



# COLOUR ME BEAUTIFUL

Growing Positive Self-Identity through Social Engagement

Theme: Neighbourhoods

Addressing social isolation for female seniors in residential care

## WHAT IS THIS INITIATIVE ABOUT?



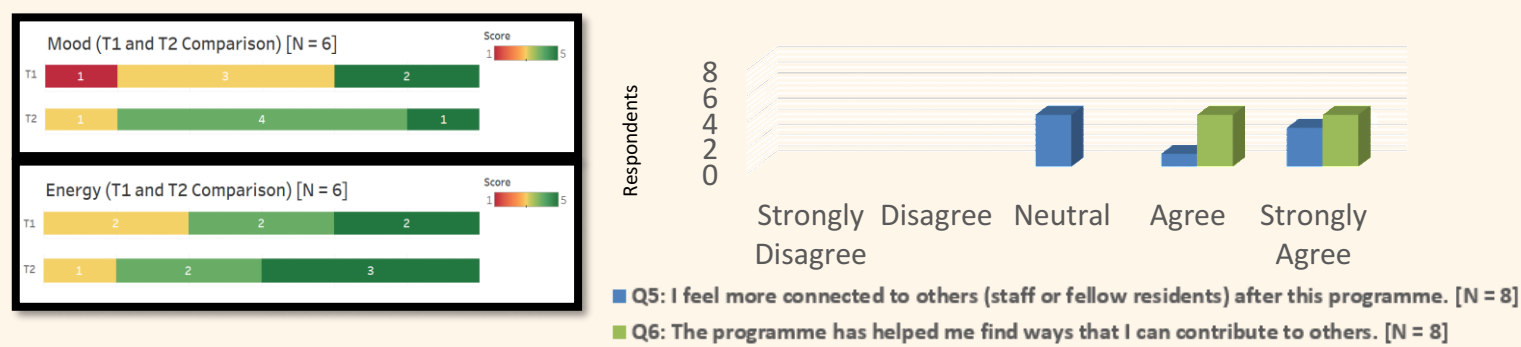
Colour Me Beautiful (CMB) is a 6-week, evidence-informed groupwork designed by a team of MWS social service practitioners to mitigate social isolation and increase mental well-being of residents of Christalite Methodist Home (CMH). CMH is a designated sheltered home that admits seniors under the Destitute Act and the Vulnerable Adults Act. Classified as homeless or vulnerable because of poor or no familial support, these seniors had largely been rough sleeping and are reliant on community handouts for their livelihood.

The Methodist Welfare Services (MWS) Research, Innovation & Training Academy (RITA) team observed that most of these seniors who enter residential living involuntarily tend to experience social isolation due to the change in social networks, strict residential rules and restricted or supervised access to the community services. Over time, they become disengaged, exhibit dispassion in life and become disconnected with the outside world. Coupled with poor or no familial support and increasing comorbidities, these seniors present poor bio-psycho indicators that can lead to rapid cognitive decline and physical frailty.

The three objectives of CMB are to promote social engagement, build positive self-identity and resilience and instill a sense of belonging and reintegration in community living. By leveraging personal grooming and artistic forms to engage and activate self-expression, this initiative layers post-activity group reflections to promote personal resilience and to instill shared contribution in this 'closed' community.

## INITIATIVE'S IMPACT

The CMB pilot was conducted with \*9 female residents with a mean age of 77. Out of the 9, 2 were diagnosed with mild cognitive impairment and 4 with mental illness. The pilot's impact was measured at 2 time-points using i) 2 quantitative tools (i.e., Mood and Energy, Rosenberg self-esteem scale) and ii) a qualitative survey. The results have been promising with overall upticks in i) mood and energy, ii) sense of belonging (Q5) and contribution (Q6) as indicated in the Likert scale scores below.



Participants were active in participation and spontaneous in sharing their feelings within the safe space accorded to them. Most significant is the sense of camaraderie in-session and the exuberant responses when they experienced sensory stimulations of smell (perfumes), touch (skincare), sight (nagomi art and floral arrangements) and hearing (fashion catwalk and music). One participant exclaimed that she was 'full of gratitude' to have received so much and all participants asked for more sessions.

\* One participant dropped out at mid-point to segregate from aggressive behaviour encountered outside of CMB sessions.

## PLANS AHEAD

The pilot targeted female residents as they were identified as the most likely to experience social isolation. This was because of the gender-segregation policy (safety reasons) and the low female-male ratio (social interaction level) in the sheltered home.

CMB is at an emergent stage in which deliberate iterations can help sharpen the post-activity reflections to elicit better participants' responses and to sustain transformative changes. The plan is to manualise the 6 weekly 1.5-hour sessions in a structured format with templates, a resource list and facilitation tips that can be readily adopted by volunteers and programme executives to run the programme regularly and independently.

MWS/RITA will also consult with vested stakeholders to pivot CMB for male beneficiaries using suitable self-grooming and artistic expressions that can achieve similar outcomes to grow self-awareness, improve mental wellbeing and mitigate social isolation.



## OUR OFFER



CMB is suited as an ideal 'plug and go' programme as facilitators can follow the 'ABC' (Activate, Build, Conclude) structured steps as outlined in the manual. It is scalable and can be replicated across different eldercare settings when the sessional activities can be modified to suit specific interest within a group setting. The key is to ensure that all modified activities must adhere to the 3 desired outcomes and can amplify the post-activities reflective groupwork that is essential to mitigating social isolation for seniors.

A promising follow up is to work with vested collaborators who can co-iterate on this pilot to identify suitable beneficiaries who can be trained as potential co-facilitators. This would layer on good therapeutic outcomes for seniors to grow confidence and contribute to their community meaningfully. Additionally, by nudging corporate organisations to adopt CMB as a signature volunteer/corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiative, this may broaden their organisational mandate for transformative societal impact beyond the usual once-off activity. By leveraging this 6-session geron-friendly initiative, these corporates not only involve more personnel but deepen their efforts to help seniors in the community thrive.