A healthy mind means a happy life

Make a mental note

YEAR 2011 ISSUE 03
A SPECIAL ISSUE ON MENTAL WELLNESS IN COLLABORATION WITH THE INSTITUTE OF MENTAL HEALTH

YOUR GUIDE TO INTERMEDIATE AND LONG-TERM CARE (ILTC)
CONTENTS

IN FOCUS
Mental Health and You

IN YOUR SHOES
Talk Shop

COMFORTING TOUCH
Love Conquers All

PRO FILES
Touching Lives

GOTTA HAVE IT
Recipe to a Happy Mind

ASK SIR CARE-A-LOT

About Agency for Integrated Care (AIC)
The Agency for Integrated Care (AIC) is set up by the Ministry of Health (MOH) to oversee, coordinate and facilitate all efforts in care integration. Our mission is to achieve best health outcomes for our patients by empowering clients and coordinating access to appropriate care, enable stakeholders to strengthen the primary and community care sectors and enhancing collaboration to create a well-connected healthcare system. For more information, please visit www.aic.sg

NEXTSTEP is a publication by the Agency for Integrated Care (AIC). The views and opinions expressed or implied in NEXTSTEP do not necessarily reflect those of AIC or its directors or editorial staff. All information is correct at time of print.

PUBLISHER
Agency for Integrated Care (AIC)
www.aic.sg

CHIEF EDITOR
Andy Seet

EDITORIAL TEAM
Cindy Lee, Elaine Soh, Penny Chua

For all editorial queries and feedback, please email to nextstep@aic.sg

MICA (P) 173/11/2010
Many people today tend to associate good health with only physical health. While eating right, exercising and making the right lifestyle choices do contribute to their well-being, what they often don’t realise is that taking care of one’s mental health is just as important. Mental health is an integral part of health; indeed, there is no health without mental health.

According to the World Health Organisation, one in four people develop one or more mental disorders at some stage in life. The truth is mental illness can strike anyone. However, due to the misconceptions and myths about mental illnesses, these people are often stigmatised by others who think that it is an uncommon condition. Sometimes, the stigma can be worse than the illness itself.

One of the many misconceptions is that mental illnesses are the same, and people with mental illness can’t control their actions. They shout and yell, making those around them feel uneasy. This is not true. There are many types of mental illnesses, as you will read In Focus (page 3), and those receiving treatment are no more violent or dangerous than the general population. We will show you where one can seek help and dispel some of the myths about mental illness.

As In Your Shoes [page 7] will show, treatment is only one part of the picture. Many of the conditions that these patients have are manageable, and they can continue to live and recover in the community, without causing disturbance to other people. This is where services by Job Club and SAMH Bukit Gombak Group Homes play a central role by offering patients a safe environment to stay in and helping them gain employment, so that they can once more contribute to society.

We hope that this issue, along with the newly-launched Care In Mind website, will serve as a one-stop resource centre for those who seek a better understanding of — and need help in — the management of mental health conditions. I would also like to thank the Institute of Mental Health for making this issue possible. And not forgetting the patients and their families for agreeing to share their stories in this issue.

As World Mental Health Day approaches, let us remove our tinted lenses and give the patients a chance to re-integrate back into the society.

ANDY SEET
Chief Editor
Today, WHO estimates that 450 million people globally suffer from mental disorders. Of these, 154 million suffer from depression and 25 million from schizophrenia. What is worrying is that people with these disorders are often subjected to social isolation, poor quality of life and increased mortality.

What many fail to realise is that with proper care and management, a great number of these conditions can be treated and managed. Unfortunately, the problem of mental illness persists due to misconceptions about these disorders, as well as the stigma that often accompanies them. Many sufferers are unwilling or unable to seek treatment.

NATIONAL MENTAL HEALTH BLUEPRINT
Recognising the importance of mental health, the Ministry of Health initiated the National Mental Health Blueprint in 2007 which looks at developing better support and care for people with mental illness. Supporting the blueprint, the Government has committed $178 million to be spent towards building an emotionally resilient society with access to good mental health services. The four key areas in focus are:

• Increasing public awareness about mental health
• Integrating the mental health care system
• Strengthening mental health manpower; and
• Conducting mental health research
COMMON MENTAL DISORDERS

While the symptoms of various mental disorders may sometimes be similar or mistaken for another, here are some common mental conditions:

• Schizophrenia
  This chronic mental disorder usually affects those aged 14 to 29. Those with this condition experience disturbances in perceptions such as hearing voices or seeing clear images that do not exist. They may display disorganised behaviour. If left untreated, the condition is likely to become worse.

• Generalised Anxiety Disorder
  People with this condition experience excessive worry, which is persistent and causes significant distress or functional impairment. Common symptoms include fatigue, concentration difficulties, increased muscle tension and sleep disturbance.

• Bipolar Disorder
  This is characterised by episodes in which the patient's mood and activity levels are significantly disturbed. People with this condition report an elevation of mood and increased energy and activity (known as the mania stage) and sometimes a lowering of mood and decreased energy and activity (depression stage) or one with mixed features of both.

• Depression
  People with this condition report a low mood and a lack of interest in life over a long period of time. They have extremely low self-esteem and are unable to control their mood. They have sleep and appetite problems and might find it hard to concentrate on tasks at hand.

According to Dr Joseph Leong, Consultant from the Department of Community Psychiatry at the Institute of Mental Health, mental disorders can occur to anyone when there is severe, prolonged, and multiple stresses, causing a mental or nervous breakdown.

The problem worsens when there is insufficient social support or inadequate life skills training, leading to burnouts. Additionally, mental health disorders can be triggered by life events such as severe physical illness, sudden accidents, moving house, losing a job, or experiencing a divorce.

MENTAL ILLNESS AND THE ELDERLY

The problem of mental illness is further compounded in Singapore where there is a growing greying population. For the elderly, the more common mental illnesses are dementia and depression.

The Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports in its “Report on the Ageing Population” estimates that by 2030, the number of residents aged 65 years old and above is expected to triple from 300,000 to 900,000. As such, demand for mental health care is expected to increase.

Dr Ng Li Ling, Senior Consultant of Psychological Medicine at Changi General Hospital, points out that the challenge facing mental health care for the elderly is caused by a lack of awareness where the elderly with such a condition are not brought to the attention of health professionals and given early diagnosis. She believes that more needs to be done. This includes increasing the number of training for health professionals to diagnose and manage dementia as well as developing more dementia resources such as home care, day care and institutional care.

WHERE TO GET HELP

Both Dr Leong and Dr Ng recommend that the best strategy against mental illness is to engage in meaningful and satisfying activities such as spending time with family and friends, and pursuing interests or hobbies. You are ultimately the best safeguard for your own mental wellbeing.

Help is always available if you or your loved ones need assistance or have queries related to mental health and well-being. You can approach any polyclinics, general practitioners, hospitals or voluntary welfare organisations. See page 17 for details.
Clinical Associate Professor Chong Siow Ann, board member of Silver Ribbon (Singapore), Vice Chairman Medical Board (Research) and Senior Consultant, Institute of Mental Health, dispels these common myths on mental illness.

**MYTH #1: People with mental conditions are violent and dangerous.**
**FACT:** Mentally ill people are generally no more violent than others. They are more likely to be victims of violence than to be violent themselves. In fact, they sometimes fear contacting the outside world because they are not sure how they will be perceived.

**MYTH #2: People with mental conditions are poor and less intelligent.**
**FACT:** Mental conditions can affect anyone regardless of intelligence, social class or income level.

**MYTH #3: Mental conditions are caused by personal weakness.**
**FACT:** Experiencing a mental condition is not a character flaw. It has nothing to do with being weak or lacking will-power.

**MYTH #4: People who are depressed could just snap out of it if they tried hard enough.**
**FACT:** Depression has nothing to do with being lazy or weak. It can be caused by losses in life, and some changes in brain chemistry or brain function. Proper treatment can help in recovery.

**MYTH #5: Mental conditions cannot be treated.**
**FACT:** Mental health professionals are well-equipped to provide treatment to patients with mental conditions. Medications and other forms of psychological treatment are very effective in treating depression.

**MYTH #6: People with mental conditions cannot lead meaningful lives.**
**FACT:** When properly treated, people with mental conditions can have enjoyable and fulfilling lives.

**MYTH #7: People with mental conditions are hopeless and have nothing to look forward to.**
**FACT:** They can still lead a normal, productive and meaningful life. Effective medical and psychological treatments, and community support are available to help them re-integrate back into the society.

**MYTH #8: Once a person develops a mental condition, he or she will always remain sick.**
**FACT:** Studies have shown that people with mental illness can become better and even recover completely with treatments which are available. Like other kinds of illnesses, the earlier the condition is diagnosed and treated, the higher the chances of recovery.

**MYTH #9: Mental illness is similar to mental retardation.**
**FACT:** These two conditions are different. Mental retardation is distinguished by the restricted intellectual functioning and difficulties which cause varying degree of difficulty with activities of daily living. On the other hand, a mental illness alters an individual’s thinking, mood and behaviour. The intellectual functioning may or may not be affected.

**MYTH #10: Mental illness only affect the weak and old.**
**FACT:** Mental illness can affect anyone. All age groups are vulnerable to mental illness; most of the mental patients have their onset by their second or third decade of life.
THE STIGMA OF MENTAL HEALTH: WHAT YOU CAN DO TO STOP IT

Most people with mental illness can live at home, hold a job and function as contributing members of society. They have aspirations, hopes and dreams. However, they are often held back by the stigma associated with mental illness due to the public’s lack of awareness of the condition. You can play your part to end mental health discrimination.

1. Avoid using terms like: "crazy", "cuckoo", "psycho", and "wacko". These words belittle and disrespect people with mental health problems.
2. View mental illness like any other health problem.
3. Learn more about mental illness to understand why the person behaves strangely.
4. Show friendship and support to those affected by mental illness.
5. Encourage the mentally ill or their families to seek help.

IN OUR LIFETIME WE HAVE...

- 6.5% chance of being affected by anxiety and depression
- 15.7% chance of suffering from minor psychiatric illness
- 5.2% chance of suffering from dementia if we are aged 60 and above
- Mental illness contributes to 17% of combined burden of premature death and living with disability

IN OUR LIFETIME WE HAVE...

- An estimated 70% of 60,000 persons with mental illness in Singapore are unemployed. The stigma against mental disorders and discrimination against patients and families prevent them from seeking the appropriate mental health care.
- Additionally, there were 401 reported cases of suicides in 2009. In contrast, the number of road accident deaths amounted to 183 in the same year.

Source: 2004 National Mental Health Survey
Source: Institute of Mental Health
Source: Samaritans of Singapore and Traffic Police

THE STIGMA OF MENTAL HEALTH STATISTICS IN SINGAPORE
ARMED with a Diploma in Quality Survey from a local polytechnic, Desmond Goh* worked for a decade as a technical officer and later, an Assistant Land Officer, till he decided to take a break in 2001. “I was bored; everything felt so monotonous,” recalls the bespectacled 40 year-old.

ON A DOWNWARD SPIRAL
During his sabbatical, the self-confessed homebody went jogging, swimming and caught movies alone. He had long stopped contacting his friends (he cannot recall the reason for doing so due to his condition). The leisurely weeks soon stretched to years, and when Desmond decided to put himself back on the job market, his attempts were unsuccessful. “Many companies preferred to hire fresh graduates at a lower pay and that made me feel even more down,” says Desmond, who got by on his savings.

Desmond, who has always been close to his family, started withdrawing even from them. In 2008, his worried father decided to take him to the Institute of Mental Health (IMH) for help. Although Desmond cannot recall any of his symptoms now, a doctor diagnosed his condition as an Acute Schizophrenic Episode.

This mental illness happens when a previously healthy person displays odd behaviour, such as hallucinations like hearing voices, or having irrational beliefs or illogical thoughts. Other common symptoms include suffering from a flat mood, suffering from delusions of persecution or being suspicious of people around him. Acute schizophrenia is often accompanied by conditions like depression, anxiety, irritability and euphoria.

Desmond was hospitalised for a month on two separate occasions and upon realising how much he missed his freedom, was determined to recover. Medication and counselling improved his condition greatly and he returned for check-ups once every five weeks.

* Patient prefers to be known as Desmond Goh
GETTING BACK ON TRACK

He knew it was now even harder to find a job, since he has a mental condition record. In February 2010, he signed up with Job Club on his doctor’s suggestion. The vocational rehabilitation service helps those with mental illness get back to the workforce through training and job matching. Within a month, Desmond was offered a job as a retail assistant with a convenience store.

Since then, he has been working six days a week from 8am to 3pm. Business is brisk and the day goes by in a flash as he restocks the shelves, organises goods and stamps price tags. “I feel happy when I help customers find something they need and they thank me,” says Desmond who likes the simplicity of his work. Regulars stop for a quick chat sometimes and his supervisor has even praised him for getting along well with his colleagues.

When work ends at 3pm, the bachelor enjoys a spot of window shopping with his mother or hangs out with his sister and baby niece in the park. Praying at his regular temple weekly also helps him to calm down. Once a month, he meets up with Job Club’s support group. “It’s great to share our experience about how we manage problems at work as we’re all in the same shoes.” Although the group hasn’t had an opportunity to socialise much beyond the meetings, Desmond says he is happy to help organise a picnic at the beach. “I can’t cook, so I’ll just buy a mountain of snacks from my work place and feed them!” he laughs.

Desmond is also saving for a holiday to Hong Kong with his family next year. As for his career plans, the movie fan says he would love to work in a cinema someday. “Maybe as a ticketing officer or an usher — then I can watch free movies on the job!” he jokes. For now, he is glad that he has managed to reintegrate into the society. “I hope employers will give those like me a chance. My Job Club friends and I will always try our best.”

A Club for Job-seekers

Job Club is a one-stop service set up by the Institute of Mental Health to help persons with mental illness select, secure and keep a job. Comprising a team of medical social workers, occupational therapists and job placement officers, it offers a comprehensive suite of services that include individualised vocational counselling, psychosocial and vocational readiness assessment, job placement and coaching, and job-site follow-up. Since it started in April 2008, Job Club, which has 64 employer partners, has assisted with more than 3,500 job placements, helping recovering patients find jobs in areas like customer service, retail, food & beverage, housekeeping and general work. To find out more and to view their list of job vacancies, visit www.jobclub.sg or contact 6389-2678/9.

Stepping Back into the Community

Nestled in the heartlands of Bukit Batok is the SAMH Bukit Gombak Group Homes (BGGH), a group of centres that provide temporary accommodation and guidance to recovering patients. Head of Residential Services of SAMH BGGH, Ms Helen Yong, 50, explained that “Often, these patients have very strained relationships with their family members due to the stress and anxiety created at the onset of their illnesses. Family members might mistake symptoms of the mental illness for laziness, aggression, unreasonableness or being possessed and as such, face difficulty in dealing with the patients.”

SAMH conducts Family Link Programme (FLP) workshops to equip caregivers with skills to help their loved ones who are mentally ill and to exercise self-care so that they can continue to be there to care for their loved ones.

Ms Yong says the initiatives at SAMH BGGH seeks to achieve the three-pronged Psychiatric Rehabilitation (PsyR) goals of Recovery, Community Reintegration and Enhancing One’s Quality of Life.

“Clients are taught the symptoms and side effects of the medication they take and ways to identify symptoms of relapse, allowing them to seek treatment early if need be. SAMH also runs the Illness Management and Recovery Programme (IMR) to equip clients with illness management skills so that they can gain further insight of their condition and enhance their coping skills,” explained Ms Yong.

SAMH BGGH offers very personalised care and services to its clients, catering to a maximum of 36 clients each time.

To facilitate community reintegration, case workers help clients to source for employment, equipping them with basic job interview skills and even job coaching. Follow-up counselling visits help to address adjustment issues and connect them to community partners.

SAMH BGGH also works with the grassroots to include clients for community activities. Besides enabling the clients to pick up socially-acceptable norms so that they can better blend in with the community, it also allows the general public to better understand their clients before judging them and to remove misconceptions about mental illness.

The SAMH Bukit Gombak Group Homes (BGGH) commenced operations in August 1995 to provide individuals with stabilised psychiatric conditions the opportunity to experience true community integration right in the midst of “heartland” living. Through the provision of vocational and psychosocial rehabilitation services, BGGH residents are supported in the attainment of their living, working, learning and social goals.

For more information on SAMH BGGH, please visit www.samhealth.org.sg or call the SAMH Counselling Helpline at 1800 283 7019 (Mon to Fri: 9am - 1pm, 2pm - 6pm)
Perhaps, some might think twice about marrying a person who has schizophrenia. But for Mr Chan, 40, a technical services engineer, it was a decision that he has steadfastly stuck to for the last 13 years. At age 27, Mr Chan had met his wife through a dating programme. They dated for less than two years before they decided to settle down.

His wife, now 39, was diagnosed with schizophrenia just before their marriage. The condition makes it difficult for a person to differentiate between what is real and imagined. However, Mr Chan decided to proceed with the marriage even though he was advised by social workers to call off their wedding. “I decided that I would be there for her, for better or for worse, in sickness and in health,” he says.

These days, the couple enjoys life’s little pleasures such as going out for a meal or watching TV together at home. On most days, Mrs Chan, now a housewife, stays at home. Occasionally, she leaves home only to buy food for the family.

COMING TO TERMS
Living with a loved one who has schizophrenia has taught Mr Chan to recognise the symptoms of an impending relapse. Mrs Chan is a quiet person by nature. However, when her condition acts up, she will become talkative and difficult to reason with. She will not be able to sleep and she will not be able to concentrate on what she is doing.

Getting medical attention as early as possible is key to preventing a more serious relapse, says Mr Chan. When Mrs Chan has a relapse, she can be hospitalised for up to three to four weeks. She has no more than two relapses a year. While work commitments often keep Mr Chan busy during the weekdays, he makes it a point to keep his wife company in the hospital on weekends.

The most critical period usually comes immediately after Mrs Chan’s discharge, during which she will experience mood swings, hallucinations, a quick temper and insomnia. Much of Mr Chan’s time is spent ensuring his wife gets adequate care and attention. And it could take several months before she returns to her normal self.

Thankfully, Mr Chan’s employer has been very supportive and understanding of his need to accompany his wife. This includes reducing his business travel when he needs to be in Singapore and being flexible with working arrangements whenever he needs to rush off to attend to his wife.

OVERCOMING THE ODDS
Mr Chan admits that it has not always been easy to be a caregiver. While he would love to have a family, the Chans have no children as schizophrenia can be hereditary. 

Ever the responsible and committed husband, Mr Chan has even ensured that his wife is well provided
for should something untoward happen to him. At the moment, the couple live very frugally to ensure their continued financial independence.

Help from others has been minimal. Mr Chan feels that the challenges he faces are not well understood by family and friends for them to offer tangible help. All Mr Chan asks for is a sympathetic listening ear. In any case, Mr Chan, adds that he has become “immune” to his circumstances and issues. “The best solution is to move on. You cannot continue to cry or blame anyone.”

Despite the challenges that he faces, Mr Chan says that his wife has been his source of strength. She encourages him by trying her best to get well. She is also considerate and avoids keeping him awake when suffering from insomnia, something which she used to do.

His love for her keeps him going, as well as his sense of responsibility, commitment, duty and honour. “I have taken her as my wife. I have a responsibility to help her and she has a responsibility to help herself”. Come what may, Mr Chan says that he will continue to care for his wife every step of the way.

“\textit{I decided that I would be there for her for better or for worse, in sickness and in health.}”

\textbf{BEWARE OF CAREGIVER BURNOUT}

While Mr Chan has managed to care for his wife without any help from others, doing it alone has its risks too. Caregivers such as Mr Chan face the risk of burnout if they are overworked from caring for their loved ones, says Dr Philip Yap, Senior Consultant Geriatrician, Department of Geriatric Medicine, Khoo Teck Puat Hospital.

Burnout occurs if the caregiver is over-burdened from having to multi-task between various responsibilities such as managing behaviour stemming from aggression, agitation, delusion and poor sleep, and helping in daily activities like feeding and bathing. These are made more challenging if the caregiver does not have the necessary resources, both social and financial, to cope with his circumstances and responsibilities. It can also lead to medical conditions such as high blood pressure and lowered immunity. Caregivers can feel isolated, depressed and trapped in their role. Therefore, it is important for siblings, relatives or friends to step in to provide respite for caregivers.

\textbf{WHERE TO GET HELP}

\textbf{CAMI}

The Caregivers’ Association of the Mentally Ill (CAMI) is made up of a group of volunteer caregivers which focuses on the needs of caregivers for the mentally ill. CAMI operates a 24-hour helpline for caregivers of the mentally ill. This helpline is manned by volunteer caregivers who have been trained and who understand what a caregiver goes through. It aims to offer essential information for caregivers on issues such as crisis management, avenues to obtain social and financial assistance, general information on mental illness, arrangements for home visits, and to provide a listening ear.

Call 6782 9371 for assistance or visit www.cami.org.sg
TOUCHING LIVES

A PAIR OF DEDICATED PROFESSIONALS SHARE INSIGHTS ON HOW THEY HELP PATIENTS COPE WITH THEIR CONDITIONS AND THE CHALLENGES THEY FACE AT WORK.

MARY LIM, Nurse Manager from New Horizon Centre (Bukit Batok)

IT is clear that Mary, 59, loves what she does for a living — she speaks of her elderly dementia clients affectionately. "I've always loved interacting with the elderly because they have so many rich experiences and stories to share. Their appreciative gratitude gives me tremendous emotional rewards," says Mary who has worked at the New Horizon Centre at Bukit Batok for the past 15 years.

Her workday starts at 7:30am when she runs through the list of clients to identify potential challenges with her fellow nurses. This is followed by phone calls to the clients’ families to provide updates and advice. Then she gets down to the main part of her job — which ranges from sorting out administrative matters, orientating new clients, brainstorming ideas for clients’ activities and providing feedback to doctors to planning staff schedules and training new staff.

Mary’s packed daily schedule lasts at least nine to 10 hours and patience is a key requirement in her job. “Families are stressed and “burnout” from having to look after their loved ones with dementia. Encouraging them to attend the Support Group helps families to cope better and prepares them for the challenging years ahead. Engaging clients with stimulating and meaningful activities will help contribute to their sense of self-worth. This can be achieved through a daily routine so clients feel comfortable. This reduces anxiety and makes them feel independent,” she adds.

Patience from families of loved ones with dementia is important too. Mary explains: “The best kind of care a client receives is one that is all-rounded — not just from medical staff but also from loved ones. We have to explain to them the nature of dementia and the behaviours they can expect from the person with dementia, so they can be mentally prepared.”

Mary says the challenge for most caregivers often lies in failing to remember their loved ones for who they were before they had the disease. “Clients may forget things, or they cannot recognise people, but it doesn’t change who they really are.”

“Maintaining the clients’ dignity and self-worth is extremely important so they have confidence and self-respect,” says Mary.

HOW THE ELDERLY CAN KEEP FIT

- Stay physically active and do regular exercises. For example, go on daily walks around your neighbourhood.
- Keep mentally active. Indulge in a hobby or pick up a new skill.
- Have a balanced diet. Include vegetables and fruits in your diet.
- Engage in social and leisure activities. Join a club, have a positive attitude, and surround yourself with cheerful people.
- Go for regular health checks.
Taking up a Graduate Diploma in Mental Health was a natural career move for Dr Lum. “I’ve always been interested in mental health, since my psychiatric attachments when I was training to be a medical officer,” says the 40-year-old who took up the course so that he could enhance his knowledge on the management of psychiatric mental health.

“When Singapore is a modern society, there are still negative connotations to being a patient at IMH,” explains Dr Lum. “Making such treatments available at private clinics will help prompt more patients to seek help, encourage compliance to follow-ups and medications, thus leading to fewer defaults and relapses.”

His patients have conditions ranging from mild to moderate mental states such as depression, anxiety disorders and schizophrenia. Those with complex and severe mental illnesses are referred to specialised care after a consultation visit.

Dr Alvin Lum, General Practitioner in a private clinic and Resident Doctor at the Institute of Mental Health

“First, I will take a detailed history by talking to them and their family members. I base my diagnosis on the patients’ descriptions of symptoms such as physical, social or functional problems caused by their conditions. Sometimes, observing the patients’ behaviours and attitudes help to provide more insight into their problems,” says Dr Lum.

A point worth emphasising is the support and care provided by the patients’ loved ones. “Looking after a mentally unwell person is challenging. It can be very stressful for family members and I help by providing families with more information on the illness, such as the signs of relapses and side effects of medication,” says Dr Lum. "I believe families need strong support too as they are the patients’ main source of care. Eventually, it can be challenging to keep up with the patient’s needs over time.”

Dr Lum believes caring for patients is beyond physical caretaking. Doctors should care for both the minds and bodies of the patients. “Other than medication, I often give patients advice on stress management and relaxation techniques. It would be good to start by being realistic, yet positive about their situation,” explains Dr Lum.

Sleep habits play an important role too. Dr Lum adds: “Don’t bring your electronic gadgets to bed as it should only be a place for rest. Prepare the bedroom 30 minutes to an hour prior to sleep; such as dimming the lights, setting it to a comfortable temperature and getting into bed only when you’re ready to sleep, so that your body will relax and recognise that it’s time to sleep!”

“Making such treatments available at private clinics will help prompt more patients to seek help, encourage compliance to follow-ups and medications, thus leading to fewer defaults and relapses.”
Recipe to a Happy Mind

YOUR MIND IS THE WINDOW TO YOUR BODY AND SOUL — SO MAKE SURE IT RECEIVES PROPER NOURISHMENT. THESE ARE THE VITAL COMPONENTS NEEDED TO ENSURE YOUR MENTAL WELL-BEING.

Your brain is a powerful thing. Your mental state does not only control your consciousness, it determines your physical being and how your body functions. However, your mental health is threatened by negative experiences in life such as stress, grief, depression and even change. Studies have shown that people suffering from serious mental illnesses can lower their life expectancy by 10-15 years.

Here are 10 must-have ingredients to help you boost your mental wellness and welcome a healthier you.

INGREDIENTS

1. **Get proper sleep**
   - **Method:** Sleep makes you more alert and reduces stress. It also improves your memory as your brain processes your day by making links to events and feelings while at rest.
   - **A minimum of eight hours daily.**

2. **Eat a healthy diet**
   - **Method:** Good nutrition is a natural defence against stress. Begin your day with a nutritious breakfast, preferably of whole grain cereals and fruit, and maintain balanced meals throughout the day.
   - **Foods rich in omega-3 fatty acids, such as salmon, tuna and mackerel, reduce the risk of dementia and mental decline.**

3. **Keep yourself active**
   - **Method:** Exercising keeps you physically strong, and also strengthens your mind by reducing and preventing stress. Go for a walk, cycle in the park, dance to some music or unwind with yoga. Remember that it is better to do moderate exercise more regularly than to engage in a heavy workout on an ad hoc basis.
   - **30 minutes of exercise three times a week is ideal.**
4. **Interact with others**

   **Method:** Talking to people stimulates the brain. A US study found that talking to another person for just 10 minutes a day improves memory scores. Also, the more you interact with others, the faster your brain will work.

5. **Pick up a new skill**

   **Method:** Engaging in mind-boggling games involves a combination of memory, decision-making and strategising which keeps the brain active and prevents dementia. In addition, playing in a group will boost greater interaction.

6. **Get a mental workout**

   **Method:** Make a list of goals and check them off when they are completed. This will help you to tackle things one at a time. Seeing problems as opportunities or focusing on the positive can also help to reduce stress. Stress cannot be avoided but you can learn to manage it.

7. **Do something for others**

   **Method:** Assistance a friend, family member or doing community work helps you to take the focus away from yourself and in turn, you will feel more empowered and included.

8. **Learn to manage stress**

   **Method:** If you are having emotional problems, seek support from family and friends or professional help. Self-medicating with alcohol, cigarettes and drugs only provide temporary relief from stress and unhappiness.

9. **Avoid alcohol, cigarettes and drugs**

   **Method:** Laugh yourself silly and have fun whenever you can! Besides an apple, laughing can also help to keep the doctor at bay because humour activates the brain’s reward and pleasure centres, generating positive emotions and relaxing the mind.
Reminiscence activities can take the form of fun and spontaneous sessions that are carried out informally between the caregiver and the patient. For a start, you can use the five senses to guide you:

a. **Smell:** Talk about the powder or perfume that she used in the past. When a neighbour cooks, start a conversation about food or cooking if she loves to whip up a dish.

b. **Taste:** When eating out, ask questions like: Do you remember eating "chwee kueh" when you were younger? How much did it cost then? What did it taste like? Was it salty or sweet?

c. **Sight:** Browse photos of old Singapore. These could include places of interest or activities that were popular during her younger days. When you are out with your grandmother, ask her if she has fond memories of any old buildings.

d. **Sound:** Listen to music from the past (Youtube is a good resource for songs from the good old days). When you hear a neighbour or a performer playing music, ask her about her favourite music.

e. **Touch:** Feel objects (such as an old radio, coffee cup, or calendar) and talk about them. Talk to her about the textures and materials of clothes.

Sensory stimulation can be a very informal and spontaneous form of reminiscence activity as it can be weaved into everyday conversations. Items such as old photos and music are very accessible as they can be easily located on the Internet.

**Some popular themes include:**
- Childhood games or toys
- Buildings of the past (Old Rex cinema, Van Kleef Aquarium, National Theatre)
- Old movies
- Favourite foods
- Festive celebrations
- Childhood, school and adult life

**Use props.** Bring a nostalgic item to spark off a discussion or ask her about the things that she cherishes.

**Things to note:**
- Listen actively and take an interest in her life story.
- Ask general questions and learn as much as possible about her background.
- Acknowledge your grandmother’s strengths along the way. Thank and praise her for sharing.
Caring for your loved one starts at “Care in Mind”. Visit careinmind.aic.sg from 20 October 2011.

FINALLY — A ONE-STOP ONLINE RESOURCE TO EMPOWER YOU AND YOUR LOVED ONES ON MENTAL WELLNESS.

Learn about the symptoms, causes, treatments and available resources for conditions such as anxiety disorder, bipolar disorder, dementia, depression, panic disorder and schizophrenia.

Know the 101s about mental health — myths and facts, subsidies and commonly-asked questions.

A caregiver resource section to support caregivers in their caregiving role. Learn how to manage your loved one and cope with stress and bereavement.

Comprehensive directory of service providers, and programmes available for children, youths, adults and elderly.
SERVICES FOR YOUR MIND

Here is a list of services that cater to your various mental wellbeing concerns. For more information, please visit careinmind.aic.sg

CAREGIVER SUPPORT SERVICE
Alzheimer’s Disease Association (Bukit Timah)
Boon Liew Building
204 Bukit Timah Road #04–00 S229863
Tel: 6737 9971
www.alz.org.sg

Alzheimer’s Disease Association (Tiong Bahru)
Central Plaza
298 Tiong Bahru Road #03–01 S168730
Tel: 6377 0700
www.alz.org.sg

AWWA Centre for Caregivers
ACCESS Building
11 Lorong Napiri 5547532
Tel: 1800 299 2992
www.awwa.org.sg

Comfort Keepers – Toa Payoh & Bishan
Pacific Building
627 Aljunied Road #07–03 S389837
Tel: 6282 0577
www.comfortkeepers.com.sg

Comfort Keepers – Bedok
Goldbell Center
1301 Bedok North Avenue 4 #04–02 S489945
Tel: 6446 7361
www.comfortkeepers.com.sg

Comfort Keepers – Bukit Merah
Henderson Building
221 Henderson Road #07–18 S199557
Tel: 6336 3376
www.comfortkeepers.com.sg

CAREGIVER TRAINING
Thye Hua Kwan Caregiver Training
Bik 126 Yishun Street 11 #01–431 S760126
Tel: 6100 1201
www.thkms.org.sg

COMMUNITY CASE MANAGEMENT
The Salvation Army Family Support Services
Bik 42 Bee Crescent #01–95 S160042
Tel: 6273 7207
www.salvationarmy.org.sg

Thye Hua Kwan Assessment and Coordination for Enabling (ACE)
14 Buangkok Green S539755
Tel: 6489 0721
www.thkms.org.sg

COMMUNITY PSYCHIATRIC SERVICE
Community Rehabilitation and Support Service
Bik 267 Bukit Batok Avenue 4 #01–206 S650267
Tel: 6562 4881
www.sacshcc.org.sg

COMMUNITY VWO CLINIC
Tsao Foundation - Hua Mei Clinic
Central Plaza
298 Tiong Bahru Road #15–01/06 S168730
Tel: 6593 9500
www.tsaofoundation.org

COUNSELLING SERVICE
Caregiving Welfare Association
Bik 3 Ghim Moh Road #01–294 S270003
Tel: 6466 7957
www.cwa.org.sg

O’ Joy Care Services
Bik 5 Boon Kang Road #02–10 S380005
Tel: 6749 0190
www.ojoy.org

SAGE Counselling Centre
Jurong Point Shopping Centre 1 Jurong West Central 2 #06–04 S648886
Tel: 6354 1191
www.sagecc.org.sg

Tsao Foundation – Hua Mei Counselling and Coaching Service
Central Plaza
298 Tiong Bahru Road #15–01/06 S168730
Tel: 6593 9500
www.tsaofoundation.org

DAY REHABILITATION CENTRE
All Saints Home – Tampines
11 Tampines Street 44 S529123
Tel: 6788 2345
www.allsaintscommunity.org.sg

Ang Mo Kio – Thye Hua Kwan Hospital
17 Ang Mo Kio Avenue 9 S569766
Tel: 6450 6150
www.amkh.org.sg

Apex Day Care for the Elderly
Bik 119 Bukit Merah View #01–85 S152119
Tel: 6273 4510
www.apex.rehab.org.sg

AWWA READYCARE Centre
Bik 123 Ang Mo Kio Avenue 6 #01–4035 S560123
Tel: 6552 3955
www.awwa.org.sg

Marine Paradise – Foo Hai Elderly Lodge
Bik 4 Marine Terrace #01–318 S440004
Tel: 6445 3733
www.foohai.org

New Horizon Centre (Tampines)
Bik 362 Tampines Street 34 #01–377 S520362
Tel: 6786 5373
www.alz.org.sg

Society for the Physically Disabled (Tampines)
Bik 866 Tampines Street 83 #01–237 S520866
Tel: 6587 7611
www.spd.org.sg

Sunlove Rehab Centre
Bik 557 Ang Mo Kio Avenue 10 #01–1874 S560557
Tel: 6456 3364
www.sunlovehome.org.sg

Sunshine Welfare Action Mission Home
5 Sembawang Walk S757717
Tel: 6510 3386
www.swami.org.sg
The Salvation Army Bedok Multi–Service Centre for the Elderly
Bik 121 Bedok North Road #01 – 163 S460121
Tel: 6445 1630
www.salvationarmy.org.sg

Thong Teck Home for Senior Citizens
91 Gaylango East Avenue 2
S389759
Tel: 6846 0069
www.thongteckhome.org

DEMENTIA DAY CARE CENTRE
Apex Harmony Lodge
10 Pasir Ris Walk
S518240
Tel: 6585 2265
www.apexharmony.org.sg

New Horizon Centre (Bukit Batok)
Bik 511 Bukit Batok Street 52 #01–211 S509022
Tel: 6336 3376
www.newhorizon.com.sg

New Horizon Centre (Jurong Point)
Jurong Point Shopping Centre
1 Jurong West Central 2 #04–04 S648886
Tel: 6790 1650
www.newhorizon.com.sg

New Horizon Centre (Tampines)
Bik 362 Tampines Street 34 #01–377 S520362
Tel: 6796 5373
www.newhorizon.com.sg

SASCO Day Activity Centre
Bik 30 Telok Blangah Rise #01–316 S090030
Tel: 6276 8713
www.sasco.org.sg

Sunlove Home
70 Buangkok View
S534190
Tel: 6389 3548
www.sunlovehome.org.sg

The Salvation Army Bedok Multi–Service Centre for the Elderly
Bik 121 Bedok North Road #01 – 163 S460121
Tel: 6445 1630
www.salvationarmy.org.sg

Yong–En Care Centre
Bik 355A Smith Street #03–37 S057339
Tel: 6225 1002
www.yong–en.org.sg

The Salvation Army Bedok Multi–Service Centre for the Elderly
Bik 121 Bedok North Road #01 – 163 S460121
Tel: 6445 1630
www.salvationarmy.org.sg

HOME HELP SERVICE
Caregiving Welfare Association
Bik 3 Ghim Moh Road #01–294 S270003
Tel: 6486 7957
www.cwa.org.sg

Comfort Keepers – Toa Payoh & Bishan
Pacific Building 627 Aljunied Road #07–03 S398837
Tel: 6822 0577
www.comfortkeepers.com.sg

Comfort Keepers – Bedok
Goldbell Center 1301 Bedok North Avenue 4 #04–02 S498945
Tel: 6446 7361
www.comfortkeepers.com.sg

Comfort Keepers – Bukit Merah
Henderson Building 221 Henderson Road #07–18 S159557
Tel: 6336 3376
www.comfortkeepers.com.sg

PSYCHIATRIC DAY REHABILITATION SERVICE
Hougong Care Centre
Buangkok Green Medical Park 20 Buangkok View S534194
Tel: 6386 9338
www.sacshcc.org.sg

Oasis Day Centre (Singapore Association for Mental Health)
Bik 139 Potong Pasir Avenue 3 #01–136 S380129
Tel: 1800 283 7019
www.samhealth.org.sg

PSYCHIATRIC REHABILITATION HOME
Sahm Bukit Gombak Group Home
Bik 239 Bukit Batok East Avenue 5 #01–165 S650239
Tel: 6565 9958
www.sahm.org.sg

Hougong Care Centre
Buangkok Green Medical Park 20 Buangkok View S534194
Tel: 6386 9338
www.sacshcc.org.sg

Simee Care Centre
10 Simei Street 3 S529897
Tel: 6781 8113
www.sacsscc.org.sg

HELPLINES
Association of Women for Action & Research (AWWA)
Tel: 1800 774 5935
Mon – Fri: 3pm – 9.30pm
Provides empathy, support, information and encouragement to women in need of assistance.

AWWA Centre for Caregivers
Tel: 1800 299 2992
Mon – Fri: 8.30am – 5.30pm
Provides information, training and support for caregivers.

Care Corner Counselling Hotline
Tel: 1800 353 5800
Mon – Fri (except Public Holidays): 10am – 10pm
Provides mandarin counselling service by professional counsellors.

Caregivers’ Association of the Mentally Ill (CAMI)
Tel: 6782 8371
Mon – Fri: 8.30am – 5.30pm
Provides support for caregivers taking care of loved ones with mental illness.

Community Psychogeriatric Programme (CPGP) by CGH
Tel: 6850 1840 / 6850 1841
Mon – Fri: 8.30am – 6pm
Provides information and referral services for residents living within Northeast and Southeast CDC districts.

Dementia Helpline (Alzheimer’s Disease Association)
Tel: 6377 0700
Mon – Fri: 8am – 6pm
Provides a listening ear for caregivers and assist them in managing any crisis situations at home.

Institute of Mental Health (IMH) Helpline
Tel: 6389 2222
24 hours
Provides counselling for those suffering from psychological and psychiatric problems.

Lifeline NUS
Tel: 8516 7774
24 hours
Provides counselling and psychological services in the event of a life-threatening psychological emergency for NUS students, staff, and their family and friends.

National Addictions Management Service (NAMS)
Tel: 6732 6837
24 hours
Provides support, information and advice for those with addiction problems.

SAGE Helpline for Seniors
Tel: 1800 555 5555
Mon – Fri: 9am – 7pm, Sat: 9am – 1pm
Provides counselling to enhance the total well-being of the older persons and their caregivers with a special focus on the psychological and social aspects of their health.

Samaritans of Singapore (SOS) Hotline
Tel: 1800 555 5555
24 hours
Provides counselling for anyone in crisis and persons with suicidal tendencies, thinking of suicide or affected by suicide.

Singapore Association for Mental Health (SAMH)
Tel: 1800 283 7019
Mon – Fri: 9am – 6pm
Provides support, information, training and support for caregivers.
3 SIMPLE STEPS
To Find The Best-suited Intermediate and Long-Term Care (ILTC) For You

1. ASSESS
WHAT IS BEST-SUITED FOR YOUR NEEDS

2. LOCATE
A SERVICE PROVIDER NEAR YOU

3. PAYING
FOR YOUR ILTC

For more information visit www.aic.sg