

## Brain Challenge improves performance of ADHD youth

Children with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) are often described as impulsive, inattentive and disorganised. As ADHD children approach adolescence, they often lack confidence and have low self-esteem. After joining the executive functions training and “Brain Challenge” competition designed by occupational therapists of Heep Hong Society, a group of secondary school students with ADHD became less impulsive and improved their attention. They also learned techniques on how to manage their emotions, which helped them improve their academic performance as well as interpersonal relationships.



Students Yan (left) and Lai (right) become more focused and less impulsive after attending training on executive functions.

### Unleash hidden potential

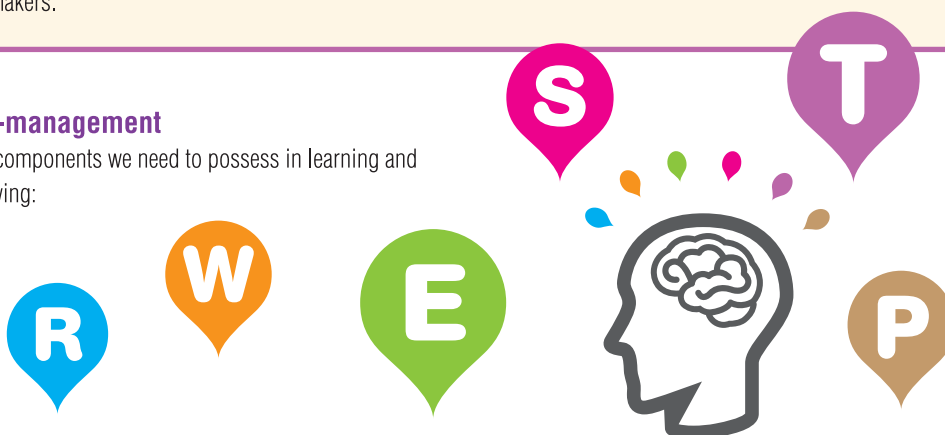
Yan and Lai, who were Form 2 students at the Church of Christ in China Mong Man Wai College, joined fellow students last year to take part in the group training on executive functions and the joint-school “Brain Challenge” organised by Heep Hong’s *Support Programme for Children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder*. Their unfailing efforts helped them clinch the champion title, outperforming eight other contesting teams. The mature-looking Yan had attention problems: he had not been able to stay concentrated in class. After joining the group training on executive functions, he gradually improved his attention issue. His teammate Lai was an impulsive youth. He shared: “I often threw tantrums and used swear words in the past. I ran into conflict with my classmates too.” During the training on executive functions, he strengthened his self-control ability. Now, when he begins to feel angry, he would first hold back his emotions and calm himself down.

Ms Fok, the teacher responsible of the school team, said: “I believe in ADHD students’ potential; they are as good as their fellow classmates. ADHD symptoms have hindered their self-management, interpersonal relationships and attention. I am glad to see how they gradually unleash their potential through this training, and they can now shed the label of troublemakers.”

### Six executive functions to improve learning and self-management

Executive functions consist of a set of components we need to possess in learning and everyday life, which includes the following:

1. Response inhibition (R)
2. Working memory (W)
3. Emotional control (E)
4. Sustained attention (S)
5. Task initiation (T)
6. Planning and prioritisation (P)



Many studies show that the executive functioning of ADHD students is weaker than those without ADHD. The training of executive functions and the ‘Brain Challenge’ competition were specially designed for Form 1 to Form 3 students with attention issues to strengthen the six components of executive functions. Before joining the “Brain Challenge”, participants first received group training conducted by Heep Hong Society’s occupational therapists to improve their learning and self-management abilities in everyday life. The training also helped the students build up self-worth and boost confidence before taking part in the competition. To date, 96 secondary school students have participated.

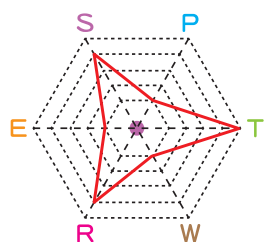


**Training examples: A series of games designed by the Society's occupational therapists to enhance the six components of executive functions**

### Quick Hands

Participants have to stay focused and ignore all interferences within a time limit; locate and hold up the correct toy. Members take turns to respond while other observing members must refrain from giving out clues.

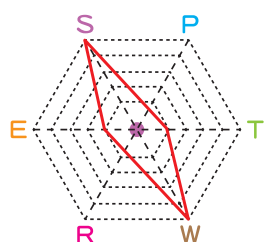
**Training objectives:**



### Emoji Faces

Participants have to stay focused and look at the emojis on the screen; follow the instructions, memorise the string of emojis in chronological order and note the last ones appearing on screen.

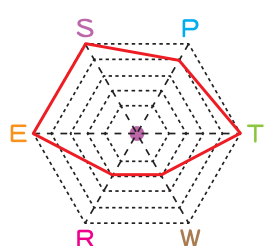
**Training objectives:**



### Secret Mission

Participants must join hands and make plans to use the materials given to create a tower. During the process, they need to stay focused, regulate their emotions and apply good communication skills.

**Training objectives:**



### Encouragement boosts confidence

Eddie Yeung (left), the Society's occupational therapist and one of the programme's instructors, said: "As ADHD children approach adolescence, many of their symptoms are manifested in their

emotions. For example, they could be inattentive, may have difficulties in expressing themselves, lacking self-esteem, difficult to stay focused, which in turn also weaken their motivation to learn; they may become rebellious and blurt words out without much thinking. Sometimes, they may even fight with others to seek attention."

Yeung pointed out that the six sessions of group training helped students understand their own strengths, weaknesses and personality. Participating schools also offered much support to the students who would then have their share of pride as they represented their school; they also gained a stronger sense of identity and peer acceptance. Yeung emphasised: "When we interact with ADHD children and youth, we should use an encouraging approach. This will help exercise their potential when their emotions are well under control."



### Training opens to all secondary schools

Organised by the Society's *Support Programme for Children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder* and sponsored by the Providence Foundation, the joint-school "Brain Challenge" welcome all secondary schools in Hong Kong to participate.

**Target audience:** F.1 to F.3 students with ADHD in Hong Kong

**Format:** Each school recruits a four-member team to attend six sessions of group training conducted by occupational therapists of Heep Hong Society for the "Brain Challenge". Students will strengthen their executive functions and benefit from boosted confidence and spirit of teamwork.

The Church of Christ in China Mong Man Wai College claimed the championship in the second joint-school "Brain Challenge" held in last February. The competition of for the third cohort was completed in July.

**Enquires: 2393 7555    [slp@heephong.org](mailto:slp@heephong.org)**





## Heep Hong Society survey: One-third of autistic students suffer from anxious feelings

As an initiative to support the United Nations' World Autism Awareness Day on 2 April, Heep Hong Society published the survey report on "The Anxious Feelings of Autistic Students". The study was conducted in February 2017 in 10 service centres of Heep Hong Society and 12 schools. Questionnaires were given out to 250 students studying at mainstream primary schools who had been diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). The study revealed that about one-third (33.8%) of autistic students experience mild to serious anxious feelings that require professional intervention. This proportion is much higher than that of overseas counterparts where professional intervention is required in 2% of ordinary children and 22% of autistic children. The top four worrying scenarios amongst primary school students were "I am worried about not getting good grades", "I am worried about the future", "I am afraid of making mistakes" and "I am worried that someone may make fun of me". The findings indicate that their anxiety is closely related to academic achievements, social life, relationship with teachers, or interaction between parents and children.



Read detailed survey report



The Society will soon launch the all new *Anxiety Relief Group for ASD Children Scheme* to help autistic students prevent and handle anxious feelings through evidence-based cognitive behavioural therapy. The scheme will be available as child-only and parent-and-child groups. Stay tuned on the Society's website for details.

## Establishing psychoeducation profile in mainland China



Professor Daniel Shek commended the study for its excellent reliability and validity.

In collaboration with the Children's Developmental Behaviour Centre of The Third Affiliated Hospital of Sun Yat-Sen University and The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Heep Hong Society conducted the validation study of the *Chinese Edition of Psychoeducational Profile (Third Edition)* (CPEP-3) to develop the first norm for autistic children in mainland China. The results of the study were published on 27 March at The Third Affiliated Hospital of Sun Yat-Sen University. This is the first validation study conducted in full accordance with the original version of *Psychoeducational Profile (Third Edition)* (PEP-3) in the mainland. Having passed stringent reliability and validity tests, the study offers an accurate and reliable scientific basis for psychological education assessment for autistic children contributing a profound and important impact on promoting the development of rehabilitation services for autism in mainland China.

Vice President Zhang Qi and Professor Zhou Xiaobing, Director of The Third Affiliated Hospital of Sun Yat-Sen University, Professor Daniel Shek, Associate Vice President (Undergraduate Programme) of The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, and the Society's Director Ms Nancy Tsang officiated the opening ceremony and spoke at the event. The findings of the study were presented by Dr Yu Lu, Assistant Professor of The Hong Kong Polytechnic University. The event attracted over 250 attendees and was covered by 10 media organisations.





## 'Read and Write Trooper' app builds children's language learning foundation

The cross-disciplinary professional team of the Society's *Read and Write: A Jockey Club Learning Support Network* recently developed the app "Read and Write Trooper". Targeted at children from kindergarten 2 to junior primary grades, the app can strengthen children's fundamental language knowledge through interesting games, which increases their motivation to learn while improving listening, speaking, reading and writing skills.

Children will turn themselves into "troopers" and venture into different theme lands, taking on listening, speaking, reading and writing challenges waged by the animals. The app is also equipped with "expert advice", "story station" and demonstration videos such as "stroke order exercise" to teach children language knowledge and learning tips.

This app runs on mobile phones and tablets. It is available in Android and iOS versions for free. Simply download from Google Play Store and Apple App Store by searching the keyword 'Heep Hong Society' and enjoy!



Android



iOS

## New service complex commences operation



Standing at the original site of Catherine Lo Centre at Sandy Bay is our brand new Heep Hong Society Integrated Service Complex which is a 10-storey building with a smart and vibrant exterior. The façade features an eye-catching yellow logo with the letter "C", which embodies our "caring" spirit and people-focused services.

The construction started at the end of 2014 soon after the old building had been demolished. Building works were completed and fitting out is underway. The new building is set to commence service in phases from the 2017/18 school year.

Assistant Director Mr Peter Au-yeung said that the new service complex will become the base for implementing innovative services and training, where children, youth and their families with diverse needs can benefit from our holistic support serving over 1,000 children and youth. Professionals who are interested in serving children and youth are welcome to join us.

As the integrated service complex commence operations, the Society will experiment many innovative services and programmes such as social inclusion and educational events, as well as installing novel facilities, which are self-financed. We sincerely invite your support and donations in helping more children and youth maximise their potential.

**Donate now: 2776 3111    [donations@heephong.org](mailto:donations@heephong.org)**





Ching (right) and the staff of the “SLP Hotline” team work together to offer instant advice to parents’ enquiries.

## First line support for parents

“I received an enquiry from a parent saying that her son is perfectly normal, and no one can tell he is different from other children, but yet he is diagnosed with autism. She felt hopeless when she thought of her son being unable to work or take care of himself when he grew up.” Ching recalled that the parent could not stop weeping, and she tried her best to answer her questions.

When parents find out or suspect that their children have developmental disorders, many would feel helpless and anxious. Their first contact with Heep Hong Society is usually through the enquiry hotline. For many parents, the “Supportive Learning Project (SLP) Hotline” is their first line support when they embark on a journey of nurturing a child with special needs. Ching has worked in the “SLP Hotline” team for 10 years. From time to time, she receives calls from parents who may get emotional. She and her hotline co-workers act as their “emergency counsellor”. “I keep talking with that parent and said — if you don’t take on this challenge with positive thinking, who else can do on your behalf? Taking the first step to seek professional support would help tackle the situation.” Ching also encouraged the parent not to hide at home but instead try to get involved in the community. Besides, Ching introduced her to the programmes organised by the Parents Resource Centre so she can get to know other parents with similar experiences and find mutual support.

Most hotline callers are parents whose children are still in the waiting line for an assessment. Even if their children have already been assessed, parents may not be familiar with developmental disorders and relevant services. To address parents’ needs, the “SLP Hotline” staff needs to leverage their experiences as well as knowledge of various symptoms of special education needs (SEN). “For example, parents enquire about speech therapy service, but upon further probing, the parents may actually reveal that their children also have attention difficulties and behavioural issues, which may require psychological assessment. Therefore we cannot take parents’ questions at face value as this may delay the children’s opportunity of receiving early treatment.” Ching added that many parent callers feel helpless and anxious. While their children’s symptoms may correspond to a certain developmental disorder, the hotline staff would still be very cautious and not mention the name of the disorder before the children are professionally assessed. They would not make casual referrals either, as it could worsen parents’ anxiety.

On top of the basic knowledge about SEN, team members must equip themselves with details of various services and subsidy schemes of Heep Hong Society, as they need to provide most suitable advices for parents. For example, before a child is assessed, psychologists would meet with the parents first. Therefore, they would suggest bringing along an extra family member or friend to look after the child, and this information will help parents make early preparation.

As the services of the Society expand, hotline enquiries also grow. The “SLP Hotline” team always uphold its role to support parents. Aside from responding to dozens of enquiries and voice messages every day, Ching occasionally receives impolite calls or calls from “mystery shoppers” which she can now handle with ease after years of experience. Being able to offer a helping hand to parents when they feel helpless or simply receiving heartfelt thank-you words are highly rewarding experiences. For Ching and her team, this is what motivates them every day.



According to Ching, the first day after a holiday is usually the busiest. Calls come in non-stop.



## The 25<sup>th</sup> Great Chefs of Hong Kong 25 years of charitable efforts and great food

The 25<sup>th</sup> Great Chefs was held on 27 April (Thursday) at Grand Hyatt Hong Kong. A total of 48 distinguished hotels and F&B groups took part in the event, serving their signature dishes and wines throughout the evening. More than 1,000 benefactors attended the event to show their support. The proceeds of the event were donated to the Parents Resource Centres of Heep Hong Society to provide diversified training and support services for children and youth with special needs, as well as their families. The centres serve more than 4,000 families every year.



Participants savoured special dishes prepared by the great chefs, and purchased charity greeting cards drawn by the children and youth of the Society. Many of them praised the wonderful talent of our young artists.



To commemorate the silver jubilee of Great Chefs, guests of honour and event participants celebrated the milestone with a cake-cutting ceremony and a toast. We would like to thank all the food and beverage suppliers for their generous contributions in serving delicacies, all the guests who joined us, and all gift-sponsors as well as the media. We look forward to seeing you again at next year's Great Chefs!

(From left) Ms Teresa Au, Chairman of the Sub-Committee on Fund Raising of Heep Hong Society, Mr Richard Greaves, General Manager and Area Vice President of Grand Hyatt Hong Kong, Mrs Grace Lam, Vice-Chairman of the Great Chefs Working Group, patron Mrs Lucina Ho's representative, Mr Pascal Raffy, Owner of Bovet 1822 Group, Ms Kim Murphy, Chairman of the Great Chefs Working Group, Mrs Emily Tang, Group Vice Chairman and Executive Director of Prince Jewellery & Watch Company, Ms Nancy Tsang, Director of Heep Hong Society, Dr Henry Au-yeung, Chairman of the Executive Committee of Heep Hong Society, and Ms Selina Lok, Member of the Great Chefs Working Group.

Special thanks go to the following donors for making donations of HK\$10,000 or above to the Society between December 2016 and April 2017:

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\*In alphabetical order





## 80 Heep Hong partners conferred 'Caring Company'

We rely on the support of many corporate partners to introduce pioneering learning experiences and opportunities to our children, youth and families. The Hong Kong Council of Social Service recently presented the Caring Company/Caring Organisation for the year 2016/17. This year, 80 companies and organisations nominated by the Society have received recognition, marking an all-time high. The Society would like to express its heartfelt gratitude for their enthusiastic support and care for children with diverse needs.



Rotary Club of City Northwest Hong Kong, Rotary Club of The Peak and Rotary Club of Wanchai

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## Creating an inclusive workplace



Ah Wah said he was glad to work at Welcome Construction, and hoped he could work there until he retires.

Welcome Construction Co. Ltd. has always been committed to promoting social inclusion. Ah Wah, who completed the Society's pre-employment training programme, has now worked at Welcome for five years. He has gained mutual trust and acceptance from his co-workers, and is of great assistance to the company.

Ah Wah was a member of the Society's "STAR Project" for autistic youth. He joined the pre-employment training programme of the Society at the end of 2011 to learn clerical skills such as photocopying, document filing and data entry. Social workers helped him identify suitable openings and prepared him for the interview. Welcome Construction actively approached the Society for employing autistic individuals. Ah Wah was then hired as an accounting clerk, helping with scanning and making copies of documents. Ivan Leung, the line manager of Ah Wah, praises his work, "Ah Wah works hard, is reliable and he performs well. He does not come in late or leave early. While he has taken up much workload of the department, he is optimistic, courteous, humorous and eager to talk giving lots of joy to our team."

To help Ah Wah adapt to the environment, his co-workers take turns to be his work buddy. They allocate tasks and offer guidance to him. The social workers of the Society also visit Welcome Construction regularly to provide support in creating an inclusive workplace. Welcome Construction believes that autistic individuals need to be included in the community and there is plan to employ one more autistic youth from the Society.

For details of the "STAR Project", please call 3679 3060 or visit [www.heephong.org/ssap](http://www.heephong.org/ssap).



## Expressive arts therapy brings caregivers positivity

**Expressive arts therapy is frequently heard in Hong Kong over the past few years. How does it differ from art therapy? How does it work?**

### Art experiences not a prerequisite

Expressive arts therapy and art therapy are both psychotherapy or counselling approaches that make use of art. Art therapy, like music therapy, dance and movement therapy, drama therapy which uses a single art form, is categorised as “creative arts therapies”. Expressive arts therapy, on the other hand, combines multiple art forms, including visual art, music, drama, dance and movement, creative writing, etc as the medium of the therapy. To achieve the best results, the therapist would decide on the mode to use and the integration of different modes, according to the conditions and needs of the client, as well as environmental factors.

Over the course of therapy, art is the medium, and the emphasis is placed on how participants explore and connect with their own body, mind and spirit during the creative process. Therefore, participants do not need to have previous art experiences or techniques. The therapist accompanies the client throughout the process to offer a safe environment, so that the client gains inspirations during the creative process and from their interaction with the arts. Through this they can then improve their self-awareness and ability to handle problems.

Expressive arts therapy is widely applicable: people of different ages, genders, abilities or needs can all take part in it. On the personal level, it is mostly used in an individual or a group basis to help participants deal with emotional, behavioural, or interpersonal relationship issues. On the social level, art exploration and creation are used to improve participants' quality of life, promoting their well-being across the body, mind and spirit. It may also be used to inspire reflections on certain social issues.



### Promoting parents' well-being

I once hosted an expressive arts therapy group entitled “I Have a Date with ME” at the Parents Resource Centre for the parents of children with special needs, which aimed at improving parents' awareness of self-care.

Many parents spend most of the time, efforts and resources on caring for their children, but they often overlook their personal needs. They need space and gentle reminders to take care of themselves too, which can enable and free them up to walk side by side with their children in the long road ahead.

There was a parent who suffered from chronic depression and was hospitalised for half year. She joined the group soon after she was discharged. During the first session, she created a cover for a weekly art journal to express her emotional state. She wrote down “lonely, scared, sometimes wants to escape, wishes to be covered up”. Over the course of eight sessions, through music, body movements, painting, pottery making, as well as her experience across different media, she gained insights and was also able to feel the support she received in life.

In the last session culminating in an exhibition of the parents' work, she shared: “It is a process – I walk alongside myself on the road to recovery. Although there are many obstacles ahead, I will prioritise. I know I have very strong support.”

Although the group was not designed specifically for handling depression, each participant had some takeaways and discoveries as they got in touch with and explore themselves through art-making. They also realised the need to take better care of and accept themselves. They understand the power and resources they have. Indeed, group members cherished the shared moments and mutual support amongst themselves.



**Author:** *Christina Chan*, Centre-in-Charge of Heep Hong Society and current student of Master of Expressive Arts Therapy

References: Ho, Tin Hung Rainbow (2017). “Non-linguistic psychological counselling by expressive arts therapy” in *Heart Works*, issue December 2016 to January 2017, pp. 28-29.  
Chang, Man Yan Fiona (2015). *Expressive Arts Therapy*. Hong Kong: Art in Hospital Limited.

