

A Culminating Amount of Work, A Culminating Amount Towards Wellness

Mr. Gu's work related stresses contributed to an unhealthy breakdown, but he has worked rigorously to recover and strengthen himself, and now, those around him.

Work, work, work, these were key words for me when I strove to make a successful life for my family and myself. Countless overtime hours, sitting behind a desk and managing a series of people, skipping meals, and always under tight deadlines, these were ingrained in my mind, inextricable requirements I wanted to build a financially free life and retire earlier, but little did I know they were slowly taking my health away.

Gradually, I found myself obsessing about my health, being restless and unable to have a proper night's sleep, being uninterested in socializing and around others, and finally, I sank into an unforgiving kind of depression. I questioned everything about my life. As you can imagine, this prevented me from performing well at work, and eventually my employer and co-workers noticed.

I was hospitalized. One day everything just came to an abrupt halt, including my health and I could no longer function the same way before. The treatment process was horrible, painfully memorable, as I had to take four kinds of prescribed medications for depression and insomnia; I felt weak and useless, especially as I could not return to work.

At first I didn't realize a clue how this all happened. I knew I was stressed and not feeling well, but to be hospitalized and on medication? All of this hit me hard; the illness crept slowly into my life and I ignored it for years, never thinking such a traumatic experience would transpire.

Staying in the hospital bed for a week was excruciating for me, as I had all the time in the world to allow negative thoughts to swallow me even more; my appetite was reduced significantly and helplessness was certainly my best friend.

After a week, I was transferred to a day-care treatment centre in North York Hospital Finch and Bathurst site for two months, attending several kinds of recovery programs and sessions. I spent a lot of time on sessions and taking medicine; family and friends would discuss, visit, check-up and try to comfort me. I know they meant the very best and wanted a quick recovery, but the path would need time and lots of work. Rushing the process would just mean another crash sooner or later.

For the first time in my life I was on Employment Insurance Sickness Benefits, unemployed, dependent on a system that was designed to help those who were incapable of securing a job, but now I was using that service even though I had the qualifications to find a job. I lost confidence in myself, but more importantly, I lost confidence from the people I loved and knew. People viewed me as "sick" and unable to work; they were supportive and caring, but ultimately, their concern was one that viewed me as someone who was disabled and not the same—incapable of returning to the world at that time.

Eventually, I was introduced to Hong Fook, the Promotion and Prevention Program, which works with individuals to empower them with knowledge to combat their illness before and after, assisting me on my path to recovery. At Hong Fook, I learned about self-stigmatization and communal stigmatization, and how to overcome that from the community. Over time, my passion and commitment to mental health, especially as I started to attend the various programs Hong Fook offers from Qi Gong classes, singing and dancing, painting, mental health workshops, and Peer Leadership programs; reflecting on the whole experience and where I am now, the ability to share my story and now mentor those who are starting their mental health journey is enlightening, humbling, and absolutely rewarding.

My journey over the past six years towards mental health has been transformative; I am back at work for years, and yes, once again I am managing and dealing with serious deadlines and clients, but I am far more equipped to address problems of my personal health, recognizing when I need to step back and reach out for help. I am proud to say that Hong Fook is a part of me, but I am also a part of them as well.

Mr. Gu still attends several workshops and hopes his story can illustrate the services he benefited from Hong Fook and tell readers that they are not alone.