

UNCOMMON VOICES

ISSUE 02/2023



EDITOR'S NOTE

The divorce rate in Singapore has been rising, especially amid the pandemic which exacerbated long-simmering marital tensions. Divorce or separation can be traumatic for all parties involved, especially for the children.

To better support families and couples with relationship woes, the Strengthening Families Programme@Family Service Centre (MWS FAM@FSC) was launched in July 2022 under the nationwide initiative led by the Ministry of Social and Family Development.

In this issue, we look at MWS FAM@FSC's work to alleviate family conflicts and strengthen familial ties, and mitigate the negative impact of divorce on children of divorcing and divorced families.

To catch up on MWS latest news and stories online, log on to mws.sg/uncommon-voices.

Michelle



WHEN IT'S LESS THAN HAPPILY EVER AFTER

FOR DIVORCED AND DIVORCING FAMILIES, AS WELL AS COUPLES FACING MARITAL STRAIN, COUNSELLING AND THERAPY CAN PROVIDE A PATH TOWARDS HEALING AND BETTER RELATIONSHIPS

For the past 3 months, Rowan* has been seeing and playing with his 4-year-old son through the steel gates of his wife's flat. The reason: His estranged wife, whom he is currently locked in a bitter custody battle with, has been denying him access to their only son. While waiting for the approval of an interim custody order, Rowan has been following his lawyer's counsel and going to his wife's flat to spend time with his son during his access periods.

When Rowan and his wife first filed for divorce in Nov 2022, he moved out of their matrimonial home to live with his parents. The couple reached a consensus

to have equal access time to their son. But shortly after, Rowan began noticing a marked change in his son's behaviour towards him.

"My son started acting distant towards me, and saying things like 'Papa is bad', 'He is stupid' and 'Papa beats me'. That was when I suspected that my ex-wife was turning my son against me and using him as a pawn in our legal battle," said Rowan.

Parenting through divorce

However, even before that, the impact of the divorce on Rowan's son was evident.

"Initially, when my ex-wife and I separated, my son refused to go over to his mother's place. I later found out that it was because he felt torn between us. He also said things like, 'I want Papa and Mama to stay together. I want to hold their hands and go to the playground,'" recounted Rowan.

"I also saw my son experiencing a lot of confusion, mood swings and at times, unusual behaviour like climbing up tables or throwing tantrums when he did not get his way. He didn't behave like this before the divorce."



Shrouded in stress, Rowan sought counselling support at the Strengthening Families Programme@Family Service Centre (MWS FAM@FSC). “Going through a divorce can be very overwhelming. But counselling has helped me to compartmentalise and focus on parenting my son when I’m with him and not be consumed by my own emotions and grief,” said Rowan.

Counselling also provided Rowan an outlet to vent his anger and frustrations over the breakdown of his marriage, and helped him to enhance his and his son’s emotional literacy.

Rowan was also introduced to resources like children’s picture books on divorce and separation to help him broach the topic of divorce with his son. That gave his son greater clarity and assurance over the family transition.

Children caught in the crossfire

Rowan’s predicament is not uncommon among divorcing parents whose children are often caught in the crossfire when their parents’ marriage goes south.

“We have encountered quite a few cases of divorcing parents denying their spouse access to their children, or using them as leverage in the process of divorce. This is especially prevalent at the start of the divorce process when the court has yet to give any mandate on child access,” said Yeow Ming Zhen, Head of MWS FAM@FSC.

“Parents are usually very preoccupied about the legal proceedings and want to make it a win-all situation. They may also be experiencing a lot of anger and

frustration towards the other party, and want to get back at them by keeping the children to themselves,” she added.

In such cases, children risk staggering damage on their psychological health.

“The sudden absence of the other parent could cause a lot of overwhelming emotions for the child. He or she may experience negative thoughts, like thinking that it’s their fault the other parent does not want to see them. They also tend to miss the other parent,” said Ming Zhen.

“In our work with families, we advocate for children to be ‘seen’, and find ways to explain the situation to the children so that they don’t experience blame or confusion. This also opens up opportunities for the children to clarify things and share their emotions about the divorce.”

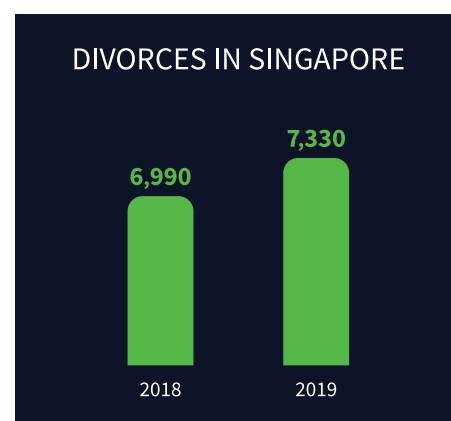
Enhancing support for divorced families, strengthening family ties

Launched in July 2022 under the nationwide Strengthening Families Programme led by the Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF), MWS FAM@FSC brings together trained counsellors and social workers to support couples facing marital challenges, families showing early signs of stress, as well as divorcing and divorced families.

Through casework and counselling, MWS FAM@FSC aims to alleviate family conflicts and strengthen familial relationships and functioning. It also helps divorced and divorcing families achieve greater stability and resilience, with a focus on the child’s needs.

The launch of the programme comes on the back of rising divorce rates in Singapore. In 2019, there were 7,330 divorces in Singapore, up from 6,990 in 2018. Some 55 per cent of divorces in 2019 involved couples with at least one child under 21. At MWS FAM@FSC, Divorce Support cases make up nearly 30 per cent of the service’s total 1,034 cases to date.

Divorce is especially prevalent among those who tied the knot more recently, according to an MSF report released in 2021. For instance, nearly 16 per cent of those who married in 2006 split up before their 10th wedding anniversary, double that (8.7 per cent) of those who wedded in 1987.

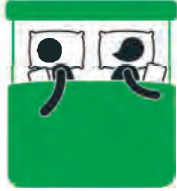


The COVID-19 pandemic has also caused a spike in divorce rates, by intensifying existing problems in strained marriages.

MWS FAM@FSC provides family counselling and divorce support. It supports anyone experiencing stress and challenges due to family-related issues such as those in a marriage or

Our Services

Family Counselling
for families, children and individuals



Marital issues



Family issues



Child/youth
behavioural
issues



Parenting /
co-parenting
challenges

Divorce Support
for couples considering divorce, in the midst of divorce
or are newly divorced, and their children



Divorce support
counselling



Discernment
counselling

Develop clarity on the
future of their marriage



Co-parenting
programmes

For both parents
and children

Strengthening Families Programme@ Family Service Centre (MWS FAM@FSC)

divorce, parent-child relationships, or among siblings or extended family. The counselling aims to help families or couples understand and resolve family or marital conflicts, and strengthen communication within the relationship.

The Centre's support programmes for divorced or separated parents and their children aim to empower children with skills to cope with their parents' spilt, and equip parents with cooperative co-parenting skills for positive parent-child relationship and better child outcomes. The support includes case management, counselling and evidence-based programmes to help families cope with changes in the family structure.

Family counselling that prioritises the child's interests

Divorce can be traumatic for all parties involved. Children are especially vulnerable, and often suffer long-term adverse effects from parental divorce or separation. For example, it has been observed that as adults, they report lower levels of life satisfaction and psychological well-being, and higher rates of depression and anxiety (Amato

and Sobolewski, 2001; Wallerstein and Lewis, 2004).

Research shows that children of divorce may also face greater challenges in their future romantic relationships or have poorer outlook on marriage and long-term partnerships.

While parental support is even more vital for children of divorce, the reality is that the parents are often grappling with the fallout of the split, and may unwittingly neglect their child's emotional needs.

Recognising the vulnerabilities of children, child-centricity forms the focal point in family counselling cases at MWS FAM@FSC.

"Divorce and separation are especially traumatic for children because they may feel powerless. Unlike adults, children may not have access to resources or healthy coping skills, which places them at an increased risk of negative outcomes," said Ming Zhen.

"The children may experience a lot of insecurity or feelings of abandonment

during their parents' divorce. In many of our cases involving divorcing couples with young children, the children tend to internalise feelings of anger and frustration and blame themselves for the divorce. Counselling and therapy can help them navigate changes in family dynamics, and cope with negative emotions like grief to prevent more serious mental health issues from developing."

In the case of Rowan's son, MWS FAM@FSC engaged him in sand tray therapy (see box story), providing him with a safe environment to express his thoughts, feelings and struggles using figurines.

"Young children of divorce need a safe space for honest conversation so that they can make sense of what is happening. For example, if the parents are living separately during the divorce proceedings, the child may worry about not being able to see the other parent again. When they have greater clarity over what is happening, they know what to expect and may feel more reassured."

TOOLS FOR THERAPY



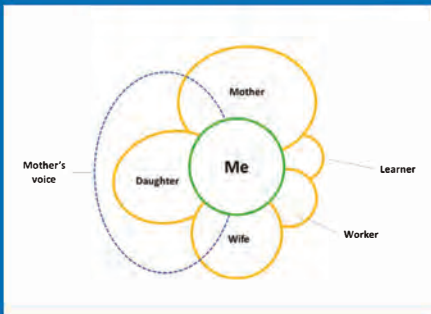
Sand Tray

This is a therapeutic technique where an individual expresses their thoughts and feelings using a sand tray, miniatures and figurines. In the case of Rowan's son, his sand tray arrangement (pictured) reflects his feelings of being caught in the middle of his divorcing parents. Rowan's son shared that he finds it difficult to understand why his parents have to stay separately, and questions their love for him. His counsellor helped him to process his feelings by acknowledging his difficult emotions and affirming his strengths.



Cars 'R' Us

Comprising a set of vehicle-themed situational cards, Cars 'R' Us is a conversation-building tool for exploring feelings and articulating goals. It is used in couples' counselling at MWS FAM@FSC to improve understanding of oneself and their spouse. For Andy* and Charmaine*, they were asked to choose a card that they felt represented the other's communication style, and explain their choice. Charmaine's choice of a car in a tunnel reflected her feelings of being kept in the dark, while Andy's of vehicles on a roundabout described his wife's tendency to talk in an indirect manner. Both agreed to communicate more openly and clearly with each other.



Daisy Model

The Daisy Model is a way of exploring the different perspectives or relationships that shape how we understand ourselves or the world. Imagine the self as the 'centre' of the flower, the petals are the 'unseen' factors that influence the 'centre'. Some petals are more pronounced as some narratives are amplified. It is a visually effective model for helping one to consider the other untold narratives. For MWS FAM@FSC client Lynn*, this approach enabled her to have a clearer understanding of the many roles she plays in life. It dawned on Lynn that some of these self-expectations are the result of the internalised voice (pictured) of her mother, and it had caused her to lose herself. Lynn was encouraged to recall some things she used to enjoy doing as a starting point to re-discovering herself again.

Navigating marital strife

The pain of divorce is so real, that part of MWS FAM@FSC's work involves discernment counselling, for couples contemplating divorce to consider its implications and decide if their marriage is worth salvaging, explained Anny Rodjito, Lead Counsellor. The sessions also raise awareness of the detrimental impact of divorce on their children.

"It's also a time for the couple to reflect on their contribution towards the problems that have befallen their marriage, and the changes they plan to make going forward," said Anny.

At MWS FAM@FSC, some 63 per cent of the couples who have gone through discernment counselling have agreed to stay in their marriage and continue with marital counselling.



Discernment counselling serves couples struggling with divorce decisions to see if the path of healing is possible

"In discernment counselling, our aim is to try and preserve the marriage," said Anny. "Even if they decide eventually to divorce, we continue to emphasise the importance of co-parenting in a healthy

way and putting their child's interests foremost, and not their pride or their own needs." UV

* Not their real names



SEEING POVERTY THROUGH A DIFFERENT LENS

In affluent Singapore where we rarely see beggars or the homeless, few can imagine that poverty is even worth a conversation. But does that depend on how we see poverty?

Find out more by scanning the QR Code to watch a video depicting a family with multiple and complex needs, as we invite you to join hands with us to address the crippling impact of poverty and empower more to have life to the full.





Prof Eugene Fidelis Soh, Deputy Group CEO (Integrated Care) of National Healthcare Group presenting MWS' representatives Brendon Yam and Deborah Ho with the People's Choice Award

MWS' INNOVATIVE ADAPTIVE SPORTS PROGRAMME WINS THE PEOPLE'S VOTES

Against the COVID-19 episodic lockdowns in 2022, MWS' Allied Health team developed an Adaptive Sports programme that addressed inactivity, improved well-being and mitigated social isolation among the residents in MWS Christalite Methodist Home.

On 14 April 2023, the programme was recognised with the People's Choice Award at the National Healthcare Group Population Health Collective (POPCollect) Annual Workplan Seminar 2023.

The programme was one of 14 that were showcased, and it won for its innovation, integration across social and health care domains, and ability to empower frail seniors to take ownership of their overall well-being.

"Adaptive sports is one of the key tenets of MWS' preventive care

strategy against frailty in seniors. Here, we train residents on strength, endurance and balance using adapted sporting equipment and modified play rules that accommodate different levels of functional abilities," shared Brendon Yam, Programme Development Manager from MWS' Allied Health team.

There is a wide range of activities within the programme and these include e.g. Boccia, Adaptive Badminton, Adaptive Basketball. In addition to encouraging equitable participation and engaging residents cognitively and socially, residents also receive tokens that incentivise them to change behaviour in a sustainable manner.

MWS is thankful for the recognition and hopes to expand this programme across MWS Nursing Homes and Active Ageing Centres so that more seniors may enjoy a fuller life through wholesome adaptive sports.



Brendon and VIP guests including Prof Jonathan Gray (in white) - Director of Improvement and Innovation Cardiff and Vale UHB, visiting professor with National Healthcare Group



Rachel Lee from MWS Family Service Centre - Tampines presenting its findings on family violence survivors' experiences with medical systems, at the FSC Practice Research Festival (Photo courtesy of Montfort Care)

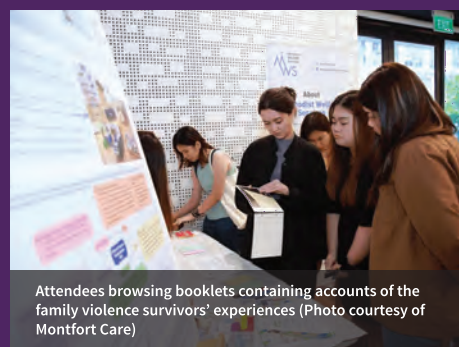
MWS FSCs LEAD GROUPWORK & RESEARCH RELATED TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

On 3 March 2023, MWS Family Service Centres (FSCs) at Tampines and Yishun joined other sector professionals at the FSC Practice Research Festival in a meaningful exchange on research outcomes related to some of today's most pressing social issues.

At the event organised by Montfort Care, MWS FSC - Yishun (YFSC) presented findings from a pilot groupwork with men who caused harm in spousal violence, in a project named 'The Gentlemen's Club: Staying Cool!'. Meanwhile, MWS FSC - Tampines shared insights about the experience of family violence survivors at medical settings, in the project titled 'In Our Shoes'.

"As I was working with the group, one of my reflections was on misconceptions social workers may have in working with persons who caused harm. I found that when I showed authenticity in connecting with them during the sessions, they reciprocated with the same level of honesty in sharing their challenges and making a commitment to change for themselves and their families," shared Benny Thiam, Assistant Senior Social Worker at MWS YFSC.

With the learnings gleaned, the FSCs hope to improve on the groupwork and research design before doing more runs.



Attendees browsing booklets containing accounts of the family violence survivors' experiences (Photo courtesy of Montfort Care)

GROUPWORK ON BREAKING THE CYCLE OF SPOUSAL VIOLENCE

“I learnt how not to throw or smash things at home (or in) public and how not to hit someone when I am triggered. Avoid (it) before it happens. I feel like I can be successful,” shared Glen*.

Tim* added, “In the past, I would usually vent my anger to communicate to the person (that) I’m angry... I have now learnt that anger management means I must remind myself to keep cool.”

These responses were just a fraction of what was shared by participants in a groupwork session conducted by MWS Family Service Centre – Yishun (YFSC), among men who had used violence against their spouses.

The onset of COVID-19 saw an alarming increase in the incidence of family violence in Singapore. When the team at MWS YFSC started seeing a slew of clients referred by the Family Justice Courts for Mandatory Counselling Programme, they decided to find out more.

MWS YFSC has previously conducted groupwork for survivors of family violence. But the rising incidence of such violence got the FSC thinking that the only way to address violence is to work directly with the persons causing harm.

The seed for ‘The Gentlemen’s Club: Staying Cool’ was therefore sown.

Being a pilot study, the programme design, content, implementation and evaluation design were conceptualised from scratch. Working with the principles of trauma-informed care (TIC), the FSC employed activities and therapy that help participants change mindsets towards regulating emotions and transform behaviours in a respectful and empowering manner.

During the sessions, participants were guided on ways to debunk myths about anger, identify triggers, learn self-compassion, recognise unhelpful thoughts and anger warning signs, and learn coping skills as well as safe and assertive communication. All these were conducted through experiential activities, discussions and role-plays.

Due to conflicting work schedules, several participants dropped out of the groupwork before completion, resulting in it involving only 6 participants. Nonetheless, MWS’ TIC approach created a non-shaming, non-blaming environment that encouraged participants to exercise self-compassion, share openly and commit to change.

** Not their real names*

Do you know anyone who is experiencing or causing domestic violence?

[Call the National Anti-Violence and Sexual Harassment Helpline \(NAVH\)](#)

Call 1800-777-0000 or make an online report via the NAVH Reporting Form.

[Go to the Police for help](#)

If there is imminent danger to life and safety, please call the police at 999, or go to your nearest neighbourhood Police Post or Centre for help.



JOB OPPORTUNITIES IN MWS!

MWS is fast expanding and we welcome those who share our vision and passion to join us! Check out mws.sg/join-us for details.

Some of the activities ran during the groupwork sessions:



‘Step Into The Circle’ activity

Participants and facilitators stood together to form a big circle. Statements that suggest distorted or unhelpful thinking patterns were read aloud. All were invited to take a step into the circle if the statement resonated with them. By the end of the activity, participants and facilitators found themselves huddled together. The objective of the activity was to show that unhelpful thinking patterns are not uncommon, and to reduce the stigma attached to persons who cause harm.



‘Shaken Carbonated Drink’ activity

Participants were given bottles of carbonated drinks and asked to shake the bottles and open them without spilling the contents. Some participants showed more caution when unscrewing the bottle cap in order to keep the carbonated liquid from bubbling over. Several succeeded while others failed to contain the bubbling liquid. Through this, participants learnt that it is possible to keep a lid on one’s emotions by exercising control.



PARTNERING MEDICAL COMMUNITY FOR MORE TRAUMA-INFORMED SUPPORT

On 11 Apr 2023, MWS Family Service Centre – Tampines (TFSC) hosted a group of staff including medical social workers from Changi General Hospital (CGH), as part of ongoing efforts to strengthen community partnerships.

Besides a discussion on case assessments, CGH’s medical social workers shadowed the FSC’s social workers, sitting in on their client consultations and accompanying them on home visits. The collaboration is aimed at helping the medical team better understand the clients served by FSCs, who often grapple with multiple complex issues.



Dr Dennis Chia (pictured) and Dr Andy Lee (Principal Resident Physician) from MWS Home Care & Home Hospice team shared on delivering palliative care in MWS nursing homes

MWS AT 8TH SINGAPORE PALLIATIVE CARE CONFERENCE 2023

With Singapore’s greying population, multi-disciplinary teams must now collaborate and dialogue even more closely to address ageing-related matters. MWS Home Care & Home Hospice is grateful to be part of these efforts as our leaders weighed in on palliative care in nursing homes at the 8th Singapore

Palliative Care Conference 2023 held on 1-2 July.

“MWS’ integrated Home Care and Home Hospice service is the first-of-its-kind in Singapore, where both non-hospice and hospice patients are served by one multi-disciplinary team,” said Dr Dennis Chia (Acting Cluster Director, Community Eldercare Services and Deputy Director, MWS Home Care & Home Hospice and Senior Care Centre). “This ensures a seamless transition of care for frail patients, reducing the risk of sub-optimal care experiences and health outcomes that can result from fragmented care.”

WHEN VALUES EDUCATION INCLUDES EVERYONE’S FAVOURITE SUPERHEROES

Over the last 6 months, the children at MWS Christalite Student Care Centre have been learning about values with the help of The Incredible Hulk, Iron Man, Captain America and Spiderman.

That’s right! Through the use of these popular comic superheroes, the children picked up many precious lessons on anger

management, selfless love, servanthood and responsibility. As shared by 10-year-old Davier: “I liked the lesson on Iron Man: Selfless Love. It made me realise how much my parents gave up in order to spend time with me.”

The values programme concluded during the recent June school holidays, during which over 40 children also visited Snow City on a science learning journey. What a cool idea in this current hot weather!



A wellness carnival which included community screening was held at Blk 40 Sims Drive in Apr 2023 to mark the onboarding of MWS Active Ageing Centre – GreenTops@Sims Place

MWS ONBOARDS 3 MORE ACTIVE AGEING CENTRES

Since 1 Apr 2023, 3 more MWS Senior Activity Centres have been onboarded as Active Ageing Centres (AACs), as part of the Ministry of Health’s nationwide initiative to provide all seniors with greater social and healthcare support.

With the transition of MWS

AAC – Fernvale Rivergrove, MWS AAC – Teck Ghee Vista and MWS AAC – GreenTops@Sims Place, MWS now runs a network of 7 AACs across the island.

The Centres provide services such as active ageing programmes, befriending and buddying, and care referrals.



7-year-old Kairen with the Spiderman craft he made during the Values through Superheroes lesson on Responsibility



PILOT PROJECT TO SECURE FOOD ACCESS FOR CHILDREN

About 1 in 4 clients who approach MWS Family Service Centre – Yishun (YFSC) have sought urgent food assistance. Recognising the traumatic impact of food insecurity, MWS YFSC piloted Kopi Kids to make healthy food options more accessible to less privileged children.

The 3-month pilot programme, which ran from March to May 2023, connected children with heartland hawkers and bakers in the neighbourhood. Every child received 3 sticker vouchers a week during the pilot run, and could redeem their meals (valued at \$5 each) at participating stalls by presenting a drawing of their desired food on the sticker voucher.

Kopi Kids seeks to raise awareness of food insecurity and encourage other patrons to pay it forward by sponsoring a child’s meal. The project also entailed an urban farming educational workshop by Ground-up Initiative where the children learnt more about food sources and sustainability.



Representatives from Hong Kong’s social service and healthcare sector were hosted by MWS leaders in nursing home and palliative care

MWS HOSTS SECTOR REPRESENTATIVES FROM HONG KONG IN MEANINGFUL EXCHANGE

MWS was honoured to host representatives from The Hong Kong Council of Social Service, Social Enterprise Limited, and St. James’ Settlement for an invaluable exchange of insights.

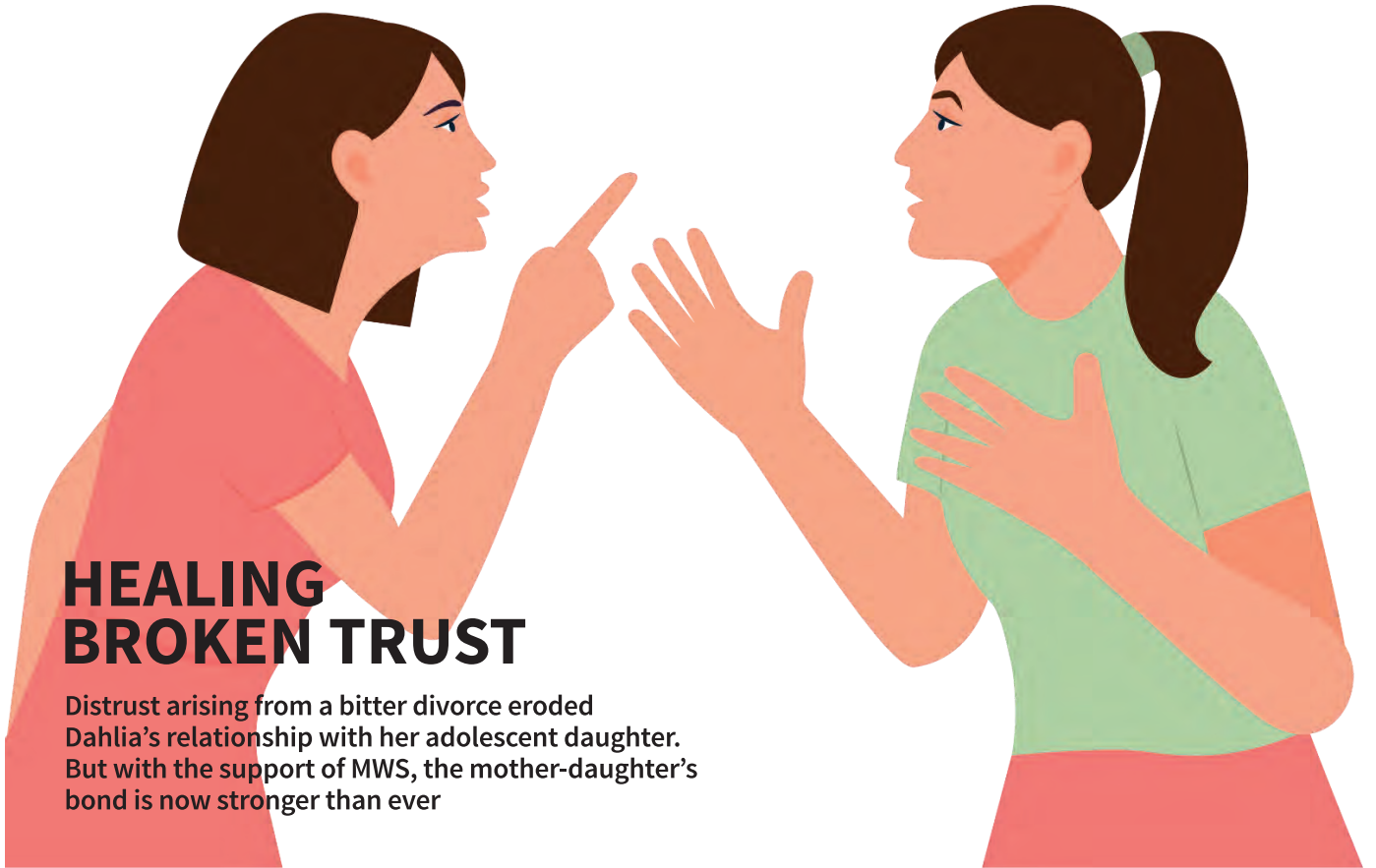
During their visit on 23 May 2023, our guests had the opportunity to learn about MWS’ integrated approach to

palliative care as well as take a tour of MWS Bethany Nursing Home – Choa Chu Kang. This first-hand experience allowed them to witness MWS’ holistic support for beneficiaries and their families.

Our visitors were impressed by the home-like environment and excellent facilities at the nursing home, which encourage residents to live well, socialise, exercise, and connect with their families. Additionally, MWS’ holistic approach ensures a

seamless transition of care where our Home Care & Home Hospice team steps in to provide palliative care when a beneficiary’s condition deteriorates.

“MWS’ range of services highlights their comprehensive commitment to addressing the various aspects of individuals’ lives,” said Prof Andrew Leung Yee Tak, Director of Social Enterprise Limited.



HEALING BROKEN TRUST

Distrust arising from a bitter divorce eroded Dahlia's relationship with her adolescent daughter. But with the support of MWS, the mother-daughter's bond is now stronger than ever

When 42-year-old Dahlia* was going through divorce, things soured so badly between her and her ex-husband that it tore apart her close relationship with her 12-year-old daughter, Olivia*.

"My ex-husband spun a story about me having an affair which had caused the family to break up. My daughter believed the lie and started resenting me. Shortly after, she found out that my ex-husband is not her biological father, but that she is the child from my first marriage. That was when her resentment towards me turned into hatred," recounted Dahlia, adding that she had intended to tell her daughter the truth about her father only when she is of a more mature age.

Olivia recalled how she had completely shut her mother out during that time. "Whenever my mother tried telling me her side of the story, I just didn't want to listen," she said.

From broken bond...

With the duo's relationship strained by trust issues, tensions turned into explosive rows, culminating in Olivia running away from home.

Whenever Dahlia pleaded with Olivia to return home, Olivia would refuse and even threatened suicide. In the throes of a messy divorce while juggling a full-time career and studying for her degree, Dahlia's relationship rift with her daughter sunk her into deep distress.

It was during this bleak period in Oct 2022 that Dahlia was referred to the Strengthening Families Programme@Family Service Centre (MWS FAM@FSC) and was connected with Anny Rodjito, Lead Counsellor.

"I was very down and broken, but Anny's encouragement comforted me. Our sessions were healing for me," shared Dahlia.

In working towards restoring the pair's relationship, Anny

prioritised building rapport with Olivia, to create a safe space for open and honest dialogue. "I also had to work at the pace that Olivia was comfortable with when it came to reconciliation with her mother," said Anny.

Employing the strengths-based approach, Anny also helped shift Olivia and Dahlia's mindsets away from their problem to consider new possibilities about their lives and the way they relate to each other.

"When someone talks about their problem, it can be inferred that the opposite is their hope. In Olivia and Dahlia's case, therapy enabled them to share what they hoped for that was missing in their relationship, and work on realising those hopes," shared Anny.

...to relationship restored

Following several counselling sessions, Olivia finally agreed to meet Dahlia and

subsequently, returned home. Applying their learnings from counselling, the pair changed the way they interacted with each other.

"We have a very positive relationship now that's better than before. We learnt to listen to each other, and to give each other space when we are angry or upset," said Olivia.

Dahlia agreed: "Anny taught me how to view things from my daughter's perspective and how to communicate with her in a different way. I learnt not to be authoritarian and to engage in open, two-way communication with my child, and to listen to her thoughts and feelings."

She added: "My daughter is my responsibility, and I will take good care of her because I brought her into this world."

** Not their real names*



FROM PAIN TO PURPOSE

Instead of letting her childhood trauma define her, Wiing Liu channelled her pain into a purposeful career of empowering lives

When Wiing Liu was 6 months old, her biological mother left her with a stranger whom she met while playing mahjong, promising to return for her child. For 7 years, she never did. That stranger went on to become Wiing's foster mother.

"When I finally found out the truth, I felt like my whole life was a lie. Moving in with my birth family at the encouragement of my foster mother, I struggled with feelings of grief, loss and displacement trying to assimilate into a new environment," said Wiing.

Turning pain into purpose

That difficult childhood experience not only shaped Wiing into the compassionate person she is today, but ultimately thrust the 34-year-old former dance artist into the helping profession.

As a Social Work Associate at Strengthening Families Programme@Family Service Centre (MWS FAM@FSC), Wiing's work includes providing online counselling to individuals experiencing marital, parenting or family stress.

"I once met a client who was suicidal and reluctant to disclose his identity or tell anyone else about his situation. But I stayed calm and kept the conversation going, conducted the risk

assessments and safety planning, and surfaced the client's strengths and hopes for the future," said Wiing.

"Eventually, after a few online sessions, the client was better able to manage his negative thoughts and gained courage to seek other forms of support. That episode reminded me of the power of human connection."

Wiing is also involved in the Children-in-Between (CIB) programme for divorced families, aimed at mitigating the negative impact of divorce on children.

"Children often come in feeling torn between their parents, who may use them as messengers during conflicts. One of the self-management strategies that we cover is 'I' Messages, which helps children to communicate their feelings, concerns and needs in a non-blaming manner. For example, they can say, 'I feel caught in the middle when you use me to convey messages to dad, and I will appreciate if you talk to him directly in future,'" shared Wiing.

Empowered to empower others

Regular professional training has enhanced Wiing's capability to address family relationship issues and better support clients.

One technique she has

applied is the spectrogram. For instance, Wiing may ask the children "How well are you coping with your parents' divorce?" and have them stand at the position they identify with on an imaginary line representing the spectrum 0-10. Each then share about their choice.

Wiing recalled a child expressly opening up to her. "We were mid-way in our first counselling session with a child when she disclosed her bottled-up feelings about her parents' divorce. Typically, it takes a few sessions for trust to be established, so I felt really touched that she felt safe early on," shared Wiing.

This empowerment approach is what guides Wiing in her work with clients towards building autonomy and control in their lives.

A silver lining

In her own life, Wiing has relied on therapeutic bodywork and the support of her inner circle to heal from childhood adversities.

"Over the years, my biological family and I have reconciled. The immense compassion of my foster family helped me through this journey, as did the support of friends and loved ones. My healing journey also shed light on the adversities my mother experienced in her growing up years and how her choices

were a result of her own personal struggles," said Wiing.

"My life experiences have helped me recognise how a person's response is greatly shaped by their struggles and environment. It has also shown me the importance of compassion and non-judgmental support when helping others on their journey of healing."

Can you see purpose through pain? Do you believe there can be triumph over trauma? Join us at MWS! View our current job openings at mws.sg/join-us.

If you feel that you are unable to cope and have thoughts of harming yourself or someone else, please contact SOS 24-hour hotline 1-767, or their 24-hour SOS CareText via WhatsApp 9151-1767.

If you feel you may be at immediate risk of harming yourself, call 995 or approach the A&E department of your nearest hospital.

If you or any person is experiencing family violence or other forms of abuse or neglect, please contact the 24-hour National Anti-Violence and Sexual Harassment Helpline at 1800-777-0000.

If you are experiencing any risks of physical violence, please know that you can walk in to your nearest Family Service Centre (FSC) to request for help. You can locate your nearest FSC by entering your postal code on this website: www.msf.gov.sg/our-services/directorries.

编者的话：新加坡的离婚率不断上升，2019冠状病毒疫情更是加剧了长期积累的夫妻矛盾。离婚或分居对牵涉的各方而言都是痛苦的，而孩子所受创伤尤甚。为了协助受影响家庭和夫妇摆脱困境，在社会及家庭发展部领导的全国性倡议下，巩固家庭计划于2022年7月在MWS家庭服务中心试行。本期我们将介绍位于家庭服务中心的巩固家庭计划(MWS FAM@FSC)的各项工作，包括缓解家庭矛盾与加强家庭纽带，以及减轻父母离婚对离异家庭子女的负面影响。欲获取卫理福利服务最新消息和内容，请浏览 mws.sg/uncommon-voices。



特写：当幸福走远时

在Rowan*提出与太太离婚后，他4岁的儿子开始出现异常行为，且情绪波动很大。分居后太太不允许他与儿子见面，为了争夺孩子的抚养权，原本和平分开的夫妻俩开始互相刁难。不知所措的Rowan向MWS FAM@FSC求助，父子俩在机构人员的帮助下，学会以健康的心态面对离异家庭难题。*化名



卫理福利服务新增三家活跃乐龄中心

自2023年4月1日起，又有三家MWS乐龄活动中心响应卫生部倡议，改头换面成为活跃乐龄中心，在全国范围内为所有年长者提供更多社会和医疗保健支持。随着三家位于芬维、德义园及沈氏坊青峰的MWS活跃乐龄中心的转型，目前卫理福利服务在全岛一共运营由七家活跃乐龄站组成的服务群，为受益者提供活跃老化项目、亲善之友与伙伴及护理转介等服务。



卫理福利服务出席2023年第八届新加坡慈怀护理研讨会 随着新加坡人口老龄化，多学科团队必须更紧密合作与对话，以解决老龄化相关问题。MWS居家护理与慈怀护理团队领袖有幸参与7月1至2日举办的2023年第八届新加坡慈怀护理研讨会，针对有关疗养院的慈怀护理课题发表看法。“卫理福利服务的综合居家护理及慈怀护理服务能妥善兼顾体虚病人所经历的不同阶段，减少因分散护理导致的较差护理体验与健康状况。”MWS居家护理与慈怀护理及结合乐龄护理中心 - 副主任兼MWS社区年长者护理服务群组 - 代理群组主管谢秉助医生说道。



MWS家庭服务中心主持与家庭暴力有关的小组工作与研究 2023年3月3日，位于淡滨尼和义顺的MWS家庭服务中心代表，与其他领域专业人士一同参与家庭服务中心社工实践研究节，就时下最紧迫社会问题的相关研究成果进行深入交流。MWS家庭服务中心-义顺此前曾对向配偶施暴的男性进行试点小组工作，并在社工实践研究节中发表调查结果；MWS家庭服务中心-淡滨尼则就家暴幸存者者在医疗机构的经历分享看法。



转换视角看待贫穷问题

在富裕的新加坡，我们鲜少会看到乞丐或流浪汉，也很少有人认为贫穷问题值得一提。但这是否取决于我们如何看待贫穷呢？请点击观看这段影片 (<https://bit.ly/46fPc7i>)，和我们携手解决贫困带来的严重影响，并为更多人赋能，使他们过上圆满的人生。



创新改良式运动项目获票选肯定

为应对2022年疫情期间的偶发性阻断措施的实行，卫理福利服务的综合医疗保健团队制定了一个改良式运动项目，鼓励MWS基督之光卫理关怀院的院民多多活动，减少社交孤立。2023年4月14日，该项目在国立健保集团主办的全民健康公社2023年度工作计划研讨会上，因其创新、跨社会与医疗保健领域的整合，以及为体虚老人赋能，提升该群体自我掌握整体健康状况的能力，而获颁大众票选奖。

重建信任 离婚过程中，42岁的Dahlia*和前夫闹得很僵，与12岁的女儿Olivia*的关系同样急转直下。后来Olivia离家出走，Dahlia为此痛心不已。就在这一灰暗时刻，Dahlia被转介至MWS FAM@FSC，开始与首席辅导员卢小媚联系。“我当时非常沮丧、崩溃，但小媚的鼓励治愈了我，也让我释怀不少。”Dahlia分享道。在协助修复母女俩的关系时，小媚先与Olivia建立融洽的关系，让她放心地敞开心扉倾诉。经过几次辅导后，Olivia终于答应与Dahlia见面，随后也愿意回家了。母子俩将辅导内容学以致用，改变了彼此间的互动方式。“我学会与孩子坦诚沟通，也多听听她的想法。”Dahlia说道。“我们现在相处得非常好，比以前更好。”Olivia说。



化悲痛为力量 在刘沛颖六个月大时，她的生母将她交给一个打麻将时认识的陌生人，临走前还答应会把孩子接回家。七年过去，生母并没有回来，而那个陌生人成了沛颖的养母。“当我终于知道真相后，我觉得我的人生就是一个谎言。在养母的鼓励下，我搬回去和我的亲生家庭住。我试着融入一个全新的环境，在悲伤、失落与流离失所的情绪中挣扎。”沛颖说道。那段艰难的童年岁月，不仅将沛颖塑造成为一个富有同情心的大人，最终更推动34岁的她进入帮扶事业。身为MWS FAM@FSC的社工助理，沛颖的工作之一是执行“离异家庭子女项目”，这一项目旨在减轻父母离婚对离异家庭子女的负面影响。“这些孩子经常夹在父母中间左右为难，有时还要充当父母吵架时的传话人。我们教授的其中一项自我管理策略是‘我’讯息，这一策略能帮助孩子不带指责地表达自己的感受、关切与需求。”沛颖分享道。*化名

MWS CENTRES & PROGRAMMES

MWS CORPORATE SERVICES Methodist Welfare Services

70 Barker Road #05-01
Singapore 309936
Tel: 6478 4700 Fax: 6478 4701
Email: admin@mws.sg
Website: www.mws.sg

FAMILY SERVICES

MWS CHRISTALITE STUDENT CARE CENTRE

Blk 122 Geylang East Central
#01-74 Singapore 380122
Tel: 6744 4927
Email: MWSscsc@mws.sg

MWS GIRLS' RESIDENCE

600 Upper Thomson Road
Blk A #01-01 Singapore 574421
Tel: 6391 0567
Email: MWSgr@mws.sg

MWS COVENANT FAMILY SERVICE CENTRE – HOUGANG

Blk 613 Hougang Ave 8
#01-432 Singapore 530613
Tel: 6282 8558 Fax: 6283 6361
Email: MWScfsc@mws.sg

MWS COVENANT FAMILY SERVICE CENTRE – BUANGKOK

Blk 997B Buangkok Crescent
#01-853 Singapore 532997
Tel: 6282 8558 Fax: 6283 6361
Email: MWScfsc@mws.sg

MWS FAMILY SERVICE CENTRE – TAMPINES

Blk 470 Tampines St 44
#01-194 Singapore 520470
Tel: 6787 2001 Fax: 6787 4459
Email: MWSfsct@mws.sg

MWS FAMILY SERVICE CENTRE – YISHUN

Blk 855 Yishun Ring Road
#01-3539 Singapore 760855
Tel: 6756 4995 Fax: 6752 4709
Email: MWSfscy@mws.sg

MWS FAMILY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

(Administered by MWS Corporate Services)
Tel: 6478 4700 Fax: 6478 4701
Email: MWSfdp@mws.sg

MWS FAMILY SUPPORT PROGRAMME

107 Eunos Ave 3
Storefriendly Centre #06-01 (W6019) Singapore 409837
Tel: 8812 9565
Email: MWSfsp@mws.sg

STRENGTHENING FAMILIES PROGRAMME@FAMILY SERVICE CENTRE (MWS FAM@FSC)

Office: 176 Orchard Road
The Centrepoint #04-04,
#05-05 Singapore 238843
Programme: Blk 997B
Buangkok Crescent
#01-853 Singapore 532997
Tel: 6330 1080
Email: fam@mws.sg

RESIDENTIAL SERVICES

MWS BETHANY NURSING HOME – CHOA CHU KANG

9 Choa Chu Kang Ave 4
Singapore 689815
Tel: 6314 1580 Fax: 6314 1576
Email: MWSbnh@mws.sg

MWS NURSING HOME – YEW TEE

51 Choa Chu Kang North 6
Singapore 689581
Tel: 6568 9200 Fax: 6568 9250
Email: MWSnhyt@mws.sg

MWS CHRISTALITE METHODIST HOME

51 Marsiling Drive
Singapore 739297
Tel: 6368 5179 Fax: 6368 7127
Email: MWScmh@mws.sg

COMMUNITY ELDERCARE SERVICES

MWS HOME CARE & HOME HOSPICE

2 Kallang Avenue
CT Hub #08-14
Singapore 339407
Tel: 6435 0270 Fax: 6435 0274
Email: MWShh@mws.sg

MWS SENIOR CARE CENTRE – EUNOS

1 Chin Cheng Avenue
#01-02 Singapore 429400
Tel: 6530 3635
Email: MWSscc@mws.sg

MWS CHARIS ACE ACTIVE AGEING CENTRE – GEYLANG EAST

Blk 125 Geylang East Ave 1
#01-05 Singapore 381125
Tel: 6842 0497
Email: MWSceaac@mws.sg

MWS WESLEY ACTIVE AGEING CENTRE – JALAN BERSEH

Blk 25 Jalan Berseh
#01-142 Singapore 200025
Tel: 6298 0194 / 6298 0195
Email: MWSwaac@mws.sg

MWS ACTIVE AGEING CENTRE – FERVALE RIVERGROVE

Blk 473A Fernvale Street
#01-17 Singapore 791473
Tel: 6481 7395
Email: MWSsacfr@mws.sg

MWS ACTIVE AGEING CENTRE – GOLDEN LILY@PASIR RIS

Blk 212A Pasir Ris St 21
#01-616 Singapore 511212
Tel: 6214 0119 / 6214 0189
Email: MWSaacgl@mws.sg

MWS ACTIVE AGEING CENTRE – GREENTOPS@SIMS PLACE

Blk 63 Sims Place
#01-227 Singapore 380063
Tel: 6747 1786 / 6747 1796
Email: MWSsacsp@mws.sg

MWS ACTIVE AGEING CENTRE – KEBUN BARU

Blk 180 Ang Mo Kio Ave 5
#01-2980 Singapore 560180
Tel: 6238 4136 / 6238 4137
Email: MWSaackb@mws.sg

MWS ACTIVE AGEING CENTRE – TECK GHEE VISTA

Blk 307D Ang Mo Kio Ave 1
#01-01 Singapore 564307
Tel: 6684 0341 / 6684 0361
Email: MWSsactg@mws.sg



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Editor: **Michelle Aw Yong** Writer: **Cheryl Ong**

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WHAT POSITIVE IMPACT WOULD YOU LIKE TO MAKE TODAY?



Every dollar counts to people who have few or no resources. Your donation is greatly appreciated.

\$50

Support a primary school child's school expenses

Education has been called the tool to alleviate poverty, yet low-income families often have to cut back on their children's education expenses, and even basic necessities such as meals, stationery and books. Give our next generation the chance to work towards a better future.

\$100

Help a low-income family clear debts of daily living or build assets

Clearing mounting debts or saving for a rainy day can seem like an insurmountable task to our beneficiaries. A little encouragement will go a long way in helping them achieve their goals and enable them to be better prepared for times of uncertainty.

\$250

Sponsor counselling and therapy for an at-risk youth

Young offenders often come from family or social environments where they have poor support and sometimes face neglect and abuse. Support our MWS Girls' Residence in providing for their basic needs and give them the trauma-informed therapy they require to get back on their feet and be a contributing part of society.

\$350

Run physiotherapy for nursing home residents

Contribute to the physiotherapy our residents receive, to strengthen their limbs and improve their motor skills. Your contribution will help them reduce muscle deterioration and regain much-needed strength.

\$500

Provide nursing care for the frail and elderly

Most of the residents at our nursing homes come from low-income backgrounds, and some struggle to afford the minimum payment. Donations are critical to give them the long-term care that they cannot afford.



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Empowering People to Have Life to the Full