

*Celebrating **35<sup>th</sup>** Anniversary*

# Take the Mental Health Journey Together

## Our Stories



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# A Message from the Executive Director



First and foremost, I would like to thank the clients for sharing their stories with the community. Without their courage and support in “Taking the Mental Health Journey Together”, this book project would not be possible. After reading their stories, I feel warm and honoured to know that Hong Fook has played such an integral part in so many lives. I hope that this book provides in-depth insight into our agency in terms of how we operate, how we work with diverse communities, and how we impact the Greater Toronto Area on a daily basis.

We started this book project with the aim of continuing our fight in reducing mental health stigma and showcasing the support system that we provide. However, an unintended result emerged: increased staff and client morale. In our profession, a not for profit agency devoted to the care of others, we sometimes forget our own needs. As a result from the story publications, several staff members identified that these stories reminded them of the successes and the positive roles they have in the community. They had forgotten some of these details, while their clients also reflected and embraced how far they had come along in their journey. These effects are encouraging to say the least, because I know that we learned something valuable from these stories and I hope you will too when you read them.

To my beloved tireless staff. I know the dedication in providing genuine health care to help those accept mental illness and recover is a long and rough journey, but I hope that this book will act as a beacon of encouragement and resource for you as well because you are not alone. You are part of this journey with these clients, family members, mental health workers, doctors, and volunteers.

To our committed doctors. Thank you for sharing your knowledge, expertise, and stories, which have helped craft Hong Fook into the highly impactful agency it is today. The countless hours that you offered to patients and their families, the guidance to our staff about programs and services, and your perspectives contributed to this book, are deeply felt by me and the readers. I also hope you can take something from these stories and realize the profound change you have affected through your work.

To our selfless volunteers. You have been the backbone of our agency. All the projects, programs and services, and community outreach are directly attributed to your altruistic dedication. Our agency began because a collection of volunteers identified a need to provide mental health care to all, no matter the cultural or linguistic barriers. Over time, our volunteer base has now grown to 200+ and I want to thank each and every one of you for bringing your unique skills to our agency.

To our generous funders. Thank you for your resolve in supporting and building a stronger community, allowing us to provide comprehensive programs and services to meet our clients' needs. Special thanks to the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care, the Central East Local Health Integration Network, the City of Toronto, the Municipality of York Region, the United Way of Toronto & York Region, and the Hong Fook Mental Health Foundation.

To the community media. Your belief in reducing mental health stigma and increasing mental health literacy is inspiring. Without your continuous support it would be difficult to provide the same transformative impact. A special thanks to Canada KCR News Corp., Thoi Bao, and Sing Tao Daily.

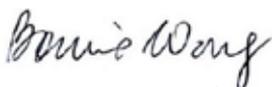
To our special contributors. Thank you to all the staff who worked with and translated clients' stories, the support from the HF Connecting Health Nurse Practitioner-Led Clinic, Aries Cheung for his amazing graphic designs, and Dave Tran for coordinating this project.

Last, but not least, all of you from service providers, hospitals, community partners, private donors, corporate sponsors, and even you, the reader, thank you for taking the time in believing in mental health wellness. Your interests, passion, work, and belief motivates us to succeed in meeting the ever increasing and changing demands of our clients and communities. We must all be vigilant in our efforts to provide fairer and equitable access to mental health care for all, and so let us all "Take the Mental Health Journey Together".

I would like to leave you with one final thought: Mental Wealth. We need to work together and strive for personal practice in establishing a holistic approach that emphasizes happiness, love, and compassion. The costs of mental health are clear and mounting; mental health can attack and undermine anyone, and so Mental Wealth is vital in establishing a rich endless resource that we can tap into when we need to overcome challenges, pressures, and trauma.

From the bottom of my heart, thank you all and I wish you the best.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bonnie Wong".

Bonnie Wong, MSW, RSW  
Hong Fook Mental Health Association Executive Director

# 2012 - 2016 Five Years of Progress

## Let's Take the Mental Health Journey Together

2016



*Need Assessment Launch*

- Received funding to pilot the Wraparound Teens Mental Health Project
- Partnered with the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI) and the Canadian Centre for Victim of Tortures (CCVT) to launch two-day Mental Health and Trauma training program for settlement sector
- Established the Pediatric Clinic at the Chester Le Junior Public School in Scarborough
- Launched Mandarin Community Mental Health Needs Assessment Results in public forum

2015



*Asian Clinic at NPLC*

- Conducted an organizational review to streamline Central Intake, invest in new technologies, and change the organizational structure
- Worked with Scarborough Hospitals, Rouge Valley Hospital, Lakeridge Health and Durham Mental Health Services to pilot the Hospital to Home project
- Completed Community Mental Health Needs Assessment Research for Chinese and Vietnamese communities
- Expanded the Asian Clinic to Scarborough at the Nurse Practitioner-Led Clinic

2014

- Conducted mental health groups and workshops for youth with three universities
- Participated in the Scarborough North and South Health Links to increase care coordination
- Began to provide Mental Health First Aid Training for Chinese and Korean Communities



*Workshops for Youth*

2013



*HFCHNPLC Grand Opening*

- Opened the HF Connecting Health Nurse Practitioner-Led Clinic
- Worked with Toronto Western Hospital Asian in Mental Health (AIM) and Abrigo Centre to conduct Journey to Healing Psychoeducational groups and Integrated Behavioral Group Therapy Sessions
- Partnered with Lakeridge Health (now Taibu Community Health Centre) and Malvern Family Resource Centre to deliver Choices Youth Program
- Partnered with East Metro Youth Services to deliver Chinese Youth Outreach program
- Involved in the three-year national research project: Strength in Unity, Asian Male Mental Health Needs Study

2012

- Celebrated 30th Anniversary
- Moved the Downtown office to 130 Dundas Street West
- Received funding from TD Bank to pilot the “Blossom of Hope” Social Enterprise Project



*30th Anniversary Gala*

# Celebrating 15 Success Stories

## War and Trauma: Seeking Refuge

*Wendy recounts her harrowing tale that brought her to Toronto, but also the continual difficulties of living as a minority.*

My mental illness started with living in Cambodia during the Khmer Rouge Regime and under the leadership of Pol Pot—I was 36 years old and this is my story.

I was the mother of nine children at the time. Five of them died during the war. Each time I recall their faces that's filled with tears and pain, I feel like a heartbroken helpless mother.

“Mommy, I am starving. We want food. Please get us some food! We are dying!” They were pulling onto my shirt, with pure innocence in their eyes, not realizing the world around them, not having the slightest idea of the poison and destruction that was consuming everyone else. There simply wasn't enough food to feed them. I tried to beg others for scraps, searching the war torn streets for any form of nutrition, but nothing was available. We were ordered to move from one village to another, never having a permanent place to call home, a safe place for my children to grow up. By foot, we travelled hundreds of miles and slept under minimal covers in the rain—sometimes right out in the open. Slowly, several of my children fell into silence; their screams of hunger and tiredness turning into light moans, gasps for breaths, and then gone. Their voices are still in my memory to this day. Hope seemed like a fictitious word.

The trauma, distress, anger, sadness, depression, and hopelessness that I was undergoing never seem to come to an end. I didn't know what else I could do to keep my children by my side, to bring them up like I promised when I first held them in my arms. I had to keep trying, I had to survive, I had to protect my family. That day finally came.

In 1979 I managed to escape from communism with my children to a Thai refugee camp. The journey took us to France in 1983 and eventually to Toronto, Ontario in 1989. However, my mental health journey would only be

exacerbated in Toronto—all I can say is that my relationship with my children became strained and fragile.

During that time, I really had no clue where the Cambodian population resides in Toronto. It wasn't as simple as finding the Chinese neighborhood at Spadina or Broadview. The city was a strange dark place for me. I was unable to think of anything else other than the strange sounds outside my window.

Eventually, my children left my side to live on their own and to avoid family conflicts. My family disappeared and I felt deserted, alone, and desperate. I had no ability to speak English and needed my children's financial assistance. I had no choice but to call the police; with my limited French, the police were able to connect me with Hong Fook. Immediately, I was connected with a Cambodian mental health worker and psychiatric treatment from the Asian Clinic since 1990.

Right away, I received advice and strategies of how to overcome the series of nightmares that haunted me; I did take medication, and this would produce some results, but ultimately, I needed to have self-strength, which I was able to get from my belief in God and the support from Hong Fook as a whole, including Case Management, Self-Help, and all the staff. I can say now, with confidence, that Hong Fook has become a family for me; their friendly staffs and their willingness to help me when I am in a difficult situation has always been encouraging and loving.

My journey has been an exhausting one, but there has been progress. My Hong Fook mental health worker keeps track on me, ensuring I was in good health, providing a source of light and hope for me. She even secured safe and stable housing and financial support for me. Through supportive counselling, I learned about my depression and how to cope with it. I joined the Cambodian Self-Help group where I was able to meet a community of Cambodians that I could not find by myself. During my struggles, I felt I was losing everything, but suddenly, I was feeling a resurgence of energy, almost as if I was given a second change to live again. The regular meetings provided me with a desire to go out, do physical exercise, engage in social activities, dancing and singing. I feel happier because I can talk to friends about my issues and be part of a group that understands what I went through—that connection is invaluable.

*Wendy continues to receive Hong Fook services; she is determined not to let herself fall into the same illnesses that threatened to take away her life. She hopes her story will encourage others to fight against depression and trauma, and to look for a better future.*

# 2 Cancerous Mental Health: A Survivor

*Jennie's physical condition led to a difficult mental illness, pushing her to find a direction of healing and wellness.*

Blood oozing out, the irrepressible coughing, the endless sense of pain and tiredness; I fell onto the floor, unable to get back up. My son and husband leaping forward to help me up; tears in everyone's eyes as the backdrop of Death seemed imminent.

Two and a half years, the cycle of waking up, struggling to the clinic, having a needle in my body, an unknown liquid dripping down and draining all my energy, going home, eating a bit, vomiting it out, and trying to sleep tortured me.

A knife would go into me, removing the large cancerous lump; that grotesque thing which formed in me like a living organism, only to try and kill the host it lives in.

Yes, I survived, but my brother did not. When I was in remission my brother was diagnosed with late stage cancer. I was trying to physically and emotionally recover from my own battle only to be put into another one as I watched him shrivel and decay; our parents watched, for there was nothing to do other than to shed tears, which only intensified the pain.

A sense of despair came over me, blanketing any light and any source of happiness. I can't imagine someone who survived cancer to end up feeling lonely and defeated, but I did when my brother passed away--our whole family became covered by that heavy blanket.

I paced back and forth in my mind about the unfairness of life. Depression was an obvious side effect of all the trauma; everyday I would think about if it was worth continuing on when there was so much pain on the other side. Maybe it would have been easier to have let go and just let everything take over and take me away. There is only so much loss one person or one family can shoulder. The mental stress had become a cancer of its own.

My husband and son also have mental health issues, and when friends began taking notice of our family difficulties, they started to distance themselves;

friends were no longer as willing to meet up, pick up our phone calls, or even visit. When my cancer was gone there was a large support group that would visit and check in on my health, but when signs of my depression appeared, that support group quickly evaporated. It was almost like a page from *The Scarlet Letter*, but the letter branded on me was M. As I walked down the street, it was like I was marked and people would stay away; it wasn't visible but somehow those who noticed had removed themselves from my life.

Ultimately, I don't blame them. There is a stigma amongst the Asian communities to disconnect from those who are ill, especially if it is a mental illness.

I needed help and I saw a pamphlet about Hong Fook one day. In turn, I entered their Case Management Services; I felt blessed to have my mental health worker who actively listens and offers advice that genuinely helped me through overcoming my depression and negative thoughts. By being part of the Hong Fook family I learned about other programs and services like their "recovery journey" workshops that gave me a lot of information and allowed me to connect with many like-minded peers. Meeting others who were like me was reassuring, comforting, and empowering. The blanket that was covering my life was slowly being peeled back, but not by me alone. Others were helping me pull it back to show me there was hope and happiness if I just opened my eyes and got out of bed.

At the workshops, the Hong Fook staff invited a naturopathic doctor and Qi Gong instructor to further provide a holistic sense of healing, which built our minds and gave us additional methods to relieve stress, think positive, and essentially feel better. I particularly enjoy the dance classes as they really lift my spirits when I may experience sadness. All of us who attended have shared our stories and have learned to build a community support group that focuses on mental wellness. We are stronger than ever because we have each other.

I am sharing my journey because I noticed that many sympathize and understand more physical pain like cancer, but not mental health issues. I want those who are on their mental health recovery path not to be alone. There is a light at the end of the tunnel. I am Jennie, a cancer survivor, I was depressed, and I am on my way to mental wellness.

*Jennie continues with Hong Fook in the Prevention and Promotion team, and has been discharged from the Case Management as she is empowered to help others with their wellness journey.*

## 如癌症般的精神病：一個倖存者的經歷

珍妮 (Jennie) 由於身體出現問題而導致患上精神疾病，促使她去尋找康復和安康的方向。

血水慢慢地滲出，不斷的咳嗽，伴著永無休止的痛楚和疲倦；我頹然倒在地上，無法站起來。丈夫和兒子跳上前把我扶起，我們的雙眼都充滿了淚水；死神彷彿正在向我招手。

兩年半以來，我重複著起床，掙扎著去診所，穿上針咀，被不知名的液體注到體內，令我累透，跟著回家，吃點東西，再把吃下的東西嘔出，然後試圖睡覺...這個不斷的循環折磨透了我。

其後手術刀把我體內的大塊腫瘤割除；現在回想起來，這怪物在我的體內形成一個活的有機體，就是要企圖殺死我這個宿主。

是的，我生存下來了，但我的哥哥卻沒有這麼幸運。就在我的病情得以緩解時，哥哥卻確診患上了末期癌症。正當我要從自己的癌症搏鬥中恢復過來時，他就步上我的後塵；看著他日漸枯朽，雙親只有垂淚面對，徒惹痛苦和傷感的氣氛。

我感到絕望，拒絕任何光明和開心的事物。我不能想像任何能夠擊敗癌症的人最終竟會感到孤單和挫敗，但在哥哥病逝後，我就產生了這種感覺，而我們全家都被那像厚厚「毛氈」般的愁雲慘霧完全覆蓋著。

我的腦海裡總是浮現著生命的不公。抑鬱症與創傷感接踵而來。每天我都在想，既然有那麼多的痛苦，究竟是否還值得走下去？也許放手更容易，就讓一切事物控制我，把我帶走吧！這就是一個人或者一個家庭可能承受的痛失，因為精神壓力本身已經變成了癌症。

我得承認我丈夫和兒子都有精神健康的問題，所以當朋友察覺我們出現麻煩時，便開始疏遠我們，不想再和我們見面，或跟我們通電話，又或探訪我們。當我的腫瘤

清除後，有一個很大的支援組織曾經來探望我，檢查我的健康情況，但當有跡象顯示我有抑鬱並影響到我的情緒時，他們卻像人間蒸發了。朋友不再和我們飲茶吃點心。我走在街上，覺得自己被標籤，人人都遠離我。這是無形的，但不知何故那些注意到這情況的人都棄我而去。

我沒有怪責他們。在亞裔社區歧視病人的情況很普遍，他們會與病者斷絕來往，尤其是精神病患者。

我需要幫助！有一天我看到關於康福的小冊子，其後我接受了他們的個人關顧服務。很慶幸我的心理健康工作人員積極聆聽我的傾訴並予我意見，真正能夠幫助我克服抑鬱和消極的想法。加入康福這個大家庭，讓我認識其他服務和項目如「康復之路」工作坊，給了我很多有用的資訊，以及把我和其他情況相若的人士聯繫起來。與他們會面，令我感到安心、鼓舞和充滿力量。那覆蓋著我人生的厚厚「毛氈」慢慢地被揭走，而我不是孤軍作戰。有人會幫我把「毛氈」拉回來，讓我看清楚，其實只要我睜開眼睛離開睡床，就有希望和快樂。

在工作坊裡，康福的職員邀請了自然療法的醫生及氣功師傅出席，提供一種全面的治療方式，以建立我們自己的想法，同時教導我們其他減壓的方法和建立正面思想，令我們感覺更好。我特別喜歡舞蹈班，因為在我不開心時跳舞會提高我的情緒。參加工作坊的人各自分享自己的故事，並且學習建立一個以心理健康為主的社區支援小組。我們比任何時候都更堅強，因為我們互相扶持。

我分享自己的心路歷程，是由於我發覺人們的同情和理解都是集中於表達對肉體的痛楚如癌症等，而不是對精神疾病。我希望那些在精神疾病康復路上的朋友們不再孤單，要知道隧道盡頭的燈正照亮。我是珍妮，一個癌症倖存者，經歷過抑鬱，我現正昂首闊步踏在心理健康的路上。

珍妮繼續參與康福的預防精神疾病及推廣心理健康的團隊，並且已無需再接受個人關顧服務，因為她已經有能力去幫助他人走上健康之路。

# 3 A Turning Point to Regain Happiness

*Hily came in 2014 as a participant at a Monthly Mental Health Workshop; afterwards, she decided to join in the course “Managing Emotions for Women” that influenced and changed her life for the better.*

My brother passed away—that was the beginning of my mental health journey. Ten years ago when I was in my 30s my life was thrown into disarray. For years, I cried thinking of him; a deep connection was lost forever as he was always a person I could rely on, share my stories with, and learn from, but suddenly he was gone, taken away from me without notice. The pain would reside in me for years. Tears would flow down my face when I drove to work, while I was at work, and when I was at home. This pain would gradually recede with time, but this solution and feeling were temporary.

As we all know sometimes when it rains, it pours; my father would be the next person to leave my side. His health quickly deteriorated; hospital visits became a regular destination for me, a second home that consistently reminded me of sickness and death. None of us like going to the hospital ourselves, but to attend and watch someone you love wither away is just heartbreaking.

Shortly after, issues with my mother, work, and other family members came up; the overwhelming feeling of all these problems were significantly pressing my mind, pushing me to extreme stages of anxiety. At first, I tried my best to cope with these problems, sometimes internalizing these issues, but ultimately, serious symptoms began to form. I started to find my hands involuntarily shaking, my heart rate beating extremely fast. I couldn't sleep and focusing on work was impossible—I was losing control of myself, my life.

One day, I started to repeatedly ask myself these questions, “Do I want to live like this forever? Do I want to take medication? Do I want my family to suffer because of me?” The rational answer is no, but when I was living these experiences I doubted myself, I questioned if I could do things on my own without modern medicine, burdening my family, and accepting my situation because I thought there were no alternatives.

Then, something changed. I saw an advertisement for a mental health workshop; initially, I didn't think much of it but thought I would at least attend and see what the workshop was about. Thank God I attended. The Monthly Mental Health Workshop organized by "Hong Fook" became a "Turning Point" to regaining my sense of self and happiness. The workshop motivated me to take action, and after I attended a Course of "Managing Emotions for Women"—I connected with a professional mental health worker and volunteers that transformed my life. Together we worked on understanding emotions, building self-esteem, positive thinking, self-rejuvenation, and so many other strategies.

The journey to recognizing my emotions, communicating with others, assessing my needs and strengths, applying the knowledge and resources from Hong Fook all contributed to my success in taking the path to mental wellness.

At Hong Fook, the emphasis of self-love and self-respect were relatively new to me, but with the unconditional care and support from the agency I was able to feel empowered; I was beginning to view stressors with a different mindset while having the right tools to overcome challenges. With Hong Fook I realized I was not alone, for we were all part of this life-long journey.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my mental health worker and all the volunteers; I won't forget their warm encouragement and continuous strength. Not only did they support and lift me up when I fell, but touched my heart, guiding me on a path that I am not afraid to take anymore. I am thankful that I did not have to compromise on my beliefs and desires as I am proud to say I never took medication. The darkness that was in my heart for the past ten years has been a heavy obstacle to clear; I am still on my journey, but I know that I am more capable than ever to cope, accept, and move forward from the creeping darkness that was threatening to swallow me. I can easily say, I am happier now than I have been in the past 40 years and that is thanks to the compassion at Hong Fook. Thank you.

*Today, Hily feels more empowered than ever. She still attends our bi-monthly supportive sessions to gain further knowledge and assistance on her mental wellness path.*

## 重獲快樂的轉機

凱莉(Hily)於2014年加入康福的每月心理健康工作坊；其後她參加了「女性控制情緒」課程，這決定令她有更快樂的生活。

我哥哥的過世，觸發了我踏上了心理健康的歷程。十年前我三十多歲，哥哥的死令我的生活陷入混亂狀態。多年來每當想起他，我總是禁不住哭起來。他是我信賴的親人，會聆聽我的傾訴，是我的學習對象，可是他突然間走了，在毫無徵兆下捨我而去，我和他緊密的聯繫就這樣永遠的消失了。那痛苦留在心內多年，無論在我駕車上班途中、在工作的時候，或是在家裡，淚水都會不期然地流下來。也許痛楚會隨著時間減退，但這種以時間療傷的解決方法只是暫時性的。

俗語所謂「禍不單行」，不幸地應驗在我身上。父親將會是下一個離開我的親人。他的病情急速惡化，我要經常出入醫院探望他，醫院成了我的第二個家，提醒我患病和死亡。沒有人喜歡到醫院去，而在那裡看著你的至愛日漸衰弱真的令人心碎。

不久，我的母親、工作和其他家庭成員的問題都陸續湧現，巨大的壓力把我推至憂慮的頂點。起初我努力應付這些問題，有時把問題埋藏在心底，但最後嚴重的症狀開始形成。我的手開始不由自主地顫抖，心跳得很快，不能入睡，更無法集中精神工作——我失去了控制自己和人生的能力。

有一天，我開始反覆問自己：「我是否想以後過這樣的生活？我要吃藥嗎？我想家人因我而受苦嗎？」理性的答案是否定的，可是當我仍經歷這些症狀時，我質疑自己，我懷疑是否可用自己的方式解決而不用藥物，不負累家人和接受現實，因為我認為並沒有其他選擇。

其後，事情有了轉機，我看到了一個關於心理健康工作坊的廣告。最初我沒有寄予厚望，只想看看它究竟是甚麼一回事。感謝上帝，我參加了工作坊。這個由康福主

辦的每月心理健康工作坊成為了我的「轉機」，讓我找回自己和重拾快樂。這個工作坊鼓勵我採取主動。我又參加了一個名為「女性控制情緒」的課程，與專業的心理健康工作者和義工建立了聯繫，這改變了我人生。他們幫我認識情緒、建立自信、採取正面想法、自我恢復活力和很多其他的對策。

我之所以能成功步上精神健康之路，全因康福提供的服務，讓我認識到自己的情緒、學習與其他人溝通、評估自己的需要和優勢，並且能夠應用到康福給我的知識和資源。

康福所強調的自愛和自重對我來說是頗為新鮮的。這個機構提供無條件的關愛和支持，讓我感到自己增強了能力。我開始以不同的心態看待壓力，同時有合適的工具去克服這些挑戰。康福令我明白到自己並不孤單，因我們都是這個人生歷程的一分子。

我希望借此機會感謝我的心理健康工作者和所有義工；我不會忘記他們給我的熱情鼓勵和持續的力量。他們不單在我倒下的時候扶持我，還觸動了我的心靈，指引我踏上康復之路，讓我不再懼怕。我毋須放棄我的信念和願望，我可以自豪地說：「我從來沒有服食過藥物。」我知道過去十年纏繞在我內心的龐大陰影是很難清除掉的，我仍在奮戰，但我知道自己比以前更有能力去應付、承受和在威脅要吞噬我的黑暗中昂首前進。我可以肯定地說，感謝康福的愛心，讓我現在比過去四十年都快樂。謝謝！

今年，凱莉感到有無比的力量。她仍然參加康福的雙月支援聚會，以便在心理健康的路途上獲得更多知識和協助。

# 4 Academics aren't Everything

*Suh, like many youths was hit hard by the pressures of doing well in school and could not cope with the stress, forcing herself to re-think her life.*

“You need to do better. We want the best for you. We know what is best for you. We work hard so you can have a better future. How can you only get these marks?”

These remarks and requests are pretty much ingrained in the Korean culture; on the one hand, we can make fun of these demands as stereotypical Asian expectations. On the other hand, these comments can be weighed heavily on the minds of children as they are unsure about their lives and are afraid of disappointing their parents. Pressure starts building up, arguments flare up and lackluster results start showing.

It all began when I was eighteen. I was a first-year university student, a new chapter that promised education, hope, and opportunity. All those years of preparation had pushed me in to this direction, but it slowly began to unfold. After midterms, I realized I was unprepared for the different academic standards. Taking an overwhelming number of difficult courses without any proper guidance, being unable to communicate with professors or connect with my peers, and an immense workload led to the worst academic performance in my entire life.

I began to panic, thinking of ways of to increase my grades so that everything would be ‘normal’ again; I pulled all-nighters and pushed myself to the limit. What else could I do? All the time I had invested into school seemed like a waste as I teetered on failing courses. I did not realize at first, but I was sinking into depression. I started skipping classes. I would stay at home, eat and sleep excessively, avoid school work, desperately attempting to relieve my stress.

I felt I had nobody to talk to about my problems. My parents definitely would not understand. As I continued to skip classes and tests, I could no longer meet the academic requirements, hence, I was put on academic probation. I tried to make things ‘right’ by taking summer courses to bring my GPA up,

but since I had lost my confidence and life pattern, I failed again. I felt I was worthless, and there was no point in even trying.

In the end, I was caught in a cycle of being absent from school and re-registering. After failing to pass the first year of university, I decided to drop out for some time. I could no longer pretend I was okay. My parents found out, and explosive arguments ensued, resulting in separation from family, friends and happiness. I was frustrated about everything around me, including myself.

Finally, a university counsellor outlined that I may have been suffering from mental health disorders, which I was recommended to speak to my parents about. With the help from my parents, this led to a number of mental health professionals entering my life; some of them were welcomed, others not so much. I was not sure about Hong Fook at first, as I was listed in their waiting list for two years. However, my views changed quickly.

Under their Case Management program, I have been working with a mental health worker that have weekly counselling sessions and if necessary, provided daily check-ins. I formed a bond with my case worker, revealing details about my feelings and life in a free and comfortable manner; I started to feel as if a weight was taken off my shoulders. I cannot emphasize enough how difficult it was for me to tell someone my problems; the stigma, the inability to speak, the idea of not knowing what I am saying, were all limitations that prevented me from seeking help and living a healthier life.

Moreover, they had Korean Family Initiative Group sessions that allowed my parents to participate and gain more information about mental health. My parents and I are working together; there is a goal for me to get better and that path took some time, but they are willing to join me in my recovery.

Now, I do not hide or avoid the problems. The coping strategies I learned not only encouraged positive thinking but action as well. Talking about issues I have on my mind with my parents became easier, which was something that I never dreamt possible. Now I am always trying to think critically about situations and work with those close to me about my concerns. I am now trying to re-enter and obtain my post-secondary education degree. I am confident that I will achieve this goal with the support of my friends, family, and Hong Fook.

*Suh has tried numerous times to complete a post-secondary education; she is still finding her way to finishing this goal. She continues to gain guidance from our Case Management Team.*

## 공부가 전부는 아니다

서(Suh)는 다른 청소년들과 마찬가지로 학교에서 공부를 잘해야 한다는 극심한 부담감때문에 일상생활의 스트레스를 대처할 여력을 잃었다.

“더 잘해야지. 우리는 네가 최고이기를 원해. 너한테 무엇이 최선인지 알아. 열심히 해서 좀 더 나은 미래를 만들어보자. 점수가 이게 뭐니?”

이런 것들은 한국 문화에서 아주 뿌리 깊게 자리 잡고 있는 특징이자 요구 사항으로 이해되기도 하지만, 반면에 동양인들이 갖는 기대로 인식되어 다른 문화에서는 웃음거리가 되기도 한다. 한편으로는 이런 생각과 기대치로 자녀들은 부모님들이 실망할까 두려워 하면서 부모님을 실망시키지 말아야 된다는 중압감으로 인해 자신이 하고싶은것을 인식하지 못하며 방향한다. 중압감이 차오르기 시작하고, 말다툼이 불거지며, 생산성 없는 결과가 나타나기 시작한다.

나의 모든 일들은 배움이 약속되고 배움과 희망의 기회가 보장된 열 여덟 대학 1학년 캠퍼스에서 시작되었다. 내가 그동안 열심히 살았던 시간들이 나를 바른 길로 인도했다고 생각했다, 그러나 서서히 그와는 정 반대의 이야기들이 펼쳐졌다. 중간고사가 끝나자마자, 나는 내가 대학생활을 성공적으로 끝낼 준비가 되어 있지 않다는 사실을 감지할 수 있었다. 적합한 지도를 받지도 않고 첫 해에 어려운 수준의 과목을 무리하게 선택했던 것, 교수들과 의사소통을 잘 하지 못하고 친구들과 잘 어울리지 못했던 것 그리고 과도한 학업과제 등 이 모든 것들로 인해 내 인생을 통털어 가장 최악의 학교 성적을 받게 되었다. 고등학교 시절 빛났던 내 성적은 대학에서는 빛을 바라지 못했다.

모든 것이 다시 정상으로 돌아오게 하기 위해 어떻게 하면 성적을 끌어올릴 수 있을까 밤을 지새우면 고민하고 나 자신을 몰아치는 와중에 나는 공황상태에 빠지게 되었다. 그밖에 내가 뭘 할 수 있었겠는가? 낙제한 과목들로 비틀거리는 내 모습은 학교에 투자한 모든 시간들이 쓰레기처럼 생각되게 만들었다. 처음에는 몰랐는데 점점 우울증으로 가라앉기 시작했다. 학교 수업을 빼먹고 집에 있으면서 그저 먹고 자고 학교 과제는 하지않는 방법으로 필사적으로 스트레스를 해소하려고 노력했다.

내 문제에 대해 이야기를 나누고 싶어하는 사람이 아무도 없다고 느꼈다. 부모님은 절대로 이해하려 하지도, 이해할 수도 없었을 것이다. 계속해서 학교 수업과 시험을 빠지자 나는 학사경고를 받게 되었다. 평균 점수를 올리기 위해 여름 학기를 신청하여 바로잡아 보려 했으나 자신감과 생활 습관을 잃은 뒤로는 또 실패하게 되었다. 무가치한 인간이고 심지어는 노력할 이유가 없다고 느꼈다.

결국 나는 학교에 결석을 하고 재등록하기를 반복하게 되었다. 첫 대학 과정을 실패한 이후 어느 날 더이상 학교수업을 따라갈 수가 없어서 학교는 그만두고 학교생활을 잘 하고 있는 척 하기로 결심을 하였으나 결국, 부모님께서 그 사실을 알게 되셨고 부모님과 엄청난 말다툼을 하게 되었다. 결과적으로 나는 가족과 친구와 행복으로 부터 멀어지게 되었다. 항상 자신을 비난했고 내 주변의 모든 것과 심지어 나 자신에 대해 극도로 실망을 하였다.

마침내 대학과정 중에 한 상담사가 내가 정신질환을 앓아 왔을 수도 있다고 알려 주었고 부모님께 말씀드릴 것을 권유받았다. 이 일로 부모님의 도움을 받아 여러 정신 건강 전문가들을 만나게 되었다. 나를 바깥계 맞아주는 전문가들도 있었지만 그렇지 않은 몇몇 사람들도 있었다. 2년 동안 흥폭의 대기자 명단에 있으면서도 처음에는 흥폭에 대한 확신이 없었다. 하지만 흥폭에 대한 내 생각은 곧 바뀌었다.

케이스 관리팀의 정신건강 복지사에게 주중 상담을 받고 필요할 때는 일상관리도 받았다. 자유롭고 편안한 자세로 나의 감정과 삶에 대한 상세한 것들을 드러내며 정신건강 복지사와의 유대감을 형성하게 되었다. 어마어마한 무게가 내 어깨를 벗어나는 듯 한 느낌을 받기 시작했다. 내 문제를 누군가에게 이야기 하는것이 얼마나 힘든일이었는지 모른다. 낙인과 말할 수 없다는 것과 내가 말하는 것을 이해하지 못하리라는 생각 모두가 도움을 구하고 더 건강한 삶을 사는 것을 방해하던 내 머릿속의 한계와 장벽들이었다.

또 우리 부모님은 한국 가족그룹 (Korean Family Initiative Group)에 참석하여 정신질환에 대한 정보를 얻는 도움을 받게 되었다. 나와 부모님은 회복을 위해 함께 일하고 있다. 회복을 위한 목표가 있고 그런 과정이 시간은 좀 걸릴 수 있지만 부모님은 지원적이어서 기꺼이 나의 회복 여정에도 함께 하려 하신다. 흥폭은 동양문화에 친숙한 환경과 우리 부모님이 직면하는 문화와 언어의 장벽이 없는 양질의 서비스를 제공함으로써 우리 가족이 선호하는 곳이 되었다. 흥폭외에 다른 어느 한국 정신 건강 전문가에게서는 경험해 보지 못했다.

이제 나는 문제를 숨기거나 피하지 않는다. 내가 배웠던 대처기술은 긍정적인 생각과 또 긍정적인 행동을 하게 해 주었다. 문제를 만나면 나를 포장하기 위해 부정적인 생각을 하려는 대신에 방법을 찾아 구한다. 비록 부정적인 감정에 빠져들 때도 있지만 이후로는 회복 속도가 빨라진다. 내 생각속에 있는 부모님들의 문제에 대해 말하는 것도 더 쉬워졌다. 이전 같으면 결코 꿈도 못 꾸었을 일이다. 지금은 상황에 대해 비평적으로 사고하려고 항상 노력하며 내 걱정을 해주는 지인들과 함께 하고 있다. 대학과정에 재입학해서 필요한 교육 학점을 취득하려 한다. 친구들과 가족과 흥폭의 도움으로 나는 이 목표를 이룰 것이라 확신한다.

서 (Suh)는 대학과정을 마치기 위해 많은 시간 노력했고 이 목표를 완성하기 위해 여전히 그녀의 길을 찾고 있으며 케이스 관리팀의 지속적인 가이드를 받고 있다.

# 5 Running Out of Gas: Finding Hope at the HF Connecting Health Nurse Practitioner-Led Clinic

*Andy went through a dark period in his life, especially when he could not find work.*

Dear Jeff,

I want to kill myself. I've thought about it carefully and over the past few years I have struggled to find work. I don't know if it is because of this economy, but since being let go from Petro Canada in 2008, it has been increasingly difficult and frustrating. I did not like the job—staying in a booth, watching everyone leaving and moving while I was stationary, stuck to watch people check their lottery tickets and fill their faces full of beef jerky. Nonetheless, it was a job; it helped pay the bills; it gave me some purpose to wake up in the morning.

I just hate life and myself; I came to this country thinking that I could make a life for myself, only to find out that it was full of false promises and greater financial responsibilities. I don't know how I will ever be able to face my family back home or answer that phone call from them. When they ask me the same question each time: "How are you doing?" I need to pretend that I am fine and that I am able to support myself in this country and that the decision to move away was the right decision. How can I honestly keep up this charade?

I know your immediate response is for me not to kill myself and to hold off on the decision, that there is hope and opportunity, but it has been forever since I last received a paycheque. I am living in squalor and have all the time in the world to think about how much of a loser I am, unable to find work in this massive country.

Sirens appeared at my home and the police came barging into my home.

"Mr. Chow, I can say that you have what we call major depression," described by my psychiatrist.

It was 2009 and I began seeing a psychiatrist recommended by the

Scarborough General Hospital after my sudden arrival for two weeks. Yes, I was hospitalized for two weeks, unable to function at all. My mental illness had taken over, but the scary part is that I didn't know or understand the impact.

Over the past six years, I have been working with my psychiatrist, discussing, medicating, and revealing part of me to someone who cares for my well being. I joined the Self-Help Program at Hong Fook, and together, with my peers, my psychiatrist, and Hong Fook staff, I made friends, learned new communication skills, developed an interest in arts and crafts, and ultimately, my thoughts of suicide decreased significantly.

In turn, my psychiatrist recommended me to the HF Connecting Health Nurse Practitioner-Led Clinic (HFCH NPLC); the staff at the Clinic was amazing.

I developed a strong connection with the Nurse Practitioner; he became my primary health care provider as he would do everything my previous general practitioner would do. I would go in and receive medical help from getting a body check to getting answers to questions about my general health. His care is genuine and his patience is rare; many are familiar with the health care system here where patients need to wait forever and the doctors may not always have much time to answer your questions, but the HFCH NPLC provided a personal touch to their services that allowed me to develop a relationship with them. I am reflecting and only one word comes to mind to describe the HFCH NPLC: unbelievable.

"I can say, your condition has improved drastically and I believe you no longer need my help, Andy. I am going to discharge you," suggested my psychiatrist.

I sat stunned and amazed, but actually quite delighted. I was noticing progress; it was a bit sad to say goodbye to my psychiatrist after all these years, but I knew that I was now more equipped to handle my depression.

Today, when I enter the HFCH NPLC, I am always welcomed by their staff and love working with them, feeling free to express my feelings to practitioners like they are my friends. Their understanding is a continual support that I need.

*Andy continues to regularly visit the HFCH NPLC and bi-weekly Self-Help Program. His condition is stable as he feels far better than in 2008, the beginning of his journey.*

## 油盡見曙光：康福安保診所燃點希望

安迪 (Andy) 經歷過人生的黑暗階段，特別是他失業的日子。

親愛的謝斐：

我想自殺。我是經過詳細考慮的。我不知道是否因為市場經濟不景的關係，自從2008年加拿大石油公司把我遣散之後，我一直都在努力尋找工作但並不成功。我感到找工作愈來愈困難和令人泄氣。其實我並不喜歡那份工作——我要留在櫃檯，望著人們來來去去，而我就只能呆在那裡，看著人們核對彩票和他們緊繃的臉容。儘管不喜歡，但這是一份工作，可幫我支付帳單，給我動力每日起床上班。

我討厭生活，也討厭自己。我本以為來到這個國家我可以好好生活，卻發現它充滿虛假的承諾和背負更沉重的經濟負擔。我不知道如何能夠面對在家鄉的家人，或接聽他們的電話。每當他們問我相同的問題：「近況如何？」我就要假裝生活得很好，並且能夠在這個國家安居樂業，而我移民的決定是對的。可是我怎能夠長期披著這個偽裝？

我知道你第一時間的反應是叫我千萬不要自殺，也不要有一個念頭，並告訴我人生充滿希望和機會，但上次收到工資已是很久以前的事了。我現在生活潦倒，有很多時間去想我多失敗，在這個偌大的國家，卻找不到一份工作。

警笛聲來到我的家門，接著警察破門而入。

「周先生，我要對你說，你患上嚴重的抑鬱症。」我的精神科醫生說。

當時是2009年，在我被突然送進士嘉堡全科醫院後兩個星期，我開始見精神科醫生。我在醫院的兩個星期，基本上無法正常活動。但最可怕的是我被精神病控制了而不自知，或者是不明白它對我的影響。

過去六年，我一直與我的精神科醫生合作，跟他討論，接受治療，並向關心我健康的人透露我部分的狀況。我加入了康福心理健康協會的自助服務計劃，與跟我境況相若的人、我的精神科醫生和康福員工做朋友，學習新的溝通技巧，培養手工藝方面的興趣，最後我自殺的念頭顯著降低了。

其後，精神科醫生介紹我到康福的安保診所，那裡的員工實在太棒了。

我與安保診所的一位執業護理師有緊密聯繫。他成為了我的基本醫療護理師，先前的醫生為我做的他都能夠做到。由身體檢查到回答關於我一般健康情況的問題，他都能幫我。他是真心的關懷我，而他的耐性更是少有的。醫療系統的情況大家都很熟悉，病人需要等候很長的時間，而醫生也未必可以有太多時間回答你的問題，但安保診所提供有人情味的服務，容許我和他們建立關係。我只可以用「難以置信」來形容安保診所。

「安迪，我可以說，你的情況已經得到大大改善，相信你不再需要我的幫助。你毋須再來覆診了。」我的精神科醫生提出這樣的建議。

我呆了一下，感到很驚訝，但實際上我很高興。我留意到自己的進展，但經過這些年得到精神科醫生的幫助，要說再見確實有點傷感，然而我知道現在我更有能力應付自己的情緒問題。

現在，每當我踏進安保診所，那裡的職員都很歡迎我。我喜歡和他們一起，因為可以跟執業護理師像朋友般表達自己的感受。我需要繼續獲得支持，而他們理解我就是對我最大的支持。

安迪繼續定期到安保診所和每兩星期參加自助服務計劃。他的情況穩定，自我感覺比他在2008年時好得多了。

# 6 To Disconnect and Reconnect

*Ivy, currently an eighteen-year-old whose sense of loss prompted further self-inflicted pain; her mental health journey continues today.*

“I’m sorry for your loss, are you okay?” These are the things I had often heard when my father passed away. I was angry that nobody understood what I was going through. Yeah, I have friends, and they are part of my life, but when I told them about my loss their words never measured up to what I wanted to hear; I didn’t know exactly what I wanted from my friends, but I knew that the answers and comments I was receiving at the time had not been enough.

At seventeen years of age, being in a country that I didn’t know well or where I didn’t speak the language well created anxiety. In this foreign land, I found plenty of time and space to feel frustrated, irritated, and outright depressed. I didn’t know how to express myself to my friends and simply didn’t know what to do. So, in the end, I did what other teenagers did: skipped school. I didn’t want to attend a school where I was feeling out of place and had to struggle to communicate and connect with others. I found myself pushing my friends away and them pushing me away. A huge disconnect began to occur between me and others as I started to dislike meeting new people, exploring places, and even just caring. I was beginning to feel lonely.

Suicide was always on my mind. I attempted the task a couple of times by starving myself. I thought that if nobody could understand me then what is the point? It would probably be easier to end my life and eliminate these painful memories and feelings that were pulling, pressing, and punching me down all the time. Albeit there was something inside me that made me want to survive. Perhaps I was scared of dying. Afraid of physical pain. Nonetheless, these suicidal thoughts were affected by my irregular sleeping habits and lack of purpose. These outlooks quickly compounded into something that made me feel as though I needed to separate myself from everyone in all aspects of life.

I remember I would skip school regularly, and sometimes for two straight weeks I would hang out anywhere but school. One day, the school social

worker managed to get me in a meeting and I remember her asking, “If you had a full happy family (with both your mom and your dad), would you not come to school?” I couldn’t hold it against her for not knowing, but I found the question hitting me harder than I expected. The direct answer I gave her was simple, “No.” Eventually, through a tug of war of words and emotions though, the social worker was able to get the answer out of me. Shortly after I was introduced to a Chinese Youth Outreach Worker at Hong Fook.

I am still going through the process of healing, but I am glad I am on this path. Hong Fook connected me with doctors, counsellors, and their own Youth Outreach Worker. I tried medication and counselling for a while, but neither was right for me. They were ineffective, but my outreach worker continued to stay with me. Gradually, I learned how to express my emotions, recognized my mental illness, and more importantly, how to manage it.

Admitting I have depression is not easy, let alone admitting I need help. My outreach worker never judged me and worked tirelessly to promote help-seeking behaviour. When feelings of depression start to overwhelm me, I now step back, think, and ask for help. With guidance, I am happy to say I am back at school now. Although I still skip certain classes occasionally, I try my best to stay on campus and attend classes. I am part of something again, reconnected in some way.

Reflecting back on these several months, I have grown to see these experiences as a learning opportunity; I know I still have work to do in making sure I apply myself at school, but without the help of Hong Fook I would never, and I emphasize, never, have decided to go back to school and share this experience with you. My father’s passing was painful, the continual lack of academic success just dug a deep hole, but now I have climbed out and I am on a path that I can say will lead me somewhere. It might be bumpy, dirty, and dark at times, but at least it is moving forward. I don’t know how my story will end, but at least I have one to share.

*Ivy continues to manage her anxiety and depression with the help of Hong Fook Youth Outreach Worker and hopes her story can help those who may be suffering as well.*

## 自我隔絕與重建連繫

現年18歲的少女Ivy，她的失落感加速了自己造成的痛苦。她至今仍在心理健康的歷程繼續前行。

「對於你失去的痛苦我感到很難過。你沒事吧？」這些說話在我爸爸去世的時候聽過很多。對於沒有人明白我所經歷的一切，我感到很憤怒。是的，我有朋友，他們是我生命的一部分，但當我把我的痛苦向他們傾訴時，他們的回答卻往往不是我想聽到的。我並不知道究竟我想從朋友中獲得甚麼，只知道當時所得到的答案和意見都不足夠。

當時只得17歲的我，生活在一個我不熟悉的國家，而不能流利地說這個國家的語言，令我感到焦慮。在這個異鄉，我有很多時感到沮喪、惱怒和鬱悶。我不知道怎樣向朋友表達自己，也不知道應該做些甚麼，後來我選擇了其他青少年都會做的：逃學。我不想上學，我感覺自己和學校格格不入，我難以和別人溝通和相處。我發現自己和朋友互相排斥。我開始和其他人隔絕，我不喜歡結識新朋友，不願接觸新事物，甚至不關心自己。我開始感到孤獨。

自殺的念頭經常在我的腦海盤旋。我試過好幾次絕食。我想，如果沒有人理解我，我生存下去還有甚麼意義？也許以結束生命來消除我這些痛苦的回憶、纏繞的感覺和壓力會較簡單。這些想法加在一起令我感到我需要與所有人隔絕。不過，我的內心有些東西要我生存下去，也許是我害怕死亡，害怕肉體痛苦。然而，這些自殺的念頭其實是受了我不規律的睡眠習慣和沒有人生目標所影響。

我記得我經常逃學，有時連續兩個月不上課。有一天，學校的社工約見我。我記得她問道：「如果你有完整幸福的家庭(與父母同住)，你還不會上學嗎？」我不能因為她不知就裡而怨恨她，但我感到這個問題對我的打擊遠超過我的預期。我只直接的

給她一個簡單的答案：「不會。」最後經過一輪情緒激動的爭吵後，社工得知我的情況。不久之後我被轉介給康福心理健康中心的華裔青少年外展社工。

我仍然在癒合的過程中，但我很高興我踏上了康復的路途。康福的醫生、輔導員和他們的青少年外展社工與我聯繫。我試過在一段時期接受藥物和輔導，但這兩種方式都不適合我，對我並沒有作用，但外展社工仍然對我不離不棄。漸漸地，我學會了如何表達自己的情緒，認識我的精神疾病，而更重要的是，懂得控制它。

要承認自己有抑鬱症已非易事，更不必說要我承認需要人家幫助。我的外展社工從不責難我，還孜孜不倦地向我推介求助行為。每當感到情緒低落開始壓倒我的時候，我就會退一步，想一想，然後尋求幫助。在有關方面的指導下，我現在已繼續上課。雖然間中仍會曠某些課，但我會盡力留在校園上課。我現在不再孤單，而是這個群體的一分子，在某方面給重新連繫上了。

回顧過去幾個月的體驗，我視它為一個學習機會；我知道我還要努力確保我在學校全力以赴，但是若沒有康福的幫助，我永不會決心重返校園和與你們分享我的經歷。父親的過世令我很痛苦，而在學業上成績持續不理想令傷痛更深，但現在我已經走出了黑洞，踏上康復的路途。也許道路有時會崎嶇不平、環境惡劣和黑暗，但至少是向前邁進。我不知道我的故事結局如何，但至少我有一個能與大家分享的故事。

*Ivy在康福青少年外展社工的幫助下繼續控制她的焦慮和抑鬱症。她希望自己的故事能幫助那些受著同樣苦況的人。*

# 7 Regaining Confidence

*Joseph came to Canada with high aspirations, but slowly began to feel the pressure of living alone in a country that did not recognize his qualifications.*

Shanghai, China, 1995.

The excitement of trains thundering by; the faces of strangers seeking to travel; a developing economy that was now striving to promote transportation that would rival countries like Germany, U.K., and Japan. China was going through great change and I was part of this.

I studied rigorously, going through the difficulties of the Gao Kao (university entrance exam) to enter a university and obtain knowledge that could make my family and country proud. I was an electrical engineer, working to make the country better. Nonetheless, things changed; I wanted to try and move to another country and apply the skills and knowledge I learned. Perhaps, I could learn more and bring it back to China.

In December 1999, I landed in Vancouver, Canada. My hopes were high and I thought the possibilities were endless; how could a university graduate in electrical engineering with a few years of experience not get a job? Sadly, I was wrong.

Stress started to mount, building into something that was larger than life as I found myself unable to find work, feeling lonely in a country that was unreceptive of someone from Mainland China. In turn, I could not sleep well. I locked myself in my room for nothing, feeling as if the world was against me and did not value me. I would write back to my family, pretending things were okay.

In the early 2000s, I moved to Toronto, which I thought would be a better city for me. But again, I was under the pressure of finding a place, finding suitable work, and living an unsatisfactory life. In the end, I took several forms of employment that were irrelevant to my specialty. I wanted to learn more about electrical engineering, so I could show Westerners that I had the abilities to make their systems better, but that was false hope.

As my stress unfolded, I was not able to function the same way, and it was quite visible on my face. I would stay up at night, noticing vehicles outside and

I began thinking that I was being spied on, perhaps the system was against me and that I was being targeted to fail. The sleepless nights took a toll and it was startling enough that my landlord noticed. He called for help and I was quickly taken to the hospital.

A few weeks later I was discharged, but not before the hospital introduced me to Hong Fook, where I worked with my psychiatrist at the Asian Clinic, whom I still visit once a month. The medication I received did help from time to time, but I still felt my life lacking meanings and the confidence that I once had in choosing to come to Canada, choosing to start a new life.

From there I was put under their Case Management, received assistance in getting ODSP and Supportive Housing. The support I received is the same for all clients that enter Hong Fook—extensive and selfless. The staffs work tirelessly to understand my needs and the difficulties that I am going through; they provide personal touches by engaging with me one-on-one and providing advice that reflects they are listening to my needs.

As a result, I began to learn about the importance of caring for myself, the need to be open about my problems and issues in order to seek help. This change in mentality provided me with a positive view of life that I could not find by myself; I started to express love and find love, and now I am happy to say that I am a proud father of two children and have a loving wife. The positive attitude that I was approaching life with manifested in ways I never thought possible; my Hong Fook mental health worker helped me enrich my social life and helped me address my problems openly.

I gradually found meaning in my life because Hong Fook provided a holistic approach to mental health that involved self-love, self-care, and community involvement. Now, I am also a volunteer with the Mandarin Group where I assist in setting up for the program, cook, provide and receive peer support. At the group discussions, since everyone there knows I am good with electrical repairs, many of them ask me to help fix their TVs, radios, and other appliances, which I gladly do because I am giving back to the community that supported me. The lessons that we learn in the group enable all of us to connect further with each other and reflect on our own needs. And now, I have hope, not just for myself, but for my family, as Canada is now my home and I do not regret my decision in 1999.

*Joseph has worked diligently to find his place in Canada and now shares his story to underline that importance of reaching out and being open about having a mental health illness.*

## 重拾自信

阿祖(Joseph)滿懷抱負地移民來到加拿大，但因他的資歷未被認可，孤單地在這個國度生活而慢慢地感到壓力。

1995年中國上海。

火車聲雷鳴般響著，一張張陌生的臉孔正等待出發。一個正在努力促進交通運輸的發展中經濟體，將與德國、英國和日本等國競爭。中國正在經歷巨大變化，而我置身其中。

我艱苦地學習，跨過了困難的高考(大學入學試)進入了一所大學，獲得足以令我家人和國家感到自豪的知識。我是一名電機工程師，本希望努力奮鬥貢獻國家，使它更美好。然而事情改變了，我遷移到另一個國家，可以學以致用，也許還可以學到新的知識，帶回中國去。

1999年12月，我移民到加拿大的溫哥華。這個國家天氣很冷，陰陰沉沉的霧和雨令人感到無助。然而，我有很高的期望，我認為這裡有無限的潛力；一個有幾年經驗的電機工程學大學畢業生怎可能找不到一份工作？可悲的是，我錯了。

壓力開始增加，令我難以承受；我發覺自己無法找到工作，在這個不接受來自中國大陸的人的國家感到孤寂。我開始不能入睡，把自己鎖在房間內無所事事，感覺像世界都在針對我及不重視我。我寫信給家人，假裝一切都沒問題，在加拿大生活過得很好，我作出的決定正確，讓他們不用擔心。

其後，我於21世紀初搬到多倫多，我認為這個城市對我來說會較好。但尋找居住地方和合適的工作，再一次令我感到壓力，我過著潦倒的生活。最後，我找到多份不同類型的工作，我學習鋪屋頂，進過多間不同的工廠，但這些體力勞動的工作並不是我決定來加拿大追求的東西。我想了解多點有關電機工程師的資料，好讓我能洋人面前顯示我有能力將他的系統弄得更好，但這只是個虛幻的希望。

我的壓力終於到了頂點，令我無法如常活動，單在我的臉上也能看出來。我晚上不能入睡，呆望著街外的汽車，並開始以為自己被監視，也許被有系統地針對，要我

失敗。無數的失眠夜傷害了我，別人看見我的模樣一定會被嚇壞，我的房東留意到這情況並致電求助，我很快便被送入醫院。

我被接駁到儀器上，那嘩嘩的聲響繼續令我徹夜難眠。在留醫期間，醫院向我推介康福心理健康協會。幾個星期以後，我我可以出院了。得到康福亞裔社區精神科診所的醫生幫助治療我的疾病，至今我仍然每月回去覆診。我服食的藥物雖然對我有幫助，但我仍然覺得生活毫無意義，像行屍走肉般過日子，失去了在選擇前來加拿大展開新生活時的萬丈雄心。

在康福的個人關顧服務之下，我獲得了安省殘疾支援計劃及住屋支援服務的協助。我得到的支援一如其他所有康福的服務使用者一樣，獲得全面和無私的服務。工作人員孜孜不倦地了解我們的需要和所經歷的困難；他們通過一對一的個人接觸，聽取我的傾訴和需要，並給我提供意見。

因此，我開始懂得關顧自己的重要性，明白需要揭示自己的問題以尋求協助。這心態的改變使我有積極的人生觀，這是我以前所沒有的。我開始去表達愛和尋找愛，現時我可以很開心自豪的說，我有兩個兒子和一個體貼的妻子。我處理生活的積極態度，是從未試過的。康福的心理健康工作人員幫助我豐富了我的社交生活及助我公開講述我的問題。之後我交了很多朋友，感到自己並不孤單及有能力改變之前的情況，並重拾信心。

由於康福提供包括自愛、自理及社區參與等全面處理心理健康的方法，我逐漸找到生活的意義。現時我亦是國語小組的義工，協助訂定計劃、烹飪、提供及接受友儕的支援。由於大家知道我精於電器修理，因此在小組討論時，他們都要求我幫他們修理電視機、收音機及其他家電，我很樂意去做，因為要回饋這個曾支持過我的社區。我們在小組所學到的，讓我們能更緊密地聯繫及認真思考我們的需要。加拿大現在是我的家，我滿懷希望，對在1999年的所下決定並無後悔，這不僅是為我個人，更是為我的家人。Ivy在康福青少年外展社工的幫助下繼續控制她的焦慮和抑鬱症。她希望自己的故事能幫助那些受著同樣苦況的人。

阿祖現正努力尋找自己在加拿大的定位。他分享自己的故事，強調尋求協助和坦承自己患有精神病的重要性。

# 8 There and Back Again

*Kyung's mental health journey has been a long road with steep turns, language barriers, financial losses and relationship troubles.*

1999 is a year that I remember vividly. A sense of grey surrounded me as I walked along the streets. Nature ceased to exist as the birds disappeared, the flowers began to rot, and everything burned away to ashes. My mother had just passed away.

At the time, I didn't know about mental health, so I didn't realize that day was when my journey had begun. Feelings of hopelessness and depression quickly followed with the passing of my mother. What made it especially difficult was that I had been in Canada at the time. With her passing, disagreements with family members began to occur all too easily, and when coupled with the language barriers I was facing in Canada, I began to feel aggravated.

Eventually, I moved back to Korea. I thought that Korea, my home, would be a place where I could find solace again, or at least refuge from the burdens of pain that I associated with Canada. This was not the case.

In Korea, my mental health was exacerbated. A deep sense of isolation and loneliness had attached itself to me. Restless nights and a lack of interest in food or socializing became common. I began to realize that something was wrong and that I simply wasn't happy anymore in a country that I had used to feel connected to due to my heritage. I realized that moving to Korea had been a mistake.

After re-evaluating my life, I decided to give a second chance to the cold wasteland that was Canada. My life underwent the process of trying to make Canada home, of trying to find a voice within this multicultural country, despite my language abilities. I did try to seek out psychiatric treatment and help, but failed. Finding a Korean-speaking psychiatrist in Toronto is not easy, even with the large Korean population. The medical help had not been available and I found myself alone again, but surviving.

Then, in 2009, something traumatic happened that involved financial ruin and a bad relationship. These issues are still too fresh and personal for me to

reveal, but the devastating effects of the incident brought me to my knees. As a result, my family doctor referred me to Hong Fook.

At first, I was not sure about the agency—what could they really do for me? I had heard about them, but how much would they help me in the end and who would want to help for free? I was wrong again. Hong Fook placed me under their Case Management, which had a mental health professional working closely with me to find a Korean speaking psychiatrist. They found me a psychiatrist, who has been helping me analyze my mental illness. Moreover, Hong Fook helped me with legal matters such as finding a place to stay and assisting with my immigration process, which I am happy to say went well as I am now a Permanent Resident of Canada. Slowly, but surely, I was starting to feel safe, and found a home in Canada.

When I could not work due to my mental health condition, my children blamed me for being lazy. They would say, “Stop making excuses, you look fine, you can easily go back to work.” The hardship of them not understanding that I just could not go back to work was incredibly difficult. My arguments with them were taxing, to say the least. Hong Fook workers stepped in and arranged meetings with my children to educate them on mental health and the issues I was experiencing. Now, my children understand and have shown great support in my journey. They have provided some financial assistance, and have also stopped judging me for having a mental illness. Their understanding would not have been possible without Hong Fook there to address their concerns, thoughts, and inaccuracies about my condition.

Hong Fook’s Self-Help Program required me to invest my time. In return for this time though, my life began to blossom again. The dismal existence I had begun this story with is now gone. I was able to offer my cooking skills to this program and earn some money, which gave me a new sense of agency and confidence that I had never experienced before as an immigrant living with a mental illness. When I get the opportunity to teach others how to make my favourite dish, Bibimbab, I just get so excited. Sharing recipes, conversations, culture, and tradition are all part of the process.

Now, I am a volunteer at Hong Fook, giving back to the community and training others to do the same. Cooking is one a passion of mine, but now, so is mental health wellness.

*Kyung volunteers with Hong Fook while continuing to attend meetings and workshops to better herself, understand others, and find a place to call home.*

# 그곳에서 제자리로 되돌아왔다: 정신건강의 어려움을 겪는 어느 이민자의 이야기

경 (Kyung) 은 갑작스러운 인생의 전환과 함께 지나간 정신 건강 여정을 지나왔다. 언어의 장벽, 재정 손실, 그리고 관계의 문제들은 캐나다 이민자로서 겪은 그녀의 험난한 여정에 흔적을 남겼다.

나는 아직도 1999년 그해를 생생하게 기억한다. 길을 걷는 나를 어두움이 덮었다. 새들은 사라졌고, 꽃은 썩어가기 시작했고, 모든 것이 재로 변환된 것 같은 자연은 내게서 사라져 버렸다. 엄마가 돌아가셨다

그때만 해도 정신건강이 무엇인지 잘 알지 못했다. 엄마와 나는 아주 가까웠고 서로 많이 사랑했었다. 소중한 사람을 잃는 경험은 고통스럽다. 엄마를 잃을 무렵 캐나다에 살고 있었기에 더욱 힘이 들었던 것 같다. 엄마의 죽음 이후 가족들간의 불화가 자주 생겼고 언어장벽은 그런 나를 더욱 힘들게 했다. 내 곁에 더이상 내편이 없다는 것은 참 슬픈 일이었다. 엄마의 죽음 이후로 절망과 우울증이 찾아왔다.

이곳에 살면서 겪어야 했던 이런 저런 어려움과 상실 그리고, 지속적인 문제들로 더이상 캐나다에 살 수 없다고 믿었고 나는 다시 한국으로 돌아갔다. 가족 문제와 내 삶에 일어났던 여러 사건들이 내 건강을 망가뜨렸고, 한국에 돌아와 병원에 입원을 했다. 내 나라에서 안식과 위안을 받을 수 있을 것이라 생각하며 최소한 캐나다에 살기에 겪어야 했던 고통으로부터 안식을 얻으리라 생각했으나 현실은 그렇지 못했다.

한국에서 내 정신 건강은 더 악화되었다. 깊은 소외감과 외로움은 나를 늘 따라다녔다. 잘 먹지도, 자지도 못했고, 사람들과의 만남도 갖을 수 없었다. 무엇인가 잘못되고 있었고 문화와 유산으로 아주 가깝게 연결되어 있다고 느껴왔던 내 나라에서도 나는 행복하지 않았다. 다시 돌아오지 말았어야 했다. 나의 실수였다.

그무렵 내 삶을 되돌아 보게 되었고, 추운 황무지 같은 캐나다에 다시 기회를 주기로 했다. 언어가 잘 통하진 않지만 복합 문화의 나라에서 내 목소리를 내어보려 노력하며 캐나다를 고향처럼 만들기 위한 노력을 시작 했다. 나는 정신과 서비스를 받기 위해 도움을 구했지만 적절한 도움을 찾지 못했다. 한국 사람이 많은 토론토이지만 한국말을 사용하는 정신과 전문의를 찾는 것은 쉬운 일이 아니었다. 의료적인 도움을 받을 수가 없었고 나는 또 다시 혼자가 되었다.

나는 또다시 2009년에 재정적 어려움을 겪고 그로인한 관계의 파괴를 경험하게 되었다. 아주 엄청난 충격과 어려움이였다. 아직도 내겐 아주 생생한 일이지만 이 곳에 밝히지는 않겠다. 엄청난 어려움을 겪는내게 가정의는 홍폭을 소개했다

나는 홍폭이 무엇인지도 몰랐고 이곳이 나를 위해 무엇을 할 수 있을까 확신할 수 없었다. 얼핏 이름을 들어본듯도 하지만 홍폭이 어떤 도움을 줄수 있을까? 무료로 주는 서비스가 얼마나 도움이 될까?라는 생각을 갖고 있었으나, 나는 또 틀렸다. 홍폭에서는 한국인 정신과 전문의 서비스를 제공해 주었고 나와 긴밀한 관계를 가지고 일할 정신 건강 복지사가 있는 케이스 관리 팀에 나를 배정해 주었다. 정신과 전문의를 찾아서 나의 정신질환을 진단할 수 있게 도와 주었다. 심지어 내가 살 곳을 찾는것과 내가 겪고있는 어려움을 해결하기 위한 여러 법률적인 도움도 제공해 주었고, 그 모든 일들은 하나씩 해결되었다. 나는 지금 행복하다.

내가 정신건강상의 어려움으로 인해 일을 할 수 없게 되자 내 아이들은 나를 게으르다며 비난했다. “변명 좀 그만하세요. 멀쩡해 보이세요. 쉽게 일하러 가실 수 있잖아요” 라고 아이들은 말하곤 했다. 내가 단순히 일을 하려 가지 않는것이 아니라는 것을 이해하지 못하는 아이들과의 관계는 나를 참 어렵게 했다. 아이들과의 말다툼은 짧게 말해 부담스러웠다. 그러나 그런 아이들에게 정신건강이 무엇이고 지금 내가 겪고있는 어려움을 이해할 수 있도록 홍폭 직원들은 몇번의 만남을 통해 알려 주었고 이런 경험을 통해 내 아이들은 나를 조금더 이해하고 내 정신건강 여정을 지재해 주고 있다. 아이들에게 약간의 재정적인 도움을 받기도 하고 내가 경험하고 있는 정신질환 증상을 더이상 비판하지 않는다. 홍폭의 도움없이 아이들의 이런 변화는 기대할 수 없었을 것이다.

홍폭의 자조 프로그램은 내가 시간을 많이 할애해야 하는 곳이다. 하지만 이 시간 덕분에 내 인생은 다시 꽃피기 시작했다. 이 이야기를 시작하였던 암울한 나는 이제 사라지고 없다. 대신에 메마르게만 바라보았던 세상과 주변 사람들과 활기차게 또한, 생동감있게 소통하고 있다. 자조 프로그램에서 요리를 하면서 약간의 수입을 얻는 경험은 홍폭에 대한 새로운 느낌과 정신 질환을 가지고 살아가는 이민자로서는 이전에 결코 경험해 볼 수 없었던 자신감을 갖게 해주었다. 내가 가장 좋아하는 요리인 비빔밥 만드는 법을 사람들에게 가르쳐 줄 기회를 갖았을때 나는 참 행복했었다. 조리법을 가르쳐 주고, 대화를 나누며, 문화와 전통을 소개하는 것이 모든 과정의 일부였다. 또 홍폭은 신뢰를 바탕으로 건강한 관계를 형성하도록 내게 인내를 가르쳐 주었고 소속감도 갖게 해 주었다.

지금 나는 음식을 만들어 다른 사람들과 나누고 내가 배우고 경험한 정신건강을 다른 사람들에게 나눔으로 홍폭에서 봉사를 하고 있다.

경은 지속적으로 회의와 워크숍에 참여하여 자신을 개선시키고 다른 사람들을 이해하며 집이라 부를 수 있는 곳을 찾아 홍폭과 함께 봉사하고 있다.

# 9 Loser: Being Bullied and My Road to Recovery

*David shares his difficult upbringing as an ethnic minority with Schizophrenia and the steps he took towards feeling better.*

“Are they talking about me? Oh great, here they come. Please, just leave me alone.”

“Loser, crazy, retard!”

Being bullied for years takes a toll on you; the constant fear and isolation that stems from having nobody to protect you or shelter you from these keep you paralyzed. Some may think these things are in my head because I am Schizophrenic, but being bullied physically, verbally, and emotionally were integrated into my life, almost like it was a natural thing I was born with. Yes, I hear voices. Yes, I have hallucinations. However, these moments do not alter the reality of when someone attacks me for performing differently in class, being Vietnamese, and well... acting “weird”.

Growing up as an ethnic minority in an infamous part of Toronto has its severe disadvantages, especially if you are from a single-parent family that suffers from low-income. Simply put, I am poor, a visible minority, and mentally ill; all of these factors in some way contributed to me being bullied. This is not to excuse their actions as many bullies hurt others for no reason at all, but my upbringing certainly did not equip me with the best tools to defend myself.

Eventually, fear took over. I became afraid of attending school, terrified of being beaten, insulted, and ridiculed for being who I was; school was not safe, and gradually, I found myself unable to focus on my studies anymore. How could I participate when there were so many of those who thought so little of me? The simple tasks of working with peers in groups when the teacher asked or speaking up to share my ideas were impossible. Teachers would feel enraged or disappointed with my behavior, thinking I was simply disengaged in class or unwilling to work, but it was not that, not at all.

Although I love my mother, there are many things I cannot convey to her, partly because of the language barrier, my illness, but also because of my trepidation of involving her in my pain and her inability to ultimately understand my issues.

“Why do you have mental problems? How can you have mental problems? It must be related to evil spirits!” my mother would shout.

Nonetheless, it was not until Hong Fook, was my life able to change for the better. When I first arrived at their North York Office, I was welcomed warmly by the staff who helped me sign up for the Self-Help Group; these professionals worked with me to promote a positive form of thinking and self-recognition.

After speaking to mental health workers, I was introduced to a psychiatrist; the psychiatrist and Hong Fook worked collaboratively with me to build my confidence and ability to express myself. Public speaking was too much; the pressure of having to say what was on my mind when so many things were running through my mind was overwhelming. At the time I didn't know I was Schizophrenic.

At the Vietnamese Self-Help group and workshops, I learned a lot about my illness, but more importantly, I made friends. The confidence I gained at the workshops empowered me to work with the psychiatrist and vice versa.

With the assistance of the mental health worker, the psychiatrist, and my mother, we would meet every three to four months to discuss my mental health and establish strategies to help me. It has been eight years since I started at Hong Fook; the help I continue to receive from everyone and everywhere showed me how my life can be different. I don't have to be frightened or isolated from others, thinking nobody can help or understand my problems. I can work with others and see the positive aspects in my life because I am not alone.

My relationship with my mother is growing stronger, the pain from all the years of being bullied is being healed, but above all else, I am feeling better today. This feeling is priceless. Thank you Hong Fook staff.

I am David, and this is my story of recovery and wellness.

*David hopes to inspire the youth with his story, sharing the commonality of bullying, the ramifications, and the need to overcome. He continues sessions with his psychiatrist, mental health worker, and his mother to build on his mental health.*

## Kẻ Bại trận: Bị bắt nạt và Con đường đi đến sự Phục hồi của Tôi

*David chia sẻ tuổi thơ đầy khó khăn của mình là một người dân thiểu số với bệnh Tâm thần Phân liệt và những bước mà anh đã đi đến việc cảm thấy tốt hơn.*

“Có phải họ nói xấu về tôi không? Ôi không, họ lại đến chỗ tôi kia. Xin làm ơn để cho tôi yên.”

“Đồ ngu, đồ điên, đồ vô dụng!”..

Bị bắt nạt trong vòng nhiều năm gây tác hại lớn cho bạn; sự luôn luôn sợ hãi và sự cô lập xuất phát từ việc không có ai để bảo vệ bạn hoặc che chở cho bạn khỏi những sự bắt nạt này làm cho bạn có cảm giác bị tê liệt. Một số người có thể nghĩ rằng những điều này chỉ là ở trong đầu của tôi vì tôi bị Tâm thần Phân liệt, nhưng bị bắt nạt về thể chất, bằng lời nói, và cảm xúc đã trở thành cơm bữa trong cuộc sống của tôi, gần như là tôi sinh ra để hứng chịu điều đó. Có, tôi có nghe thấy những tiếng nói trong đầu tôi. Có, tôi có nhìn thấy ảo giác. Tuy nhiên, những giây phút đó không làm thay đổi thực tế rằng người khác tấn công tôi vì tôi sử dụng khác họ ở trong lớp, vì tôi là người Việt Nam, và ... tôi cư xử một cách “kỳ lạ”.

Lớn lên như một người dân thiểu số ở một vùng khét tiếng xấu của Toronto dẫn đến những bất lợi nghiêm trọng, nhất là nếu bạn đến từ một gia đình nghèo chỉ có cha hoặc mẹ. Nói đơn giản, tôi là một người nghèo, dân thiểu số, và bị bệnh tâm thần; một phần nào đó tất cả các yếu tố này dẫn đến việc tôi bị bắt nạt. Đây không phải là lý do bào chữa cho hành động của họ vì nhiều kẻ bắt nạt làm tổn thương người khác không với bất kỳ một lý do nào cả, nhưng chắc chắn là tuổi thơ của tôi đã không không trang bị cho tôi với các công cụ tốt nhất để bảo vệ bản thân mình.

Cuối cùng, nỗi sợ hãi đã trở thành quá lớn. Tôi trở nên sợ phải đến trường, sợ bị đánh đập, bị sỉ nhục, và chế nhạo; trường học không còn là nơi an toàn cho tôi nữa, và dần dần, tôi thấy mình không thể tập trung vào việc học nữa. Làm thế nào để tôi có thể tham gia khi có bao nhiêu người coi thường tôi? Những việc đơn giản như là làm nhóm với các bạn trong lớp khi giáo viên hỏi hoặc nói lên ý tưởng của mình để chia sẻ là không thể đối với tôi. Các thầy cô thường cảm thấy phẫn nộ hoặc thất vọng với hành vi của tôi, nghĩ đơn giản rằng tôi không muốn tham gia vào trong lớp hoặc không muốn cố gắng, nhưng nó không phải là như vậy một chút nào.

Mặc dù tôi yêu mẹ tôi, có rất nhiều điều tôi không thể chia sẻ được với bà, một

phần vì rào cản về ngôn ngữ, vì căn bệnh của tôi, mà cũng vì tôi sợ nếu tôi cho bà biết những nỗi đau của tôi nhưng bà không thể hiểu hết được những vấn đề của tôi.

“Tại sao con lại bị mắc bệnh tâm thần? Làm thế nào mà con lại bị bệnh tâm thần? Chắc là lại do ma quỷ ám rồi!” Mẹ tôi sẽ kêu lên như vậy.

Tuy nhiên, chỉ khi tôi đến Hồng Phúc, thì cuộc sống của tôi mới có thể thay đổi theo chiều hướng tốt hơn. Khi tôi đến Văn phòng North York của họ lần đầu tiên, các nhân viên đã chào đón tôi một cách nồng nhiệt và giúp tôi đăng ký vào chương trình Tự tương trợ và Giúp đỡ lẫn nhau; các nhân viên này làm việc với tôi để khuyến khích tôi suy nghĩ và tự nhận thức về bản thân một cách tích cực hơn.

Sau khi nói chuyện với các nhân viên sức khỏe tâm thần, tôi được giới thiệu đến một bác sĩ tâm thần; bác sĩ tâm thần và Hồng Phúc cùng làm việc cộng tác với tôi để tạo sự tự tin và khả năng bộc lộ những suy nghĩ của bản thân tôi. Tôi không dám phát biểu trước đám đông; tôi rất sợ áp lực của việc phải nói ra những suy nghĩ của tôi trong khi có rất nhiều suy nghĩ ập đến cùng một lúc—lúc đó tôi vẫn chưa biết là tôi bị tâm thần phân liệt.

Tại nhóm Tự tương trợ và Giúp đỡ lẫn nhau của người Việt và những hội thảo, tôi học hỏi được rất nhiều điều về bệnh tình của tôi, nhưng quan trọng hơn thế nữa là tôi đã kết bạn được với người khác. Sự tự tin tôi đạt được tại các hội thảo giúp tôi làm việc với bác sĩ tâm thần và ngược lại cũng vậy.

Với sự trợ giúp của nhân viên sức khỏe tâm thần, bác sĩ tâm thần, và mẹ tôi, chúng tôi cùng gặp nhau 3-4 tháng một lần để thảo luận về sức khỏe tâm thần của tôi và bàn ra cách kế hoạch để giúp tôi. Đã được tám năm rồi kể từ khi tôi bắt đầu đến Hồng Phúc; sự giúp đỡ mà tôi tiếp tục nhận được từ tất cả mọi người và ở khắp mọi nơi cho tôi thấy là cuộc sống của tôi có thể khác đi. Tôi không cần phải sợ hãi hoặc tránh mặt người khác nữa, nghĩ rằng không ai có thể giúp đỡ hoặc hiểu được vấn đề của tôi. Tôi có thể làm việc với những người khác và nhìn ra những khía cạnh tích cực trong cuộc sống của tôi, vì tôi không đơn độc một mình.

Mối quan hệ của tôi với mẹ tôi cũng đang trở nên tốt hơn, nỗi đau từ những năm tháng bị bắt nạt đang được chữa lành, nhưng trên hết, bây giờ tôi đã cảm thấy tốt hơn. Cảm giác này thật là vô giá. Xin cảm ơn những nhân viên của Hồng Phúc.

Tôi tên là David, và đây là câu chuyện của tôi về sự hồi phục và chăm sóc sức khỏe.

*Với câu chuyện của mình, David hy vọng là mình sẽ động viên giới trẻ, chia sẻ sự giống nhau của những sự bất nạt, các hậu quả của chúng, và sự cần thiết để vượt qua những điều đó. Anh ấy vẫn tiếp tục làm việc với bác sĩ tâm thần, nhân viên sức khỏe tâm thần, và mẹ của mình để tạo dựng sức khỏe tinh thần cho mình.*

# 10 Woes to Anger, Anger to Recovery

*Mr. Nhu Bui has dealt with depression and anger issues that originated with financial difficulties; his temper resulted in his encounter with the law. He recalls his journey to mental health wellness.*

“Unfortunately, we had to go with another candidate.”

“You are great, but we are looking for more experience.”

Rips up application forms.

These were the rejections I was constantly receiving; I couldn't break through and find a profession that was reflective of the skills and energy I offered. Everyone needs English, but I could not achieve their required level of language proficiency. Part of me thinks there was some discrimination based on my ethnicity, but I know that some just could not give the opportunity because I lacked the proper education, so how could I ever move up this socio-economic ladder?

Things started to get worse, and with my temper, things got a lot worse—fast. I was always getting into serious disputes with strangers, friends, and family. These fights were not just verbal, but physical and eventually, I lashed out at my family. By 2005, I was without a job and the stress of providing for a family was simply too much for me. In 2005, the police were involved and well, domestic abuse was what I was charged with and eventually I went to jail for it. I am not proud of these moments, and nobody would be, but I just didn't see many ways out of the lifestyle I had. I was constantly worrying over finances, thinking about the next pay stub, only to be reminded of the fact that I was barely making enough for a living, let alone supporting a family.

Everyone and everything quickly left my life; my friends and family stayed away. Basic leisure activities were impossible. Hope was gone and despair had entered to create a home for itself. I think at one-point depression itself took on its own life, speaking to me as if it were alive; debating with me about the hopelessness I was living in and the eventuality of death. Sometimes I started to see ghosts; I never knew why I was imagining them, but perhaps all the stress, anger, and depression just manifested into something that came to haunt me frequently.

All these problems culminated into myself getting evicted. I was homeless, separated from my family, hearing voices, and all alone.

In 2006, I was introduced to the Hong Fook Mental Health Association. After working with their staff, I was provided with a realistic plan of action that enabled me to slowly regain my independence. They provided me with assistance in obtaining services in health care, legal services, and supportive housing. At first, I was amazed that others would want to help me; my journey to recovery began with a simple question from a Hong Fook staff member, asking, “How can I help you today?” I could never imagine that even for someone like myself, who had been through so many troubles, would have people around willing to assist me—not for gain, but out of the sake of helping someone because they care.

By 2008, for the second time, Hong Fook referred me to the Diversion Support Program; the worker and lawyer supported me in regaining a peace-bond to move back to my own home because I was dealing with family law again. In addition, I received advice and interpretation of financial help regarding Employment Insurance, Ontario Works, Ontario Disability Support Program, and my social housing application. The services and programs at Hong Fook showed me a different picture of my future; I was beginning to understand the mental health illness I was suffering from while working with others to change my life for the better.

The support groups and workshops have enabled me to cope with my stress and anger; I am not the same man who lashed out at my family, but instead someone who is more capable of dealing with life in Toronto as an immigrant with limited English abilities. Piece by piece, day by day, my sense of agency returned. Medication is no longer part of my life as I have begun practicing yoga, become more aware of the diversity within my community, leverage my community resources, and become a better person that I hopefully can show the world. I now have a much better relationship with my children.

It has taken several years to turn my personal life around. Before I was at the bottom. Now I have moved forward. The journey has been hard, but with continuing support from Hong Fook’s services, I was able to get back what I had lost, finding a new positive direction and moving forward. Thank you.

*Mr. Bui is now still with Hong Fook, continuing to learn stress and anger management strategies; his commitment to personal change and growth is a story he hopes that will be used to help others on their path.*

## Từ Đau khổ đến Tức giận, từ Tức giận đến Hồi phục

*Các vấn đề trầm cảm và tức giận mà ông Nhu Bùi đã trải qua xuất phát từ những khó khăn về tài chính; sự nóng giận của ông đã dẫn đến việc dính líu đến với luật pháp. Ông nhớ lại cuộc hành trình dẫn tới việc chăm sóc sức khỏe tâm thần của mình.*

“Rất tiếc là chúng tôi đã chọn một ứng cử viên khác.”

“Ông rất là giỏi, nhưng chúng tôi muốn tìm một người có nhiều kinh nghiệm hơn.”

Xé đi những hồ sơ xin việc.

Đây là những lời từ chối tôi đã liên tục nhận được; Tôi không thể bút ra và tìm được một nghề phản ánh đúng các kỹ năng và nhiệt huyết mà tôi có thể cống hiến. Nơi nào cũng đòi hỏi trình độ tiếng Anh, nhưng tôi đã không thể đạt được trình độ ngôn ngữ yêu cầu của họ. Một phần trong tôi nghĩ rằng có một số nơi phân biệt đối xử dựa trên chủng tộc của tôi, nhưng tôi biết rằng một số nơi đã không thể cho tôi cơ hội vì tôi thiếu bằng cấp thích hợp, vậy thì cho đến bao giờ tôi mới có thể trèo lên nấc thang kinh tế-xã hội này?

Mọi việc càng ngày càng xấu đi, và với tính khí nóng nảy của tôi, mọi thứ càng trở nên tồi tệ hơn rất nhiều—một cách nhanh chóng. Lúc nào tôi cũng dính vào những vụ tranh chấp nghiêm trọng với người lạ, bạn bè và gia đình. Những vụ cãi lộn này không chỉ bằng lời qua tiếng lại, nhưng bằng cả hành động tay chân và cuối cùng, tôi đã trút lên đầu gia đình tôi. Đến năm 2005, tôi vẫn không có việc làm và sự căng thẳng của việc cung cấp cho gia đình đã trở thành quá nhiều cho tôi. Trong năm 2005, cảnh sát đã can thiệp, và tôi đã bị buộc tội là hành hung vợ tôi, và cuối cùng thì tôi đã phải đi tù vì việc đó. Tôi không tự hào về những giây phút này chút nào, và cũng chẳng có ai có thể, nhưng tôi chỉ không nhìn thấy lối thoát ra khỏi cuộc sống lúc đó của tôi, vì tôi lúc nào cũng phải lo lắng về tài chính, suy nghĩ về cuống phiếu lương tiếp theo, và nhận ra rằng tôi đã chỉ làm đủ cho nuôi sống một người, làm sao có thể gánh vác được cả một gia đình. Sự căng thẳng rất là to lớn, lúc nào cũng gây áp lực trong tâm trí tôi, như một lời nhắc nhở về những thất bại của tôi và việc cần phải làm tốt hơn, chỉ để đánh giá và xem xét bản thân mình lại trong một sự hoài nghi như vậy, và chu kỳ của sự thất vọng, bạo lực bên ngoài, và tự tự hủy diệt bên trong.

Tất cả mọi người và tất cả mọi thứ nhanh chóng rời ra khỏi cuộc sống của tôi; bạn bè và gia đình tôi tránh mặt. Tôi đã không có thể có những hoạt động giải trí cơ bản nào. Hy vọng đã ra đi và tuyệt vọng đã đến và tự tạo dựng một chỗ cho nó ở trong tôi. Tôi nghĩ rằng đến một lúc nào đó, sự trầm cảm đã trở thành một con người khác, nói chuyện với tôi như thể một người khác đang nói chuyện với tôi; tranh luận với tôi về sự tuyệt vọng mà tôi đang phải trải qua và cái chết trước sau gì cũng sẽ phải đến. Đôi khi tôi bắt đầu nhìn thấy hồn ma; Tôi không biết tại

sao tôi lại tưởng tượng ra chúng nữa, nhưng có lẽ tất cả những sự căng thẳng, giận dữ, và trầm cảm đã biến thành một cái gì đó ám ảnh tôi thường xuyên.

Tất cả những vấn đề này đã dẫn đến việc tôi bị đuổi ra khỏi nhà đang mượn. Tôi trở thành một kẻ vô gia cư, bị chia cách khỏi gia đình của tôi, nghe thấy tiếng nói của người khác, và chỉ có một thân một mình.

Năm 2006, tôi được giới thiệu đến Hội Sức Khỏe Tâm Thần Hồng Phúc. Sau khi làm việc với các nhân viên của họ, tôi đã được cung cấp một kế hoạch hành động thực tế để giúp cho tôi từ từ lấy lại được sự tự chủ của mình. Họ cung cấp cho tôi với những sự giúp đỡ trong việc để có được các dịch vụ chăm sóc sức khỏe, dịch vụ pháp lý, và hỗ trợ nhà ở. Lúc đầu, tôi đã rất ngạc nhiên rằng có những người khác muốn giúp tôi; cuộc hành trình dẫn đến sự phục hồi của tôi bắt đầu với một câu hỏi đơn giản từ một nhân viên Hồng Phúc: “Tôi có thể làm gì để giúp cho anh?” Tôi không bao giờ có thể tưởng tượng rằng ngay cả đối với một người như tôi, người mà đã phải trải qua rất nhiều khó khăn, có những người xung quanh sẵn sàng giúp đỡ tôi—không vì lợi lộc gì cho họ, mà chỉ vì họ quan tâm và muốn giúp đỡ người khác.

Đến năm 2008, đây là lần thứ hai, Hồng Phúc giới thiệu tôi vào Chương trình Hỗ Trợ Chuyển Hướng (Diversion Support Program); nhân viên của họ và luật sư đã giúp tôi lấy lại được lệnh hòa giải (peace-bond) để quay về chính nhà của mình, vì tôi lại phạm luật gia đình nữa. Thêm vào đó, tôi nhận được lời khuyên và sự giúp đỡ về thông dịch để xin tài chính cho tiền thất nghiệp (EI), tiền trợ cấp chính phủ (OW), tiền bệnh (ODSP), và xin nhà chính phủ của tôi. Các dịch vụ và chương trình ở Hồng Phúc đã giúp cho tôi thấy một bức tranh khác nhau về tương lai của tôi; Tôi đã bắt đầu hiểu hơn về bệnh tâm thần mà tôi đã bị từ khi làm việc với những người khác để giúp cho cuộc sống của tôi được tốt hơn.

Các nhóm hỗ trợ và hội thảo đã giúp tôi có thể đối phó với sự căng thẳng và giận dữ của mình; Tôi không còn là người đàn ông trút hết giận dữ lên gia đình tôi nữa, mà thay vào đó là một người nhập cư với khả năng tiếng Anh hạn chế có thể đối phó với cuộc sống ở Toronto tốt hơn. Từng bước một, từng ngày một, cảm giác tự chủ đã dần dần trở lại và vững vàng hơn trước đó; tôi đã không cần uống thuốc nữa vì tôi đã bắt đầu tập luyện yoga, bắt đầu nhận ra được sự đa dạng trong cộng đồng của mình, tận dụng các nguồn lực của cộng đồng, và trở thành một người tốt hơn mà tôi hy vọng có thể cho thế gian biết. Bây giờ, tôi đã có một mối quan hệ tốt hơn với các con tôi.

Đã phải mất vài năm để cuộc sống của tôi quanh lại vào quỹ đạo. Trước kia, tôi đã ở phía đáy cùng. Bây giờ, tôi đã bước lên phía trước. Cuộc hành trình rất gian lao, nhưng với sự hỗ trợ không ngừng từ các dịch vụ của Hồng Phúc, tôi đã có thể lấy lại những gì mà tôi đã mất, tìm kiếm một hướng đi tích cực mới và tiếp tục đi tiếp. Xin cảm ơn Hội.

*Ông Bùi bây giờ vẫn đang làm việc với Hồng Phúc, tiếp tục học cách quản lý sự căng thẳng và tức giận của mình; sự cố gắng để thay đổi cá nhân và vươn lên của mình là một câu chuyện mà ông hy vọng rằng sẽ được dùng để giúp đỡ những người khác trên con đường sống của họ.*

# // A Culminating Amount of Work, A Culminating Amount Towards Wellness

*Mr. Gu's work related stresses contributed to an unhealthy breakdown, but he has worked rigorously to recover and strengthen himself, and now, those around him.*

Work, work, work, these were key words for me when I strove to make a successful life for my family and myself. Countless overtime hours, sitting behind a desk and managing a series of people, skipping meals, and always under tight deadlines. These were ingrained in my mind, inextricable requirements I wanted to build a financially free life and retire early, but little did I know they were slowly taking my health away.

Gradually, I found myself obsessing about my health, being restless and sleepless, uninterested in socializing, and finally, I sank into an unforgiving kind of depression. I questioned everything about my life. As you can imagine, this prevented me from performing well at work, and eventually my employer and co-workers noticed.

I was hospitalized. One day everything just came to an abrupt halt, including my health and I could no longer function the same way before. The treatment process was horrible, painfully memorable as I had to take four kinds of prescribed medications for depression and insomnia. I felt weak and useless, especially as I could not return to work.

At first I didn't realize a clue how this all happened. I knew I was stressed and not feeling well, but to be hospitalized and on medication? All of these hit me hard; the illness crept slowly into my life and I ignored it for years, never thinking such a traumatic experience would transpire.

Staying in the hospital bed for a week was excruciating for me, as I had all the time in the world to allow negative thoughts to swallow me even more. My appetite was reduced significantly and helplessness was certainly my best friend.



After a week I was transferred to a day-care treatment centre in North York Hospital Finch and Bathurst site for two months, attending several kinds of recovery programs and sessions. I spent a lot of time on sessions and taking medication. Family and friends would discuss, visit, check-up and try to comfort me. I know they meant the very best and wanted a quick recovery, but the path would need time and lots of work. Rushing the process would just mean another crash sooner or later.

For the first time in my life I was on Employment Insurance Sickness Benefits, unemployed, dependent on a system that was designed to help those who were incapable of securing a job. I lost confidence in myself, but more importantly, I lost confidence from the people I loved and knew. People viewed me as “sick” and unable to work; they were supportive and caring, but ultimately, their concern was one that viewed me as someone who was disabled and not the same—incapable of returning to the world at that time.

Eventually, I was introduced to Hong Fook, the Prevention and Promotion Programs, which works with individuals to empower them with knowledge to combat their illness before and after, assisting me on my path to recovery. At Hong Fook, I learned about self-stigmatization and communal stigmatization, and how to overcome that from the community. Over time, my passion and commitment to mental health grew, especially as I started to attend the various programs Hong Fook offers from Qi Gong classes, singing and dancing, painting, mental health workshops, and Peer Leadership programs. Reflecting on the whole experience and where I am now, the ability to share my story and now mentor those who are starting their mental health journey is enlightening, humbling, and absolutely rewarding.

My journey over the past six years towards mental health has been transformative. I am back at work for years, and yes, once again I am managing and dealing with serious deadlines and clients, but I am far more equipped to address problems of my personal health, recognizing when I need to step back and reach out for help. I am proud to say that Hong Fook is a part of me, but I am also a part of them as well.

*Mr. Gu still attends several workshops and hopes his story can illustrate the services he benefited from Hong Fook and tell readers that they are not alone.*

## 極度工作，極度摧毀健康

古先生的工作壓力曾導致他精神崩潰，但他努力令自己康復和堅強。現在，他還能夠幫助周邊的人康復和堅強。

工作！工作！工作！當我努力為自己和家人爭取美好的生活而埋頭苦幹時，我腦子裡想的就是這兩個字。處理文件、管理下屬、無數的加班工作、廢寢忘餐、經常在緊張地趕上「死線限期」，這就是我的生活寫照。我拼命地工作，希望能夠賺到足夠的金錢提早退休，誰知這種疲累的生活方式卻慢慢地侵蝕我的健康。

我漸漸被自己的健康問題所困擾，感到不安和睡得不好，對社交和周圍的人都不感興趣，最後更陷入難以應付的抑鬱。我質疑自己生活上的每件事。不用說，這還影響了我的工作表現，而僱主和同事終於都留意到。

有一天，所有事物都突然停頓了，包括我的健康。我再無法像以前般工作。我被送入醫院。治療過程很可怕，是痛苦的回憶，因為我要服食四種治療抑鬱和失眠的處方藥物。我感到虛弱和一無是處，特別是我未能重回工作崗位。

起初我不明白為何會發生這種情況。我知道我感受到壓力和不適，但為何入院，以及要借助藥物來重返現實世界？其實這種種對於我是很沉重的打擊。疾病靜悄悄地闖進了我的生命，而我多年來竟忽略了它，從沒想過這些痛苦經歷會發生在我身上。留院一個星期令我苦惱不已；大部分時間我被消極的想法吞噬；我的食慾大減，感到相當無助。

一個星期後我被轉送到北約克醫院位於Finch和Bathurst的日間治療中心，並在那裡接受治療的兩個月，參加了一些康復計劃和療程。我耐心服藥，家人和朋友都來探望我，和我傾談，並試圖開解我。我知道他們希望我很快便能復原過來，但康復之路



需要時間和很多功夫，過於倉促催趕早晚會引致另一次崩潰。

這次是我一生人之中首次領取就業保險疾病福利。本來就業保險金是用來幫助那些無法獲得工作的人，可是現在我有條件找到工作，卻要使用這種福利。我對自己失去信心，但更糟的是，我對我所愛和所認識的人同樣失去信心。當我「患病」時，不能工作；別人很支持我，關心我，但不再像從前一樣，最終他們都視我為殘疾，認為我無能力重返崗位。

其後我獲轉介至康福心理健康協會，並參加了預防精神疾病及推廣心理健康服務計劃；這計劃為人們提供知識以對抗疾病，它協助我走上康復之路。我在康福了解到自我歧視和社會歧視的概念，以及如何在社區克服這些歧視。隨著時間過去，我對心理健康很熱心和投入，尤其是我開始參加康福所提供的多項服務如氣功班、唱歌和舞蹈班、繪畫班、心理健康工作坊和健康推廣大使訓練計劃。我在康福的經歷，成就了現在的我，可以有能力分享我的故事，並可以輔導那些剛展開心理健康之旅的病友，這個過程相當富啟發性、讓人謙卑，而且絕對有價值。

過去六年我的心理健康歷程改造了我。我重返工作崗位已有好幾年，但工作態度截然不同。我再次擔任管理工作，要應付緊張的死線限期和客戶要求，但我已裝備自己去解決個人健康的問題，明白自己有需要抽身出來和尋求協助。我可以很自豪地說，康福是我的一部分，而我也是他們的一分子。阿祖現正努力尋找自己在加拿大的定位。他分享自己的故事，強調尋求協助和坦承自己患有精神病的重要性。

古先生現時仍有參加工作坊。他希望透過自己的故事展示到他受惠於康福的服務，並告訴讀者他們並不孤單。

# 12 A Lonely Mother's Redemption

*Ms. Q's mental health journey began 20 years ago with a loud noise threatening the safety of her family.*

Knock, knock, knock, ring, ring, ring, bang, bang, bang. "Open the door, you have not paid rent in a month," shouted the obnoxious, yet just landlord.

The kettle boiling, baby son crying, and two-year-old daughter shouting all came at once and I fell to my knees, tears came rushing to my eyes and I thought life couldn't get any worse. What could a single mother do?

Alone. Deserted. Evicted. Threatened. My husband left us without a single word and with no money. I tried my best to delay the landlord, but she wasn't dumb, she knew I could no longer pay. I couldn't move, I felt I was trapped, and my mind felt crushed by an unbearable weight. I had no clue what kind of solutions would be possible.

The women's shelter became our home. Can you imagine having your two children living and growing up in a women's shelter? It wasn't pleasant, and in the end, Children Aid's Society came and threatened to take my children away, deeming I was an unfit mother. Eventually it happened. It felt like someone had just violently ripped pieces of my limbs off and had left me there to die.

Days would begin with taking a shower—thinking of my children and future. Midday would include attending job training workshops—thinking of my children and future. Living in a shelter provided sleep, safety, and food, but how could anyone focus when there was so much at stake?

Nonetheless, over time, the shelter and friends came to my rescue, helping me secure a network of resources from doctors, specialists, and ultimately, access to my kids.

Afterwards, when I was finally able to leave the shelter home, my kids and I were placed into supportive housing. We had a place to call home, somewhere where I could be safe with my children and be part of their lives.

Cancer cut through this brief moment of happiness in 2009. Breast cancer. I underwent chemotherapy. It was days and weeks of going to a clinic, and being hooked up to chemo. There was hair loss, weight loss, and a gradual feeling of decay accompanied by no desire to do anything. My kids were

teenagers by then. Could I be there for them at graduation? Depression came swooping in again.

The physical pain was numbing and dilapidating. There was no way I could work. I realized I had taken for granted the basic things in life: walking, eating, breathing. I could no longer go outside because I felt too weak, and was worried about what others would think of me. A weak, depressed, dying woman.

Eventually, the pain was too much and during a visit to see a specialist, Dr. Tran recommended me to seek Hong Fook services. At first I was reluctant, but my children talked to me and motivated me to go address my mental illness; they were concerned about my well-being, and I strove to fight because my children are everything to me.

Hong Fook staff put me into their Case Management. I was immersed in their philosophy of recovery, sharing emotional guidelines to overcome difficulties, learning the ability to accept what had happened, and ways to cope.

The ideas of self-love were difficult for me since I didn't view myself as someone who deserved it, but Hong Fook staff encouraged me and made me believe in myself; in order to recover I needed to recognize I deserved love for myself. I shouldn't hold onto the past, but instead view them as memories that have shaped me into who I am today, a proud single mother who has survived breast cancer and raised two lovely children.

Each time I met with my mental health worker, I was able to assess, revise, and achieve my goals of mental health wellness and learned something new about myself. My children and I feel the results of Hong Fook's influence every day.

Moreover, it wasn't just words, but tangible action that provided me with confidence. My mental health worker assisted me in securing a better place to live; having somewhere I could return to every day for comfort was vital. I came to the positive realization that I had more ahead of me if I was willing to value myself. I know I have a mental illness and that is okay because I have many who cherish me and want to support me; I am no longer that woman crying in the kitchen. I am not alone.

*Ms. Q understands she does not have to exclude herself from society; she continues to work with our Case Management Team to gain the knowledge and resources needed on her journey.*

## Sự Chuộc lỗi của một Người mẹ Cô đơn

*Hành trình sức khỏe tâm thần của bà Q đã bắt đầu cách đây 20 năm với một tiếng động lớn đe dọa sự an toàn của gia đình bà.*

Cộc cộc cộc, reng reng reng, âm âm âm. “Mở cửa ra, bà vẫn chưa trả mượn nhà tháng vừa rồi đó,” bà chủ nhà hét lên nghe thật đáng ghét, nhưng bà ấy nói đúng.

Ấm nước đang sôi, cậu con trai còn bé đang khóc, và cô con gái hai tuổi hét lên, tất cả xảy ra cùng một lúc và tôi quy gục xuống, nước mắt ngấn đầy mắt và tôi nghĩ rằng cuộc sống không thể nào tối tệ hơn thế được nữa. Một người mẹ đơn thân thì có thể làm gì?

Một mình. Bị bỏ rơi. Bị đuổi ra khỏi nhà mượn. Bị đe dọa. Chồng tôi bỏ chúng tôi đi không nói một lời, và nhất là không để lại một đồng nào. Tôi đã cố gắng hết sức mình để trì hoãn với chủ nhà, nói dối với bà ấy, lấy lý do, nhưng bà ấy đâu có ngu, bà ấy biết tôi không còn có khả năng trả nổi tiền mượn nhà nữa. Tôi không thể chuyển đi chỗ khác, tôi cảm thấy mình bị bế tắc và tất cả mọi áp lực đã đổ dồn lên tôi, nghiền nát tâm trí của tôi với một áp lực nặng nề mà tôi chưa bao giờ phải gánh chịu. Tôi không biết là phải làm thế nào.

Nhà tạm trú cho phụ nữ đã trở thành nhà của chúng tôi. Bạn có thể tưởng tượng để hai đứa con của mình sống và lớn lên trong nhà tạm trú cho phụ nữ không? Bây giờ thì tôi đã có thể. Nó không phải là dễ chịu chút nào, và cuối cùng, Hội Giúp Đỡ Trẻ Em (Children Aid’s Society) đã đến và đe dọa sẽ mang các con tôi đi, khi họ xét rằng tôi là một người mẹ không thích hợp và không đủ khả năng cung cấp cho chúng, và cuối cùng, điều đó cũng đã xảy ra. Cái cảm giác đó như là có ai đó vừa xé xác tôi ra, rồi bỏ mặc tôi chảy máu dần dần mà chết.

Mỗi ngày bắt đầu với việc đi tắm—nghĩ đến những đứa con và tương lai của tôi. Giữa ngày bao gồm việc tham gia vào những hội thảo đào tạo nghề—nghĩ đến những đứa con và tương lai của tôi. Cuối ngày, tắt đèn đi ngủ, nhìn những đồ vật ít ỏi mà tôi sở hữu—nghĩ đến những đứa con và tương lai của tôi. Sống trong nhà tạm trú, nơi cung cấp chỗ ngủ, sự an toàn, và thức ăn, nhưng ai mà có thể tập trung khi có rất nhiều điều có thể phải đánh đổi?

Tuy nhiên, sau một thời gian, nhà tạm trú và bạn bè đã cứu giúp tôi, giúp tôi có được một mạng lưới của các nơi giúp đỡ lâu dài từ các bác sĩ, chuyên gia, và cuối cùng là được gặp lại các con tôi. Chuyện này xảy ra vào một thời gian khá lâu trước đây; các chi tiết đã mờ nhạt dần đi vì tôi đang cố gắng để quên đi những ký ức đau đớn này.

Sau đó, khi tôi cuối cùng đã có thể rời khỏi nhà tạm trú, tôi và các con tôi đã được vào ở nhà hỗ trợ của chính phủ. Chúng tôi đã có một nơi để ở, một nơi mà chúng tôi có thể gọi là nhà, nơi mà tôi có thể được an toàn với các con tôi và là một phần trong của cuộc sống của chúng.

Bệnh ung thư đã cắt quãng giây phút hạnh phúc ngắn ngủi này vào năm 2009. Ung thư vú. Tôi có sự lựa chọn nào đây? Đầu hàng hay chiến đấu để có thể ở trong cuộc sống của các con tôi. Và vì vậy, tôi đã làm hóa trị liệu. Chắc cũng có bạn biết những bước của việc hóa trị liệu này, nhưng không ai hiểu được những ngày tháng đi đến phòng khám, bị kết nối với hóa trị, và cảm giác dần dần bị phân hủy. Rụng tóc, giảm cân, và một cảm giác không muốn làm bất cứ một cái

gi cả. Lúc đó, các con của tôi đã đến tuổi vị thành niên. Liệu tôi sẽ còn sống được để đến những cuộc họp phụ huynh với giáo viên, hay ngày tốt nghiệp của chúng không? Có nhiều lúc tôi không thể nào mở được mắt ra, ban đêm tự cố gắng phải thức dậy, nòn thật khê vào bồn vệ sinh để tránh đánh thức các con tôi vì tôi biết chúng có bài kiểm tra vào ngày hôm sau. Sự chán chường lại ập đến với tôi.

Các cơn đau thể xác làm cho tôi tê liệt và suy sụp. Tôi thực sự không thể đi làm được. Đây là khi tôi nhận ra rằng tôi đã không trân trọng những điều cơ bản trong cuộc sống: đi lại, ăn uống, hít thở. Tôi không còn có thể đi ra ngoài nữa vì trông tôi rất yếu, và tôi không biết những người khác sẽ nghĩ gì về tôi. Một người đàn bà yếu ớt, ủ rũ, sắp chết.

Cuối cùng, sự đau đớn trở nên quá mức và trong một lần đến khám bác sĩ chuyên khoa Trần, ông ấy đã khuyên tôi tìm kiếm các dịch vụ của Hồng Phúc. Lúc đầu, tôi đã miễn cưỡng, nhưng bây giờ, các con tôi đã đủ lớn để thấy ảnh hưởng của tất cả mọi thứ. Chúng đã nói chuyện với tôi và khuyến khích tôi đi chữa căn bệnh tâm thần của tôi; chúng lo ngại về sức khỏe của tôi, và thêm một lần nữa tôi lại cố gắng để chiến đấu vì các con tôi là tất cả mọi thứ đối với tôi.

Nhân viên Hồng Phúc đưa tôi vào Dịch vụ Giúp đỡ Cá nhân của họ. Ngay lập tức, tôi đã được hòa vào trong cách nhìn của họ về sự phục hồi, được chia sẻ những chỉ dẫn về cảm xúc để vượt qua khó khăn, học khả năng chấp nhận những gì đã xảy ra, và học cách để đối phó với chúng.

Những khái niệm về tình yêu bản thân rất là khó khăn cho tôi vì tôi không coi bản thân mình là một người xứng đáng nhận điều đó, nhưng nhân viên Hồng Phúc khuyến khích tôi và làm cho tôi tin vào bản thân mình; để hồi phục, tôi cần phải nhận ra rằng mình xứng đáng được sự hồi phục đó, tình yêu cho bản thân mình đó. Tôi không nên bám lấy quá khứ, mà thay vào đó, xem chúng như những kỷ niệm đã giúp tôi là một người như ngày hôm nay, một người mẹ độc thân tự hào đã sống sót ung thư vú và nuôi dạy hai đứa con đáng yêu.

Những cuộc thăm viếng và các cuộc họp thường xuyên với nhân viên sức khỏe tâm thần của tôi đã giúp tôi đánh giá, xem xét lại, và đạt được mục tiêu của tôi về việc chăm sóc sức khỏe tâm thần; mỗi lần chúng tôi gặp nhau, tôi lại học được một điều gì đó về bản thân mình và muốn cải thiện mình. Các con tôi và tôi không chỉ nhìn thấy kết quả từ sự ảnh hưởng của Hồng Phúc mà còn cảm thấy chúng mỗi ngày.

Hơn nữa, nó không chỉ là những lời nói, mà là hành động, những hành động cụ thể cung cấp cho tôi với sự tin tưởng hơn nữa. Nhân viên sức khỏe tâm thần của tôi giúp tôi trong việc có được một nơi tốt hơn để sống; ý tưởng về việc có một nơi ở thoải mái để tôi có thể đi về mỗi ngày rất là quan trọng. Họ đã làm việc cùng với tôi để liên kết các cơ quan như Mainstay Housing và Ontario Works để hỗ trợ những nhu cầu của tôi. Với sự giúp đỡ của họ, tôi có ít điều phải lo lắng hơn. Tôi bắt đầu nhìn nhận cuộc sống một cách tích cực, nhận ra rằng tôi có nhiều cơ hội ở phía trước nếu tôi coi trọng bản thân mình. Tôi biết là tôi bị bệnh tâm thần và điều đó thì không có sao vì tôi có nhiều người yêu mến tôi và muốn giúp đỡ tôi; tôi không đơn độc trong cuộc chiến này. Tôi không phải là người phụ nữ khóc trong bếp như ngày nào. Tôi không còn cô đơn nữa.

*Bà Q hiểu ra rằng bà ấy không phải rút mình ra khỏi xã hội; bà ấy tiếp tục làm việc với Nhóm Tự tương trợ Giúp đỡ lẫn nhau của chúng tôi để có được những kiến thức và sự giúp đỡ cần thiết trên hành trình của mình.*

# 13 Rediscovering the Lost Feeling of Hope

*Vanna expresses the pain she felt after losing her first family and the desperation she had after losing her second one.*

It was the last time I would ever see my husband again. My daughter—only 3 years of age at the time—had died of starvation. I was 30 years old, living under the communist Khmer Rouge regime in Cambodia. From there I was sent to do forced labour. I wanted to die. I worked from morning to night, and when I was done, I had nothing to go back to. My husband and daughter had been my only family. I had been taken away from my home, and I was always hungry. The hunger was never ending; a constant physical reminder of the pain I was already feeling from my loneliness. When I slept, I would see visions of food dancing in my dreams, and when I woke up I would cry. My hunger was still there. My loneliness. My sadness. I had nothing. No food. No home. No family.

Then it ended. In the 1980s the Khmer Rouge fell, and I was able to reunite with some of my family members, but the depression and sadness that had followed me since the loss of my husband and daughter remained. I remarried another man, had a son and eventually followed my new husband to Toronto. My depression followed with me, on to the plane, and into my new home.

My relationship with my new husband was abusive. He and his children did not respect me. I was physically and emotionally abused. He demanded that I give him all my money when I managed to start a small business for myself, expecting that whatever was mine belonged to him.

Finally, in 2008, I left with my son, but my depression only grew. There were many moments when I wanted everything to just end. But then I would think about my son. I would see his face on the back of my eyelids. I couldn't leave him alone, like how I had been left alone. But then he was gone.

In 2010, my 18-year-old son disappeared. The police never found him.

I fell back into the lonely pit I was once in, wanting to die. I couldn't stop crying. I went out to look for my son again and again and again. I refused to eat. I refused to sleep. All I wanted was to see my son. To see him walk

through the door of our home as if he was coming back from school, just like always. I never stopped looking for him. I couldn't stop looking for him. If I stopped, that would be the end. I was consumed by my pain, my loss, and my loneliness, and due to my lack of language ability and knowledge, I was unable to find help.

Then, one day, a friend noticed my pain and took me to Hong Fook.

I was introduced to a Cambodian Mental Health Worker where I gained valuable one-on-one counselling; the personal and emotional care that my worker provides each time I see her, even after all these years is remarkable.

Moreover, the Cambodian Self Help program allowed me to make new friends and form a new family for myself. I wasn't alone anymore. The Self Help group gave me a community and a purpose. Something I could focus my energy onto. During moments when I couldn't control my grief at the loss of my son, I would also seek supportive counselling. While I was also provided with medication, Hong Fook workers helped me the most as they speak my language and understand where I come from. It gave me a feeling of connectedness—of belonging. I was taught about my depression and how to manage it. Most important, I was taught how to feel hope. Hope for my missing son. Hope that he is doing well. Hope that, one day, I will see him again.

Currently, I am 69 years old. Many years have passed since the day my husband was taken away. Many years have passed since my daughter died. Many years have passed since my son went missing. Within these years, there were many days when I had wanted to give up my life—but I never did. Thanks to the support I have received from my doctor and the workers at Hong Fook, hopefully, I never will.

Finally, I want to say thank you to my doctor and mental health worker; without either of them I do not think I would be here to share my story today. They gave me hope and I pray that I will continue to receive their support for the rest of my life.

*With the continued support from those at Hong Fook, Vanna continues to think positive. She is sharing her story as a way to pass her hope on to others who may have also gone through the same grief of losing one's home and family.*

# 14 The Natural Way of Things: Life Moves On, and so do you

*Ms. Chong's eight months of experiencing depression and the recovery process prompted her to volunteer in the mental health sector with a great deal of passion; she shares her story as a volunteer who has benefitted from Hong Fook services and now impacts changes within the community.*

Back in 2004, I was constantly feeling down, no motivation, no appetite, can't sleep well at night and so on; I had no clue what was going on with my body. Back then, I didn't know anything about depression and that made me more fearful and difficult. Thankfully within eight months I was able to escape from it by seeking help from the doctor. Also my strong belief in God helped me greatly during this difficult time.

In 2008, I heard about Hong Fook's volunteer training from the media. And I was provided with ample information at their volunteer training and workshops. Immediately, I started volunteering for the agency. Through volunteering at Hong Fook, I had many opportunities to learn about the causes, symptoms, and coping strategies to address depression, anxiety, stress and other mental illnesses. At Hong Fook, I became engrossed in detail, understanding when I was feeling negative about myself.

Since I retired in 2012, I have spent more time in volunteering which always makes my days meaningful. My role as a volunteer is to help promote mental health awareness and to interpret for the Koreans within the Asian-Canadian community. At these volunteer workshops, I learned Mental Health First Aid and now I am a volunteer Case Aider where I provide direct peer support to assist those on their journey. The coping and self-care skills, such as mindfulness, stress management, communication skills, and the ability to view situations objectively are powerful tools that I learned and help teach. In addition, I help co-lead a "Body and Mind Program" that uses Dance Therapy, creating a vibrant environment for attendees to express themselves and have a fun time; the positive energy that flows in the workshop promotes positive thinking and helps those overcome their troubles, underscoring they have

friends and support groups there for them. The network of friends constantly expands, providing everyone with additional support that reinforces everyone's success.

The constant flow of conversations at these Self Help groups and workshops allows everyone to speak openly, share their thoughts and lives with people they can trust. There is no shame or stigma; instead, we embrace each other's problems and try and help each other overcome their illness.

My first-hand experience with depression helped me gain and use empathy in helping people with mental health problems, advocating the need to speak up and seek help when you need it. I was transferring life experience and skills to others as they were entering their journey. In the Korean Self Help group at Hong Fook, I've learned about the importance of mental health, nurturing my desire to be more responsible in putting the time necessary to achieve mental health wellness. Like those who exercise on a regular basis to obtain and maintain a physical look and condition, the same principle applies to the mind; working out the mind on a daily basis to promote positive thoughts is essential to an overall balanced health.

Many Korean people who were experiencing depression don't want to express their symptoms to anyone because we rarely discuss about mental health issues in our culture. The stigma of being labelled as mentally ill is considered shameful. We all are affected by a mental illness in some way, directly or indirectly, and we need to work on accepting this fact. Choosing to do nothing is not a wise decision.

I am telling you my story because I have observed many people who get support from Hong Fook and the success stories as a result. The mental illness is not the end because there is always hope to recover as long as you are willing to take that first step. I can confidently say, Hong Fook made a difference in my life and can make a difference in yours too.

*Ms. Chong continues to provide excellent volunteer service to help those on their mental health wellness journey. She holds a seat on the Korean Community Advisory Committee.*

## 자연스러운 길: 인생이 지나가듯 당신도 그렇다

정이 경험한 8개월간의 우울증과 회복의 여정이 그녀를 정신건강에 대해 열정을 가지고 봉사하도록 만들었다. 흥폭에서 봉사자로서 받은 여러 서비스에 대해 나누며 그녀가 속해 있는 커뮤니티에서 자신이 하고 있는 일들을 나눈다.

지난 2004년에 나는 아무 이유없이 기분이 가라앉고, 의욕과 식욕이 상실되며, 잠을 잘 이루지 못 했다. 내안에 무슨일이 일어나는지 도통 알 수 없었다. 그때 나는 우울증에 대해 아무것도 몰랐고 그런 증상들이 나를 더욱 두렵고 힘들게 했다. 감사하게도 8개월 안에 의사의 도움을 받아 우울증으로부터 벗어날 수 있었고, 또한 하나님을 믿는 신앙이 이 어려운 시기에 큰 도움이 되었다.

2008년도에 미디어를 통하여 흥폭의 자원 봉사자 교육에 대하여 듣게 되었다. 그리고 그 교육을 통해 필요하고 유익한 정보를 얻었고, 바로 흥폭에서 자원봉사를 하기 시작했다. 봉사를 하면서 우울증, 불안증, 스트레스, 또 그 외 여러 정신 질환들의 원인, 증상, 대처하는 방법들에 대해서 배울수 있는 기회를 가졌다.

2012년에 은퇴한 뒤로, 나는 내 삶에 의미를 부여해 주는 봉사활동에 좀더 많은 시간을 할애 할 수 있었다. 자원 봉사자로서 한국 커뮤니티가 정신 건강에 대한 인식을 향상시키도록 돕고, 영어가 부족한 한국인들을 위해 통역 하는 일을 할 수 있었다. 봉사활동을 하면서, 정신 건강 응급 처치 (Mental Health First Aid) 코스에 등록하여 배움을 얻었고, 정신건강 회복의 여정 중에 있는 고객들에게 직접적인 동료 지원 서비스를 제공하는 케이스 도우미로도 봉사하고 있다. 마음챙김(mindfulness)과 스트레스 관리, 대화의 기술, 객관적으로 상황을 바라보는 능력과 같은 자기관리와 대처 기술은 봉사자로 사용할 수 있는 중요한 능력이 되었다. 게다가 나는 댄스 치료를 적용한 “바디앤 마인드 프로그램 (Body and Mind Program)” 을 공동으로 인도하게 되었는데 이 프로그램은 자신을 표현하고 즐길 수 있도록 활기찬 환경을 만들어 내었다. 이 프로그램에서 경험되어지는 에너지는 긍정적인 사고를 하도록 돕고 혼자가 아니라 누군가가

함께 있다는 것과, 나를 지지해 주는 무리가 있다는 것을 강조하여 가지고 있는 문제를 극복하도록 돕는다. 참여한 개인 하나하나가 서로를 지지해 주고 믿어줌으로 서로가 성공적인 경험을 할 수 있도록 격려하는 자리가 제공되는 프로그램이라고 할 수 있다.

자조그룹과 여러 교육 프로그램에서 지속되는 메시지는 우리 모두가 공개적으로 이야기할 수 있고, 믿을 수 있는 사람들과 함께 자신의 생각이나 삶을 나눌 수 있도록 한다. 창피함이나 낙인 같은 것이 없는 대신 서로의 문제들을 포용하고 질병을 이겨낼 수 있게 도와주고 있다.

내가 경험한 우울증은 정신건강 문제가 있는 사람들에게 공감하고 이해할 수 있도록 도왔다. 나는 정신건강 회복의 여정에 들어선 사람들에게 삶의 경험과 기술을 나누기도 하며, 경우에 따라 도움을 필요로 하는 사람들을 위해 목소리를 높여 도움을 청하고 받을 수 있도록 힘이 되어 주기도 한다. 자조그룹에서는 정신건강의 중요성에 대해 배우기도 했고 정신 건강을 성취하기 위해 필요한 시간을 쓰는 데에 좀더 책임감있는 소망을 키우게 되었다. 육체건강과 컨디션을 유지하기 위해 정기적으로 운동을 하는 사람들 처럼 정신에도 똑같은 원리가 적용된다. 긍정적인 사고를 향상시키기 위한 날마다 하는 정신 운동은 전체적으로 균형잡힌 건강을 위해서 꼭 필요하다.

한국 문화는 정신건강 문제에 대해 다른 사람들과 이야기 하는 것을 꺼려한다. 그러기에, 우울증을 경험하는 많은 한국인들은 자신이 가지고 있는 증상을 다른이들과 나누려고 하지 않는다. 정신적으로 이상이 있다는 꼬리표가 달리는 것은 수치스러운 것으로 간주된다. 그러나 현실적으로 우리 모두는 직, 간접 적으로 정신 건강 문제를 경험한다. 그리고 그 사실을 인정해야 할 것이다. 마치 나는 정신건강 문제와 아무 상관이 없는것 처럼 살지 말아야 할 것이다.

나는 흥폭에서 지원을 받았던 사람들이 성공적으로 정신건강 여정을 걸어가고 있는것을 종종 보게된다. 정신 질환에 걸린다는 것은 이 세상을 끝이 아니다. 첫 발을 내딛으려는 의지만 있다면 언제든지 회복을 위한 소망은 있기 때문이다. 나는 흥폭이 내 인생에 변화를 주었고 또한, 여러분의 인생에도 그런 변화를 줄 수 있다고 확신한다.

정은 정신 건강 관리 여정 중에 있는 사람들을 돕기 위해 뛰어난 자원봉사 서비스를 지속적으로 제공하고 있다. 그녀는 한인 커뮤니티 자문 위원회의 위원으로 수고하고 있다.

# 15 Two Jobs as a Single Mom

*Linda's mental health journey started with what many go through—that is, the additional pressures from her surroundings and obligations while ignoring her own needs.*

“Mommy! Daddy!” Maybe those are thoughts that go through a new born baby. I didn't know what my first child was trying to say to me when he came into our family in 1995, but his birth changed me. This might sound awful, but I felt lonely and unhappy; don't get me wrong, I am not suggesting I was sad that I gave birth, but I recognized that as a new immigrant and a new mother, I needed to work harder to establish a career in a foreign land and learn how to care for my child.

I am a registered nurse; the constant rotating day and evening shifts prevented me from providing the full care and support for my child needs. I was young, I didn't realize the pressures and damages to my mental health were accumulating.

Some of you may ask: why didn't your husband help with easing the pressure you were in? He just didn't. Maybe it was the culture where men feel emasculated for doing house chores or maybe because he was selfish and lazy. Nonetheless, he never helped, and so in the end, I was working two full-time jobs. From an 8-hour shift where I was helping every patient's needs to returning home to raise two children—exhausting. It just felt like I was constantly forcing myself to meet other people's needs and not my own, which probably, now looking back, amplified my sense of anxiety and sadness. Mental health was something people didn't talk about openly in the 1990s, especially in the Asian communities, and so I kept my feelings, my problems locked up in my heart.

“I don't love you anymore. I can't do this anymore. We need to divorce.” These are words that have been chained onto my head; in 2008 I received the divorce letter, revealing that our vows had to come to an end. The promises that we made to each other were over. We had gradually learned to live without each other, choosing not to share as much and communicate. It was not a simple divorce, but a long drawn out war that incurred financial burden and a vicious custody battle over our children.

During the legal process I was feeling overwhelmed; the cave was collapsing on itself. Day after day, I was experiencing chronic fatigue, physical weakness. I would wake up from a full day's rest feeling like I just wanted to sleep in more and did not want to get up.

My growing anxiety problems caused me to seek help from my family doctor. He suggested medication, but that wasn't the option I looked forward to. While I was in his office, I saw a flyer called "Change ways", an outreach program organized by the hospital. I gave them a call and joined the group. I saw the importance of group support and eventually was introduced to Hong Fook.

In 2009, I joined Hong Fook's Prevention and Promotion program on how to manage emotions. 10 months later, I received their Case Management service. Through counselling, I learned how to get along with my children. The pressures and changes in teenage boys brought on additional stresses and arguments, but counselling allowed me to see the conflicts differently.

At Hong Fook's women's group and self help program, I learned important lessons in taking care of myself, taking part in activities such as Tai Chi, badminton, and Happy Thursdays, along with various workshops e.g. "build up self esteem", "journey to healing", and "integrative behavioural group therapy". The array of workshops was targeted at one thing: making us feel better. The multiple opportunities I had at Hong Fook to work with staff members, clients, counsellors, and volunteers gave me the chance to share my burdens, which took pain away from me and ultimately set me forward in finding happiness. I learned interpersonal skills, parental skills and social skills, which enabled me to enhance my life.

Although I am no longer a homeowner, I have achieved a lot in establishing a strong mindset. In the past, I didn't want to let people know about my losses, but I now feel more comfortable about letting people know I am a single mother.

The most important lesson I learned at Hong Fook is that self care comes first. When I'm healthy, I feel joy; and when I feel joy, I am healthy. We can support each other and that is why I am sharing my story with all of you so you can begin your journey.

*After all the help that Linda received at Hong Fook, she decided to give back to others by volunteering for the Peer Drop-in program.*

## 身兼兩職的單親媽媽

蓮黛 (Linda) 開展心理健康歷程的情況與大多數人差不多，即周圍環境給她太大壓力和責任，而她本人則忽略了自己的需要。

「媽媽！爸爸！」也許初生嬰兒的腦子裡都是想這樣叫的。我不知道我的第一個孩子在1995年出世時想對我說些甚麼，但他的出生改變了我。這樣聽起來有點可怕，但我真的感到寂寞和不開心。不要誤會我的意思，我不是說我生了寶寶很悲傷，而是我知道作為一個新移民和新媽媽，我需要加倍地努力在異國建立一番事業，同時要學習如何照顧我的兒子。

我是一個註冊護士，經常要輪班工作，當夜班妨礙我為兒子提供全面的照顧和支持。當時我很年輕，沒有意識到損害我心理健康的壓力正在累積。然後，在1997年，我第二個孩子出世。

也許你會問：為何你的丈夫不幫忙以減輕你的壓力？但他就是袖手旁觀。或者這是一種文化，認為男人做家務會失去男子氣概，又或者只是他自私和懶惰。總之，他從不幫忙做家務，所以到最後我要做兩份全職工作。當了八小時班照顧每一個病人的需要後，回家還要帶兩個孩子，真的令我疲憊不堪。我如何告訴他們要安靜讓我睡覺？我如何因為很疲倦而叫他們自己換衣服？他們仍未懂說話，我怎麼跟他們訴說我的困境？我感到我不斷強迫自己滿足別人的需要卻忽略了自己。現在回看，也許這放大了我的憂慮和悲傷的感覺。在90年代，人們不會公開談論精神健康，尤其在亞裔社區，所以我掩藏自己的感受，把自己的問題埋在心坎裡。

「我不再愛你了。我不能再這樣下去。我要跟你離婚。」這幾句話一直在我的腦海縈繞。2008年我收到一封離婚信件，顯示我兩的誓言告終，我們之間的承諾完了。我們慢慢適應沒有對方的日子，盡量不去分享和溝通。那不是一樁簡單的離婚，而是一場漫長的鬥爭，引發巨大的財務負擔和激烈的孩子撫養權爭奪戰。

在司法程序進行期間，我感到被壓垮了，快要倒下來。經過漫長的爭奪戰後，我們協議共同監護兩個孩子，我這才可以勉強站起來。可是我仍感到透不過氣來。日復一日，我感到患上慢性疲勞，身體十分虛弱。我會在一整天休息醒來後，仍想繼續睡覺，不想起床。

我的焦慮問題越發嚴重，迫使我要向家庭醫生求助。他建議我吃藥，但這並不是我想要的治療方法。我在他的診症室看到一家醫院推出名為「扭轉人生」外展計劃的傳單。我打電話給他們，然後加入了該小組。我看到支援小組的重要性，而最後我獲轉介到康福心理健康協會。

我於2009年加入康福的預防精神疾病及推廣心理健康計劃，學習控制情緒。10個月之後，我接受了他們的個人關顧服務。透過輔導，我學會了如何與子女溝通。少男的壓力和轉變增添我們之間的壓力和爭拗，但經過輔導後讓我對衝突有不同的看法。

在康福的婦女和自助服務計劃，我學到最重要的一課是要好好照顧自己，我同時參加了如太極班、羽毛球班和快樂星期四等活動，以及多個不同的工作坊，例如「建立自信」，「康復之旅」和「綜合行為小組治療」。這一系列的工作坊目標只有一個：就是讓我們感覺好些。我在康福有很多機會與他們的職員、服務使用者，輔導員和義工相處，讓我能夠釋放我的重擔，把我的痛苦帶走，最終使我大步向前尋找快樂。我學到人際關係的技巧、養兒育女之道和社交技巧，令我的人生更精彩。

雖然我不再擁有房屋，但我在建立堅強的心態上獲益良多。過去，我不想人家知道我的不幸，但現在我告訴人家我是單親媽媽時，我感覺自在得多。

我在康福學會最重要的、排在首位的一課是自我照顧。我健康時就會感到快樂，而我感到快樂時就會健康。我們可以互相扶持，所以我與你分享我的故事，希望你也開展你的康復之旅。

由於在康福獲得這麼多幫助，蓮黛決意作出貢獻，幫助別人。她現在於康福擔任活動中心的義工。

## 2015 Youth Mental Health Needs Assessment

### Scope:

In an effort to better understand the mental health challenges that Asian youth face, Hong Fook Mental Health Association (HFMA) embarked on a 9-month (2015-2016) study called the Youth Mental Health Assessment Project. Aimed at examining youths (aged 16-24) from Cantonese, Mandarin, Korean and Vietnamese backgrounds, the assessment looks at the types of mental health concerns and/or stressors they may encounter and how they cope with these situations.

The study was carried out in three parts including in-depth interviews with social service workers in the targeted ethnic communities, 9 focus groups involving 92 youths, and 163 surveys.

### Findings in Brief:

- **Substance use**  
Youths admitted that smoking and drinking alcohol were methods used to relieve stress, gain social acceptance and popularity among peers.
- **Social exclusion (from peers and teachers)**  
Youths shared their troubles being unable to make friends and have meaningful relationships with classmates. This directly correlated to the amount of stress they felt.
- **Poor communication skills with parents**  
Youths reported other communication outlets since they feel a weak bond with their parents.
- **Lack of positive coping skills**  
Youths spoke about keeping themselves isolated until they could “get over the issue”, as they wish not to ever speak about the issue again.
- **Mental health stigma**  
The fear of being judged as “attention seeking” or “complaining too much, and

bringing other people down” were primarily motivations behind them not wanting to share with peers or family.

### Additional Findings:

- 25% of youths surveyed reported having 5 or more alcoholic drinks on one occasion.
- Korean youths reported the highest amount of stress, surpassing Cantonese, Mandarin and Vietnamese groups at 39% (compared to 23%, 27% and 19% respectively).
- 19% of youths surveyed thought it would be better if they were dead in the past 12 months, while 12% seriously considered suicide. This figure is double of that in the Canadian Community Health.

### Recommendations from participants and conclusion:

About 50% of the surveyed youths feel that more information about mental health issues, treatments or available services are helpful. Chinese, Korean and Vietnamese youths have suggested that school workshops are difficult to understand due to language barriers, as well as relevance of information.

Youths also have positive reactions towards counselling or therapy to help them deal with their mental hardships. The focus, as suggested by Asian youth participants, should involve:

- trust building between the professional and youth
- professional interventions being able to relate to daily circumstances and expectations

Culturally competent mental health information and counselling services are needed for youths and their families, so they can identify with the services offered and feel truly supported.

# 2016 Mandarin Community Needs Assessment

## Scope:

The Hong Fook Mental Health Association launched a Mental Health Needs Assessment Study with regard to members of the Mandarin community in GTA. This was one of the few large scale studies targeting Mandarin-speaking residents aged 17 to 65+ to explore their mental health conditions, attitudes towards mental illness and needs for mental health resources and support.

For the study, 486 respondents participated in the needs assessment survey and 95 participants were interviewed in 6 focus groups.

## Findings in Brief:

- Among all age groups, the younger respondents (aged under 34) exhibited:
  - The lowest rate in positive outlook of life
  - The highest rate in mental health problems
  - Lowest level of stigma
- Among all age groups, the older respondents exhibited:
  - Better outlook for life, lowest rate in mental health problems, but
  - Highest level of stigma

## Additional Findings:

- Almost half, 48%, feel they would be discriminated due to mental health problems
- A majority, 73%, of participants carry a level of medium to high stigmatization towards those with mental illness
- About 1-in-10 of the respondents said that in the past month, they have thought that it would be better if they were dead now

## Recommendations:

- 1) Culturally and linguistically competent counselling services are most needed for the Mandarin community so they can identify with the services offered and feel truly supported.
- 2) Age appropriate mental health services are needed. The young adults (aged under 34) is the group exhibiting the highest mental health risks. Early identification and intervention services should be made available to prevent them from developing serious mental health problems.
- 3) Rigorous mental health promotion/ campaigns which are culturally relevant, carrying evidence-based key messages, and age-specific should be launched to tackle the myths and stigma, e.g. use of medication, seeking help vs self-management, alternative medicine.
- 4) Diverse channels and formats should be employed for anti-stigma workshops/ information (those preferred by community members), targeted at different age groups.
- 5) More localized and ethno-specific studies to collect data to support evidence-based program and service planning.

## Dr. Lin Fang - Association President



**Interviewer:** *What persuaded you to help Hong Fook?*

**Fang:** Hong Fook was one of the first few agencies I visited when I came to Toronto in 2008. Before I came to Toronto, I was a social worker and provided mental health services to people primarily from immigrant communities, so it was quite a natural draw.

Also, I got to work with some very passionate volunteers like Josephine Leung, Kathy Wong, and Ellen Liu. They helped me gravitate towards the agency more. It was fascinating to see someone who would commit voluntary work for the same organization for 20-30 years. It tells you something about the organization.

**Interviewer:** *When you first started at Hong Fook, you had a goal to try and help the community. I'm curious, how has your goal changed over that period of time?*

**Fang:** Hong Fook always has dedicated staff and volunteers and we're doing hard work. One thing I was hoping to see if how we could generate the evidence of strong work to the funders and to our communities. The Board has been focusing on quality improvement of our various client services. It's not to say that we weren't doing a good job, but rather how we can demonstrate it in a clear manner. Our operation teams really focuses on indicators and quality benchmarks where we can show strong evidence of our impact. The information will also help us identify areas we can further improve or services we should consider expanding.

**Interviewer:** *How does the Association see mental health care evolving over the next 5 years?*

**Fang:** Certainly we will continue the good work we have been doing. We will launch our next strategic planning soon and I hope that over this process will help us clearly define the directions and operation plan for the next 3 years. From the client stories you hear about how their life may have been impacted, and hopefully transformed by Hong Fook's work. So we want to make sure we continue to do that.

Also, in the next 3-5 years, the Association is looking into accreditation. Hong Fook came from a community grassroots agency to now a mid-size community health agency with a \$4.5 million annual budget. We've come a long way. By being accredited, it will reflect that we have very strong internal processes and procedures and meet the industry standards - Anywhere from board governance to frontline operations. We want to demonstrate that we have the capacity, strong internal processes and ability to deliver the work we promise.

**Interviewer: Hong Fook has been around for 35 years, how can the community continue to help Hong Fook or mental health awareness grow?**

**Fang:** The term "mental health" used to be loaded and seen as a taboo. Over the years the community has been more open to and aware of the concept of mental health and mental illness, but obviously more needs to be done. Hong Fook is no longer a place where we only work with people who have a mental illness, our goal is to look into how we can enhance the mental health for all in our community. The community can support our cause by making donations, participating in our events, and volunteering for us. That way, we will continue to have resources to facilitate health prevention and promotion activities relevant to community concerns and to serve our clients.

**Interviewer: If you had to choose another profession besides the one you are in right now, what would it be?**

**Fang:** I've been a social worker all my professional life. If anything, maybe a historian.

**Interviewer: What are you reading these days?**

**Fang:** I finished a book called Family Life by Akhil Sharma. It's a beautifully written story about an Indian immigrant family. I love reading stories about immigrant families and how they navigate their lives.

**Interviewer: Last question, ice cream, chocolate, chips.**

**Fang:** Maybe ice cream. Green tea. If I have a second choice, it would be rum-raisin.

**Interviewer: Thank you.**

## Kam Lo - Foundation Chair



***Interviewer: There are many worthy non-profit agencies, but what persuaded you to join Hong Fook?***

**Lo:** Many years ago, I had gone through a period of time where I had some family issues and I felt trapped in my daily routine life. I needed to break through so when I saw the recruitment of volunteers at Hong Fook, I decided to try it out. Through the training Hong Fook provided to peer leaders, I learned many coping skills and the importance of looking after yourself before you look after others. It changed my perspective to see and handle problems. The group training also provided me with a forum to share my frustration and it is

comforting to know that I am not alone on this journey. I gained stronger self-esteem. The training also transformed me into a more balanced individual who can handle more at home and at work. I felt indebted to Hong Fook so I joined the Foundation board in 2005.

***Interviewer: What was your mission/goal when you started at Hong Fook and how has that changed over the years as you work with staff, volunteers, and community members of Hong Fook?***

**Lo:** The role of the Foundation board is to provide funding to the Association so that they can offer underfunded programs and workshops like supportive housing, family support, prevention and promotion and youth outreach. With the tight budget of LHIN and the expansion of the population we serve, we have to subsidize the Association with more dollars every year. Traditional ways of fundraising can no longer meet our needs. I am hoping to expand our donor base through social media platforms and other creative fundraising activities. Hong Fook Foundation has no full time staff. Over 98% of our donation goes back to benefit our program participants. Therefore, I would like to develop more volunteers in the coming years in order to carry out the ever increasingly difficult task of fund raising. People who have the passion for our cause are best to promote the good work of Hong Fook.

***Interviewer: How does the Foundation envision mental health client care in the next five years? How does the Foundation hope to achieve this vision?***

**Lo:** Other than fund raising for the annual operating budget, we will be starting our capital campaign soon to facilitate the purchase of our own building. As

the rental cost in Toronto has been sky rocketing in the past years, a site of our own can help us better manage our rental expenses and leave Hong Fook more money to run our programs. A permanent home for Hong Fook can also help our community to be more aware of our services and help us reach out to newcomers who are our prime service target.

**Interviewer: What else can the community do to help mental health causes and Hong Fook?**

**Lo:** Mental health, like physical health, needs to be worked on. I am hoping everyone can take a pledge to work towards their own mental wellness and help the community to be more aware of its importance starting today. They can:

1. Plan a period of down time on their daily schedule to relax and de-stress.
2. When they feel stress, talk it out with people they trust and be that listener for their family and friends.
3. Volunteer in Hong Fook like being a peer leader, help promote Hong Fook through social media or even create a personal page in fundraising.
4. Make on-going donations or be a program sponsor. By donating regularly, Hong Fook can plan their programs better and on a longer term basis.

**Interviewer: Chips, Chocolate, Ice cream?**

**Lo:** Chocolate for sure, particularly dark chocolate. I love the bitter taste and also, I feel less guilty eating it.

**Interviewer: What are you reading these days?**

**Lo:** The Road Less Traveled by Scott Peck. It gives me a new perspective on the meaning of love. I also watched a series of episodes on Youtube about Chinese immigrant history to North America. I thank our forefathers for fighting for us so we have equal rights today like any other citizens. It further inspires me to continue the work of Hong Fook as we need to pay it forward for the generations to come in the mental health front.

**Interviewer: Thank you.**

## Jason Park - NPLC President



**Interviewer: What persuaded you to join Hong Fook?**

**Park:** Originally, I got asked to join by Raymond Chung because I knew Raymond Chung's son-in-law. I didn't really have a connection to Hong Fook at first, but I thought when I attended the Korean group meetings, I thought it was a good way to provide services to the Korean community. Subsequent to that, I had family members and friends who suffered from mental health so, although initially, it wasn't the case, after the fact I felt like I had more of a connection to it.

**Interviewer: When you first joined, there were some goals you had for Hong Fook, how have these goals changed over the time since working with Hong Fook and its' communities?**

**Park:** A lot has happened in terms of breaking down the stigma in the Korean community. That was my initial goal in helping. I helped start the golf tournament organizing committee, and that was partly due do fundraising, but I think fundraising was a secondary thing, it was more to bring positive awareness to Hong Fook and mental health issues. I think the real driving force behind the golf tournament was to bring people who, otherwise wouldn't be aware of mental health issues, and how to promote that.

**Interviewer: How does the NPLC envision mental health care evolution in the next 5 years?**

**Park:** From the clinical perspective, our focus isn't just solely on mental health. It's a nurse-practitioner led clinic and obviously, we have affiliations through Hong Fook, but it's not meant to provide services just to people with mental illnesses. Having said that, we have somewhat of a focus, and do help people and refer people to Hong Fook or other psychiatrists who need that and come to the clinic. I think the real big thing is that we will help those who need clinical assistance, but the bigger idea for us is to make sure that people practice good mental health and are aware of mental health issues, and they get the necessary help. It's a place for us to promote and provide information. I think the clinic's doing a good job of doing that now and will continue to build upon that in the next 5 years.

**Interviewer: Can you give an example of how you think the clinic is achieving their vision or mission of promoting mental health?**

**Park:** The clinical staff gives regular workshops over a wide variety of issues. Some of it is diabetes prevention, but some of it is mental health related.

And we're trying to branch out to younger people. Just to identify and reach students at a younger age because a lot of younger people now have depression or other mental illnesses so we want to be able to reach out to them as well.

**Interviewer:** *How else can the community help Hong Fook and mental health awareness?*

**Park:** I think the first way is to volunteer. I think the other thing is that people just have to have an open mind to mental health issues. Just get the facts. A lot of people have a lot of incorrect views on what causes mental illnesses, and in many respects, people have to work on promoting good mental health in their lives. Whether it's being physically active, or just being aware of things that could potentially put you in a position to suffer from depression.

**Interviewer:** *Do you think there is a lot of open dialogue among the community?*

**Park:** I think there is more dialogue, the question is, is there enough dialogue and I'm not sure we are there yet. I think it's becoming more mainstream acceptable, but we service a lot of new immigrants and that's one of the things we're trying to reach out to. For new immigrants who may have different views depending on where they came from on mental health issues, to allow them to be open-minded and to educate them about mental health issues. I think in certain communities, we're doing well, but in certain other ones, there isn't that open dialogue that we're hoping to achieve.

**Interviewer:** *What other profession would you have liked to pursue other than the one you are currently in.*

**Park:** I would say a professional golfer.

**Interviewer:** *Final question, chips, chocolate or ice cream?*

**Park:** Chips—all kinds.

**Interviewer:** *Thank you.*

# Dr. Peter Chang

- Foundation Immediate Past Chair



**Interviewer:** *As a founder, what made you stay at Hong Fook for 35 years?*

**Chang:** I stayed because I felt there was a need. I think there is a particular place for Hong Fook to continue operating, and I stayed because I felt I could help.

**Interviewer:** *My understanding is you are no longer practicing medicine right now right?*

**Chang:** That's right. I retired from medicine in 2014.

**Interviewer:** *When you were practicing medicine, what were the cultural and linguistic barriers that you saw in your patients?*

**Chang:** Mental health services require empathy, understanding, and if you don't speak the language it poses a fairly formidable barrier. Then there is the cultural element, even if you speak the language. We have English speaking Chinese patients who seem to have trouble with the mainstream because the mainstream doesn't understand the cultural practices and the way the patient thinks. When a Chinese person gets sick they think Traditional Chinese Medicine. Psychotherapy is very remote in their minds. So there is a cultural barrier to psychotherapy.

**Interviewer:** *Did you find [this holistic view] similar in the Korean and Vietnamese communities?*

**Chang:** I think there are similarities. There are many things in the Korean culture that are similar to the Chinese, some Chinese characters have been adopted by the Korean language and Koreans put a high value on education. For the Vietnamese population here, we are mostly dealing with the Chinese ethnic group from Vietnam. Of course, we have Vietnamese origins as well, but I think the vast majority of the boat people were of Chinese origin. So culturally there are similarities.

**Interviewer:** *Have you encountered people who are resistant to this mental health journey process? How do you navigate them through this?*

**Chang:** Whether it's hard or not depends on the therapist. I think the duty of the therapist is to reach out and understand where the patient is coming from. So I don't find it hard, I just find that it's necessary to get over stage one. By the time they show up in my office, it's already half the battle won because at least they came.

**Interviewer:** *What do you mean by stage one?*

**Chang:** Trying to understand why they came. They came because there was a problem that brought them here. So, let's identify that problem.

**Interviewer: Can you recall an instance when you worked with a client that really influenced you as a professional or personally?**

**Chang:** There are many. I learn so much from my patients.

There was a young man. He was told that he was mentally retarded. Actually, this young man was a lot smarter than [people] thought. He told me about his views on the political system in Canada. He studied Hong Kong elections and European elections. I'm sure he's having a field day right now, he's so enthusiastic about the political process (laughs). This fellow has been labelled as an underachiever, handicapped, but he's not. He taught me a lot about how we look at our patients.

Then there was the elderly man who took care of his sick son. There was an unfortunate situation where this man, out of all his children, two were very seriously ill, so he took care of them until the day he died. A lot of these people touched me. I learned about life, about how people deal with hardship and adversity.

**Interviewer: How do you think mental health awareness, prevention, promotion has changed in the past 5 years?**

**Chang:** There are a lot of changes in the community. Generally, people are much more open about the concept of mental illness. The stigma is coming down a little bit. Not a day goes by without some news commentary or news item about mental illness and people are overwhelmingly sympathetic.

**Interviewer: How has Hong Fook's goal and vision funneled into helping clients in terms of success?**

**Chang:** The original goal evolved. Many community hospitals have a multicultural staff and interpreters on site, so that's not the focus anymore. What Hong Fook is good at these days is what they call culturally competent services. Because not only do we speak the language, but we have to understand the culture where the patients come from.

**Interviewer: What are you reading these days?**

**Chang:** There is a book I read that is kind of interesting. The Forgotten Ally, written by an American, pointing out that China was an ally during the Second World War. I'm interested in recent Chinese history, so I've been reading about recent Chinese history and the Nanking massacre. Recently I read a Japanese writer who wrote about the Nanking massacre. These are books I've read recently.

**Interviewer: What is another profession you would pursue, besides the ones you are currently in?**

**Chang:** Not so much a profession, but actually, I would like to study more history and become a historian.

**Interviewer: Last question, ice cream, chocolate, or chips.**

**Chang:** Vanilla Ice Cream

**Interviewer: Thank you.**

# Dr. Brian Cho

## - Asian Clinic, Psychiatrist



**Interviewer:** *What persuaded you to get involved with Hong Fook?*

**Cho:** When I was in medical school I was actually recruited. I also worked under Dr. Fung as a resident. So, I started to accompany him here to Hong Fook and continued afterwards.

As a resident, it was a way to connect with the Korean population. I grew up here, and I attended Korean churches, so I was grounded in the community, but there's not a lot of talk about mental illness unless you're actually part of the mental health system. It was a bit of an eye-opener to me, how there was a need. It shouldn't have been surprising, but it was a little bit surprising that Korean people get sick too (laughs).

**Interviewer:** *What are some of the cultural and linguistic barriers that you encounter when helping clients?*

**Cho:** My Korean isn't fluent. I think over the course of time, I may have picked up a little bit more, but I don't speak fluently. Sometimes just the fact that you look the same as somebody, there is a familiarity there. But the flipside because my Korean isn't great, sometimes it's as if you're not Korean enough (laugh). Your Korean is suddenly discounted because you haven't been in Korea very long (laugh).

Whereas the people who come from Korea, they've had decades of transformation. Their culture has gradually shifted over decades, like with any society, so bridging that cultural understanding is sometimes difficult.

**Interviewer:** *Has there been instances where a client or patient has changed you in terms of professional or even as a person?*

**Cho:** I think every person you see, you have the opportunity to learn a little bit more. We're taught all kinds of things about different illnesses and medications, but how any particular individual reacts to these kinds of things is all unique. It's one thing to recommend a treatment, but to be able to access how people are responding to some things is really quite important. You learn about experiences in the greater world that you haven't personally haven't had to deal with in your life, different struggles that are quite different than your own experiences. And other times struggles that are quite similar. This is kind of a frequent thing, the advice you seem to be giving out to someone, at some point, it clicks into you, like 'you know, I could probably benefit from that advice too' (laugh).

**Interviewer:** *How much change, in terms of mental health awareness, prevention and promotion, have you noticed in the last 5 years and how much do you think it will change in the next 5 years?*

**Cho:** I think even in the media it's being spoken of more. We just had the Bell Let'sTalk promotion. I don't think the attempts to raise awareness are entirely new. There have been all kinds of campaigns that go over every few years.

I think it's possible to go too far. Pathologizing sometimes normal experience. It's important to raise awareness and not have people be stigmatized and too ashamed to go to treatment. But you don't necessarily want every kind of life struggle or every kind of difficulty that people have to be diagnosed with a mental illness or a mental disorder. I think there is a range of what we call normal distress and what you call disordered distress, and people can go for help, and sometimes this can be an impediment. I want help, I need help, but I don't want to be told that I have a mental disorder. You can call it stigma.

**Interviewer:** *What can the community do to help Hong Fook in terms of mental health awareness?*

**Cho:** The term you used, mental health awareness, I think that's a very appropriate term. Sometimes psychiatrists get into this mindset, my job is to determine whether you have a disorder or not, and then to treat the disorder and if you don't have a disorder then go somewhere else. But I think this idea of mental health awareness, in my profession, we should be doing this as well. You don't have to have a disorder to get help, and you can benefit from help even if you don't have a disorder.

I think in all kinds of medicine, the focus should be shifting on to preventative medicine. We do this to a better degree in other areas, such as exercise regularly, eating well, quit smoking. For mental health, we can reinforce maintaining good sleeping habits and maintain a positive relationship.

**Interviewer:** *What are you reading now these days?*

**Cho:** I like science fiction. I'm reading a series. It's the first of a trilogy called Ancillary Justice.

**Interviewer:** *Ice cream, chocolate chips.*

**Cho:** I like mint chocolate chip.

**Interviewer:** *What is another profession that you would like to pursue.*

**Cho:** I actually trained in Mechanical Engineering. I wanted to make robots actually (laughs). I also think architect is kind of interesting, but I don't think I have the creativity. I'd probably just make one kind of building over and over again (laughs).

**Interviewer:** *Thank you.*

# Dr. Kenneth Fung

- Diversity and Equity Conference, Co-Chair



**Interviewer:** *What persuaded you to get involved with Hong Fook?*

**Fung:** I don't think I needed too much persuasion. Hong Fook is doing is exactly the kind of work that I feel is needed. And so it's an organization that I'm more than happy to get involved in. I first started when I was doing an elective with Dr. Ted Lo, and that's when I discovered what this organization is.

**Interviewer:** *Can you comment on the linguistic and cultural barriers when helping clients?*

**Fung:** Language can certainly be a barrier to care. I think that in an ideal world, everything can be done in your first language. I find that many people are much more expressive in their own language, particularly when it comes to personal issues and emotional distress. When we need to work with an interpreter, there's an intermediary layer through which subtle things may sometimes get filtered or left out. Paradoxically, for some people, even though their English may not be fluent, they may still prefer to use it for certain sensitive topics. For example, if sex is taboo in their own language, they switch to English because they perceive that it's less shaming or embarrassing.

Culture can also affect the way patients understand their illness and the way they present symptoms. When we ran a group session for Cambodians, the way they conceptualize their thoughts, feelings, and bodily sensations are not distinct as in the West like three separate categories, but rather, they're contextually linked together. So the way you would conduct therapy or communicate with them may need to be altered because of cultural difference.

**Interviewer:** *Have you encountered people who are resistant to this journey process? How do you navigate them through this?*

**Fung:** As clients go through their journey of recovery, there may be so many potential barriers, which means, there are many potential solutions. Sometimes a patient may feel stuck for a long time, and maybe all it takes is talking with the family members and then things get resolved. Sometimes it's about having the client open to the idea that taking medications is ok because there may be misconceptions. On the other hand, sometimes it's about letting a client know that medication is not the only answer. And sometimes, it is about allowing the patient some time to deal with their issues in their own way as they might be quite insistent on a certain way of approaching them, and you might need to follow the patient for a period of time until they are open to alternative ways.

**Interviewer: Thinking of a client(s) at Hong Fook in the past, how have they changed you as a professional or even as a person?**

**Fung:** Working with the clients here at Hong Fook has continued to help me appreciate the complexity of culture. I learn a lot from the patients as they explain their cultural beliefs and how they navigate through difficulties. I am impressed by how a lot of them have persevered to overcome their challenges – it is quite inspiring.

**Interviewer: How do you think mental health awareness, prevention, and promotion have changed in the last 5 years, and can keep changing in the next 5 years?**

**Fung:** I think that there is gradually increasing acceptance of mental illness in the community, and yet, there is still a lot of stigma. In terms of prevention and promotion, there is more emphasis on empowering clients to realize their strengths, and this approach is slowly evolving among providers. In this transition in the past four to five years, we're also beginning to encounter and work through some of the implications and complexities. There is no longer a very simplistic relationship between a user and a provider because that same user/consumer of services may also be a volunteer, a leader, an educator, a coworker, or an employee in some ways.

**Interviewer: What do you think the community can further to do to help Hong Fook?**

**Fung:** To address the mental health needs of everyone including the diverse communities, which is what Hong Fook has always stood for, the Asian community as well as the wider community and the government, need to realize that mental health needs are important; that culture is important; and that the two are inextricably linked. The importance of taking culture into consideration in care to achieve health equity is vital. If culturally competent care is taken seriously, as a "must", then more resources will be devoted to this. This will be a way of helping Hong Fook achieve its mission.

**Interviewer: Another profession you would like to try, other than your own right now.**

**Fung:** A painter. Contemporary. Surrealist.

**Interviewer: Ice cream, chocolate, or chips.**

**Fung:** I can't have all of them? It depends on my mood, so right now, chips. Ask me again when I finish the chips.

**Interviewer: Thank you.**

# Dr. Ted Lo

- Asian Clinic, Clinic Director



**Interviewer: What persuaded you to start Hong Fook?**

**Lo:** When I was training at medical school, I didn't see too many Chinese patients. But listening to people working in the community, like a public health nurse or social worker, there were lots of people they came across who were Chinese and were having difficulties in [obtaining] services.

One story I remember was when a nine-year old kid was going to Sick Kids because he needed some assessments, but the staff said, 'your family doesn't speak English, so we can't help you'. These stories actually upset a lot of us. Are the Chinese to be denied services even when we work and pay taxes?

**Interviewer: How do you begin to help clients start their journey?**

**Lo:** I don't help them to go on a journey really. They come here to see a doctor. When they come to see a doctor they say 'Oh, I can't sleep. I want to be sleeping', so it's a straight forward thing. Like you say 'Oh, I have a rash and I want that to be taken away', so it's dealing with a symptom and a problem that you want the doctor to get rid of.

The journey only refers to people who have a chronic condition. A condition that is not so simple that you can erase with just a few visits. For those who have chronic depression, for example, their whole life could be disrupted. For those problems to be resolved it usually takes some time. And also, the problem will take the person to another space in their life. They don't just go back to where they started.

**Interviewer: Have you encountered people who are resistant to this journey process? How do you navigate them through this?**

**Lo:** Of course. As I said, patients may think that the doctor will solve all their problems, and they want to go back to where they were. That is where the transition has to happen, that they need to know that it will take time and that this is difficult. Because they will say, why can't you fix it right away? They have to accept my limitations and the limitation of the situation and then accept the journey.

**Interviewer: How has working with Hong Fook clients changed you as a person or professionally?**

**Lo:** I had a patient with depression and was treated with 3-4 medications and not getting better. And then I realized that she knows how to type Chinese. At that time, that wasn't a common skill, but she knew it. So, at Hong Fook, we needed some flyers and posters so I asked her to help me. So the next day, she came to

Hong Fook, but no longer as a patient. She dressed up nicely like a secretary, walked in with her head held high. I realized that actually, medication can only do so much. It actually didn't do that much, but just the fact that she could be a volunteer helped to change so many things. She's a volunteer, not just a patient. She feels there is meaning to what she is doing.

How it affects me is that I learn a lot from my patients. People may not agree with me, but I think that psychiatry training doesn't teach too much. I had very little training, and most of my training is from my patients. That changed me a lot because I want to learn and learn from them. How they deal with the situation, what are better ways.

**Interviewer: What can the community do to further help Hong Fook and its communities in addressing mental health needs?**

**Lo:** That's a very big question. At the Foundation board, I'm still a member. Kam Lo is the new president. I think she has tried to look for ways to do things differently and I am encouraged by that....Promotion is important, which is exactly related to what you're doing too. Mental health awareness on Facebook is great.

I think that if I could answer your question very briefly, I hope the awareness will include the patients being involved. Research shows the contact with patients is most effective in reducing stigma. If we promote along with the patients, which you are doing anyway with the client stories, that is very important. Mental patients are just persons sitting next to you. That realization, in the gut, is going to change things. So I think that is one aspect that can go further and further.

**Interviewer: What are you reading these days?**

**Lo:** My problem for me is that I open books, but I often...

**Interviewer: Don't finish them?**

**Lo:** Yeah. Not that I don't try. (laughs) I open books many times.

**Interviewer: What is another profession you would have liked to pursue?**

**Lo:** I thought I'd be a taxi driver, perhaps do therapy in the car ride. (laughs)

**Interviewer: Tropical beach, a day without phone calls and emails, or skydiving?**

**Lo:** All three are nice, but emails and phone calls aren't actually that big for me. A lot of people complain about it, I would complain, but I don't have too much.

**Interviewer: You need more then (laughs).**

**Lo:** (laughs) That's why I'm not on Facebook or Instagram. I resisted.

**Interviewer: Thank you.**

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