

# INCANDESCENT

TRI-ANNUAL NEWSLETTER OF



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Dec 2017

## 'IT'S THE MOST *wonderful time* OF THE YEAR'

Doesn't this tune ring in your ear the entire month? Well, it is perhaps the month we all wind down (but wine up), take stock and stockings, but all of us will somehow prepare for the next year. Some wiser ones will talk about resolutions, others talk scores... things we have done, not done, or had been done to us.

This issue of Incandescent casts the spotlight on forgiveness. How timely would it be when people gather that we can make decisions to let go of something that actually might cost more keeping? How about some emotional stocktake so that we enter 2018 less encumbered by events of the past?

This edition also gives you a peek into EMCC's 2017, highlighting some notable events, talk about some meaningful developments and excite you about how you can be involved in our Marriage Workshops.

2017 has been a year of ups and downs in EMCC, our work has grown, the team has grown. We look forward to serving our community with a deepened conviction and a quiet confidence that the impact we make is eternal. We invite you to continually be on this journey alongside us.

From all at EMCC, allow me to wish you and your loved ones a Blessed Christmas, and a Happy 2018!



Lai Mun Loon  
Head Professional Services  
EMCC





# WHAT IS FORGIVENESS AND SELF-FORGIVENESS?

The countdown to 2018 is approaching faster than we expect, each year feeling shorter than the previous. The new year comes with endless possibilities and opportunities; but how do we usher in the new year to embrace all these potential? In this Christmas issue of Incandescent, we address issues that make us prisoners of the past, stingy and even bitter. Yes, we are talking about forgiveness, and how the lack of it makes us the Prisoner of our emotional Azkaban.

## What Is Forgiveness and Self-Forgiveness

We have all experienced an emotional injury, intentional or accidental; the pain and humiliation caused by the offending party births a grudge we carry.

We spoke with our counsellors to learn more about the anatomy of forgiveness. Rachel Chan and Diana Chandra provided us a glimpse of how forgiveness is defined – ‘a conscious, deliberate decision to surrender the right to hurt those who had hurt you, to release feelings of resentment or vengeance towards a person or group who has harmed you, regardless of whether they actually deserve your forgiveness.’ Revenge is an age-old principle or ‘right’ of the repayment of evil for evil, but when you forgive, you give that right up. In other words, forgiveness is the giving up of our rights to be vindictive when hurt.

If it sounds so simple, then why does it seem so hard? We soldier on.

Let’s start by dispelling some myths about forgiveness, and perhaps unforgiveness.

Firstly, people think forgiveness is done for the offender’s sake. By not releasing forgiveness we hope to bind the other party to the guilt of the offence, but that is furthest from the truth. The offender may be unaware that they have done something wrong and/or may have already moved on. Bearing that grudge or unforgiveness is to carry someone else’s mistake, and enduring emotions of sadness, anger, pain and even bitterness.

Secondly, people confuse forgiveness with reconciliation; that when they forgive they must forget and immediately return to being friends. Forgiveness is not reconciliation. Reconciliation requires that both parties agree to mend the relationship and this may not be what you intend.

According to Tan Ying Shi, EMCC's Mediator, unforgiveness impairs sound decision-making. The unforgiving person will find it difficult to mediate in a conflict. Issues of fairness and sustainability becomes subjective, and parties end up having shifty positions in their negotiation, because often, one party is too consumed by the hurt endured. For the unforgiving person, mediation becomes a zero-sum game where the adversary is very real and the contest is still on. There will never be a place of good enough as long as the needs of another party are accommodated. However, when we see disputant on the path of forgiveness, we also see settlement being more forthcoming, and adherence to the agreement more intentional. In a divorce mediation, while it has happened before, forgiveness rarely results in the couple abandoning the divorce process and reconciling. It underscores the difference between forgiveness and reconciliation; that we can be friendly, but not necessarily become best friends with each other again.

We have dealt briefly with forgiving someone else. Let's move on to something a little more challenging - the issue of self-forgiveness.

Self-forgiveness is our ability to forgive ourselves for mistakes that cause us to feel guilt and shame. Some examples are like when a marriage ends in divorce, many feel a deep sense of self-condemnation and shame, or parents who unintentionally hurt their children through excessive punishment may find it hard to forgive themselves.

Shame and guilt are very similar – both experiences stem from disappointment and feeling a sense of condemnation about ourselves. While guilt occurs when we feel bad about something we did or did not do, shame is guilt on steroids. It is self-blame and feeling of unworthiness that results from what we committed or omitted.

The struggles with self-forgiveness is well documented. Psychological issues like eating disorders, depression and even substance abuse can be prevented when people are able to start forgiving themselves. When you forgive yourself, you begin the healing from layers of shame and are more willing to make positive adjustments to your behaviour. This pro-social behaviour, ripples into other relationships of our lives, impacting our family, colleagues and anyone interacting with us. More importantly, your emotions, esteem and outlook see an upswing.

The theme of forgiveness is always hard to dissect, but often a topic of discussion. You would be surprised by how many conversations we hold daily just talking about a grudge we bore, or an annoyance that never goes away. Not every irritation or annoyance is an issue about forgiveness, but many of them stems from hurts that we hope time would heal.

Marianne Williamson famously said 'unforgiveness is like drinking poison yourself and waiting for the other person to die'. So true, isn't it?



### *Advice from our counsellors and mediators...*

- 1 All of us make mistakes, it is okay to let ourselves off the hook
- 2 Have compassion for yourself and others, forgive yourself and others
- 3 Take responsibility for your actions and make amends such as apologizing to parties you have hurt wherever possible.
- 4 Speak with a professional if you are finding yourself becoming cynical, contemptuous or bitter about people, incidents or objects that may trigger you in an unexplainable manner.

# MARRIAGE CLOSURE THERAPY



A divorce is an extremely emotionally traumatising experience. Emotions of loss, grief and even a sense of abandonment are often masked by deep feelings of anger, hurt and resentment.

In 2015, EMCC embarked on the development and deployment, where appropriate, of Marriage Closure Therapy (MCT), a therapeutic intervention that sought to address the myriad of emotional stresses experienced by divorcing couples, by helping to facilitate the termination of an intimate but broken relationship in a manner that respects the dignity, deliberations and now decisions of parties.

MCT was created to assist couples in their personal transition pre- and post- divorce, deal with as much acrimony as possible, as well as help make the process of divorce less stressful for all parties - especially for the children.

Thus, the goals of MCT are firstly to help couples find closure by facilitating their discussions and managing their emotions. Blame is inevitable in a breaking down marriage, but when couples take ownership of their contributions and responsibilities, they begin working through their own hurt and grief as well. When blame and shame are addressed appropriately and adequately, couples are more ready to embrace a different relationship in the future together.

Secondly, MCT is a safe, non-judgement platform that helps divorcing parties understand how they each contributed to the breakdown of the marriage, and an opportunity to take responsibility for it. This brings us back to an earlier discussion about forgiveness and reconciliation. Couples rarely find themselves reconciling, but forgiving each other. By accepting and recognising each other's contribution to the fall of the relationship, MCT helps remove the blame sting in the divorce couples, by dealing with it, and then allow couples to move forward and focus their attention on carrying out co-parenting responsibilities in a more amicable way.

Third, an important goal of MCT is to help couples establish clear boundaries in their new roles (as ex-spouses, but parents of the same children) and to establish co-parenting outcomes collaboratively. Indeed, the bearing the child's best interests at heart, in dealing with parent's hurts. Through MCT, we hope that couples will work through their issues without triangulating their children and accidentally use the children's well-being and future as bargaining chips, but to form a collaborative, respectful and meaningful relationship that is able to raise their children with the best outcomes for the child.

Finally, the child. MCT provides a platform for parents to discuss, or even break the news of their divorce to the child in the presence of a counsellor. This facilitated process by the counsellor gives all parties affected by

the decision, an opportunity to talk openly about how they feel, their fears or even their pain. A counsellor works through the discussion with the family, and help emotionally and psychologically prepare the family for what is to come.

It started as a novel idea, whose results has been encouraging at both counselling and mediation, where couples while not being able to save their marriages, do not destroy their families as a result of a broken marriage.

The pain of a divorce is immeasurable. The same can be said of a miserable marriage. The loneliness, fears and angers in a divorce must be mitigated by the necessary emotional closure so that our children will not inherit a legacy of pain they did not choose.

## MILESTONES

MONTH	EVENT	DEPARTMENT
January	Collaboration with Dr Daryl Chow to run for the first time a one day FIT* workshop for National University of Singapore (NUS) Counselling Team	Counselling
February	FIT Preview to prepare potential applicants for the upcoming FIT workshop by Dr Daryl Chow in April	Counselling
	We were conferred the Registered Service Provider status in 2017 by Singapore International Mediation Institute (SIMI)	Mediation
April	Running of second FIT Workshop	Counselling
Aug -Sept	Gottman Workshop: A) increased demand for second run of Level 1 and Level 2 Workshop. B) Introduction of Level 3, which is for professionals who have undergone L1 and 2 and have been practising Gottman method for a time, fine tuning their skills under the supervision of former Clinical Director of the Gottman Institute, Dave penner	Marriage Journey and Training & Education
November	Ran first FIT Implementation Consultation for Care Corner FSC at Care Corner (Admiralty)	Counselling
General	Growth of Marriage Closure Therapy First time having Chartered runs of 7PP	Counselling Marriage Journey and Training & Education

\*FIT – Feedback Informed Treatment

## BECOMING A REGISTERED SERVICE PROVIDER

EMCC was registered as service provider with the Singapore International Mediation Institute (SIMI) in February 2017. This Accreditation makes us a Designated Mediation Service Provider for the purposes of the Mediation Act.

The Mediation Act 2017 came into force on 1 November 2017 and sets a legislative framework for mediation in Singapore. Among the changes, the new mediation act notably allows parties involved in a mediation administered by a designated mediation service provider or conducted by a certified mediator to apply to court to have their mediation agreement recorded and enforced as a court order. This contrasts the earlier regime where mediated settlement agreements are enforceable only by suing in contract or if the dispute had already been before the courts.

EMCC is glad to be participant in such exciting developments and time for the Mediation landscape in Singapore.

## INTRODUCTION OF CHARTERED RUNS FOR SEVEN PRINCIPLES PROGRAMME



Have you ever wonder what actually makes marriage work? Is it true that opposites attract? Are Men really from Mars and Women from Venus? Can two very different people stay married for life?

Our Seven Principles Programme (7PP) seeks to answer some of these questions. The programme is designed to help strengthen relationships by enhancing Marital Friendships, Managing Conflicts and creating Shared Meaning for couples..

Over the years, we have conducted these workshops in-house, but realised that it would be excellent to expand the reach further by providing chartered runs for organised groups who may be interested in benefitting their members' marriages.

This year, EMCC ran four such workshops for various groups in the community, two of which were conducted for marriage

mentors. The late Mr. David Kan, Manager for Marriage Journey and Mr. Lai Mun Loon, Head of Professional Services (EMCC) anchored these runs, along with our associates and other staff members.

2018 slots are available for chartered runs for any groups of married people, if you are keen to bring together a group of people who want to enrich and nourish their marriages, and want a robust, evidence-based, scientifically-designed programme, we invite to book as soon as possible.

*If you would like to find out more about our 7PP workshops, please visit our website at [www.emcc.org.sg](http://www.emcc.org.sg). If you would like to work with us to hold chartered runs at your organisation, please contact [parcsen@emcc.org.sg](mailto:parcsen@emcc.org.sg). Limited Slots Available.*



## DONATION APPEAL

As the year draws down, and the curtains fall on an exhilarating 2017, we are thankful. We would not have come so far without your support, and are extremely grateful for it. Our supporters, partners, donors and friends have always been the bedrock of encouragement that keeps us going on – the mission to impact lives and more.

2018 is no different, and work plans are in place to help more people, more effectively. EMCC needs to raise \$200,000 this year to fund initiatives and projects in the coming year. Your gift will allow us to ensure our services remain accessible to the people who needs it, but no means to elsewhere – a commitment who hold sacrosanct to. Entering the next year with good financial standing will also enable us to put up more beneficial programmes and campaigns that will educate and impact the public at large on issues of psychological, emotional issues as well as dispute resolution resources. We have recognised that many need help, and need to know they do, and where to find it – we want to continue to stand in that gap.

As EMCC is an Institute of Public Character (IPC), all donations will enjoy a 250% tax deduction. We urge you to give and ensure that cheques come in before the 28th of December 2017 to enjoy tax deductions for 2018.

Allow me to wish you, all at home, and everyone you love a Blessed Christmas, and a Happy New Year.



Mr Lai Mun Loon, Head Professional Services

## YOUR SUPPORT MATTERS

This year, we will require \$470,000 to support our work in helping couples and families in crisis, through our integrative counselling and mediation services. We are constantly on the lookout for people who share the same passion as us and want to contribute in a tangible way.

If you would like to make a one-time or monthly donation, kindly fill up the form below and mail it back to us

### 1. CHEQUE

Please make your crossed cheque payable to "EMCC", indicate your full name, NRIC and contact details at the back of the cheque (for tax-deductible receipt), and mail it to our address.

### 2. ONLINE

Please go to <http://www.giving.sg/EMCC> and follow the instructions there.

## DONATION FORM

Title: Dr / Mr / Mrs / Mdm/ Ms \_\_\_\_\_

First Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_

NRIC/FIN/UEN No: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

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Yes, I would like to donate based on the following arrangement: (Please tick to select an option)

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I like to donate: (Please tick only 1 option)

S\$25  S\$50  S\$100  S\$200  S\$500  S\$\_\_\_\_\_ (Please fill in the amount)

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(Please note that for each successful deduction, a partial bank processing fee of \$0.80 will be charged to your account.)

### DONOR SIGNATURE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I understand that by signing this Direct Debit Authorisation, I have read and understood the Terms and Conditions governing this authorisation as reflected overleaf. I also agree that my particulars can be used by EMCC (Eagles Mediation & Counselling Centre) and its appointed partners for the purpose of administration of this donation.

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Donor's signature as in bank record

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Singapore 179030

Please fold along dotted area and seal securely before posting

### **TERMS AND CONDITIONS**

#### **DEAR DONOR,**

Your commitment and support of EMCC through a regular donation will assist us in our mission to provide care and hope to the many families struggling to overcome difficulties and pain.

Please note that your full donation will be received directly by Eagles Mediation and Counselling Centre

#### **DEDUCTION FREQUENCY**

The first deduction will be made within 3 working days for credit cards and a month for GIRO upon signing of this Authorisation Form. Subsequently, your account will be debited in accordance with the frequency that you have chosen overleaf (Monthly/Half-yearly/Annually). On the 15th of every month, we will deduct your authorised donation. For unsuccessful transactions there will be a retry on the 28th of every month.

#### **TAX-DEDUCTIBLE RECEIPT**

You will receive your tax-deductible receipt at the beginning of every calendar year from us for all donations received in the previous calendar year. Monthly receipts will not be provided for your deductions. Please refer to your credit card statements from your issuing bank for confirmation of deductions made.

#### **CASH DONATIONS**

Those who wish to make a separate cash donation can contact EMCC at Tel 6788 8220 or email reachus@emcc.org.sg for details.

#### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

We will keep all information (i) name, gender, nationality, date of birth; (ii) email address, postal address, telephone numbers; (iii) credit card number and expiry

date in this Direct Debit Donor Programme confidential. This Programme adheres to a very strict policy regarding donor privacy. We will use this information in order to: (i) administer your accounts with us; (ii) process donations made by you, orders or applications submitted by you; (iii) send you information and calling you in regards about our events, programmes, fund raising, products and services; (iv) verify your identity; (v) carry out donor profile analysis; and (vi) contact the winners of our competitions (if any) and to help us plan other fund raising and/or promotional activity. No information, in whole or in part, in its paper or electronic format, will be disclosed, used, modified or reproduced for any other person of organization, except in connection with these purposes stated.

Once again, thank you for your time and generosity in supporting EMCC.