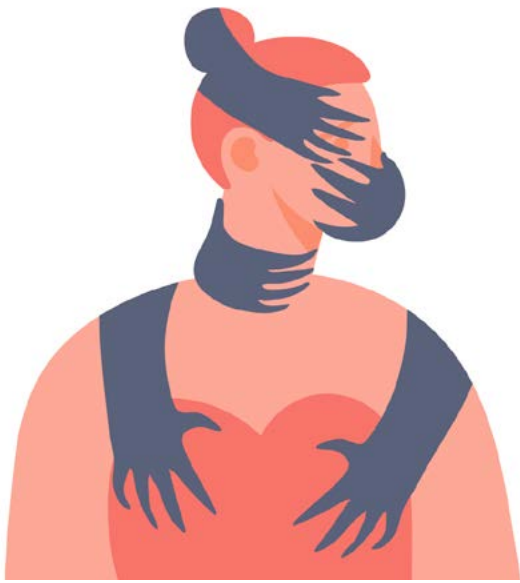
## The Impact of Childhood Trauma

For survivors of childhood trauma, instability, danger, and the threat to one's safety is constant. The chronic stress from prolonged exposure to trauma leads to the excessive activation of the body's stress-response system. The experience would be like someone revving a car engine for months at a time. As a result of the 'stress alarm' constantly sounding, children who endure extended childhood adversity experience continuous arousal, anxiety, hypervigilance, and alertness.

In the longer term this stress system dysregulation during the critical years of a child's development, negatively impacts the development of an individual's immune system, emotion regulation skills and skills related to attention, concentration, and self-control.







## The Link Between Trauma and Addiction

The main reason individuals use substance is for their immediate mood-altering effects. For example, opioids have calming intoxication effects as the nervous system is slowed down. Amphetamines have stimulating intoxication effects, producing energy and alertness. Additionally, activities such as sex and gaming may shift individuals out of numbness and allow them to feel some sensation in the short-term (van der Kolk, 2014).

Substance use is commonly stigmatised as a character weakness or personal failing of willpower. However, the association between adverse childhood events and substance use disorders suggests that substance use represents an individual's attempt to cope with the devastating biological

and neurological impact of childhood trauma (van der Kolk, 2014). For example, an individual may use opioids to quiet intrusive thoughts or suppress the hyperarousal or anxiety due to elevated stress hormones.

Sam shared, "In my life, I never learnt to deal with emotions in a healthy way. I never received love or guidance about how to deal with things well. All I wanted was to escape. For my mind to have a break and stop worrying that something bad was going to happen. I did not know any other way. Friends who were also going through their own problems introduced me to how they coped. So, drugs became how I learnt to cope too."

## Moving Forward

For longer term change to occur we need to move beyond blaming the individual, and to acknowledge the impact of adverse childhood events on health and wellbeing. Changes need to be made at every level in society. At a community level for example, important initiatives include public education campaigns promoting social norms against violence, mentoring programs that connect youth with caring adults and the early identification of at-risk families for family-centred treatment to reduce the impact of adverse childhood experiences.

**Laika** is currently pursuing her Master in Counselling and is undertaking her placement at **WE CARE**. She is a mother of two and passionate about the use of expressive arts in recovery.

## References

Dube, S. R., Anda, R. F., Felitti, V. J., Edwards, V. J., & Croft, J. B. (2002). *Adverse childhood experiences and personal alcohol abuse as an adult*. *Addictive behaviors*, 27(5), 713–725. <[https://doi.org/10.1016/s0306-4603\(01\)00204-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0306-4603(01)00204-0)>

Gomez, B., Peh, C. X., Cheok, C., & Guo, S. (2018). *Adverse childhood experiences and illicit drug use in adolescents: Findings from a national addictions treatment population in Singapore*. *Journal of Substance Use*, 23(1), 86–91. <<https://doi.org/10.1080/14659891.2017.1348558>>

Poole, J. C., Kim, H. S., Dobson, K. S., & Hodgins, D. C. (2017). *Adverse Childhood Experiences and Disordered Gambling: Assessing the Mediating Role of Emotion Dysregulation*. *Journal of gambling studies*, 33(4), 1187–1200. <<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10899-017-9680-8>>

van der Kolk, B. A. (2014). *The body keeps the score: Brain, mind, and body in the healing of trauma*. Viking.





# HIGHLIGHTS

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



Visit to the Bird Paradise



Addiction Awareness Talk at NUS (CAPT)



Law Talk on Employment Law



WE CARE Charity Golf 2023



Conversations on Youth 2023





Yellow Ribbon Prison Run 2023



SAFE Family Day 2023



Yellow Ribbon Run 2023



Deepavali Light-up Experience



Singapore Prison Services (COMC) Learning Journey visit



Law Talk on Estate Planning



Far East Flora Excursion



SIA CARES Open House



# 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 behaviour 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

**Editorial Team:**

Leslie, Simon, Jat.

**Contributors:**

Keith, Laika, Merve.

## WE CARE needs your help.

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

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

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

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

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

To make a donation:

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

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

