

The Red Pencil: Empowering People with Arts Therapy

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Short Communication

SINGAPORE, XX - The Red Pencil is not your ordinary charity in Singapore. It is a charity that advocates the use of art in its quest to help the needy. Founded in 2011, The Red Pencil has provided extensive clinical art therapy sessions to hospitals, schools, social welfare and about 55 voluntary organisations. Its mission is to bring the power of Arts Therapy to children, adults and families, especially those facing overwhelming life circumstances for which they have no words.

To heal with arts

Through the use of Arts Therapy, The Red Pencil invokes the creative power of art, music and dance to enhance one's physical, mental and emotional wellbeing. While traditional art focuses on the final product, arts therapy shifts the emphasis to construction of meaning. When people draw, paint or dance to express their pain, it acts as an effective emotional outlet. Indeed, the benefits of arts therapy are:

- Resolve conflicts and problems
- Develop interpersonal skills
- Manage negative behavior
- Reduce stress and trauma
- Increase self-esteem and self-awareness
- Achieve emotional insight

Apart from clinical sessions, The Red Pencil has brought these benefits to the mass public through booth engagements in art fairs. Participants indulge in fun art activities to experience the therapeutic nature of art for themselves. Moreover, the charity also conducts local corporate workshops that utilize arts therapy to help employees boost bonding, joy and relaxation in a work environment and effectively tackle with professional situations. In a nutshell, The Red Pencil aims to facilitate emotional release, reflection and restoration in the lives of individuals through arts therapy.

Extending beyond home ground

More than just Singapore, The Red Pencil has extended its influence across the globe in a robust effort to assist the needy. Up till now, the charity has carried out 18 unique humanitarian missions in partnership with many NGOs. Just to name a few examples, it has provided psychosocial relief to Syrian children and families suffering from de-patriation trauma in Lebanon. The charity has also conducted clinical sessions in Thailand with teenagers of the Hmong community, who are affected by discrimination, violence and abuse. The Red Pencil team has travelled to Nepal to assist a community of children, parents and caregivers who were negatively impacted by the destructive earthquake.

In conducting a humanitarian mission, The Red Pencil incorporates tools such as the Visual Journal and its Train the Trainer program. The Visual Journal requires beneficiaries to draw/paint something daily in a journal to express and capture their inner thoughts and emotions. It promotes self-insight, enabling beneficiaries to develop their own coping mechanisms after the Arts Therapy process is complete. For the Train the Trainer program, it equips caregivers of the beneficiaries with basic Arts Therapy skills so that they can continue the healing process even after the arts therapists have left.

By establishing these tools, The Red Pencil hopes that beneficiaries will perpetually reap the benefits of arts therapy, shaping them into emotionally resilient individuals who can withstand overwhelming setbacks.

So far, The Red Pencil has conducted 13,056 art therapy sessions, with a total of 7,857 people who have benefitted from their work both in Singapore and overseas. The charity also offers art therapy scholarships for the Masters in Art Therapy course at LASALLE College of the Arts; a fitting pursuit for students who wish to become professional art therapists.

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