

Hope Times



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IN THE NEWS

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Building strong families

A man who has been married for over a long period of time said he learnt tips to better communicate with his wife and a mother received guidance on how to help her child be secure yet independent. The feedback came from two participants among ten couples with children who attended EMCC's "Building Strong Families" talk held on November 17, 2013 at Grace Methodist Church.

Conducted by our counsellors Mrs Monica Fernando and Billy Chan, the talk covered three main areas in building a strong family.

The topics included "Understanding your family system" which gave couples the opportunity to explore how they are functioning in their present family system compared to their family of origin. This topic is to help couples understand that they need to sustain values, beliefs and norms applicable for their current family system.

In the talk, the speakers examined the role change that occurs during marriage. Quite often, couples become distant in their marital relationship with the arrival of children.

The speakers also encouraged couples to improve their communication through using the Community Temperature Reading tool. This tool is adapted and used with permission from the Virginia Satir Global Network by Pete & Geri



Scazzero, the American husband-and-wife team who wrote the Emotionally Healthy Skills Workbook.



The exercises highlighted the importance of emotional and sexual intimacy. In addition, by sharing their worries, appreciation for each other and dreams, couples can change the atmosphere within a family setting.

On parenting, the speakers provided a number of tips to help parents bring up their kids with love and respect.

Helping struggling couples

There is a lot of scope to use the material presented at an EMCC couples training workshop for marriage enrichment and recovery work for struggling couples, said Reverend Carrie Chan, a pastor at Amazing Grace Presbyterian Church.



Rev Chan, also a director of Filos Community Services Ltd, attended the "Bridging the Couple Chasm - Gottman Therapy Level 1" workshop on November 13 to 14, 2013. She said the training is very useful as in her church couples facing crises tend to want to talk to pastors.

For Rev Darryl Chan, Senior Minister at Prinsep Street Presbyterian Church, the two-day workshop provided him with an additional toolkit when he talks to couples.

The workshop was conducted by Dr Jeffrey W. White, Certified Gottman Method Couples Therapist and Certified Gottman Educator. An American licensed Marriage and Family Therapist, Dr White said, "A lot of Singapore marriages seem to be wanting deeper levels of intimacy. We're training therapists to help couples to do that."

Some of the topics covered in the workshop included proven strategies and tools to help couples successfully manage conflict and methods to help couples process their fights and heal their hurts.

Helping children to boost self-esteem

Our counsellor Mrs Monica Fernando conducted talks at Macpherson Primary School from October 28 to 30, 2013 to help some 150 Primary 6 students boost their self-esteem.

During the one-and-a half hour talks which included slide presentations and activities, she educated the students on their identity -- "Who am I?" - and taught them to appreciate themselves.

Mrs Fernando first asked the students to complete a self-esteem assessment to determine if they have a high or low self-esteem. She then taught them how one could maintain a high level of self-esteem, through maintaining a balance between one's positive and negative aspects, believing in oneself and accepting oneself.

The students discovered factors that could affect their self-esteem -- puberty, peer pressure, relationships between friends and family and identity.

Building self-esteem is important for the kids because they are going through a huge life transition period. Said Mrs Fernando, "When kids have low self-esteem, they are low achieving and emotionally unsure about themselves. We need to help them develop and become aware of their positive sides. A positive self-image will impact school performance and they will be motivated to stay in school."

Family counselling helps teenager pull through dark period

Recently, our counsellor helped a teenager Steven* (pseudonym used to protect his identity), who was slipping into depression and guided him through his dark period so he could sit for his school examinations.

Steven was seeing his school counsellor but also came to EMCC for counselling. He did not function well emotionally because of very low self-esteem. At school, he had been bullied for years and at home he felt he did not have a voice and his parents placed high expectations on him.

For years, Steven had suppressed his pain and felt he was alone in his journey. He had no close friends or ample family support. Our counsellor brought in his parents who then found out about the bullying. After several sessions, Steven's parents were able to have a better

understanding of him and listen to him. They held back on overloading Steven with too much advice and instead found ways to communicate better with him. This change reduced the tension in the family. As a result they related to each other in a loving way.

The counselling Steven received enabled him to overcome his negative self-image. He started to process some of his suppressed pain and learnt to forgive. He also learned skills to better relate to his peers and manage his anger. He finished his examinations and is now working.

Managing stress before it leads to depression

Ms Hazel See, a researcher at the Civil Service College who attended a lunchtime talk on "Managing Stress vs. Slipping into Depression" on October 16, 2013, found the tips presented at the lunch time useful to help her de-stress.

"The information is not new but it's a useful refresher on what you can do to relieve stress," said Ms See, who was six months into her new position. She found the role stressful because of expectations and a lack of support till a month ago when a new person joined her.

Ms Linda Tay, an administrator for almost 35 years said, "The talk was useful as I learnt about what is stress, the effects of stress and the triggers."



During the talk attended by 26 staff of Civil Service College, the public sector's core institution for training, learning, research and staff development, EMCC counsellor Mrs Monica Fernando gave handouts which included a scale of the most stressful events and a burnout self-test.

Mrs Fernando highlighted tips to help a person manage stress such as a positive attitude, gratitude, a sense of humour and physical exercise.

To ensure emotional health, a person needs to be self-aware, have support, resolve relational conflicts, deal with hurts and unresolved issues, set healthy boundaries and have a good, loud cry.

Help us bring HOPE to troubled families

This festive season, you can partner us to bring cheer and hope to low-income families suffering from emotional pain and hurts. We need public donations to provide subsidized counselling and mediation services as well as parenting education.

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