

GPBUZZ

MCI(P) 037/05/2021
JAN - MAR 2022

The Self-care Issue



IT'S OK NOT TO BE OK:

Caring for the Well-being of Caregivers

Breathing to De-stress: Techniques to keep your cool in any situation

Mindfulness in Our Daily Lives: Being Mindful or Mind-full?

Huat-derful & Healthy CNY Recipe

Scan the QR code using your iPhone
or smart phone to view GPBuzz
on the TTSH website, or visit
<https://delivr.com/2KB6V>



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Dear Central Health Partners,

HAPPY 2022!

Transiting into an endemic COVID-19
state, healthcare workers must ready
ourselves for changes brought on
by the ever-evolving situation. By the
time you are reading this, we will have
learned much more about the Omicron
variant. Nevertheless, the emergence
of any new variant will bring its
attendant uncertainties, fears and
frustrations, as we raise our game to
keep things under control.

TAKING CARE TO GIVE CARE

Throughout this challenging journey, you would likely have felt stressed, and perhaps wondered if you have sufficient resilience to deal with each and every curveball. As frontliners of healthcare, we have also seen our colleagues' well-being affected as they go above and beyond their call of duty. It is no wonder that biopsychosocial self-care has emerged as an essential part of caring – building our resilience through taking time to rest and recharge will allow us to reconnect better with our mission and our duty to serve the community.

THE ROAD AHEAD

Our healthcare landscape is also changing. As we pursue Ministry of Health's (MOH) vision of Beyond Healthcare to Health, Beyond Hospital to Community and Beyond Quality to Value, Central Health looks to actively transform ourselves into a care system for population health, through health and social care integration for both direct clients and residents. In addition, new care models such as the National One-Rehab Framework, and integrated care programmes for prevalent chronic conditions such as diabetes and stroke will be introduced. With Ang Mo Kio Specialist Centre becoming fully operational, we envision further collaboration opportunities.

In this and upcoming issues of GPBuzz, we look forward to sharing more initiatives targeted at strengthening our commitment to collaboration, to ensure better health and healthcare for our residents.

Take care and let's work hand-in-hand together.

Yours Sincerely,
Adj A/Prof Ian Leong
Assistant Chairman Medical Board
(Community Care Integration)

Ms Loh Shu Ching
Executive Director,
Division for Central Health



Relocation of TTSH Rehabilitation Outpatient Service

After spending 25 wonderful years in the heartlands of Ang Mo Kio, Rehabilitation Specialist Outpatient Clinic has relocated back to TTSH main campus in Novena. Merging with Clinic for Advanced Rehabilitation Therapeutics (CART), the newly renovated facility at TTSH Annex 2, has started operations from 18 October 2021.

This relocation allows for better care integration with inpatient services, as it would facilitate seamless transition of patients from inpatient to the outpatient phase of recovery, and subsequently back to the community.



“ We have finally achieved one of our milestones to return to the Novena campus. For CART 2.0, we aim to provide state-of-the-art and integrated rehabilitation therapeutics to individuals who require tertiary rehab outpatient care. We also envision to service beyond hospital walls to community by forging close partnerships with both internal and external healthcare providers, as we work towards transforming present and future rehabilitation continuum care needs, supported by technology enablers. ”

*Dr Loh Yong Joo,
Senior Consultant and Head, Department of Rehabilitation Medicine*

ABOUT CART

CART is an integrated rehabilitation facility providing a comprehensive suite of services for patients with complex conditions requiring multi-disciplinary rehabilitation care. This includes patients with spinal cord injury, severe stroke, acquired brain injury, neurodegenerative disease, neuro-oncology conditions and those who are ventilator-dependent.

Upper & lower limb programmes integrated with robot-aided therapies, use a variety of robotics or VR technologies to increase patients' participation and interest in therapy, thereby helping them achieve functional independence for an improved quality of life.



Services and facilities in CART include:

- Multi-disciplinary outpatient consultation to deliver holistic care to patients
- Medical and rehabilitative approaches using innovative robotic and Virtual Reality (VR) technologies like Total Walk Programme, Re-Arm Programme
- Rehabilitation gym with allied health professionals supporting the varied needs of patients
- Comprehensive spasticity management
- Driving Assessment and Rehabilitation Programme (DARP)
- Psychological services and speech therapy
- Seating clinic
- Sexual wellness
- Vocational rehabilitation

To refer a patient to the new CART facility at **TTSH Annex 2 Level 1**, email to cart@ttsh.com.sg with patient's documents and CHAS referral form or call **6889 4580**.

Locate us at 7 Jalan Tan Tock Seng TTSH, Annex 2, Level 1, S(308440)

Pandemic Fatigue: Recognising Signs of Burnout & Self-Care Tips for Restoring Wellness

Dr Lau Khai Ying
Associate Consultant,
Department of Psychiatry,
Tan Tock Seng Hospital



Two years since the onset of Covid-19, we are now navigating our way in the endemic new normal. As we deal with derailed plans and uncertainties in different aspects of our lives, stress and its various manifestations have also emerged. A survey found that 13% of Singaporeans experienced symptoms of depression or anxiety during the pandemic.¹ Reasons for stress cited in similar surveys have included anything from social isolation, worries of close ones getting infected, anxiety over the future, financial concerns, to distress over academic or work performance.

Many survey participants have revealed that they are more willing to seek help from their General Practitioner (GP) or family doctor first. GPs as frontliners have also reported higher rates of burnout² – defined as a state of emotional and physical exhaustion brought on by long periods of constant unrelenting stress, which, if not addressed can lead to clinical depression or anxiety. Here are some self-care tips to share with your patients (and yourself) to achieve better mental well-being and reduce burnout!

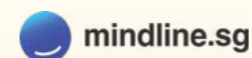
How to Identify BURNOUT in Your Patients

Ask if he or she is experiencing some of the following:

- Feeling on edge and anxieties about the future
- A sense of dread and irritation with constant news of the pandemic
- Sleeping difficulties or feeling tired even after getting enough sleep
- Lack of motivation, cynicism or feeling like they lack a sense of purpose
- Snapping at loved ones
- Difficulty concentrating

Self-care Advice for Patients:

- 1 Stick to routines**
 - Continue with activities you enjoy, including me-time
 - Avoid mindless snacking or overspending
 - Prioritise sleep
- 2 Stay connected with loved ones**
 - Keep up efforts to connect with friends and family remotely
 - Build in downtime for the whole family to connect and relax, or simply to spend time together
- 3 Set clear boundaries**
 - Draw a line between personal time, family and work while working from home
- 4 Build resilience and restorative strategies**
 - Stay active and exercise regularly
 - Practise meditation to learn how to pay attention to the present moment and build self-awareness on your response to stress
 - Find out what helps you relax, such as listening to music, watching a movie or baking
- 5 Take a break from social media**
 - Limit frequency of news reading during the day if feeling overwhelmed by Covid-19 news
 - Covid-19 related information on social media can be conflicting and emotionally-laden. Seek relevant information from trusted sources
- 6 Seek help if there are signs of depression, anxiety or suicidal thoughts**



Visit mindline.sg for a wide collection of free daily self-care tools and curated resources to support your wellness. Scan the QR code to explore more today!



For more mental health resources, please refer to the next page

References:

1. The Straits Times, Singapore. (2021, 24 August). IMH study points to likely increase in mental health issues in Singapore amid Covid-19. <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/health/imh-study-points-to-likely-increase-in-mental-health-issues-in-singapore-amid-covid-19>
2. Lum A, Goh YL, Wong KS, Seah J, Teo G, Ng JQ, Abdin E, Hendricks MM, Tham J, Nan W, Fung D. Impact of COVID-19 on the mental health of Singaporean GPs: A cross-sectional study. *BJGP Open*. 2021 Aug 24;5(4): BJGPO.2021.0072.

Mindfulness in Our Daily Lives: Being Mindful or Mind-Full?

Mindfulness is defined as “paying attention in a particular way on purpose, in the present moment, non-judgmentally” by Jon Kabat-Zinn, founder of the Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction programme.

Benefits of mindfulness

Mindfulness trains us to observe our thoughts and emotions, as well as internal and external sensations without judgment. By keeping us focused on each moment as it happens, and preventing our thoughts from drifting to the past or future, it realises an improvement in our concentration and well-being. Practising mindfulness also activates the body’s relaxation response, thus reducing stress, improving mental and physical well-being and even working memory.

Did You Know?

Mindfulness meditation has been linked to enhancing our immune system, improving quality of sleep and even reducing depression and anxiety!

How can GPs introduce mindfulness to patients

A good way to introduce mindfulness to patients or caregivers is encouraging them to start from simple tweaks in daily lives before incorporating mindfulness practices deliberately.

- We can take almost any activity (brushing our teeth, reading, eating a meal, taking a walk) and make it mindful
- The key is to focus on the activity, rather than letting the mind wander to other matters
- Start with Activities of Daily Living (e.g. eating, walking) and focus on the body’s moment-by-moment state of being

Tips to start mindfulness in our daily lives:

- 1. Mindful breathing:** Pay attention to the rise and fall of our chest during inhalation and exhalation. In moments of anger, frustration or stress, stop whatever you are doing and inhale and exhale 3 times, focusing on each breath. This helps to induce calmness and increase clarity of the mind, while lowering one’s blood pressure.
- 2. Mindful speech:** Bear these 3 questions in mind before speaking to refrain from careless speech:
Is the information true, is it necessary, is it kind?

Dr Noorhazlina Binte Ali

Senior Consultant,
Department of Geriatric Medicine,
Tan Tock Seng Hospital



The six foundational attitudes of mindfulness are:

- 1 Gratefulness** for the opportunities to care for others instead of being cared for
- 2 Acceptance** of the limited abilities and to seek help if needed
- 3 Non-judging** of oneself when mistakes are made
- 4 Kindness** in the words uttered to others
- 5 Letting go** of situations that are beyond one’s control
- 6 Focus on the positive** by showcasing one’s strengths and abilities



Access Useful Resources on Mindfulness



Audio-guided mindfulness practices
(Center for Mindfulness, University of California San Diego):
<https://medschool.ucsd.edu/som/fmph/research/mindfulness/programs/mindfulness-programs/MBSR-programs/Pages/audio.aspx>



Audio mindfulness sessions (Oxford Mindfulness Centre):
<https://www.oxfordmindfulness.org/learn-mindfulness/resources/>



Headspace for Mindfulness
<https://www.headspace.com/mindfulness/>

Spotlighting Our Hidden Heroes: Caring for Caregivers

The COVID pandemic has caused multiple disruptions to the provision of healthcare. Patients get their appointments converted to virtual consults, have operations postponed, and medication delivery became a norm; healthcare providers work doubly hard to contain the infectious fallout, while making continuous adjustments to their daily protocol.

A topic close to my heart, challenges faced by caregivers in informal healthcare settings — who are often untrained — commonly receive less attention. Many of these caregivers are family members of our patients who have to deal with increasing inconveniences and disruptions, on top of the impact of COVID on their own lives.

Budding efforts have been put together to support these caregivers while giving voice to the huge responsibility they take on. At Tan Tock Seng Hospital, we are motivated to provide targeted support for the physical and mental well-being of carers through programmes such as Carer Matters and CarersXPhysios. Furthermore, the Singapore Patient Conference 2021 featured caregiving journeys and invaluable tips shared by dedicated groups such as Caregivers Alliance, visit the website to hear more of these stories!

Building on this empowering premise, we present two uplifting features which I trust will bring a message of hope and encouragement for caregivers, and humbly seek your support in bridging the gap and strengthening the resilience of our caregiving peers.

Dr Tjan Soon Yin

Senior Consultant, Department
of Rehabilitation Medicine,
Tan Tock Seng Hospital
Co-chair for Singapore
Patient Conference



CarersXPhysios -
Tan Tock Seng Hospital



Sustainable Caregiving 101:
Caring For Myself and My Loved Ones



Singapore Patient Conference - SPC -
Let's CHAT! A Journey of Care



IT'S OK NOT TO BE OK: Caring for the Well-being of Caregivers

Often placing their loved ones’ interests above their own, caregivers risk neglecting their own needs, compromising their well-being in the long run. To address this, Asst Adj Prof Chan Ee Yuae, Assistant Director of Nursing at Tan Tock Seng Hospital (TTSH), established Carer Matters, Singapore’s first hospital to home framework for family caregivers to provide better care for family caregivers of older persons. This service is built off her earlier work on the stresses faced by caregivers of patients transitioning from hospital to community.¹⁻³ GPBuzz caught up with two caregiver support nurses from the team **Ms. Devon Chng, Senior Staff Nurse** and **Ms. Siti Aishah Samsudin, Senior Staff Nurse**. They shared their insights on risk factors for caregiver stress, common symptoms and how to mitigate them!



>>> Caregiver Support Nurses (L-R):
Nurse Clinician Ms. Lim Shi Ling,
Senior Staff Nurses Ms. Devon Chng and
Ms. Siti Aishah Samsudin

WHO IS THE “CAREGIVER”?

Contrary to common perception, “caregivers” are not only persons who care for the physical well-being of the care recipient, but also family members who are responsible for organising other aspects of the care needs, from medical, psychosocial, emotional to financial needs, etc.

CHALLENGES ON THE CAREGIVING JOURNEY

While caregiving can be a rewarding experience for some caregivers, “having to manage everything” and taking care of their loved one’s “physical, emotional, financial and spiritual needs” can take its toll on others, shared **Ms. Devon**.

Increasing isolation from society, a lack of support from family members, and non-compliance from the care recipient can exacerbate stress. In addition, new caregivers might have to adjust to the “role reversal” of looking after their loved ones. As illustrated by Ms. Devon, “For example, their mother has always been [the one] to care for her children, but when she falls sick, it is time for them to take up the care-giving role to care for her instead.”

Even for seasoned caregivers, insufficient rest, lack of quality sleep, changes in care recipient’s needs, and medical conditions, can negatively impact their own well-being and health. This can in turn affect the quality of care and support to the care recipient.

WARNING SIGNS OF BURNOUT & SEEKING HELP

Ms. Devon highlighted some physical and emotional signs of burnout, such as fatigue, a sense of indifference and helplessness. Furthermore, other less obvious signs might be present, such as a constant state of worry and anxiety over small details. These are just some signs that healthcare professionals and family members/friends can look out for when engaging with a caregiver.

According to **Ms. Devon**, the first step is to “recognise...and acknowledge [the symptoms], this will help them manage their caregiving and seek help when needed.” Finding time to do the things they enjoy and “prioritising me-time” is something seasoned caregivers advocate, while **Ms. Aishah** emphasised that caregivers should not feel ashamed to seek help, no matter how small the issue may be. She highlighted that there are many services available for caregivers to seek help from, including support groups, respite services and counselling, etc.).

It is natural for caregivers to experience a barrage of emotions! Here are some tips to share with them:

Exercise self-compassion – skip the judgement and avoid blaming self

Adjust expectations – accepting what is/is not within control

Set aside time to recharge and recover – do something enjoyable!

KNOWING THEY ARE NOT ALONE

Even though each caregiver’s journey is unique, joining relevant support groups can be helpful and insightful at any stage of caregiving, as one can pick up practical advice, new tips and knowledge, and gain emotional support by being part of a like-minded network.

Set up to empower caregivers, the TTSH Carer Matters platform offers a depository of resources for caregivers of older persons (e.g. avenues to turn to for support, navigation of the social and healthcare system, caregiver-related information, etc.). In addition, the initiative offers a range of caregiving programmes to equip caregivers with the knowledge and skills to confidently care for their loved ones.

¹ Chan EY, Glass G, Chua KC, Ali N, Lim WS. Relationship between Mastery and Caregiving Competence in Protecting against Burden, Anxiety and Depression among Caregivers of Frail Older Adults. *J Nutr Health Aging*. 2018;22(10):1238-1245.

² Chan EY, Phang KN, Glass GF Jr, Lim WS. Crossing, Trudging and Settling: A phenomenological inquiry into lived experience of Asian family caregivers of older persons with dementia. *Geriatr Nurs*. 2019 Sep-Oct;40(5):502-509.

³ Chan EY, Lim ZX, Ding YY, Chan YH, Lim WS. Development of a Brief Caregiver-centric Screening Tool to Identify Risk of Depression among Caregivers of Hospitalized Older Adults. *J Nutr Health Aging*. 2019;23(6):578-585.

Keen to find out more or make a referral to Carer Matters?

Visit Carer Matters website @ <https://tinyurl.com/ttshcarermatters> or scan the QR code for more information



Maintaining Love

In the Time of COVID

Creating opportunities for patients to connect with their loved ones amid pandemic restrictions is a mighty but meaningful challenge.

Dr Ho Lai Peng

Senior Principal Medical Social Worker, Department of Care & Counselling, National Centre for Infectious Diseases



Having a support network is not only beneficial to one’s health¹, but has also been shown to be helpful in chronic disease management². However, social distancing and restrictions to hospital visitor policies during the present COVID-19 pandemic—mandated to protect healthcare workers and elderly patients most vulnerable to effects of infection — have also restricted social support, confounding patients’ sense of loneliness and social isolation.

This was keenly felt for some of our isolated elderly patients at National Centre for Infectious Diseases (NCID), who were undergoing recovery in an unfamiliar environment without loved ones’ support, since most lacked tech-savviness, while others had dementia, or were non-communicative due to either existing conditions or intubation.

Along with other healthcare workers, medical social workers (MSWs) helped to bridge the gap by acting as surrogate caregivers to facilitate virtual contact between patients and their families. Though no replacement for physical connections, video calls provided an invaluable avenue for families to “see” their loved ones, and allowed loving goodbyes to be conveyed to dying patients in their final moments.

Meaningful connections were also expressed through food, handwritten notes, photos and even soft toys; as an exception to the case, MSWs helped receive food from relatives for patients in extreme distress — a patient who had lost his wife to COVID-19 and was disallowed visits got much comfort on receiving home-cooked dishes from his children. Another patient who was terminally ill was brought home-baked cakes and cookies during the festive season, which was especially significant since cooking and baking were their family tradition.

However advanced, technology is no replacement for physical connections and in certain situations, patients and their families were allowed to meet physically.



Husband saying goodbye to his wife in the intensive care unit. This patient was granted permission to visit his dying wife as they were both infected. Despite the tight manpower situation, the medical, nursing and MSW teams made the visit possible, and facilitated closure for him and his family in trying circumstances.

¹ Leigh-Hunt, N., Bagguley, D., Bash, K., Turner, V., Turnbull, S., Valtorta, N., & Caan, W. (2017). An overview of systematic reviews on the public health consequences of social isolation and loneliness. *Public Health*, 152, 157-171. doi:https://doi.org/10.1016/j.puhe.2017.07.035


² House, J. S., Landis, K. R., & Umberson, D. (1988). Social relationships and health. *Science*, 241(4865), 540-545. doi:10.1126/science.3399889

HELPLINES & SUPPORT

Reach out for help for yourself or anyone whom you know that needs help.

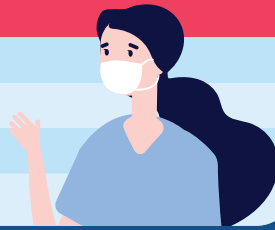
Helplines

Institute of Mental Health (IMH) Helpline	6389-2222	24 hours
Samaritans of Singapore (SOS)	1800-221-4444 / 1-767	24 hours
National Care Hotline	1800-202-6868	Mon - Sun: 8am - 12mn
Brahm Centre Assistline	6655-0000 and 8823-0000 (WhatsApp available)	Mon - Sun: 9am - 10.30pm




Counselling Support for Adults

TOUCHline	1800-377-2252	Mon - Fri: 9am - 6pm
Care Corner Counselling Hotline (Mandarin)	1800-353-5800	Mon - Sun: 10am - 10pm
Singapore Association for Mental Health	1800-283-7019	Mon - Fri: 9am - 6pm
Silver Ribbon Singapore	6386-1928	Mon - Fri: 9am - 5pm




Support for Seniors

Agency for Integrated Care Hotline For ageing, caregiving and mental health related support	1800-650-6060	Mon - Fri: 8.30am - 8.30pm Sat: 8.30am - 4.00pm
The Seniors Helpline [By SAGE Counselling Centre]	1800-555-5555	Mon - Fri: 9am - 7pm Sat: 9am - 1pm
CareLine [By Changi General Hospital]	6340-7054	24 hours




Counselling Support for Children/Youths

Tinkle Friend Helpline	1800-274-4788	Mon - Fri: 2.30pm - 7pm
Community Health Assessment Team	6493-6500/1 and www.chat.mentalhealth.sg	




Support for Persons Struggling with Addiction

WE CARE Community Services	6547-5459	Mon - Fri: 10am - 7pm
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Support for Family Violence

National Anti-Violence Helpline (NAVH)	1800-777-0000	Daily: 24 hours
PAVE Integrated Services for Individual and Family Protection Specialist Centre	6555-0390	Mon - Fri: 9am - 6pm
TRANS SAFE Centre	6449-9088	Mon - Fri: 9am - 5pm
Care Corner (Project StART)	6476-1482	Mon - Fri: 10am - 5pm
Big Love Child Protection Specialist Centre	6445-0400	Mon - Fri: 9am - 6pm
HEART@Fei Yue Child Protection Specialist Centre	6819-9170	Mon - Fri: 9.30am - 5.30pm



Counselling Support for Caregivers

Caregiver Alliance Limited	6460-4400	Mon - Fri: 9am - 6pm
AIC Caregiver Support	1800-650-6060	Mon - Fri: 8.30am - 8.30pm Sat: 8.30am - 4pm
Dementia Singapore (formerly known as ADA Caregivers)	6377 0700	Mon - Fri: 9am - 6pm Sat: 9am - 1pm



ONLINE RESOURCES

mindline.sg

[My Mental Health: stayprepared.sg/mymentalhealth](http://MyMentalHealth:stayprepared.sg/mymentalhealth)

[Fei Yue's Online Counselling Service: eC2.sg](http://FeiYue'sOnlineCounsellingService:eC2.sg)



Coping with COVID-19 Curveballs: View From a General Practitioner

Primary care clinics are often patients' first point of contact with the healthcare industry, from ailments to minor emergencies. During the ever-evolving pandemic, GPs faced the challenge of abiding by strict health protocols while addressing patient needs. We spoke to the friendly Dr Goh Sze Yi, who shared how he handled stressors and learnt to practise self-care so he could take better care of his patients!

Dr Goh Sze Yi,
General Practitioner,
Prudence Family Clinic



Q1 Hi, Dr Goh! Please share more about yourself and your practising clinic.

Hello! I work at Prudence Family Clinic in Bishan. We are a GP partner with TTSH Community Right-Siting Programme (CRISP), a partner with Institute of Mental Health's GP programme, and a Public Health Preparedness Clinic (PHPC). My interests are in preventive medicine, men's health and mental health.

Q2 Are there any changing trend(s) in the residents' needs that you've observed, as a result of the prolonged COVID-19 pandemic?

I see less demand for travel-related vaccines and medicine, alongside more interest in and awareness of vaccines, particularly pneumonia and flu vaccines. I also noticed a small increase in patients who come to us because they are worried about going to the general hospitals or because their hospital appointments got pushed back due to reduced capacity. There was plenty of disruption when the pandemic started, but usual health care needs like acute care, chronic care and health screening are largely back to normal.

Q3 How has the COVID-19 pandemic changed your clinic's practice and care for patients?

I think one of the biggest changes is the wearing of masks and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), which takes away a little bit of that personal touch. Workflow has to be modified to isolate patients with fever or respiratory symptoms, and turn-around time for patients is also slower on average because of the pandemic measures, like changing of gowns or wiping down after seeing patients with respiratory symptoms or fever. Another area where I see changes is the proportion of patients asking for phone or email reviews after their tests or scans, probably to avoid unnecessary trips down to the clinic. But overall, I think we have largely been able to maintain the same level of care for our patients.

Q4 What were the common stressors faced by you and your clinic staff before/after the onset of the pandemic? Were the latter challenges contributed by constantly-changing protocols, or patients' worries about their health?

The challenges we faced changed as the pandemic progressed. In the beginning, there was a lot of uncertainty about the virus, especially over stocks of masks and PPE. We were also worried if we were doing enough to protect our patients and ourselves. Subsequently, the constantly changing protocols was a definite pain. It was a struggle and a constant worry to keep updated on the latest protocol; patients and staff were confused and frustrated. Sometimes, the patients will even take their frustration out on the staff. Like the rest of the nation, the prolonged restrictions on socialising, and the worries over the health of our families added on to our stress.

Q5 How did you cope with these stressors? How can you encourage other GPs/clinic staff/healthcare workers to speak up/discuss these stressors/symptoms of burnout so they can care better for themselves?

Even in this more enlightened day and age, there is still a stigma with burnout amongst healthcare workers. It's as if acknowledging the stress or fatigue equates to some weakness in our resolve, or a wavering in the commitment to our work. I really enjoy my work - but I also believe in self-care before we can take care of our patients properly; and the first step to dealing with stress or burnout is to acknowledge its existence! When I felt myself being on edge more frequently, I scheduled additional clinic closures and shortened the clinic hours to give myself more me-time and family time. For relaxation, I run several times a week, indulge in an occasional glass of wine and binge on Netflix. It is also important to have sufficient sleep. Coincidentally, there's an article in the October edition of SMA News by Dr Chris Tan from IMH, which mentions the 7 types of self-care - physical, emotional, spiritual, intellectual, social, relational and safety/security. I recommend everyone to have a read!

Q6 In your opinion, how can better emotional self-management help GPs in interpersonal doctor-patient relationships, and in turn, translate into better patient health outcomes?

Managing stress and avoiding burnout is essential. When we are emotionally well taken care of, we are more engaged with our patients, we listen and focus better, think more clearly, and are less likely to make mistakes.

Q7 As Singapore heads towards an endemic approach to COVID-19, what do you think are some of the potential challenges that GP clinics will face and how best can they be managed?

The pandemic amplified some of the trends that took root before it. For instance, telemedicine and online shopping for medication will likely be more prevalent. While hospitals and medical groups can pool resources and come up with their own ecosystem for video consultation, medicine delivery, and even an online marketplace for drugs and supplements, the solo GPs will have to fend for themselves as the potential patient pool shrinks.

For those who are unable to join the telemedicine bandwagon, joining a Primary Care Network (PCN) is a good start! PCN can provide support to the GP on both personal and professional levels. Beyond that, GPs can also benefit from more training and experience in their area(s) of interest and serve as 'pseudo-specialists' in these areas. This will hopefully ease the load of hospital specialists, and in turn further value-add to our patient care!

Breathing to De-Stress:

Techniques to Help You Keep Your Cool in Any Situation

Not just an automatic process, breathing can also be a mindfulness tool to help combat stress and anxiety!

By Valerie Wang

Senior Psychologist,
Department of
Psychology,
Tan Tock Seng
Hospital



“Relax and take a deep breath...”

Sounds familiar? This advice is often heard when trying to calm someone feeling angry, anxious, or stressed. Despite its well-meaning intention, the simple action is often easier said than done, especially when that someone is emotionally charged. Instead, many would end up doing chest breathing — taking in rapid, shallow breaths, which can make you feel worse!

Recall a time when you felt relaxed. Was your breathing slower and deeper? Known as diaphragmatic or deep breathing, this helps to fill your lungs with air, and signals your mind and body to relax. While breathing is usually an automatic and subconscious process, paying attention to how you breathe can help bring those stress levels down!

Diaphragmatic breathing exercise is not only effective, it is also easy to learn, and can be done whenever you like.

Here's how to do it:

Find a comfortable and quiet place to sit or lie down.



Take a deep breath through your nose, feel your abdomen expand, and exhale slowly through your mouth in a steady rhythm. Repeat.

Close your eyes or gaze downwards. If you feel distracted, count slowly (one word per second) in your head (“in...two...three...four...pause... out...two...three... four...pause...”) to ground yourself in the moment.

Remember, while diaphragmatic breathing exercise is easy to learn, mastering it requires consistent practice. Here are some ways to incorporate diaphragmatic breathing into your daily routine:



Begin with just 5 minutes a day, and practise at a time when you are not likely to be distracted (e.g. before bedtime)



Set phone reminders to do it multiple times a day



Play some soothing background music to make it more enjoyable



As you get better with time, you will be able to use it to relax easily, whenever you are in distress

Finally, practice makes perfect!

Healthy & Huat-derful Fortune Cabbage Stew (serves 8)

Nutrition Facts (per ½ cup serving)

Calories (kcal)	105
Protein (g)	4.8
Total fat (g)	2.7
Total carbohydrates (g)	12.8
Dietary fibre (g)	1.8
Sugar (g)	2.3
Sodium (mg)	307

Ingredients:

- 1 medium head (500-600g) of Chinese cabbage (wombok/napa cabbage)
- 12 small (~70g) Chinese mushrooms (xiang gu)
- 50g glass noodles (tang hoon)
- 1 packet (100g) of dried beancurd stick (fu chok)
- 1 tbsp of vegetable oil (e.g. sunflower, canola)
- 1 tbsp of low sodium soya sauce
- 1 tbsp of oyster sauce
- ½ tsp of salt
- 1 tbsp of corn starch or potato starch
- 500ml water
- 2 tbsp of goji berries (for garnishing)
- Parsley (for garnishing)

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Directions:

- Soak Chinese mushrooms in room temperature water for at least 2 hours, or until soft. Squeeze out the water and cut off the stem. Retain the mushroom water.
- Soak beancurd stick in water to soften, then cut into 3-5cm long pieces.
- Soak glass noodles in water for 5 minutes, then strain from the water and set aside.
- Cut the Chinese cabbage into pieces 3-5cm long.
- Add the vegetable oil into a heated wok.
- Stir fry the softened mushrooms for 2 minutes, strain from the oil and transfer into a deep pot.
- Add soya sauce to the mushrooms.
- Add softened beancurd stick into the pot.
- Stir-fry the cabbage for 3-5 minutes with the remaining oil in the wok, then add to the pot.
- Rinse dried goji berries and add to pot.
- Add water to pot and bring to boil.
- Turn the heat down to a simmer, and continue until the vegetables are soft (~20 minutes).
- Bring some water to boil and cook glass noodles for 1-2 minutes, until soft. Then add to the pot.
- Season with oyster sauce and salt to taste.
- Mix corn starch/potato starch with 2 tbsp of water until dissolved, immediately pour into the pot.
- Stir and allow to thicken, top with garnishes as desired. Serve hot.



4 Steps to a Healthier You this Chinese New Year

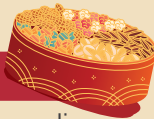


1. Maintain balanced and healthy meals



Make an effort to have a balanced meal with plenty of vegetables. Fibre promotes a feeling of fullness, which can help to manage any hunger pangs. Thus, do have at least half your plate filled with vegetables! Limit your choices of fried foods and choose those prepared through healthier cooking methods (e.g. steaming, baking, boiling).

2. Practise mindfulness as you eat



There are a myriad of snacks and goodies this time of the year. Take your time to savour each bite – there is no rush! Are you still enjoying the rich flavours? Give your body 5 minutes to decide if you really want that next helping of food. Setting aside portions of snacks rather than eating them out of the box can also help you to be mindful of how much you are having.

3. Stay hydrated and choose your drinks wisely



Sugar-sweetened drinks and alcoholic beverages often come packed with calories, which can add up quickly. Alcohol should be limited to 1 standard drink per day for women, and 2 standard drinks per day for men. A standard drink is defined as a can (330ml) of beer, half a glass (100ml) of wine, or a shot (30ml) of spirit. Aim for 8 cups of water daily, or choose no-calorie options such as unsweetened tea, sugar-free soft drinks, or sparkling water.

4. Keep moving



Even with multiple visitations over this busy period, remember to stay active! Whether that means going for a bicycle ride, playing frisbee, or taking the stairs instead of the lifts, keeping active remains an important part of preserving your health. The Health Promotion Board recommends a goal of 150 minutes of moderate-intensity activity per week.

Flip open for a healthy festive recipe!

3 Steps for referring patients to TTSH

Here's a comprehensive chart listing the steps to refer non-subsidised patients and patients under the Community Health Assist Scheme (CHAS) to Tan Tock Seng Hospital (TTSH).



*To ensure that your patients are seen promptly at TTSH, triaging may be conducted by our staff. Our staff will get back to you with an appointment date within 3 to 5 working days.

**Please retain a copy of the documents for reference purpose.

We thank you for your kind understanding.