

Caregiver's Village – an online resource of care and support for caregivers

None of us had ever imagined a disruption to life in Singapore as major as those of COVID-19 with its circuit breaker period.

The pandemic started off disrupting daily meetings at work, amongst teams and externally - with clients and community partners. Eventually, our counselling team adjusted from making face-to-face sessions to phone or video sessions with our elder clients, caregivers and partnering agencies. We also have to work doubly hard to ensure them of the provision of continual support and assistance needed by clients. The pandemic also triggered more anxieties for some of our clients – which we are eager to understand, and to share with other caregivers and care teams.

The experience has been bitter-sweet for caregivers. The advice for all to stay home means that some would not be able to get physical support from their relatives, friends and neighbours. For those who have to work from home, they have to juggle between work and longer dedicated hours of caring for their loved ones, taking a toll on their physical and/or emotional well-being.

On the other hand, some caregivers had surprised us with creativity and adaptability during this extraordinary times, be it developing stronger motivation for self-care, e.g. inserting a daily 15-minute coffee + radio break; to simplifying the caregiving routine, e.g. appointing other family members to make online purchases and relieving each other's workload using technology, they are truly displaying the spirit of 'THRIVING'!

Their can-do spirit is contagious and has encouraged us to kick-start an online **Caregiving** resource space where we hope will reach out to caregivers under our care and potentially, a wider online audience who are caring for their elder family members. And we fondly call this a Caregiver's Village.

At Hua Mei Counselling and Coaching, we firmly believe that:

- Caregiving is not a one-man show. It takes a village to bring up a child and likewise, to care for our elders too
- Caregiving can be a positive experience and a catalyst for personal growth and better bonding with family especially with our elders
- Caregivers can reap many benefits such as developing kindness and acquiring knowledge
- Every caregiver has the potential to be the best they can be while caring for their elders and themselves

By creating this virtual Caregiver's Village, we hope to be able to support you through (1) sharing experiences and practical tips, (2) facilitating awareness of CAREGIVING and being a CAREGIVER, and last but not least, (3) keeping alive the spirit of positivity and hope through your caregiving journey.

Our team of counsellors and community-based eldercare professionals will be putting together a library of content including audio visual and written material, covering topics ranging from relaxation exercises to inspiring stories of caregiving. Live interactive sessions are also in the pipeline.

COVID-19 pandemic has been a catalyst for change on how we live, work, play and more importantly, how to keep ourselves and our loved ones healthy and safe. We hope this new 'village of care and support' will help you to create positive changes for your elders and loved ones.

From the Hua Mei Counselling and Coaching team,
Tsao Foundation