朋輩支援員
精神健康互相伴
Peer Support Workers —
Your Partners Toward Better Mental Health

早前香港中文大學調查指出近六成受訪港人精神健康不合格，是六年以來最差，精神健康成為港人近年關注的課題。本會轄下的精神健康綜合社區中心「康晴天地」的兩名朋輩支援員子傑和敏姑娘希望以「過來人」的寶貴經驗，可以在復元路上給予同路人支持與鼓勵，相互陪伴。

復元路上重拾自信

曾經受精神病困擾的敏姑娘五年前入職「康晴天地」，成為朋輩支援員，「當時我生完第二個BB，產後抑鬱復發，好難專注工作，所以辭咗職。而我奶奶就負責照顧小朋友，我覺得自己好似一無是處，個人無晒目標，搵唔到出路咁。好彩後來認識咗康晴天地，佢哋問我有無興趣試吓做朋輩支援員，了解咗工作性質後，自己都想試吓。」而子傑則因成長背景而引發精神病，同樣因為成為朋輩支援員而重拾自信，「最初由分享復元嘅經歷開始，之後覺得好有意義，所以就入職做埋朋輩支援員。」

A recent study from the Chinese University of Hong Kong indicated that close to 60% of people in Hong Kong have reported to be in a state of sub-standard mental health, which is the worst outcome of the study in the past six years. Mental health has become a topic to be concerned. Kit and Man, two Peer Support Workers from the Society's Integrated Community Centre for Mental Wellness - Sunrise Centre have made use of their own valuable experiences to support, encourage and accompany those who are in need on their journey to recovery.

Regaining confidence on the road to recovery

Man, who has once suffered from mental challenge, joined Sunrise Centre as a Peer Support Worker five years ago. "I had just given birth to my second child at the time being, and suffered from postpartum depression. It became difficult for me to concentrate on my work, so I quit my job. My mother-in-law took care of the baby, I felt as if I was useless. I lost my personal goal, and I couldn't find a way out. Luckily, I joined Sunrise Centre soon afterwards, and I was asked if I was interested in becoming a Peer Support Worker. After learning about its job nature, I thought I might try." Kit suffered from mental illness because of his unhappy development during childhood, and he has also regained his confidence through becoming a Peer Support Worker. "When I first shared my path of recovery, I thought that it was meaningful. That was why I later joined as a Peer Support Worker."

分享經驗同路互助

在復元路上，有一個理解自己的人非常重要，子傑表示曾經用自身經歷鼓勵一名服務使用者，「佢同我一樣都喺單親家庭，從小就無乜得到其他人嘅讚賞，讀書成績唔好，所以一直自信心過低，情緒受到困擾。佢同我的家庭背景相近，經歷亦好似，會考0分，我同佢分享自己經過努力之後最終考到碩士學位，鼓勵佢唔好放棄。」敏姑娘則表示在你幫助他們的同時，他們其實都很關心你，「唔好以為係你幫緊佢哋，佢哋成日都會問我兩個小朋友乖唔乖，又會關心我嘅近況，其實我哋係互相守護。」

聆聽的重要

作為過來人，敏姑娘及子傑都不約而同地說，「聆聽」是復元的「良藥」，「有啲人會話唔好諗咁多啦，又或者開心啲啦，但問題係外人唔明白我哋未必控制得到，所以如果大家身邊有朋友有情緒困擾，試吓唔好咁快俾意見，我哋靜靜地聽吓佢分享佢嘅想法，成為佢情緒上面嘅『出口』。其實佢哋好多時都係想揾人傾吓，講咗出嚟就會舒服好多。」朋輩支援員正正就是擔任「聆聽者」的角色，他們均希望可以給予支持與鼓勵予更多的同路人。

Helping each other by sharing similar experiences

It is important to have someone who understands you well on the path of recovery. Kit mentioned that he has once used his own experiences to encourage a service user. "He was also from a single-parent family like me. Because he has received very little recognition during childhood, and his academic results were unsatisfactory. That is why he suffered from emotional distress and low self-esteem. We had a similar family background and experiences. Both of us got a "Zero" at the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination. I encouraged him not to give up with my experience of obtaining a Master's degree after my hard work." Man added that though it seems you are the one offering help, you will also receive care from the service users. "Don't think that it's only you who's helping others. They concerned my kids' well-being. In fact, we help each other."

The importance of active listening

As someone who has had similar experiences, Man and Kit both mentioned that active "listening" is the best "dosage" for recovery. "Some may suggest you to stop over-thinking, or just to be happier, but the problem is that outsiders don't understand that it is out of our control. If you have friends who are under emotion distress, try not to give advice immediately. We need to be the 'outlets' of their emotions, and allow them to share their thoughts. Actually, a lot of times they just wanted someone to talk with, and they often feel much better after voicing out their feelings." Peer Support Workers often play the role of a "listener". Both Man and Kit hope that they can provide support and encouragement to more people through similar experiences in the future.