



March and April had been a hectic period for training staff of EMCC(Eagles Mediation & Counselling Centre) who ran Father-Teen Conflict Resolution and Peer Mediation workshops in several schools across Singapore. Our counselling staff and associates were busy handling in-centre cases for troubled Singaporeans and on-site school counselling for at-risk students. Meanwhile, our mediation department provided mediation services for disputing family members.

Marital counselling helps stall a quick divorce

Does counselling help when you're planning to get a divorce? For Mrs. Wong* (pseudonym used to protect identity), the counselling process helps her to calm down and reaffirm the need to minimize the impact of divorce on her children and even to consider reconciliation.

After years of difficulty in their marriage, Mrs Wong was ready to give up her marriage when she discovered that her husband had an affair while overseas. She was persuaded to come to EMCC for counselling and agreed partly because she saw the impact of her parents' divorce on her younger brother.

Patiently, Mrs Wong went through several sessions, after which she started taking a different position. Her husband came for counselling too and soon their relationship did not look as bleak.

EMCC's counsellor worked with Mr and Mrs Wong to help them speak from their hearts and share their struggles. The couple learnt to communicate better and show care for each other. They also found common ground and values in the love for their children and joy of being good parents.

For now, the family remains intact while EMCC's counsellor works with the couple as repairing an intimate and trusting relationship can be a long process.

Such counselling is important in Singapore as more couples today face marital problems. There are at least 20 divorces a day in Singapore (7,604 divorces in 2011) and annually, about 7,300 children below the age of 21 years are affected by the divorces of their parents.

Assuming the fathering role with courage and confidence

On the 2nd March 2013, 20 men at



Damai Primary School committed themselves to a journey of responsible fathering. They attended the Father-Teen Conflict Resolution Workshop conducted by EMCC in partnership with Dads forLife and Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF).

Some of the participants were uncles and caregivers wanting to provide the same kind of father figure to their

nephews and nieces.

“It was an eye opener,” said a participant after the workshop. “Indeed (it) made me realize who am I and how I can improve as a father.”

The fathers enjoyed themselves throughout the workshop as they watched videos and played games with object lessons. Most importantly, their courage and confidence grew as they learnt the importance of handling conflicts and the straining effects conflicts could have on the father-child relationship. They shared their struggles and hopes they had for their children, some sharing for the first time and others as the more experienced ones.

With the understanding that conflicts often arise in families and parents tend to react rather than respond, EMCC is committed to helping parents learn about conflicts and teaching them to identify them before they escalate into something more serious.

Profile: Vincent Sim, father of two

Mr Vincent Sim is your ordinary working father who struggles to manage two boys in his home. Like most working Singaporeans, he finds balancing work and family a struggle. To ensure his children feel love and supported in their learning in school, he takes turns with his wife to spend time in the weekday evenings to chat with his children.

A previous participant in an EMCC Father-Teen Conflict Resolution workshop, Mr Sim believes a father’s role is to provide an immediate role model for his children and impart values to them. A father is a friend to his children, sharing their interests and problems. When he attended the EMCC workshop, Mr Sim brought along his young son who was delighted to join the class. This helped them to bond.

Mr Sim emphasizes the importance of showing love to children as they will reciprocate that love shown to those around them. To manage conflicts in families, parents should manage expectations of children and know how to negotiate and communicate for a balance.



To cope with being a father in today's high-stress society, Mr Sim gets support from his spouse, colleagues and even friends. He realizes that by sharing his problems and bringing them up for discussion he feels better after letting off some "steam".

On the EMCC workshop he attended, Mr Sim said that such a workshop helped fathers like him to recognise, discuss and acknowledge the different approaches that they should adopt with their children to enhance their roles. He sees room for community involvement projects starting at primary schools for all fathers to come together with their children to support school or community events.

Students learn how to manage conflicts

Helping friends to resolve their problems when they fight was one of the skills student leaders learnt from the CMC-EMCC peer mediation workshops conducted for four schools in March. The interactive workshops to teach life skills in conflict resolution through mediation were attended by four groups totalling 100 students -- St. Joseph's Institution (March 15), School of Science and Technology (March 18), East Spring Secondary School (March 20) and Bedok South Secondary School (March 21).



The students played games which taught them elements of trust and negotiation. They engaged in role plays which encouraged them to think out of the box and to negotiate. They also learnt to be active listeners and to paraphrase statements by disputing parties.

"The course was useful to me," said a student from East Spring Secondary School. "If any of my friends happen to fight, I would be able

to help them resolve the problem."

Shavin Singh of Bedok South Secondary School said, "The course was very useful as it teaches me to handle conflicts calmly."

Hubert Yeo of St. Joseph's Institution said of the training provided by the peer mediation workshop, "The confidence level I possess to mediate and resolve conflicts has increased much more."