

# SINGAPORE GOVERNMENT PRESS RELEASE

PUBLICITY DIVISION · MINISTRY OF CULTURE · CITY HALL SINGAPORE 6

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SPEECH BY MR CHAN CHEE SENG, SENIOR PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY  
(SOCIAL AFFAIRS) AT THE FIRST MASS COUNSELLING SESSION OF  
PARENTS OF DRUG ADDICTS HELD ON FRIDAY, 13 MAY 1977

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I am glad that you were able to attend this evening's meeting. I hope you will find this and subsequent sessions useful in better understanding the problems and needs of your children, their trouble with drugs and some ways to prevent them from further drug abuse.

Your son or daughter has undergone a six-month period of treatment and rehabilitation in the Drug Rehabilitation Centre. This however does not mean that they are completely cured. Only the drugs have been removed. Their craving for drugs, will exist over a long period of time. This is the crux of the problem in dealing with drug addicts. It defies easy solutions. But, we do know that, if they are given the understanding, goodwill and opportunity; are assisted to resolve their personal and family problems which had contributed to their initial involvement with drugs; and are guided to adopt a new outlook and direction in life, we could minimise their return to drugs. It is for these reasons that compulsory aftercare was introduced on 20 August 1976. Under this scheme, every person released from the Drug Rehabilitation Centre has to undergo a period of compulsory aftercare for two years.

Between 20 August 1976 and 31 March 1977, an eight-month period, 628 cases (made up 549 males and 79 females) were released from the Drug Rehabilitation Centre under compulsory aftercare. Some of these cases are young children.

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~~While the ultimate success or failure of compulsory after-~~  
care can only be determined over a number of years after the cases  
are successfully discharged from their supervision, early results  
could suggest that compulsory aftercare has a useful and rightful  
place in the total correctional system for drug addicts. However,  
even at its best, compulsory aftercare can only supplement the  
concern and efforts of parents. It cannot replace your obligations  
and responsibilities to your children who are troubled with drugs.

Drug addicts come from every strata of society. Their root  
problem is often found in the poor relationships in the family that  
persist and tend to preserve their need for drugs. Parental action  
would suggest the removal or alleviation of these factors or  
modification of attitudes before further involvement in drug abuse  
can set in. It is in this context that aftercare is viewed as a  
service to the families and a continuing contact with the dis-  
charged drug addict under supervision. A discharged drug addict  
usually returns to live with his family. The chances of successful  
aftercare would be greatly enhanced if during his period of stay at  
the Drug Rehabilitation Centre, the family prepares itself for his  
eventual return and strengthens itself to give encouragement and  
worthwhile support to him on his return home.

Some families unfortunately, do not make a deliberate  
attempt to resolve their difficulties or modify their attitudes  
which are crucial to success in aftercare. Their children on their  
release from the Drug Rehabilitation Centre, discover much to their  
disappointment, that they are returning home to the same or even  
more depressed conditions. And very often they are out on the very  
same night to satisfy their conscious urge, amounting to a  
compulsion, to use drugs.

Studies and experiences have shown that drug addicts come  
from unhappy homes. They have no pride in their families. They  
have no one to fall back. The communications between adults and  
children are largely confined to superficial matters. The  
components of character and values are not best transmitted by  
books or sermons but rather by close relationship with someone else  
whom the children comes to admire and respect and wishes to emulate.

The young have always sought to find their own unique answers to the basic questions of living and to seek other personal relationships as a source of support and security. To a great extent unfortunately the substitutes for the family in these matters have been the peer group. Thus, when someone urges them to take a dose of drugs, they are less likely to feel that they should refuse because they have no established parental guidelines to fall back. Their boundaries between right or wrong, between wants and needs, are blurred.

In some families with drug addicts parents tend to interpret the word 'progressive' to be synonymous with lack of guidelines or discipline. The result is that there is no established behavioural concepts about the dividing line between propriety and impropriety. As a result, the individual reacts to a variety of situations including continued drug use on the basis of emotions and wants rather than within the context of parentally established and accepted guidelines. Parents sometimes feel that if they are to question their children on their activities, the children would resent them. This notion is wrong. Indeed, the children would well respect them for the concern shown.

Parenthood, if it is not to end in disaster, or fear of disaster, is a great responsibility, particularly to those with adolescent children in the context of the present current drug situation. It involves a continual struggle against harmful influences from within and outside the family. It demands your interest in their activities and sometimes a measure of self-denial for their sake.

The aftercare services have been created specifically to help your son or daughter to veer away from further drug abuse. It can best be achieved within a bond of confidence and trust among your son, his Aftercare Officer and you. The Aftercare Officer is always ready, willing and able to help you and your son. Make the best use of his services.