

Tuning in to the Leaders

with Ms Chow Choy Yin



Ms Chow Choy Yin has been in social work for more than 20 years since graduating from the National University of Singapore with majors in both social work and sociology. She first started work in a statutory board where she learnt about raising social awareness of issues such as poverty and advocating for change. In 1991, she joined TRANS Family Services (then known as TRANS Centre). Under her leadership, the work of TRANS has grown tremendously. She was instrumental in developing TRANS Centre which morphed from a youth outreach centre into a full-fledged Family Service Centre in 1994. In 2000, the work of TRANS expanded again with the development of another Family Service Centre and Students' Care Centre in Bukit Timah. In 2003, she pioneered elder protection work in Singapore with her team and this eventually led to the birth of TRANS SAFE Centre, a centre that specialises in helping elderly and families with issues of abuse. For the pioneering work in elder protection, she was presented the Outstanding Social Worker Award 2007. Known to be a passionate social worker and hands-on leader, she is currently serving as the Executive Director of TRANS Family Services.

*Two roads diverged in a wood,
and I took the one less
traveled by, and that has
made all the difference.*

Robert Frost, Mountain Interval (1920)

How I Keep On Going...

BELIEVE THAT
CHANGE IS POSSIBLE

HAVE A VISION



☆ DON'T GIVE UP:
PERSEVERE THROUGH
DISCOURAGEMENTS

☆ FIND ALL MEANS TO GET
THINGS THROUGH

☆ THE WORK THAT WE
DO IS A PROCESS

☆ BEGIN WITH THE
END IN MIND

☆ REMEMBER THAT THE
WORK IS DONE FOR THE
CLIENTS

☆ IMAGINE WHAT KIND
OF SOCIETY YOU HOPE
YOU SEE

*"I expect to pass through this world but once. Any good
therefore that I can do or any kindness that I can show
to any human being, let me do it now. Let me not defer
or neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again"*

Stephen Grellet

How to Keep On Going...

☆ SURROUND YOURSELF
WITH GOOD SUPPORT
(E.G FAMILY AND
COLLEAGUES)

☆ SELF-AWARENESS:
FIND WAYS TO
RECHARGE WHEN
YOU ARE LOW



- GO FOR TRAINING
- TALK TO PEOPLE
- LEARN FROM OTHERS
- READ

Question and Answer

What advice would you give to someone entering into the social service sector?

BE PREPARED FOR THE JOURNEY BECAUSE IT IS LONG. IF YOU REALLY WANT TO EXPERIENCE CHANGE, IT WILL TAKE TIME. IT IS ABOUT GROWING AS AN INDIVIDUAL IN THE PROFESSION.

WE ALL NEED A CERTAIN DEGREE OF RESILIENCE TO DO THIS WORK BECAUSE THERE WILL BE PROBLEMS TO LISTEN TO EVERYDAY. YOU MUST KNOW YOURSELF AND LEARN HOW TO DELINEATE: THERE ARE OTHER ROLES THAT YOU NEED TO PLAY BESIDES BEING A SOCIAL WORKER. IN SOCIAL SERVICE, YOU NEED TO HAVE THE EMOTIONAL STRENGTH TO BE ABLE TO BOUNCE BACK. DO NOT CARRY EVERYTHING ON YOUR SHOULDER AND END UP BEING DEPRESSED.

CHOOSE A FIELD OF SOCIAL WORK THAT MOST SUITS YOU: FOR EXAMPLE, POLICY WORK IF YOU ARE UNABLE TO COPE WITH THE HIGH EMOTIONAL STRESS

How has your social work training helped you as an Executive Director?

I WEAR DIFFERENT HATS BUT MY PRIMARY MOTIVATION IS STILL A SOCIAL WORKER. I AM AN EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR IN A SOCIAL WORK SETTING SO IT IS THE SOCIAL WORK THAT DRIVES ME. I WANT TO BE IN DIRECT SERVICE SO THAT I UNDERSTAND WHAT MY STAFF GO THROUGH. WHEN WE FIRST STARTED ELDER PROTECTION WORK, I MADE SURE I TOOK THE FIRST CASE AND I STILL TAKE THE TOUGHEST CASES.

THE BEAUTIFUL THING ABOUT SOCIAL WORK IS THAT IT SOCIALIZES YOU INTO A BEING. IT IS NOT JUST A DEGREE BUT THE WHOLE COURSE OF STUDY CHANGES YOUR MINDSET AND DEVELOPS CERTAIN VALUES IN YOU.

What is your advice to social workers on how to cope with internal struggles as they face rising caseloads?

ALL OF US STRUGGLE WITH HIGH CASELOADS, EXPECTATIONS AND WANTING TO DO A GOOD JOB. IT IS NOT EASY. IT IS IMPORTANT TO FIND SUPPORT WITHIN THE TEAM IN ORDER TO ENCOURAGE ONE ANOTHER BOTH PERSONALLY AND PROFESSIONALLY.

HELP EACH OTHER TO LOOK AT CASES DIFFERENTLY, TO SEE IF WORK PROCESSES CAN CHANGE, TO LOOK AT PROCEDURES OR PROCESSES AND SEE IF IT IS POSSIBLE TO REDUCE UNNECESSARY WORK AND TO FREE UP TIME TO DO THE PROFESSIONAL WORK. GIVE MORE TIME FOR CASE DISCUSSION, CONFERENCES OR SUPERVISION SESSIONS. IT IS IMPORTANT THAT ONE WORKS IN A TEAM AND NOT ALONE IN ORDER TO FIND NEW ENERGY AND SUPPORT.

IF IT IS POSSIBLE, TRY TO ADVOCATE FOR MORE MANPOWER WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT. BUT THERE IS A NEED TO PLAN THIS OUT PROPERLY. IT IS NOT EASY BUT ONE HAS TO LOOK AFTER ONESELF TO PREVENT BURN OUT. LOOK AFTER YOUR OWN MENTAL HEALTH. HAVE PEOPLE AROUND YOU WHO WILL BE ABLE TO GIVE YOU AN EMOTIONAL BOOST. FOR MYSELF, WHEN I AM DOWN, I FIND SOMEONE TO VENTILATE TO WHICH MAKES ME FEEL BETTER. I AM THEN ABLE TO CLARIFY MY THINKING AND BOUNCE BACK. YOU NEED TO UNDERSTAND YOUR OWN MECHANISM: HOW YOU WORK AND WHAT WILL ALLOW YOU TO BOUNCE BACK?

TAKE BREAKS. EXERCISE. PLAN FOR A HOLIDAY. WHEN YOU ARE OUT YOU SEE THINGS DIFFERENTLY BECAUSE THERE IS TIME TO REFLECT. YOU NEED TO LOOK AFTER YOURSELF, AND THEN THE TEAM WHO WILL LOOK AFTER YOU TOO.