

JUNE-SEPTEMBER 2022

imagine

A MAGAZINE ON MENTAL HEALTH

YOU SNOOZE, YOU WIN

Making the connection between
sleep and well-being

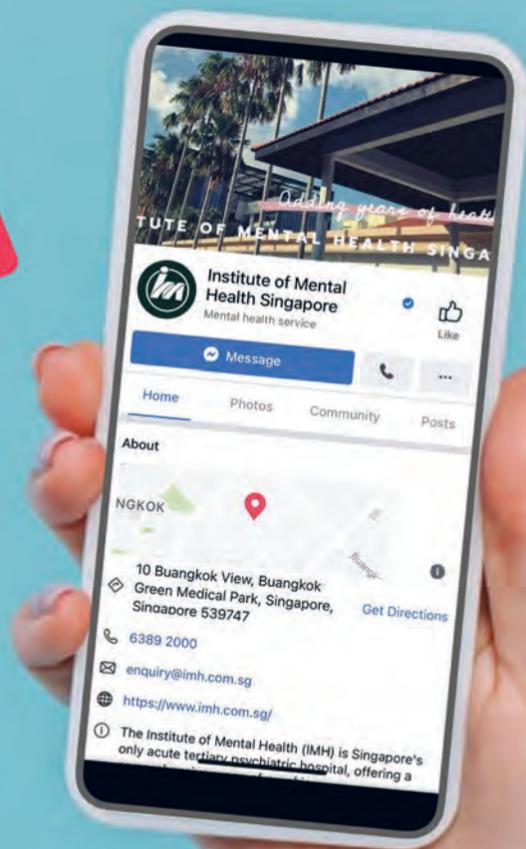


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GAMING TAKES
OVER YOUR LIFE**

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and escape the
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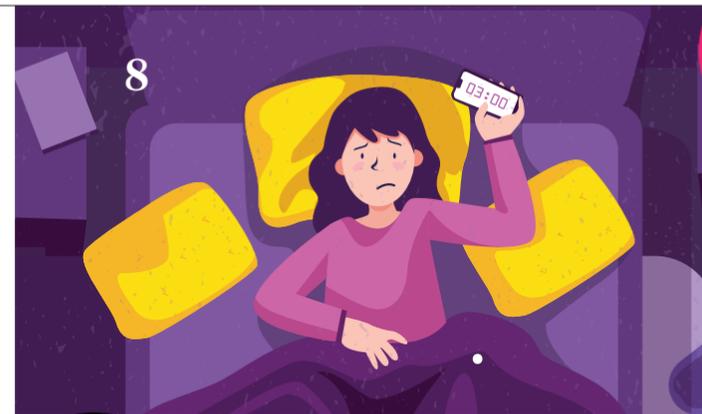


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Live Well
Going on holiday with family can have mental health benefits.



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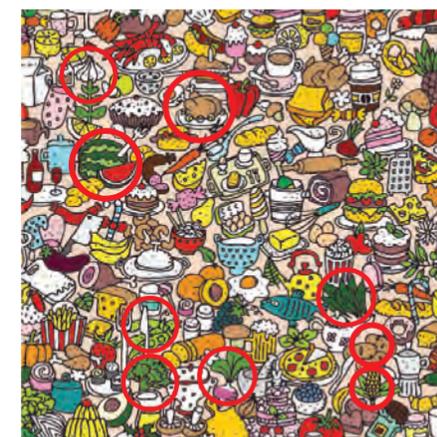
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"Sleep is taken for granted, but it's fundamental for health. Various studies show that improving sleep hygiene will improve one's health status, not just the physical aspect but also mental well-being."

DR LEE YING YING, Research Officer, Research Division, IMH

Find the food items



Turn to Live Well, page 7, for the puzzle.

FINDING THE ANSWERS FOR BETTER URBAN WELL-BEING

Some of us seem to be sleepless in Singapore. A recent study by the Institute of Mental Health using data from the *Singapore Mental Health Study 2016* found that 27.6 per cent of adults here report having poor sleep quality. That is more than one in four of us — and it is a trend that is prevalent in cities across the region. We keep late nights due to a host of modern-day factors, from working long hours to scrolling endlessly on our smartphones. And when we snooze less, we suffer the after-effects physically and mentally.

Scientists like the IMH researchers who led the recent sleep study are increasingly learning that a good night's rest is closely tied to mental health. Our cover story (pages 8 to 11) examines this bidirectional link between sleep quality and our well-being. We also find out who is most at risk of poor sleep and share practical tips to quiet the mind before bedtime.

Gaming disorder is another issue that seems unique to some urban dwellers, especially adolescent males. Our second feature (pages 14 to 16) explores the psychology behind this behavioural addiction, where individuals excessively playing online games risk their health and functioning, and why it is critical to spot the signs early and seek professional support if it is needed.

Sleeplessness and screen addictions are contemporary concerns that affect those living in cities like Singapore. One of the ways we can better grasp the extent of these and other mental health issues is through continued research. It gives us the answers we need to enhance our knowledge of various conditions, as well as identify those who are at risk of developing mental illness early. Two individuals in IMH's Research Division — Professor Chong Siow Ann, Senior Consultant; and Dr Mythily Subramaniam, Assistant Chairman, Medical Board (Research) — share their story (page 3) of embarking on Singapore's first large-scale, epidemiological mental health study in 2007: The precursor to the 2016 study that offers insights into poor sleep quality in Singapore today.

The more data and insights we glean from mental health research, the more we improve our understanding of mental disorders and the lives of people around us living with these issues.

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A finger on the pulse

Research can change the way we think about mental health — and it's a worthy effort that needs continued support, say these **IMH researchers**.

Text **KEENAN PEREIRA** // Photo **KELVIN CHIA**

>> IN 2007, A RESEARCH TEAM FROM the Institute of Mental Health (IMH) embarked on a landmark study to better understand Singapore's mental health landscape. Coined the *Singapore Mental Health Study (SMHS)*, the findings released in 2011 provided the first-ever epidemiological picture of Singapore residents' state of mental health. Among the important questions the study answered: The prevalence of common mental disorders in the general population, who these conditions affected and whether these individuals sought treatment.

Until then, mental health research here had been fairly piecemeal and not many large-scale, population-based studies were done, recalls Professor Chong Siow Ann, Senior Consultant at IMH's Research Division. The need for an epidemiological study was spurred in part by the first National Mental Health Blueprint (NMHB), launched in 2007 by the Ministry of Health to provide a holistic approach to supporting Singapore's mental health needs. "As the NMHB was being formulated, there was a paucity of information on the general population's mental health, which made developing policies and public health measures challenging."

Dr Mythily Subramaniam, Assistant Chairman, Medical Board, Research, IMH, adds, "At the time, there was tremendous stigma related to mental illness and little understanding of the problem of mental health. We felt a need to conduct studies that push out information — relevant to policymakers and the general public — to address knowledge gaps and raise awareness on people with mental health conditions and the issues they face."

STARTING A CONVERSATION

The first *SMHS* and its follow-up in 2016 have since helped to improve understanding and perception of mental illness. They have dispelled the myth that mental disorders are uncommon. Results of the second study, for



Professor Chong Siow Ann & Dr Mythily Subramaniam

Researchers, IMH

example, showed that one in seven people in Singapore had experienced a mental disorder in their lifetime.

Having such data makes the issue more relatable. "That one person could be someone you know. It starts a conversation," reflects Dr Mythily. "People may be more inclined to say, 'Hey, these are fairly common conditions. You can't just institutionalise people for these and forget about them. We have to make sure they are integrated back in the community.' That kind of motivation is very powerful."

The knowledge gained from the *SMHS* also laid the foundation for further research into different areas and population segments. For example, the *Well-being of the Singapore Elderly (WiSE)* study in 2013 sought to establish the prevalence of dementia and depression in seniors, and *Mind Matters: A Study of Mental Health Literacy* in 2014 examined the public's recognition and perception of mental disorders and the extent of stigma associated with mental illness. "One study led to another," says Prof Chong.

MINDING THE GAP

While support and funding for mental health research in Singapore is growing, they are still not where they need to be, say Prof Chong and Dr Mythily. "There's still somewhat of a gap in acknowledging that mental health conditions can be just as serious as physical conditions,"

says Dr Mythily. This is in part due to a few things that are inherent in mental health research. "We don't have a lot of biomarkers, so there's still some scepticism, compared to other physical conditions."

Yet, with mental health pervading all aspects of an individual's life, investing in mental health research is a crucial step in addressing the real-world challenges faced by persons living with mental illness. "People should understand that mental health is just as important as physical health," says Prof Chong. "It can never be a direct comparison when you research a disease that can be cured with a procedure or surgery versus one that needs long-term care from the community. Mental health represents the latter, so the results may seem more abstract — but they are valuable."



FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH

Since its beginnings in 2000, the IMH Research Division has:

- > grown from **three** to **56** staff;
- > focused on **two key areas** — mental health policy research and translational clinical research;
- > published more than **1,000 papers** in peer-reviewed journals.

LOVE WELL!



A CLEAN GETAWAY

» Making plans for the holidays now that travel restrictions are easing? You're on the right track. Taking a break can be good for our mental health and also improve family bonds — especially after the last two years of 'pandemic parenting', which saw many parents juggling various challenges like working from home while supporting their children's virtual learning. On top of serving as an opportunity to take time off, a study published in the *Journal of Positive Psychology* shows that vacations have mental health benefits similar to meditation for parents and children. They help reduce our mental fatigue, and boost our brain functions and sense of well-being, recharging us for future tasks.

HERE ARE THREE TIPS FOR A FUN AND SAFE FAMILY HOLIDAY:

- > **KEEP PLANS FLEXIBLE.** The pandemic situation can change rapidly. So be on your toes to adjust your travel plans accordingly.
- > **DO YOUR RESEARCH.** When planning your holiday, consider the COVID-19 and travel restrictions in your destination country and how these will affect your accommodation and holiday activities. Also think about how crowded the destination will be. This will help you to avoid risky situations and make for a more comfortable trip.
- > **BE HYGIENIC.** Along with wearing a mask and handwashing, use disinfecting wipes to wipe down high-touch surfaces around you like hotel room doorknobs and airplane seat trays.

MIND OVER mastery:

Are skills and talent enough for success? Scientists continue to believe that mental strength, not aptitude, determines success. >



The root of these findings is based on an influential 1921 Stanford University study of 1,521 gifted children with similar high IQ scores, who were tracked throughout their lives. Classifying participants into three groups based on their level of success attained, the study found that those in the most successful group were highly motivated to excel and had more willpower, confidence and perseverance. It showed that having just skills and talent is insufficient for success — you have to count mental strength or fortitude too. Although the science on how to encourage mental grit is still unclear,

researchers theorise that a growth mindset approach — which regards one's potential as not fixed — can help. For instance, disadvantaged students with a growth mindset were better able to close the academic achievement gap and reported a better sense of well-being than those with a fixed mindset, according to a 2021 global study by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development. What sets these students apart? They believe that ability can be enhanced by seeing setbacks as learning experiences and establishing their own learning goals.

Rolling in the deep conversations

We often hesitate to have deep conversations on personal topics with strangers, fearing it would be awkward. But a study published in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* reveals that we underestimate how much people enjoy such conversations. In the study, 1,800 strangers were paired up and put through 12 experiments. In some experiments, each pair was given shallow or deep questions to discuss. Shallow questions such as "What is the best TV show you've seen in the last month?" or "What do you think about the weather today?" led to small talk.

By contrast, deeper questions such as "Can you describe a time you cried in front of another person?" led to more intimate conversations. In other experiments, the pairs discussed their shallow or deep topics of choice. Before and after each experiment, participants were asked to predict and report the level of awkwardness, connection and enjoyment of the conversations.

The results showed that while both deep and shallow conversations led to greater feelings of connectedness and enjoyment than the participants initially expected, the effect was stronger for deep conversations. Participants also overestimated the level of awkwardness of deep conversations in their predictions.

The key takeaway? As the study's co-author, Professor Nicholas Epley from the University of

Chicago Booth School of Business, says, "People seemed to imagine that revealing something meaningful or important about themselves in conversation would be met with blank stares and silence, only to find this wasn't true in the actual conversation."



EAT WELL FOR LESS

Headlines are abuzz with the impact of global inflation, and consumers around the world are feeling the pinch. It's no different in Singapore, where the prices of fish, seafood and meat are creeping up. Even those who eat out more are affected, as hawkers and restaurants, too, raise prices. But you need not let this worry you. Here's how you can beat inflation and still eat healthily:

- 1. SHOP FROZEN** Frozen foods often retain the nutrition of their fresh counterparts but are much cheaper. For instance, flash-frozen fruits and vegetables have their nutrients locked in immediately after they are harvested. Choose "one-ingredient" frozen products that have nothing else added, to make sure you're getting the best.
- 2. COMPARE UNIT PRICES** Instead of examining just the price tag, do some simple maths to find out what you are paying for each unit of the product (for example, per 100g). This way you can compare products across brands and supermarkets to get more bang for your buck.
- 3. PREP MEALS** By planning and making your own meals a week in advance, you'll be able to save money and cut down waste. Instead of small portions, cooking large portions allows you to buy food in bulk, which is cheaper, and avoid wasting ingredients. Apart from saving money, this will also prevent unwanted snacking.



FROZEN FOODS ARE MUCH CHEAPER.

4. DIVERSIFY YOUR SHOPPING

Avoid doing all your shopping at one place and consider visiting multiple stores. While time-consuming, this will enable you to compare prices and utilise any available discounts and promotions at various places. A smartphone app that promises to help is Price Kaki, by the Consumers Association of Singapore, which lets you compare prices of groceries and other necessities in Singapore.



FOOD FOR THOUGHT

➤ **Having the cooking skills to whip up a tasty meal isn't just great for your tastebuds.** Researchers from the Edith Cowan University in Western Australia have found an added benefit – better mental well-being. To measure the mental health benefits of good cooking skills, researchers put about 600 people through a seven-week healthy cooking course. They evaluated the cooking confidence, self-perceived mental health, satisfaction levels around cooking and other diet-related behaviours of the participants before and after the course. They also assessed these indicators in a control group that did not attend the course. The results, which were published in *Frontiers in Nutrition* journal, showed that those who attended the course reported significant improvements in their general and mental well-being immediately after, compared to the control group. Participants also felt more confident in their cooking and were better able to overcome lifestyle barriers to healthy eating.

SPILLING THE GENES ON MENTAL ILLNESS

Researchers from the Institute of Mental Health (IMH) and A*STAR's Genome Institute of Singapore – as part of a global team – have found 287 regions in the human DNA with genes that increase the risk of schizophrenia, a mental illness characterised by hallucinations and delusions.

In the study, published in *Nature*, researchers analysed DNA samples collected over 13 years of more than 300,000 people worldwide. They found that the genes which increase the risk of schizophrenia were present in brain cells called neurons, but not in other cells. "These biological processes have previously been speculated to be theoretically related to schizophrenia – this study is seminal because the DNA data analysis provided real evidence from real data to show it," says Dr Max Lam, Research Fellow at IMH, who led the data analysis for the Asian population.

"Mental illnesses like schizophrenia are disorders of the brain. Since brain tissue from living individuals is not readily



available for investigations, clinicians and scientists face significant challenges in advancing our understanding of mental illnesses," adds Dr Jimmy Lee, Senior Consultant, Department of Psychosis and Research Division, IMH.

Studies like this were made possible with the rise of human genomics technology over a decade ago when scientists realised they could study brain function indirectly through human DNA, says Dr Lee. "Deciphering DNA

codes for the structure of neurons and how they 'talk' to each other in the brain is like putting together a jigsaw puzzle to understand behaviour. It took tens of thousands of participants and hundreds of scientists and doctors working together to achieve this feat."

The researchers believe the findings could lead to new drug development and other ways of treating schizophrenia.

Craving a challenge?

See how fast you can find these 9 hidden food items.



A Wake-up CALL

Sleep and mental health are closely connected, yet around one in four people in Singapore report having poor slumber. Here's why good sleep hygiene and seeking professional support, where necessary, can help improve your well-being.

Interview EVELINE GAN in consultation with DR LEE YING YING, Research Officer, Research Division, IMH; and DR GOH SHIH EE, Associate Consultant, Department of Mood and Anxiety, IMH

27.6% of respondents reported having poor sleep quality in an IMH study of over 6,000 Singapore residents aged 18 and above.



*Not her real name

Lucy* never had problems falling asleep. But a good night's rest began to elude the former civil servant when she developed anxiety in her 40s due to work and family-related problems. At the lowest point in her life, she would stay up all night, her mind and heart racing.

Ironically, the thought of how she was going to get through the next day without a decent amount of shut-eye made her more anxious than ever. Recalling how she had to drag herself out of bed to go to work despite having little sleep, Lucy, now in her 60s and a business owner, shares: "I couldn't function and felt drained the

whole day. The lack of sleep over the months worsened my mood and anxiety even more."

THE RESTLESS ONES

Poor sleep quality affects over one in four people in Singapore, according to a study conducted by researchers from the Institute of Mental Health. The study, based on data from the *Singapore Mental Health Study 2016*, looked at a nationally-representative sample of over 6,000 Singapore residents aged 18 and above using the Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index.

Some 27.6 per cent of the respondents reported having poor sleep quality. "We are such an urbanised city so that probably makes a



difference to sleep quality," says Dr Lee Ying Ying, Research Officer, Research Division, IMH, and lead author of the study.

In urbanised cities like Singapore, the heavy use of blue-light-emitting devices impacts the body's biological clock and can disrupt the sleep-wake cycle, she says. To sleep well at night, our bodies need sufficient exposure to sunlight in the day. But because many Singaporeans (and people living in other cities) work long hours indoors and in front of computer screens, our sleep quality may be affected.

Past studies suggest that poor sleep quality is also prevalent across the region. For example, about 27 per cent of people in China reported insomnia. In Hong Kong, the figure was approximately 39 per cent. In Japan, around 26 per cent of men and 31 per cent of women reported poor sleep, Dr Lee says.

WHO IS MOST AT RISK?

In the study, the researchers found a strong association between poor sleep and mental health conditions. "Singapore residents who live with one or more mental health conditions were more likely to report poor sleep," she says. "They were also more likely to report a shorter duration of sleep compared to people with no mental illness."

“Prolonged poor sleep can lead to significant worrying and frustration, and it has been linked to an increased risk of mental health issues.”



DR GOH SHIH EE, Associate Consultant, Department of Mood and Anxiety, IMH

People with chronic health conditions, such as obesity, were also found to have poorer sleep quality. The link between sleep and health is not surprising, given that sleep has restorative functions for the mind and body. An example is how the heart rate and breathing rate slow down during sleep, providing the body with much-needed rest, Dr Lee says. "Our muscles relax to allow repair and rebuilding after a day of physical activities. Our brain waves slow down during sleep to help with memory consolidation and emotional regulation."

Additionally, many hormones critical to the control of bodily functions, like growth and appetite,

HOW MUCH ZZZs DO YOU NEED?

The National Sleep Foundation recommends **eight to 10** hours of sleep daily for teenagers aged 14 to 17, **seven to nine** hours for adults, and **seven to eight** hours for adults above the age of 65.

However, not everyone requires the same amount of sleep to function well, Dr Lee says. The three main aspects that sleep researchers look out for when assessing sleep quality are the time taken to fall asleep, whether there are sleep disturbances and problems waking in the morning, she shares.

"Some people may have six hours of uninterrupted, good-quality sleep, and that is sufficient for them. On the other hand, spending 12 hours in bed does not translate to good-quality sleep if the person goes to bed at 10am, tosses and turns until 3am, and falls asleep only at 5am," Dr Lee explains.



“Various studies show that improving sleep hygiene will improve one’s health status, not just the physical aspect but also mental well-being.”



DR LEE YING YING, Research Officer, Research Division, IMH

are produced during sleep. Having insufficient or poor-quality rest can impact the metabolism of energy and these hormones, she explains.

Dr Lee shares another standout finding from the study: Women generally reported poorer sleep compared to men – a finding that she says is consistent with similar studies across the world. Reasons may include women experiencing hormonal changes in their life cycle and how they are more likely to live with mental health conditions, such as anxiety and depression, she adds.

A TWO-WAY LINK

Poor-quality sleep can adversely affect a person’s ability to regulate

his or her emotions. In fact, there is a bidirectional association between sleep and mental health, says Dr Goh Shih Ee, Associate Consultant with the Department of Mood and Anxiety at IMH. This means that sleep and mental health are interconnected – while poor mental health may lead to sleep disturbances, poor or disrupted sleep may also cause or worsen symptoms of mental health conditions. “Experiencing a prolonged period of poor sleep can lead to significant worrying and frustration, and it has been linked to an increased risk of mental health issues,” he says.

Dr Lee shares that insomnia could affect the amygdala – the part of the brain that regulates emotions like fear,

anger and anxiety. “Chronic insomnia and disruptions to amygdala functions could lead to the development of mental health issues like depression and anxiety. Reduced amygdala activity has been associated with depression severity,” she adds.

On the other hand, not being able to sleep well could also be a harbinger of a mental health condition. “Having poor sleep is a symptom seen in many mental health conditions,” says Dr Goh. “For instance, sleep may be hampered by the excessive ruminations seen in generalised anxiety disorder or disturbing hallucinations and delusions in schizophrenia.”

NO MORE TOSSING AND TURNING

While every individual may face different sleep-related problems, establishing good sleep habits can make a difference (see box story below). Says Dr Lee, “Sleep is taken for granted, but it’s fundamental for health. It’s important to allow the body to rest and repair. Various studies show that improving sleep hygiene will improve one’s health status, not



7-9
The recommended number of hours of sleep that adults should have, according to the National Sleep Foundation.

GOOD NIGHT, SLEEP TIGHT

Follow these tips for more restful slumber from Dr Goh Shih Ee, Associate Consultant, Department of Mood and Anxiety, IMH.

- 1 Set a **regular time** to go to bed.
- 2 **Limit** the use of electronic gadgets before bedtime.

- 3 **Reduce** your caffeine intake during the day. Caffeine can stay in the body for up to six hours, so avoid drinks such as tea, coffee and cola in the evening.
- 4 For those working from home, try to keep your home office and work **out of the** bedroom.
- 5 Exercise **regularly** in the daytime.
- 6 **Avoid** looking at the clock and tossing and turning in bed when you cannot fall asleep. Instead, get out of bed to do some quiet

activities, such as reading or listening to soothing music, before returning to bed.

- 7 If you work shifts, establish a **conducive environment** for sleep. For example, get blackout curtains, use earplugs and turn on the air-conditioner when sleeping during the day.



just the physical aspect but also mental well-being.”

For a start, it helps to be aware of everyday lifestyle habits that can interfere with a good night’s rest. For example, the use of electronic devices around bedtime and consuming too much caffeine throughout the day. Dr Goh shares, “I once had a patient who drank six cups of iced green milk tea a day, not realising that it may contribute to her difficulties with sleep.”

Bringing work into the bedroom can also sabotage sleep. “With work-from-home arrangements during the pandemic, many have converted their bedrooms into makeshift offices, bringing the associated stress and worries of work directly into the heart of their homes. The constant association between work and the bedroom environment makes it hard for one to disconnect from work completely at bedtime,” Dr Goh says.

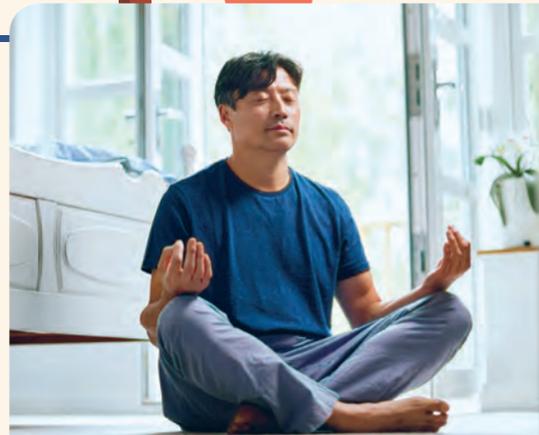
In addition, treatment strategies – including cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) and pharmacological options – are available to manage insomnia. CBT involves examining and changing thoughts, emotions and habits related to sleep, while pharmacological options

include the prescription of sleeping aids. For individuals with co-occurring mental health conditions, such as anxiety and depression, treatment for those conditions usually occurs concurrently, Dr Goh shares. A medical practitioner can advise on the most appropriate treatment strategy based on the cause of the sleep issue.

STRATEGIES FOR A GOOD SNOOZE

As for Lucy, improved bedtime habits as well as psychiatric treatment and medications for her anxiety and sleep issues have helped her manage the condition and rest better at night. “Nearing bedtime, I switch on the night light, listen to soothing music and drink some milk – going through the same routine every night helps me fall asleep,” she shares. “I can function so much better now. My quality of life in the day is good too, and I have the energy to do so much more.”

Having experienced so many sleepless nights, Lucy feels that people should not shy away from seeking professional help if they have sleep problems or mental



QUIETING THE MIND

Some studies have found that meditation may help promote better sleep. During meditation, it is believed the body experiences changes similar to those in the early stages of sleep. Here’s how to get started:

- > Sit or lie down in a quiet area.
- > Close your eyes, and inhale and exhale deeply. Focus on your breathing.
- > If a thought comes up, let it go and refocus on your breathing.
- > Those who are new to meditation may start meditating for three to five minutes before bedtime and slowly increase the duration.

health issues that interfere with daily life. “Lying awake at night and not being able to sleep well is a terrible feeling. If you are suffering, seek help,” she says.

I always excelled academically, and have master's degrees from Harvard Business School, the National University of Singapore (NUS) and the National Technical University of Ukraine. Despite having a high IQ, I did not live up to my potential for a long time because of my ADHD.

As a student, I never had a schedule or any structure to my days.

Sometimes, I would study three to four subjects simultaneously; other times, I would go out and play on a whim. Up to the age of 12, my mother sat with me to get my homework done. My grades slid after she stopped but I still did well in the university entrance examination. I was one of two people in my year in Rajasthan, India, to get into both engineering and medicine, the most sought-after programmes in the state. But, because I was always chasing new experiences, I chose to study mechanical engineering in the former Soviet Union, which Ukraine was part of. I didn't consider how this decision would benefit me or help me reach my goals. I was just drawn to the novelty factor, which pushed aside the much better options I had.

My high IQ masked my ADHD.

In hindsight, not knowing I had this condition cost me many opportunities. After graduating, I returned to India to work. I felt restless and job-hopped continuously, switching careers in industries from fast-moving consumer goods to IT to oil and gas every other year. I ran in all directions without a single trajectory. I was always bursting with ideas, but never really followed through them. In 2006, I moved to Singapore to do my master's at NUS and remained here to live and work. However, I never really found career stability.

My unstable career and finances strained my marriage.

My then-wife, whom I married at 27, came to believe I did not care about her even though that was not true. I was very forgetful, so when she asked me to do something, I would forget if I didn't get it done within the next five minutes. Often, my mind would drift while she was talking to me.

Overcoming life's obstacles

For decades, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) derailed Mr Prashant Pundrik's career and marital life — until he sought professional help. He has since managed to control the condition and turn it to his advantage.

Interview ANNIE TAN Photo KELVIN CHIA



MR PRASHANT PUNDRIK

Serial entrepreneur

She saw these as signs of me not paying attention to her and trivialising her needs. I would say whatever was on my mind, without realising how hurtful or condescending it might have been. I also did not know how to manage my emotions and sometimes would fly off the handle over minor things, only to regret it a few minutes later. It was only much later that I realised these were secondary symptoms of ADHD.

The turning point came in 2011

when I read a *Harvard Business Review* article titled "Overloaded Circuits: Why Smart People Underperform". It explained attention deficit disorder, and I recognised myself immediately from the description. I finally had a word for my condition, but I didn't do anything about it until 2016, when I came across *Driven to Distraction* by Edward Hallowell. Up until then, I thought my condition only affected my ability to focus. Reading the depictions of other individuals with ADHD, I finally saw the full impact that it had had on my life, including my marriage. I went to see a psychiatrist, who diagnosed me with the condition. I was prescribed medication, and my world changed. From perpetually dreaming and feeling like I was "flying", I now felt like my aircraft had landed back in reality. I could focus on things, like long conversations and reading chapters of a book at one sitting, without getting distracted.

Then, things became messy again.

I was very apprehensive about the side effects of the medication. After attending a 10-day meditation course in India, I thought meditation might be a better option for managing my condition and stopped taking medication. But I was wrong — meditation did not control my

ADHD. At the start of 2020, a close family member was diagnosed with depression. Then, my wife filed for divorce — the issues we faced had corroded our relationship over the years. My business selling clean technology solutions to commercial buildings and hotels came to a standstill because of COVID-19. Everything that I had built in my life fell apart.

To better care for my loved one with depression,

I signed up for a 12-week caregiver course at Caregivers Alliance Limited. As I learnt more about mental health conditions, I realised I too needed help and only medication could control my ADHD. Going back to my medication in 2021 and understanding ADHD better helped me tremendously. I am now more aware of my shortcomings and structure my business and personal life around my condition. For example, I use the Freedom app to set time restrictions and block distractions like news feeds, social media and emails on my phone and computer so I can work more productively. I no longer say whatever comes to my mind. Instead, I consciously let my thoughts sit for a while and have a mental filter, so that I do not offend people.

If I had known more about my condition and taken medication sooner,

my life might have turned out differently. I might have corrected myself in my marriage. My ex-wife might have understood that I did not intentionally mean to hurt her. I might also have been more deliberate in my career decisions. I realise that many people may not understand ADHD very well. Everybody thinks ADHD just makes a person restless, unable to focus and hyperactive. Yet this is only half of the story. There are multiple secondary issues that could impact your life and relationships.

“I realise how powerless one can feel with a mental health condition, but it is important to remember that we are not alone. We need not carry the burden ourselves.”

Now that my condition is under control, I see ADHD as my strength.

ADHD makes me creative, great at problem-solving and someone with endless energy. I have a treasure trove of learnings and experiences (from job-hopping!) that I would not have gained otherwise. As a result, I am able to see the big picture and envision things better. Understanding my condition, strengths and weaknesses has helped me achieve success in my career and evolve as a person.

I realise how powerless one can feel with a mental health condition,

but it is important to remember that we are not alone. If you look up the data, there are close to 800 million people in this world with mental health issues. Millions have already gone through the mental health issues that we are going through, and we need not carry the burden alone. As soon as you realise that you might have a condition, see a mental health professional and get the help you need. By staying silent, we do an injustice to ourselves and our loved ones. I wish I had realised this sooner.



➤ In early 2021, Mr Prashant started two new businesses: one to scale up clean-energy solutions and another to help emerging consumer brands expand into the Singapore and Southeast Asia markets. "This time round, I was **very aware of my weaknesses**," he says. "I knew that I was not a detail-oriented person and had difficulties staying organised, so I hired people to help with that. As a result, all my businesses have thrived and expanded globally."



When online gaming takes over your life

If you see your onscreen avatar more than your family and friends, or feel anxious when not on your favourite multiplayer game, it might be time to talk about **gaming disorder**.

Interview PEARLYN THAM in consultation with DR MELVYN ZHANG, Consultant, National Addictions Management Service, IMH

GAMING DISORDER
This is a behavioural addiction that is more prevalent among adolescents, especially males aged 12 to 20.

>> OBSESSIVELY PLAYING INTERNET

or mobile phone games may not sound as shocking as other addictions like drug use and gambling. But problem gaming has become a significant enough issue for the American Psychiatric Association to define it with diagnostic criteria closely related to gambling disorder in 2013.

More recently in 2018, the World Health Organization (WHO) formally recognised “gaming disorder” in its International Classification of Diseases. According to the WHO, gaming disorder is a behavioural addiction that is “marked by impaired control of gaming behaviour, prioritisation of gaming

over other activities, and persistent or exacerbated gaming behaviour despite negative life consequences”.

Gaming disorder is more prevalent among adolescents, especially males aged between 12 and 20, with studies showing that it can affect teenage males five times more often than females, says Dr Melvyn Zhang, Consultant with the National Addictions Management Service (NAMS) at the Institute of Mental Health. “This is attributed to the fact that males tend to prefer playing games on the Internet, while females tend to prefer using the Internet for communication.”

He explains that based on prior research, those prone to gaming disorder include individuals with

elevated levels of externalising behaviours, such as antisocial behaviour and anger control, and internalising behaviours like emotional distress and low self-esteem problems. For instance, individuals with emotional regulation issues and low self-esteem might seek out the virtual world of online games as an escape and use games to avoid these negative emotions.

Aggravating the issue are online and video games that have become increasingly addictive. “The user interface and gamification elements in games these days are often highly appealing to individuals,” Dr Zhang explains. “Some games have other

elements like ‘loot boxes’, which are essentially virtual goodie bags with random rewards, that might entice them to continue playing.”

WATCH FOR THE WARNING SIGNS

Contrary to popular belief, it is not just the amount of time spent playing online that indicates if someone has gaming disorder, but the severity of negative behaviour patterns that arise. “The pattern of gaming behaviour must result in marked distress or significant impairment in personal, family, social, education or other areas of functioning,” Dr Zhang explains.

For instance, common tell-tale signs include falling academic grades for younger gamers still in school. Some individuals may live in their own world and pay less attention to their health, personal hygiene or appearance, give up other hobbies or activities they previously used to enjoy, and skip social events. They spend more and more time gaming or using the Internet to achieve the level of satisfaction they did before. They may also become more irritable and even violent if they are not allowed access to their games. Other physical symptoms can include migraine, sleep disturbances, backaches and eating irregularities.

In more extreme cases, someone with gaming disorder may also suffer from anxiety, depression and social phobia. Dr Zhang says that the last is an “anxiety condition in which one has an intense, persistent fear of being watched or judged by others”. In fact, the Japanese term, *hikikomori*, was coined to describe a type of severe social withdrawal that affects mostly gaming addicts.

If a family member shows any of these signs, encourage him or her to seek help. There are various avenues of support for individuals dealing with gaming-related issues. These include

NAMS and community agencies like Touch Cyber Wellness, which helps families use digital technology responsibly. “It is important to seek help as soon as possible, as early identification and treatment improve the prognosis and prevent the problem from escalating,” advises Dr Zhang.

ESCAPING THE DANGER ZONE

Treatments for gaming disorder are focused on changing the patient’s dysfunctional use of his or her gaming device – like a smartphone or laptop – to functional and responsible use. “We need to recognise that individuals still need to use their devices for other work,” says Dr Zhang. “By advocating functional use, the clinician or counsellor will attempt to modify the client’s use of the Internet through activity scheduling, where activities he or she used to enjoy are reintroduced to replace his or her Internet use.”

At NAMS, clinicians first assess the extent of the client’s problem: How the problem began, the role gaming plays in his or her life, and what prolongs or worsens the issue. Treatment then involves strategies to manage the use of electronic devices. Some individuals whose gaming disorder is related to a secondary mental health disorder, such as depression or anxiety, may also be prescribed medication or other treatment for these issues.

SPOT THE SIGNS

- Do you use your devices or the Internet **for gaming only**?
- Do you feel **restless, anxious and irritable** when you are not gaming?
- Would you rather stay on your devices than **meet your friends**?
- Do you **skip meals** because eating takes time away from gaming?
- Are you **paying less attention** to your personal hygiene and appearance?
- Are you **staying up late** and having less energy for school or work?
- If someone stopped you from gaming, would you have **violent thoughts** about that person?



If you answered “yes” to at least five of the questions above, you might have a problem with excessive gaming. Consider speaking to a professional to discuss your concerns.

Here are some resources to learn more: National Addictions Management Service at www.nams.sg or 6-RECOVER (6-7326837), or Touch Cyber Wellness at www.touch.org.sg or 1800-377-2252.

“The user interface and gamification elements in games these days are often highly appealing to individuals. Some games have other elements like ‘loot boxes’ that might entice them to continue playing.”

DR MELVYN ZHANG, Consultant, National Addictions Management Service, IMH





NIPPING IT IN THE BUD

Suppose a young person in your family is gaming excessively. Dr Zhang says that “behaviour modification” – which aims to change problematic behaviours – is a key way to help him or her nip the issue in the bud. There are many parts to behaviour modification, such as activity scheduling to help individuals prioritise the time spent on their smartphone or the Internet. Dr Zhang explains, “It provides predictability and consistency, promoting their independence in managing their time and daily activities.”

Another behaviour modification technique involves giving individuals an Internet to-do list. Just like a shopping list, this can help the person prioritise tasks and ensure he or she does not go “off track” and use the Internet beyond the agreed time limit. As soon as the individual checks it off, he or she should log out from the computer. This works only if there is a trusting relationship between parent and child, he says. “Be upfront with your child

if you are going to check on his or her online activities,” adds Dr Zhang. “You may want to work out an agreement to place the computer in an open area, such as the living room, for easy monitoring of Internet use.”

Other ways to help individuals change their behaviour include promising an inexpensive and non-excessive reward if there is a positive behaviour change, and acknowledging the positive changes, especially for older children, to encourage and affirm them. Also,

Young people need to learn how to manage their time and be more responsible with their Internet use.



as with most things in life, it is best that parents act as good role models and lead by example. “If your child sees you using the Internet, talking on your phone or watching television excessively, he or she will think it is permissible to spend a great deal of time on such activities,” says Dr Zhang.

THROUGH THE EYES OF A CHILD

It’s important to keep in mind that adolescents are going through a challenging phase in their lives, where they want to forge their own identities and interact with friends through social media or online gaming to gain acceptance. “Very often, we as parents forget what it is like to be an adolescent,” says Dr Zhang. “For example, when we were young, we might have spent hours on the basketball court. But now we expect our children to engage in online gaming for less than an hour each time. Is this realistic?”

Setting more pragmatic rules that respect young people will allow them to respond more positively in turn, he says. “It is crucial to understand why your child is attracted to the Internet and how it benefits him or her. At the same time, young people need to learn how to manage their time and be more responsible with their Internet use. You and your child have to negotiate and jointly decide on the rules and consequences if he or she does not comply. Once decided, these rules should be followed closely.”



DR ONG SHI WEI
Associate Consultant,
Department of Emergency
and Crisis Care, IMH

From Nurse to Doctor

A winding career path did not stop former nurse Dr Ong Shi Wei from achieving her ambition. Interview KEENAN PEREIRA // Photo KELVIN CHIA

As a child, Dr Ong Shi Wei harboured dreams of being a doctor, but when her first attempt applying for medical school ended in vain, she took it in her stride and joined a communications course instead. Within a year, however, she felt the nagging urge to try again. “Health is a fundamental need, and I’ve wanted to be in healthcare to help others since my St John’s Ambulance Brigade days in secondary school,” she says. Determined to succeed this time, she tried a different approach. “I was quite gung-ho and called up the Ministry of Health to ask about my options,” she says with a laugh. That was how she learnt about the Public Service Commission’s nursing scholarship. “I saw it as a ‘way in’ into healthcare.”

Sailing through the scholarship selection process, she completed a nursing degree in the United Kingdom, where she specialised in psychiatric nursing. Recalling that decision, she says, “We were exposed to different specialties in the first year of nursing foundation. I found myself drawn to psychiatric nursing because of

the focus on skills like communication and engagement beyond hands-on clinical skills.”

After graduation, she joined IMH in September 2000. In her 10 years as a psychiatric nurse, she worked in various acute wards and was part of the team that set up and supported the hospital’s first isolation ward during the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) outbreak in 2003. She also helmed IMH’s pioneer Mobile Crisis Team, attending to psychiatric emergencies in the community.

She sought to be a better nurse through constant study, even completing a master’s degree in California. In 2010, she learnt that the Duke-NUS Medical School was up and running. The graduate-entry medical school caters specifically for students like Dr Ong who have a first degree in a different field. “It rekindled my early ambition of doing medicine, and I applied to Duke-NUS that year,” she recalls.

PUSHING ON

Her journey through medical school was at times challenging. “It was a fully packed four-year course. I was in my mid-30s – older than most of my cohort – and my daughter was very young. I was worried about

psychiatrist • I SERVE

“I’m fortunate to be able to bring two perspectives to my work.”



the commitment and being able to manage my family’s needs,” Dr Ong says. Fortunately, she had her family and colleagues by her side. “They encouraged me to apply for the programme and provided immeasurable emotional support,” says Dr Ong.

Juggling motherhood with a medical degree also meant that Dr Ong found herself studying whenever she could. “On the commute, while walking, even in the bathroom,” says the single parent. “My mum and sister also took turns helping me take care of my daughter so I could focus on medical school.”

Yet, Dr Ong remembers the positives too: Her work experience meant she understood how the healthcare system functions, and how to communicate with patients, caregivers and other healthcare co-workers. “I had classmates who had a first degree in engineering and even music. So my healthcare knowledge put me in good stead.”

Dr Ong rejoined IMH in 2020 as an Associate Consultant and now sees patients facing severe emotional and psychological distress at the Department of Emergency and Crisis Care. “I’m fortunate to be able to bring two perspectives to my work,” she says. “As a doctor, I initiate treatment and management plans for my patients, but from my years as a nurse I carry the nursing care perspective as well in my assessment and interactions.”

It is something her patients often notice. “They instinctively know I have a nursing background and ask me about it. Nurses have a unique way of talking to patients, so they must have picked up on that.”

Q&A

ASK THE

Experts

IMH clinicians answer your questions.

Q: I'M IN MY EARLY 70s AND FEEL THAT LIFE IS CHANGING FAST AROUND ME.

After retiring, I've tried to keep myself occupied by staying healthy and active and maintaining relationships with loved ones. However, lately, some friends and relatives my age have become ill or passed on, and I'm also feeling down thinking about the future. How should I stay positive as time goes by?



FIND YOUR JOY

You need to find meaning or purpose in life — something you look forward to every morning.



A: Maintaining a healthy lifestyle and social connections helps keep your spirits up, making it easier to stay positive. I understand that some of your relatives and friends are no longer around. Connect as much as you can with the rest of your loved ones. If you feel lonely, try to form new connections as loneliness is a significant risk factor for depression. Regular physical exercise also helps to keep you healthy and reduces the risk of depression.

Consciously maintaining a positive perspective in life may also help in your situation. You can choose to see the cup as half-full or half-empty. The former is a more positive view of the situation. Treasure and appreciate what you already have and be kind to others.

My last piece of advice is the most important one, but it is also the most difficult. You need to find some meaning or purpose in life. Some people find joy when they are in a position to help others, while others find joy in pursuing their hobbies. There are also those who find greater purpose in spiritual development and in religion. The meaning of life is unique for each individual. Have you found yours? Do you have something you look forward to doing when you wake up every morning? If you do, you have most likely found your meaning in life.

DR YAO FENGYUAN,
Chief and Consultant,
Department of Geriatric Psychiatry



Q: MY FRIEND THINKS SHE HAS ATTENTION DEFICIT HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER (ADHD) AFTER WATCHING SOME TIKTOK VIDEOS ON THE CONDITION.

She now tells our mutual friends that she has ADHD and that it explains her issues like always being late or losing her things. She has also started using tips that she picked up from the videos. Is there anything wrong with this? Should she seek professional help?

A: Recently, there has been an increased awareness of ADHD following discussions on various traditional and social media platforms. Many videos, like the one you referred to, offer tips to improve executive functions. These are cognitive skills we all use every day to get things done — for example, organisation, time management and planning skills. It is good to see your friend taking active steps to manage and cope with her issues. These skills can be helpful for many of us (even those without ADHD) to manage the hectic pace of daily life.

However, just because it looks like ADHD does not mean it is. Not all individuals with ADHD exhibit the symptoms in the same way. Moreover, ADHD can also co-occur with other mental

health conditions, such as anxiety and depression, for instance. Therefore, getting a thorough assessment and diagnosis by trained professionals (for example, a psychiatrist or a psychologist) is crucial. Working with professionals can also be beneficial in developing individualised interventions and overcoming potential barriers to coping and living with ADHD.

MR TAN YIREN,
Clinical Psychologist,
Department of Developmental Psychiatry



IT MIGHT NOT BE ADHD If you have symptoms, get a thorough assessment and diagnosis by trained professionals.



News

A round-up of news and events centred on mental healthcare.

happenings • IMH SCENE



(From left to right) Mr Girija Pande, Chairman of the IMH Board Committee; A/Prof Daniel Fung, CEO of IMH; and Ms Lillian Lee, Member, IMH Board Committee, getting involved in IMH's greening efforts

EVER GREEN

Science has long shown that greenery can improve our mental and physical health. To encourage better well-being and a positive environmental impact, IMH staff and patients will be planting 250 new trees on campus in Buangkok

Green Medical Park this year starting in April. This eco effort is part of IMH's Green Plan that focuses on waste management, water efficiency and energy efficiency to ensure an environmentally-friendly and sustainable hospital for the future.



IMH staff planted trees along the driveways of IMH

SEEKING PARTICIPANTS FOR STUDY ON SUICIDE RISK FACTORS

Each year, about 400 individuals die by suicide in Singapore. Every suicide is one death too many.

To strengthen ongoing suicide prevention and intervention efforts in Singapore, IMH researchers are conducting a study titled *Seeking Answers: A Psychological Autopsy of Exploring & Analysing Risk Factors in Singapore (SPEARS)*. The study hopes to identify and shed light on the key elements that could have contributed to suicide. It will explore themes such as childhood and education, personality, employment, life situation, access to health services, and the events surrounding their demise.

IMH is seeking the participation of the next-of-kin and close friends of those who died by suicide.* To learn more or to take part in this study, please email imhresearch@imh.com.sg.

*Inclusion criteria:

- > aged between 15 and 99;
- > able to provide written, informed consent;
- > able to understand and speak English, Chinese, Malay or Tamil

Exclusion criteria:

- > not willing to be audiotaped;
- > cognitively impaired people or those who do not have the capacity to consent;
- > pregnant women

Inaugural World Infant, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Day

The inaugural World Infant, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Day was held on 23 April 2022. Established by the World Psychiatric Association Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, International Association for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Allied Professions (IACAPAP), International Society for Adolescent Psychiatry and Psychology, and World Association for Infant Mental Health, the event aims to highlight the global importance of mental health in infants, children and teenagers, and advocate for promoting mental health and preventing mental illness in the young.

The Institute of Mental Health (IMH), together with the Singapore

College of Psychiatrists, marked the day with a webinar titled "Trauma-Informed Care and Practices: Supporting Children in Crisis". A panel of IMH experts offered insights on how traumatic experiences significantly increase a person's risk of developing a mental disorder later in life to about 500 participants, made up of allied health professionals, educators and individuals working with young people.

"Many countries are grappling with the health, financial and economic challenges posed by the ongoing pandemic and various crises around the world," says Associate Professor Daniel Fung, Chief Executive Officer, IMH, who is also President of IACAPAP. "Children and adolescents are often the silent victims of the uncertainties arising from these challenges. As

mental healthcare professionals, we are deeply concerned about the psychological impact of these adverse events on our young. IMH is pleased to support the inaugural World Infant, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Day and take this opportunity to raise awareness on the impact of early trauma on the mental health of individuals."



>> To learn more about the importance of youth mental health, get involved in next year's event — look out for more information closer to the date.

Can bad dreams be good?

Unpleasant as they are, dreams that induce stress or fear may have a purpose in our waking lives.

Questions about dreams and why we have them have puzzled humans for centuries. But researchers believe they are now closer to understanding how dreams, specifically bad ones, may benefit us by regulating our emotions when we are awake.

In a study by the University of Geneva and Geneva University Hospitals, scientists examined how emotions experienced during stressful or fear-inducing dreams are connected to wakefulness. They attached electrodes to 18 participants as they slept and instructed another 89 to keep diaries of their dreams, and showed all of them emotionally negative images – of assaults and other disturbing subject matter – while awake.

They found that when we experience a moderate level of fear in our dreams, it activates the parts of our brain responsible for controlling our emotions. In turn, these bad dreams train our brain to recognise threatening scenarios and prepare us to respond more effectively to fear should we face similar situations in real life. The researchers, however, make a distinction between nightmares and bad dreams – the excessive fear in the former can cause too much distress that can disrupt our sleep and negatively impact our emotions when we are awake.

The next time you find yourself stirring from the wrong side of the bed, don't feel too distraught. At least you now know the stuff that bad dreams are made of.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE DREAM

> **DEEP-SLEEP PHASE**
 We dream mostly during the deep-sleep phase known as rapid eye moment (REM). Our brain is more active, and our heart rate, breathing and blood pressure increase to near waking levels. At this stage, the brain sends out nerve signals to relax the muscles in our arms and legs, preventing us from physically acting out our dreams.

RESOURCES AND USEFUL INFO

HELP IS A PHONE CALL AWAY



Mental Health Helpline

Manned by trained counsellors from IMH for those requiring advice on mental health issues.
Tel: 6389 2222 (24 hours)

Singapore Association for Mental Health (SAMH) Helpline

Provides information and assistance on mental health matters and psychosocial issues.
Tel: 1800-283 7019 (Monday to Friday; 9am to 6pm)

Dementia Helpline by Alzheimer's Disease Association

Provides information and assistance on caring for a person with dementia.
Tel: 6377 0700 (Monday to Friday; 9am to 6pm)

Dementia InfoLine by Health Promotion Board

For advice and information on dementia-related queries (available in all 4 languages – English, Chinese, Malay and Tamil).
Tel: 1800-223 1123 (Monday to Friday; 8.30am to 5pm and Saturday; 8.30am to 1pm)

Samaritans of Singapore (SOS)

Provides confidential emotional support for those in crisis, thinking of suicide or affected by suicide.
Tel: 1800-221 4444 (24 hours)

National Addictions Management Service (NAMS) All Addictions Helpline

Provides a range of services to assist people who are dealing with addiction problems.
Tel: 6732 6837 (Monday to Friday; 8.30am to 6pm)

National Council on Problem Gambling (NCPG) Helpline

Provides information and help for problem gamblers and their families.
Tel: 1800-666 8668 (8am to 11pm daily)

Touchline by Touch Youth Services

Renders emotional support and practical advice to youth.
Tel: 1800-377 2252 (Monday to Friday; 9am to 6pm)

Tinkle Friend Helpline by Singapore Children's Society

Provides support, advice and

information to primary school children in distress, especially in situations when their parents or main caregivers are unavailable.
Tel: 1800-274 4788 (Monday to Friday; 2.30pm to 5pm)

Club HEAL

Helps persons with mental health issues to reintegrate back into the community.
Tel: 6899 3463 (Monday to Friday; 9am to 5pm)

Silver Ribbon

Supports persons with mental health issues and their families.
Tel: 6386 1928 (main line); **6385 3714** (Crisis Resolution Team) (Monday to Friday; 9am to 5pm)

Caregivers Alliance Limited

Supports caregivers of persons with mental health issues.
Tel: 6460 4400 (main line); **6388 2686** (Caregivers Support Centre)

IMH SERVICE DIRECTORY

INSTITUTE OF MENTAL HEALTH

Buangkok Green Medical Park
 10 Buangkok View
 Singapore 539747
General Enquiries 6389 2000 (24-hour hotline)
Appointment Line 6389 2200 (Monday to Friday; 8am – 6pm)
 Email: imh_appt@imh.com.sg

CHILD GUIDANCE CLINIC SUNRISE WING

IMH, Block 3, Basement
Monday to Thursday 8am to 5.30pm
Friday 8am to 5pm

CHILD GUIDANCE CLINIC HEALTH PROMOTION BOARD BUILDING
 3 Second Hospital Avenue #03-01
 Singapore 168937

Monday to Thursday 8am to 5.30pm
Friday 8am to 5pm

CLINIC B

IMH, Level 1
Monday to Thursday 8am to 5.30pm
Friday 8am to 5pm

SAYANG WELLNESS CENTRE CLINIC (for non-subsidised patients)

IMH, Level 2
Monday to Thursday 8am to 5.30pm
Friday 8am to 5pm

COMMUNITY WELLNESS CLINIC, QUEENSTOWN

580 Stirling Road, Level 4,
 Singapore 148958
Monday, Tuesday, Thursday
8am to 5.30pm

Wednesday 8am to 12.30pm
Friday 8am to 5pm

COMMUNITY WELLNESS CLINIC, GEYLANG

21 Geylang East Central, Level 4
 Singapore 389707
Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday 8am to 5pm
Wednesday 8am to 12.30pm

NATIONAL ADDICTIONS MANAGEMENT SERVICE (NAMS) CLINIC

IMH, Block 9 Basement
Monday to Thursday
8am to 5.30pm
Friday 8am to 5pm

I don't feel
like myself
lately.
What can I do?

She doesn't
tell me her
problems.
How can I help?

Something's
not quite right.
Should I ask
him to seek help?

The Community Health Assessment Team (CHAT) can help.

We offer confidential mental health checks for individuals aged between 16 and 30. Through the health checks, our friendly team of mental healthcare professionals can help youths in distress understand what they are experiencing, and how they can make things better.

Make an appointment at www.chat.mentalhealth.sg, or contact us to find out more.

Email: CHAT@mentalhealth.sg | Phone: 6493 6500 / 01 (Tue – Sat, 12nn – 9pm)



Community Health
Assessment Team