



A Day in the Hub of Hope



"Depression is not a disease, it's something that you must learn to manage," shares Eileen, 63 years old. Having suffered from depression for over ten years, Eileen approached a lot of senior activity centres to try and find community, but felt rejected and uncomfortable sharing about her condition.

A friend introduced Eileen to New Life's Silvercare active ageing programmes, held at the Fajar Youth Hub. "When I first came here, (Silvercare staff) Cindy gave me a lot of care and support when she found out I was depressed. That gave me confidence to keep coming back to join the activities." Now a hub regular, Eileen joins the morning stretch band exercises every Monday and enjoys chatting with her friends over board games. "New Life really changed my life," Eileen says, smiling. "All my friends can see that I'm a happier person now."

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The Fajar Hub not only hosts active ageing programmes that liven up seniors' days, it also acts as a safe space for youths to socialise and build relationships with New Life youth mentors. One such mentoring relationship is the friendship between Letisha, 11 years old, and her mentor Samantha.

A bubbly and mischievous girl, Letisha faced tense familial relationships at home which left her struggling with negative emotions. She found a trusted listener in Samantha, who connected to Letisha through afternoon activities at the youth hub. "In my conversations with her, I always ask her how she's feeling, so that she can be aware of how her emotions are affecting her," Samatha shares.



In the evenings, the Fajar Hub opens its doors to children from the Steady Readers (SR) programme. The children in SR usually come from low-income backgrounds or families whose native language is not English. "In Singapore society, if you can't read or if you lag behind in the education system, you will lose out," states Voon Kham, an SR volunteer-mentor. She and her husband Yoong Chow tutor two children each in SR sessions on Monday and Wednesday evenings.

The couple initially wondered whether mentoring two children "in an ocean of kids" would really be effective. But after Yoong Chow encouraged one of his students to believe in himself and saw the child tear up in response, he realised that they were not just there to teach English, but to empower the children to become better people. "If we can care for and motivate just one child, I think that's good enough," says Yoong Chow.

Whether young or old, lonely or struggling, the Fajar Hub has opened its doors to make room for all kinds of people, to give them hope for a better life.

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by helping to build this Hub of Hope?*

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