

MINDS MYG ISSUE 20/21 H1

# ***RADIANCE***

## ***20/21 H1***

***The New Norm***

# TABLE OF *contents*

3

## CHAIRPERSON'S FOREWORD

A message from our  
MINDS MYG Chairperson,  
Jie Yin.

5

## VIRTUAL SESSIONS

Due to COVID-19, all  
physical sessions were  
replaced by e-sessions  
on Zoom.

13

## ONLINE WORKSHOPS

Sharing on one of the  
workshops attended  
through Zoom.

14

## PHYSICAL SESSIONS

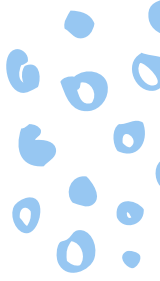
In Phase 2, some  
projects have kicked-off  
resumption of physical  
sessions!

17

## RECENT EVENTS

Check out the exciting  
events that happened  
recently!

# Chairperson's Foreword



Dear volunteers! Hope this message finds you and your family in good health!

2020 is going to be remembered as the year of COVID-19, a year of disruptions to our normal routines and periods of social isolation. Tools like Zoom and WhatsApp have helped to bring us together especially during the circuit breaker period when we cannot visit our loved ones living away from us. Schools and businesses had to implement work-from-home operating models in a very short period of time to ensure the safety of students and employees.

For MINDS MYG, it is heartening to witness how our volunteering community has transformed from our usual physical volunteering sessions. To keep our services going for the clients, we began by producing e-session toolkits to bring our sessions online via Zoom. We also have volunteers who took the initiative to check in with the caregivers and clients on their well-being during this period. Caregivers, too have adapted and learnt to use technologies so that their children can still have access to our services and stay socially engaged. In our attempt to engage volunteers and sharpen their capabilities, MINDS MYG also explored various initiatives such as virtual volunteer training, photo competition and MINDS MYG Bingo.

In our attempt to engage volunteers and sharpen their capabilities, MINDS MYG also explored various initiatives such as virtual volunteer training, photo competition, MINDS MYG Bingo, and virtual Volunteers' Night.

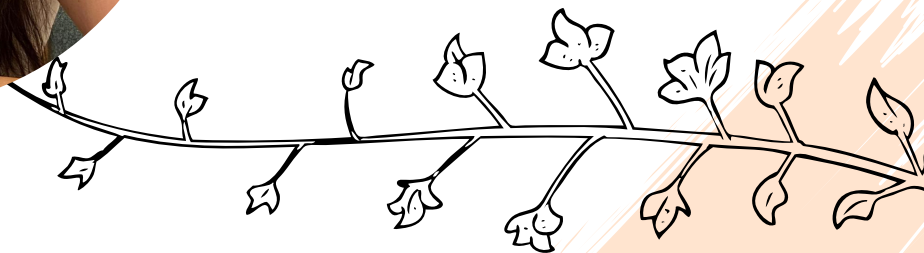
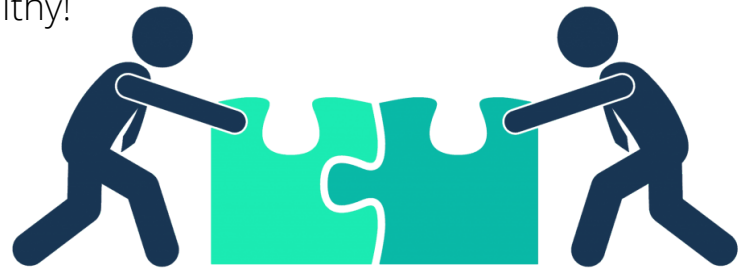


# Chairperson's Foreword

With Singapore's community cases generally stabilized, MINDS MYG is moving towards the resumption of physical sessions modified to be in compliance with national safe management measures. At this juncture, I would like to emphasize to all of you the importance of following these national directives to the T. We are one of the many participants in this ecosystem who serve the PWID community - in no circumstance should we be the proverbial Achilles' heel in Singapore's battle against COVID-19.

I would also like to take this opportunity to express my heartfelt thanks to you, our MINDS MYG community, for the way you have helped MINDS MYG pivot in response to this pandemic. We are unsure when this pandemic will be over, but we can see how each session, whether virtual or physical, has made an impact on each of our clients' lives. Thank you all for working together hand-in-hand to ensure the well-being of our clients and their caregivers. Stay safe and healthy!

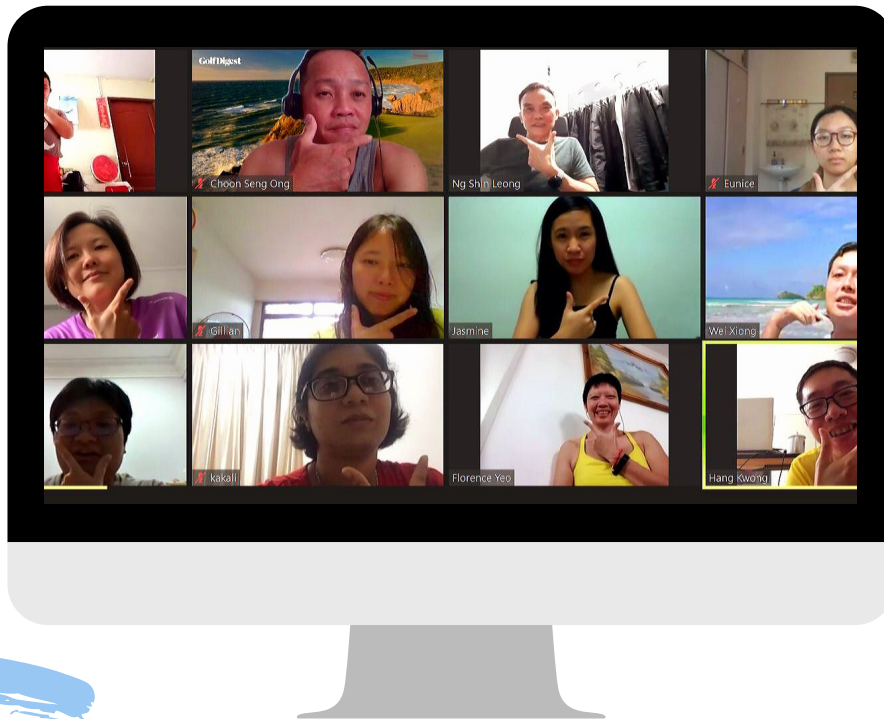
Jie Yin, Chairperson of MINDS MYG





# The New Norm - VFH

VOLUNTEERING FROM HOME (ONLINE)



## Volunteering From A Distance

As a new highly infectious viral disease, COVID-19 surfaced for the first time with no available vaccines near the end of last year, it has rapidly affected you and I in so many ways.

Sharing with you some thoughts from BKTG Volunteers on having virtual sessions.

**BKTG**

"For now volunteering from home is the new norm. My first response to using Zoom was to question the safety aspects. So far so good, it is safe. My experience with attending BKTG virtual session remotely via Zoom started out with some hiccups. I am not tech savvy. Struggled with low bandwidths at home and with intermittent mobile data while at trainee's house. Took some time to get the hang of it. Heard there was only one trainee who attended a past e-session once at the beginning due to other trainees' caregivers experiencing difficulties moving to virtual platform for sessions."

# The New Norm - VFH

VOLUNTEERING FROM HOME (ONLINE)

*"BKTG is the first project to have teachers assisting trainees to get them on board Zoom"*



"I have experienced more than a month of virtual sessions with the trainees and volunteers which include two mass festive sessions, one remotely from home and another at trainee's home. All were a mix of fun and various difficulties. I heard that Zoom sessions are boring but not to me at all! Challenging will be a better word to describe it.

CHALLENGING

It is not easy to facilitate virtual sessions while keeping communication and engagement ongoing. There were limited interactions between trainees and teachers in a virtual environment. The fun parts for me are getting involved in planning and executing the various sections of the curriculum, such as engaging trainees to interact and respond to the different activities.

All of these were done with the help of caregivers and some teachers who visited trainees home to assist them. BKTG is the first project to have teachers visiting trainees to assist them to get on board Zoom once every two weeks."



# The New Norm - VFH

VOLUNTEERING FROM HOME (ONLINE)

*"Appreciate the silver lining that comes alongside with virtual sessions"*



# CW

"As per all other MYG projects, the COVID-19 situation has forced us to re-examine the way we engage our clients. At Children's Wing Project, we continue to work around the challenges and find alternative ways to connect with our children meaningfully."

# The New Norm - VFH

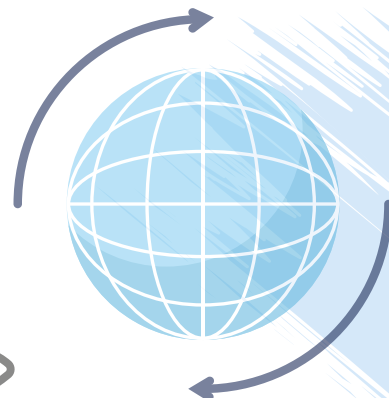
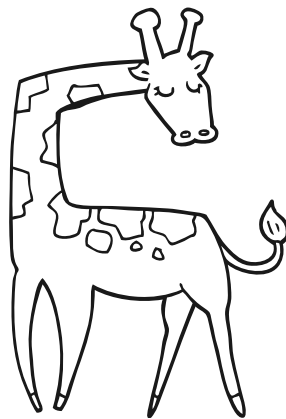
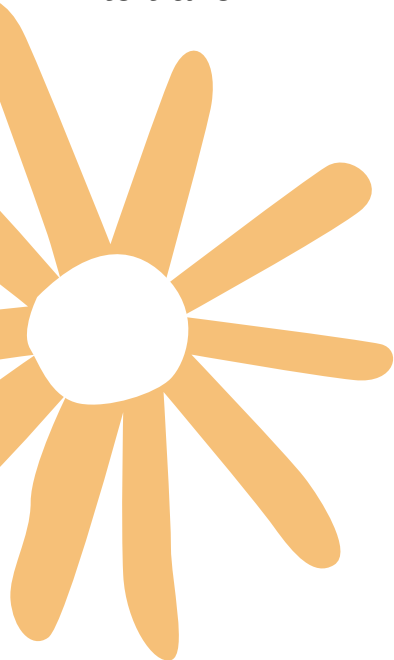
VOLUNTEERING FROM HOME (ONLINE)

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"Our project has yet to resume physical sessions, and we do miss the face-to-face interactions with our children. Nevertheless, we have since learnt to appreciate the silver lining that come alongside with virtual sessions. For instance, we have capitalised on the e-sessions to continue bringing our children on virtual outings in a fuss-free and efficient manner (e.g. virtual tours to Zoo, Changi Airport and Chek Jawa Wetlands). This has allowed us to bring new experiences to our children, especially those who may otherwise have limited opportunities to travel.

In terms of volunteer engagement, virtual sessions have also allowed volunteers who are based overseas to join in the fun. Our children are also able to get a glimpse of how the environment in other countries look like, without having to leave MINDSville.

As we continue to look forward to our return to face-to-face sessions, Children's Wing project will continue to seek better ways to engage our children more meaningfully. We welcome all other MYG volunteers to join our virtual sessions and learn from one another."

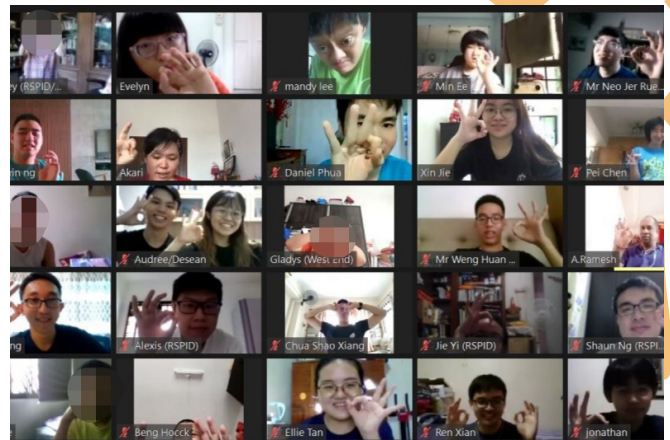




# The New Norm - VFH

VOLUNTEERING FROM HOME (ONLINE)

"There is always more to learn about our dear trainees regardless of the years that go by. If you observe them, they just might surprise you when it is least expected. We have always assumed that our trainees benefit more from in-person interactions that teaches them how to communicate effectively with people in the community as it is key for social integration. But during e-sessions that were conducted in the recent months, a few of our quieter trainees gradually became more vocal. Initially, there was some awkwardness in the e-sessions. It was new to everyone and it took a few weeks for acclimatisation. Once it was part of their weekly routine, the trainees became comfortable and conversations over the virtual platform began to feel more normal.



WE  
RSPID



It was heartening for the volunteers when trainees said that they missed sessions and the volunteers. The volunteers who conducted the e-sessions were motivated to find interactive ways of engaging the trainees over the virtual platform. That was when we noticed that it was not only the trainees who were usually vocal who were speaking up, but also a few of the quieter ones."

# The New Norm - VFH

## VOLUNTEERING FROM HOME (ONLINE)

"Trainees who are on the autism spectrum, require a longer duration to feel comfortable in a new environment. Till then, the trainees tend to be more reserved. But if they are already in a comfortable and familiar environment like their home, it allows them to be more involved in their interactions. This coupled with the commendable effort by the volunteers to create more interactive sessions, resulted in these trainees becoming more vocal and engaged."



The number of engaged trainees may be few. But e-session has proven to be a valuable means of engaging our trainees and learning more about them! We are all glad that we have been able to restart physical sessions for those who have not been engaged. Hope to see more trainees and volunteers being allowed to join soon!"





# Relearning Volunteering

## VOLUNTEERING FROM HOME (ONLINE)

"Few of us would have expected that volunteering these days would turn to a virtual platform. Afterall, volunteering was always about that personal touch and interaction. Therefore, in most of our minds, we would just have to patiently wait out the restrictions imposed before returning to physical volunteering sessions.

However, as weeks turned to months, it seemed inevitable that the physical setting of volunteering that we have grown so accustomed to would not be returning to our lives soon. The small chit chats, the jokes, the sharing about their weekday work lives and even the minor conflicts that happened between them in their confines. These topics made up the brief conversations between our weekly activities. As brief as they may be, it formed a huge part of the physical volunteering sessions for us volunteers. These conversations were a part of our weekly social life, and they were what we would be missing the most too."

TH

# Relearning Volunteering

## VOLUNTEERING FROM HOME (ONLINE)

"Furthermore, volunteers both new and experienced volunteers were now thrown into an unknown situation filled with questions of uncertainty. Will online sessions work? Can online sessions effectively engage our beneficiaries? Can our beneficiaries accept these changes? Will we even receive any response from them? As much as this discomfort made us uncomfortable, it allowed us to revisit the early practices of our volunteering lives where we relied on trial and error rather than methods we have tried before. Relied on the use of facial expressions, body language and actions to communicate rather than with the use of words. Relied on constantly sharing, discussing and improving on the ideas tried and implemented from week to week.

What may have started as a simple barter trade of exchanging physical interactions with the assurance that our vulnerable beneficiaries will remain safe in these unassuming times, this period of online volunteering may have allowed us volunteers to embark on a new phase of learning, adapting and adopting unconventional methods that we would not have tried if not faced with such circumstances and limitations."

**"We volunteers are re-learning volunteering."**

# Online Workshops

## "SAFE CIRCLE: TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE"

"2020 is a very special year when COVID-19 outbreak struck the whole world since the beginning of the year. A lot of physical training workshops that were planned initially were cancelled due to safety measures. Instead, some training workshops were shifted online to Zoom which is very different from the physical workshops that I had attended in the past.

One of these workshops was "Safe Circle: Trauma-Informed Care" online workshop by Singapore Association for Mental Health (SAMH). Initially, I thought that online workshops would have more limitations than physical workshops, like having little face-to-face group interactions and discussions.



But, this one was different, the workshop taught me how to perform self-care, and caring about others by being mindful of any behavioural changes (especially for our trainees). In addition, being more empathetic towards them and mindful of any verbal and non-verbal cues from our trainees are very important so we can look out for any signs of trauma, and understand the causes, hence being able to approach any situation without any biasness.

As a volunteer, I guess what I can do is to provide our trainees the emotional and physical safety such as ensuring the environment is welcoming and comforting for them."

# Resumption of Physical Sessions

ONLY FOR SOME CENTRES

"On 5th September, WE and RSPID successfully brought back our first socially-distanced physical session at WGS! Although smaller in size with 11 trainees, it was nonetheless welcome news for our trainees, caregivers and volunteers who have been excitedly waiting for the resumption of physical sessions!

Before physical sessions resumed, we did have our weekly virtual sessions. Though it was fun, We missed the closeness and energy in the air from having all our trainees together face-to-face. Hence, it was music to our ears when physical sessions were about to resume."

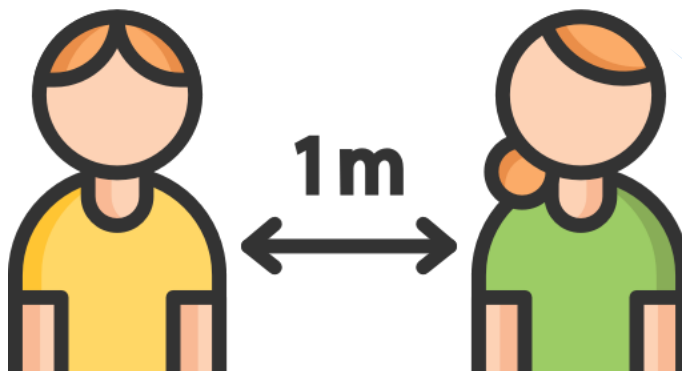


# Resumption of Physical Sessions

ONLY FOR SOME CENTRES

"Of course, in view of the COVID-19 situation, the way we run physical sessions now is very different as compared to past regular sessions. For example, WGS is split up into zones and only a maximum of 5 people, both trainees and volunteers, are allowed in each zone. Everyone also dons a mask now. Such are the differences which are new but necessary to keep both our trainees and volunteers safe.

The combination of zoning and smaller scale for physical sessions has a plus side. We are able to scale down our volunteer to trainee ratio, assigning 2 volunteers for every 3 trainees. Smaller groups mean more personalized interactions between our volunteers and trainees. This also contributed to much growth in our trainees. Our proudest accomplishment was when a trainee was able to travel independently from his house to WGS, after much personalized care and training by volunteers in his group."





# Resumption of Physical Sessions

ONLY FOR SOME CENTRES

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“What has not changed though is the fun and excitement our trainees and volunteers had. In their little zones, trainees enjoy the music during their favourite Singalong session! With masks on, trainees also have fun during PRT, where they get a chance to exercise their muscles in a game of frisbee or relax their body and mind in a session of yoga.

However, physical sessions are not without its challenges. Due to limited capacity, only two volunteers are allowed per group every session. Each volunteer will have to be prepared to take up more responsibilities as compared to regular sessions. From conducting activities within groups to meeting trainees at assembly points to liaising with other volunteers to ensure staggered entry timings into WGS. Yet, we are heartened to see that volunteer enthusiasm remains strong despite the increased effort and workload. Many of our alumni and seniors from RSPID and WE are willing to go above and beyond during this COVID-19 period with its many special arrangements. With their help and efforts, sessions have been conducted well and smooth.

Overall, it is obvious that trainees are more engaged during physical sessions than in our e-sessions. It shows that for our trainee's sake, it is worth it to put in the effort to resume physical sessions, no matter the difficulties.”

*“I think that is the spirit- Dare To Commit, and you will find something different.”*







# *Recent Events*

FUN-FILLED!

**5 DEC**

**VOLUNTEERS' NIGHT**

**12 DEC**

**ACID 2020**



# Volunteers' Night



COME ONLINE WITH SOMETHING YOU BRING/WEAR TO SLEEP!

## MINDS MYG VOLUNTEERS NIGHT'20



DEC

5

8PM



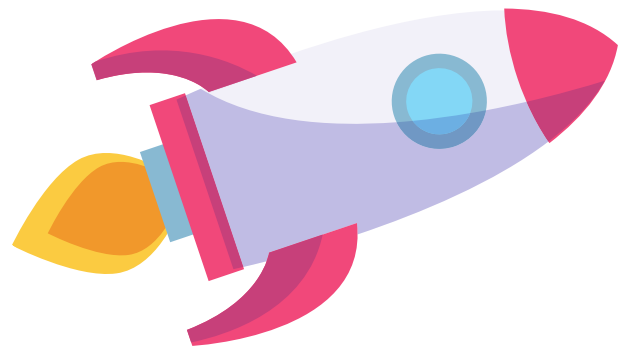
Venue: Zoom

Theme: Pyjamas Party!



Attractive games with prizes to be won!  
What are you waiting for? Sign up now!

# ACID 2020



DATE: 12 DECEMBER 2020