



Mediation services: collaborating with FSCs

EMCC has started collaborating with some Family Service Centres (FSCs) this year and is hoping to see an increase in the number of family mediation cases held at our centre.

Last year EMCC connected with staff of three FSCs who expressed interest in working with EMCC for mediation training and to refer cases to EMCC.

In April this year, EMCC mediators helped a family dealing with financial dispute who was referred by a FSC.

Mediation and counselling services are the components of EMCC's integrative approach to serve families in crisis. EMCC is the only centre in Singapore that provides both counselling and mediation services under one roof.

EMCC is keen to promote mediation as a cost-effective, time-saving and non-adversarial way to resolve disputes that has proven to be a highly successful alternative to litigation.



EMCC's general manager Benjamin Chan said, "The usual outcome of a settled mediation case is one of rebuilding confidence and relationships amongst the family members. In contrast, a common outcome of any litigation would be a total breaking down of the relationship. With more marriages breaking down, there is a greater need for family mediation."

Department of Singapore statistics show that the number of divorces and annulments in 2011 totalled 7,604 while marriages were 27,258. This meant that almost 1 in 4 marriages broke up, bringing pain and loss to family members.

Teaching teachers 5 Aces for conflict resolution



A hundred teachers and staff of a



school who wanted to learn how to deal with students' parents learnt something from EMCC's recent workshop on conflict management: use the 5 Aces to resolve conflicts.

"I would use 5 Aces when communicating with students' parents," was the response from a teacher who attended the Conflict & Mediation Skills Workshop for Teachers: Managing Parents on June 5 held at St.

Hilda's Primary School.

"The 5 Aces are useful when dealing with parents," a teacher wrote in the feedback form after attending the workshop designed to impart an understanding of the nature, causes and perspectives of conflict.

The 5 Aces of managing differences between people include Acknowledge (recognizing differences), Accept (strength and weaknesses), Accommodate (clashes are normal and neutral), Affirm (seeing the glass as half-full, focusing on strengths) and Applaud (the other party's success is our success).

Other mediation related workshops held by EMCC in June included a one-day peer mediation workshop for students of Pei Hwa Secondary School on June 4 and a two-day basic mediation workshop for staff of St. Luke's Eldercare on June 13 and 14.

Dr John Ng - how to deal with conflicts at home

On June 1, Dr John Ng, EMCC's founder and Honorary Vice-Chairman gave fathers attending the Dads for Life Conference 2013 tips on how to handle conflicts at home especially with their teens.

A mediation expert and president of Meta Consulting, Dr Ng was running a workshop on the topic of "Conflict @ Home - Fighting Well, Recovering Better" at the conference at Singapore Expo.

What should parents do when there is conflict at home? Dr Ng gave tips such as calming down, reframing self-talk, owning the problem and getting help to deal with escalating conflicts. His focus was on how to turn conflicts into opportunities for better relationships.

Dr Ng invited his teenage daughter Meizhi to join him in the workshop to give her input as a teenager on the subject of parental conflict.

A day earlier at the conference, Dr Ng was on a panel of experts who addressed pressing fatherhood questions posed by about 500 attendees. Dads for Life Conference



2013 was organised by Dads for Life, a national movement started to inspire and involve fathers to be good influencers in their children's lives for life.

Client's story: counselling as yoga for the heart

One night when I* was desperately seeking help with a major conflict with my ex-fiancee, I found myself browsing through EMCC's website and was attracted by the agency's tagline "There is hope".

This happened four years ago. I started marriage counselling not out of choice. My then-fiancee and I had a heated argument which saw us both behaving in ways we didn't think we were capable of. We agreed our issues have escalated to beyond our abilities to solve, and hence decided to seek external help.

Unfortunately, it wasn't a happy ending for us. We didn't get beyond three sessions in EMCC before she had an overseas posting, and eventually, we parted ways. I continued on my own thereafter, trying to make sense of what happened.

Initially, I was looking for a quick solution to my relationship issues. I wanted to do something, as opposed to talking about who I was.

My counsellor was familiar with this, and was patient with me. The first step was for me to see my part in the problem - it wasn't just about what I was or wasn't doing, but it was also about who I was and the motivation behind what I was doing.

Once I realized that, I found that the more forthcoming I'm, the more I get out of it. The more I shared, the more my counsellor could help me, and the more I got out of our sessions.

Since then, I've continued counselling and used it to address other issues I've faced - stress at work, anxiety with new people, a lack of connection with my siblings, and my propensity to getting impatient with people.

It's fair to say that I've used my counselling sessions to address all the various deep-rooted issues that have always bothered me, and to chisel out a version of me that makes me happier.

Unfortunately, I think "counselling" is a highly misunderstood word. People still get the wrong impression that it's about psychotic people lying on a couch dealing with anger, hatred or depression.

I like to think about counselling as yoga for the heart, and my counsellor as my yoga instructor. And for me, counselling goes beyond healing ... long after my wounds have recovered, I still use counselling to be the person I want to be.

*The writer, a male in his mid-30s, has been a client of EMCC since 2009