



 **impart** mid year update

celebrating progress,
surveying potential

3 arms, over 200 youths, over 200 volunteers, and more stories than our numbers can tell!

Growth, growth, and more growth has been the theme of the past 6 months, which has made for an exciting and encouraging first half of the year. But everyone knows that growth always includes growth pains, present struggles, and future challenges.

This newsletter edition is fairly extensive. We've summarised 6 month's worth of growth, and we included stories from the ground to accompany each update. Let us know what you think of them! We intend to publish these newsletters with greater frequency matched by greater brevity.

Read on to find out how Impart has navigated 2021's growth, and how we see the rest of the year shaping up.





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celebrating progress, surveying potential

Naomi approached us in the first week of April. Just 19 years of age, she was scrambling to find accommodation for her father and two younger sisters. Her single-parent family had been renting out one small room in a HDB flat owing to a complex slew of circumstances, but their landlord had a sudden change of plans: They were given one week's notice to find alternative accommodation.

As though things were not stressful enough, this was also an examination year for Naomi's younger sisters, who would be taking their 'N' and 'O' levels.

She knew the significance of securing an education. She used to top her class even as she juggled a part-time job, but had to forgo further studies after her 'N' levels to work a full time job -- her father was struggling to sustain the family's financial health, and sacrifice was needed. From this angle, Naomi is no stranger to stepping up to the plate for her family. Help was needed, and Naomi was determined to make it happen.



One significant aspect of Naomi's story is the way she got connected to Impart. Amenable as always, Naomi got along well with her co-workers who naturally responded with concern about her predicament.

Farah was one of these co-workers, and Farah thought it best to point Naomi to Impart. After all, Farah was a youth who had thankfully experienced the best of Impart, having seen how many helping hands can come together to buffer the worst of crises.



This is significant, because it fleshes out the **community-building aspect** of Impart's work. It's true that hurt people hurt people, and equally so that helped people help people.

While Farah wasn't in the best position herself, she had grown to experience the best of community-led resilience in her life. The systems were failing Naomi, and her family was teetering on the brink of desperation. But Farah's care and advocacy brought Naomi to Impart, where we could join in as part of Naomi's community as well.

Then entered **Impart's Mental Health Care**. It can be tempting to lock in on Naomi's material needs, but wiser men say that only fools rush into the pragmatics. As much as Impart labored to navigate the systems and work out contingencies for Naomi's housing, we labored equally hard to ensure that avenues for mental health care would be available and accessible for Naomi. A volunteer youth advocate met with Naomi to listen to her and understand her story. And our programs and services were readied to receive her.

It was a hectic few weeks of stress. It felt like the weight of her world was on her shoulders, and repeated flurries of whatsapp messages navigated every bump along the way. Thankfully, things eventually stabilised for Naomi. Her family is on the wait-list for rental housing, and residing in a transitional shelter. Having processed her emotions and circumstances, Naomi excitedly shared with us a few weeks ago,

"I can finally go back to school next year."



When that happens, **Impart Education** will be primed to help her realise her academic potential, and also explore other modes of learning and development where she might have interests.

Higher education will bring its own set of challenges, and while we cannot guarantee a smooth transition, we can guarantee that Naomi will not navigate the bumps alone.



In reflecting on the past 6 months, I thought that Naomi's experience captured the heart of why we work through Impart Education, Community, and Mental Health Care. These programs, services, and missions are individually important, but they must never work alone.

Community needs are always complex, and we must never settle for reductionist solutions. Our community-building efforts must work in tandem with a youth's most pressing developmental needs, and communities must be empowered to advocate for change. This is why our next 6 months will be focused on synergising our services across our different arms, and with other relevant stakeholders. Stay tuned!

Beyond communicating the heart behind Impart's work, Naomi's experience also communicates the way we envision growth: drawn out over time, replete with challenges, and built by the everyday faithfulness of community.

We'll spend more time unpacking what growth has looked like at Impart over the past 6 months. For now, know that your presence and your efforts have played a part in growing Impart to support youths like Naomi.

Modern problems, modern solutions.

Big Group Sharing, May 2021

Undeterred by gathering restrictions, our recent Big Group Session on 18 May 2021 had a turnout of 127 volunteers across our 3 arms; we even had to upgrade our zoom account!

While online engagement is admittedly challenging, we were kept engaged through an interactive drawing activity, sharings from volunteers, a presentation by Jay that utilized a virtual background hack, and breakout room discussions.

Be sure to join us for the next Big Group Session towards the year's end, hopefully in-person!



Seen us around?

You might have caught us at various public events over the past 6 months!

From engagements like sitting on panel for Baby Boy (2020), we had the privilege of sharing our experiences and insights across many public events; 7 in total for the first half of the year!

And we're just getting started. Stay tuned for more updates about future engagements, and reach out if you know of anyone who would like to have us!



Merch, Models, and Media

If you missed out on last year's merch drop, fret not! We have another round of merchandise coming your way soon. Send us a message if you have any merch ideas; we'd love to see what we can do together.



In the meantime, you might have already heard of our partnership with EXIT, a curated fashion retail store featuring global streetwear labels and our house-brand EXIT LABS. Founded in 2018, EXIT started with the goal of creating a safe space for streetwear lovers to connect, buy and sell their favourite grails.

Two of our youths modelled for their latest campaign, and part of their proceeds from sales in the month of Jul 2021 will go to an Impart youth employment. Be sure to check them out!

The second half of the year will also have its fair share of media features. A podcast, video series, and many other in-depth interviews are in the pipeline, so stay connected on @impartsg for the latest updates!

Impart Community

In the past 6 months of Common Ground Floorball, we converted open community spaces into floorball courts, and played alongside many new teammates. We tried new projects, found things that worked, and others that didn't.

As a community, we reflected on these meaningful experiences, the challenges we faced together, and our shared aspirations moving forward.

Together, we realised that the most meaningful moments took place when community-wide outreach events were matched with quiet moments of relationship building in small groups.

Communities have also shown to be diverse and dynamic. Beyond floorball, youth residents have varied interests, skills, and assets to offer. These aspects make them a crucial part of the solution to shared community challenges.



So, the common ground project was born!

At CGP, we work alongside youth residents to organise various community building projects. These projects range from community-wide events to small-group engagements, with relationship building within the community kept at the core of our efforts.

A community's diversity can be its strength, and we are working towards displaying its strength in technicolor vision. CGP has included 7 new activities, including but not limited to origami, art jamming and mobile legends.

Stories from the ground

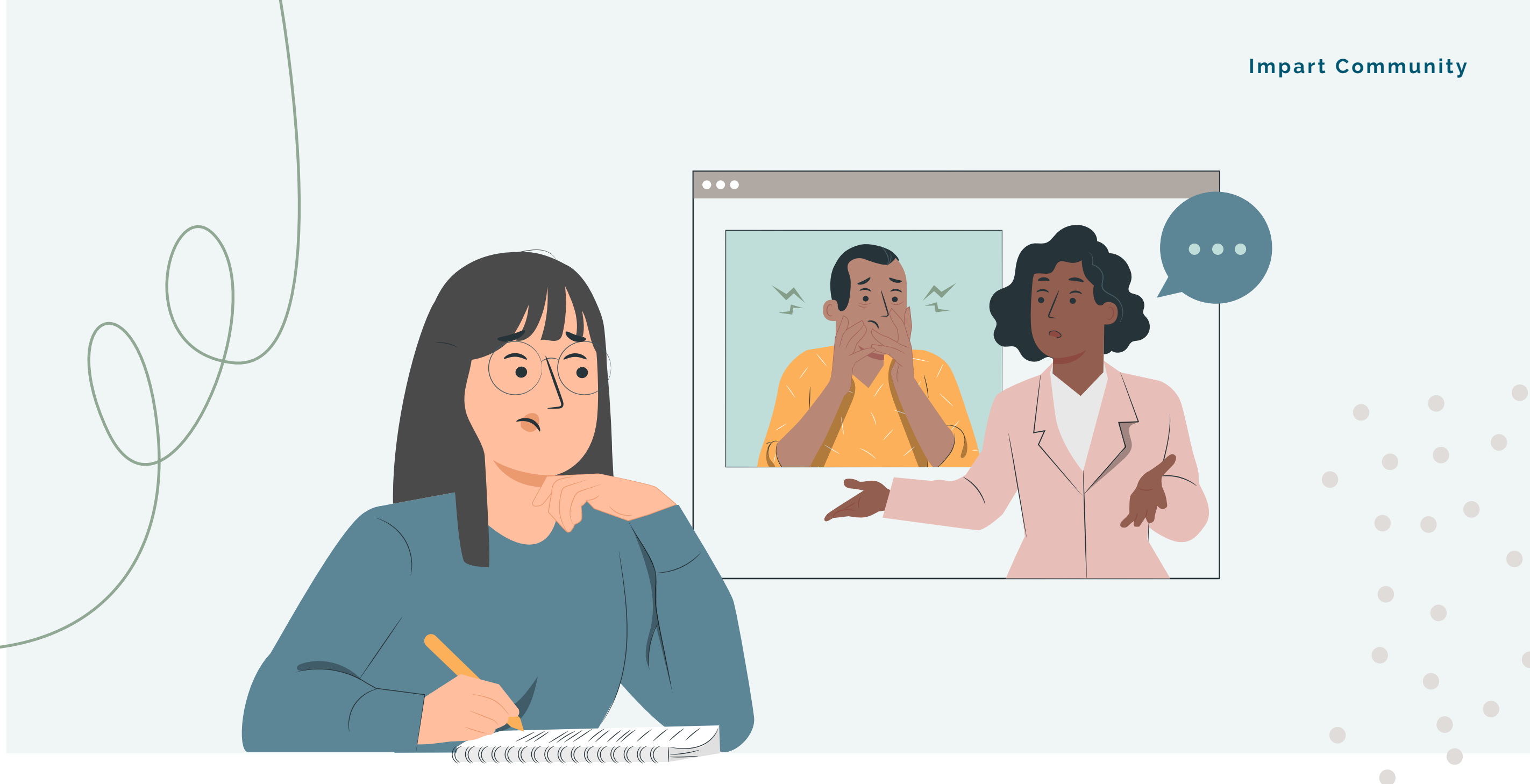
We met Aziq¹ through common place rhythms of community life. Raucous laughter and the sound of children guffawing caught his attention, and he felt safe approaching our floorball group in play at his void deck.

Common Ground Floorball, our community outreach programme, was working as intended. As much as there was deliberate planning in the programs and processes, they were deliberations and plans for organic community life.

And so it was encouraging to witness Aziq's approach; he even brought his younger brother along, and it wasn't long before he accepted us as a part of his community.

¹ Pseudonym





It was a few weeks later that we bumped into Mdm Lee², a student welfare officer from a nearby primary school. She shared with us that Aziq and his brother attended her primary school, and they were known to her for their regular absenteeism.

In fact, Aziq had recently been caught by the Police for committing an offence, and was placed on a 6-month pre-court diversionary programme known as the Guidance Programme (GP).

Completing the GP was imperative: he would no longer have to be charged in court, and would have an untarnished record.

However, Aziq had difficulty keeping to the daily 7pm curfew that his GP mandated. He was

routinely out past 7pm despite multiple reminders from his parents and Mdm Lee, and it didn't help that he never explained his reasons to Mdm Lee. He was at serious risk of failing his GP because of seemingly rebellious behaviour.

² Pseudonym

So we responded with outreach. Our volunteers found him at his void deck, and Aziq started opening up after some conversation.

His house overlooked the common play areas in his neighborhood, and the everyday sounds of community life tormented him every time it went past 7pm.



No one was around to engage him at home, and it only made matters worse that he could pick up the distinct sounds of his brothers at play in his neighborhood.

From this angle, it made perfect sense that 11 year old Aziq would not stay at home. His desire to connect with his community had to be encouraged, and we were determined to make it happen.

Our team began a small group engagement project: We knew from previous observations in the community that Aziq had a keen interest and budding talent in origami.

While none of us had his interest or his talent, two of our volunteers began meeting him over Zoom every week at 7pm for an origami folding session. Mdm Lee also participated by furnishing Aziq with origami paper and a box for keepsakes.



All of these little moments of engagement are, well, little moments. But they point to something larger. They point to an approach to community work that recognises strengths before cauterising weaknesses; they point to community work that is community work -- cliché as it sounds, it takes nothing less than a village to raise a child past 7pm; and they point to larger narratives changed.

Aziq now excitedly displays his box of origami to Mdm Lee after every session of Common Ground Origami. Time that once reminded Aziq of his delinquency has been reclaimed as time for growth.

Impart Education

It's been a hectic past 6 months! Impart Education's academic tutoring program has reached maximum capacity at slightly over 100 youths.

As with previous years, we received referrals from a wide range of institutions and outfits: youth rehabilitation institutions, government agencies, healthcare institutions (IMH), major social service agencies, and grassroots were consistently represented.

An interesting addition to the lineup has been our engagement with Student Welfare Officers from various secondary schools.

This marks movement into a hybrid model of engagement: our prior models majored heavily on taking on referrals, and then engaging them in community spaces. But in our collaboration with secondary schools, we have commenced community-led engagement within formal institutions of education. Much to be done, and much to think about!



Last-Mile Support

We've also piloted our first run of Last-Mile Support. We realised that our youths' felt needs and motivation tended to peak towards the final 2-3 months leading up to the national examinations.

In response, we decided to bring in education professionals to curate last-mile preparation courses for certain subjects and examination skills; English oral examination preparation, Principles of Accounts crash courses, and subject specific study best-practices are currently in the pipeline.

Let's continue to cheer our youths on as they head towards their examination days!

Our plans for broad-based education programs such as career exposure programs, engineering workshops, and learning journeys, had to take the backseat given Covid-19 restrictions, but they are still firmly in the pipeline. Stay tuned to hear about how diverse passions and learning continue to be nurtured.

Stories from the ground

We're not sure when it started, but Andrew³ knew that something was going wrong in his life at school. Social interactions were anxiety inducing, everyday conversations were laborious, and things felt unpleasant all around.

It wasn't long before things got worse, and Andrew had to take an extended break from school; experiencing psychosis at a young age will do that to the best of us.

Thankfully, Andrew found professional care to support him in his mental health journey. This stabiliser also afforded him the opportunity to return to school, even though he would be two years ahead of his classmates.

³ Pseudonym



Most of us will remember that the most terrifying thing about school is not the discipline master, but the prospect of not having friends around. Against this backdrop of academic and social uncertainty, Nathan entered the fray.

Andrew needed a mode of educational support that was adaptable, consistent, and personal. Nathan saw the need, and began joining him in persevering through the challenges.

It has almost been a year since they first met each other, and Nathan has been nothing less than adaptable, consistent, and personal -- so much so, that Andrew beams whenever he tells his caseworker about Nathan's basketball sessions and promise of instant noodle cooking parties.



Nathan, volunteer with Impart Education

Change seems placid on the surface. Andrew trudges along the Singaporean education system, progressing term by term in the way expected of every schooling youth.

But look closer, and you'll see a youth who is triumphing through psychological adversity day by day; a youth who is overcoming 2 years of educational setback whenever he shows up for class; a youth whose stutter has been wiped out by consistent friendship; and a community of care at every turn of the journey.

However, the way forward is not that simple. Andrew recently shared sorrow with Nathan: He had just received news from his caseworker that his mental health history creates significant challenges in pursuing his desired profession.



This was a helping profession that had captured his attention; having received help in the past and present, he aspires to make help his livelihood in the future. So sorrow was shared, and the way forward remains unclear.

Still, Andrew isn't giving up, and we're not giving up either. Unclear paths forward also spell possibilities for broader dreams. We'll take it on, one moment at a time.

Impart Mental Health Care

Impart officially grew to include a Mental Health Care arm in the month of May. This arm had already been operational in a separate capacity as SYNC (Strengthening Youths in a Network of Care) over the past year, and we're really excited for the growth to come!

We've always known that our various developmental opportunities (i.e. academics, passions, sports, etc.) are powerful vehicles for change. What we've grown to recognise is that these vehicles will not travel far without a well-paved road: Mental health care is a crucial aspect of a well-paved road, and developmental headway is now more promising.



SYNC's Programs and Services



Project Cope

involves volunteers journeying alongside children and youths to learn adaptive coping strategies.



Project Hope

supports youths in the journey of equipping them with practical skills to empower them in terms of interests, education and/or employment.



IMNA (I'M Not Alone)

is an outreach service which acts as the first line of response by pairing volunteers with a child or youth facing psychological or life adversities to build motivation and instil readiness for change through Motivational Interviewing (MI).



Advocacy

increases the accessibility of therapeutic resources through decommodification.

In particular, mental health care at Impart supports youths through their psychological adversities in their community spaces. This is a break away from traditional models, where mental health care is typically institutionalised and medicalised.

It's quite a lot to take in, and rightfully so, for there's so much more for all of us to learn about mental health care!

Find out more details about our new operations at impart.sg/mental-health-care.

Stories from the ground

Some of us might recognise the notion of a strawberry generation as a poorly aged trope, but this idea remains comfortably nestled in many minds. Not enough gumption. Not enough gusto. Not resilient.

Perhaps these sentiments spill over most clearly as we witness a mental health epidemic wash over our land.

Yes, we've grown to acknowledge that there's always more than meets the eye, and mental health is multicausal. But isn't it true that at one level or another, people who face significant mental health adversities just aren't resilient enough?

Against the grain of popular sentiment, Mandy came to see a different side of resilience in her journey with Hailey⁴ at Project Cope.

⁴ Pseudonym

Hailey had been referred to our Mental Health Care arm by her Child Protection Officer at the end of 2020, and Mandy had undergone requisite training to come alongside Hailey.

She remembers the first time they met and the modern white aesthetic of Hailey's house; sleek, clean, and seemingly uncreased by the chaos that raged within.

Hailey's hair sat at her hip. Not a deliberate sartorial decision, but a facet of life as a Hikikomori: Acute social withdrawal, extreme degrees of social isolation, and self-confinement are typical behavior patterns for Hikikomori, who have been described as 'modern-day hermits'.



Mandy, volunteer with Impart Mental Health Care

In Hailey's case, she had only stepped out of the house once or twice all year long. The effects of life-in-isolation made themselves known through her muted responses and instinctive aversion to eye contact.

She had been out of school for 2 years, and her experience battling significant psychological adversities for almost twice as long had evidently taken its toll. Social interactions were challenging, so awkward moments peppered their first engagement.

How would you have described Hailey after meeting her for the first time? Shy? Afflicted? Unfortunate? For even the best of us, resilience would probably be far from our list of adjectives.

Time went on, as did Mandy and Hailey's engagement. Project Cope works by pairing volunteers, or Youth Advocates, to teach and practice coping skills with youths facing psychological adversity.

These skills are undergirded by the Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT) framework, and psychoeducation of this sort can oftentimes be dry.

However, Mandy and Hailey found themselves soldiering on, buffered through the process by their budding relationship and shared interests in video games.

It also helped that Mandy had the companionship of Mag, who was the other Youth Advocate supporting Hailey.



Hailey is now five months into the program; just one month away from completing Project Cope, and her growth has been encouraging.

Sessions are no longer peppered by awkward silence, but filled with warm conversation. Emotions are clearly identified and experiences are thoughtfully processed; no little feat, if you pause to consider how you work through your emotions and experiences of crises.

Hailey's mental health is on an upward trajectory, so much so that Child Protection Services has decided to close their case given her progress.



So it has been encouraging all around, but you might be wondering, where's the resilience? Mandy grew to recognise that it had always been there, even before we entered her life. It's true that Hailey has continued in psychological adversity for 4 years, but it's also true that she has always continued:

Some of her greatest triggers surround her at home, but she never gives up. School is a site of terrible trauma, but she privately presses on in education. Her long-term goals remain hazy given her setbacks, but she continues to dream, and to work on her dreams, proactively seeking out career exposure and development opportunities.

Her closest friend is enmeshed in deeper psychological adversity, but she has always been a bulwark of refuge. She continued engaging psychological help even though her first therapist routinely disregarded her social shame by abruptly pulling her out of class for sessions.



She continued even though her second therapist, whom she had bonded with, abruptly left to resolve a personal emergency. And she continued even though her third therapist never managed to make her feel safe around him. What is this if not resilience persevering?

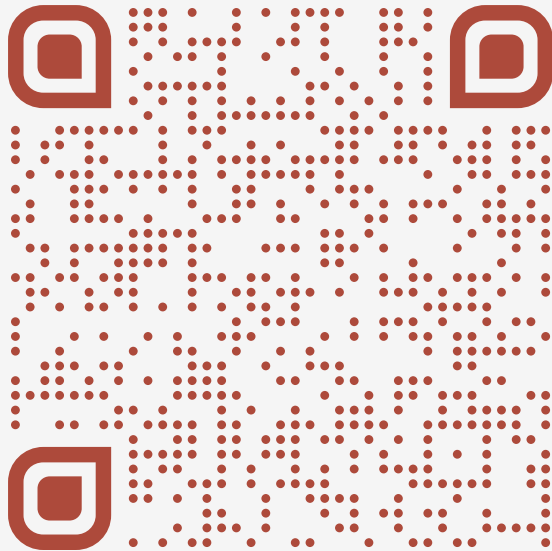
Fixate on the breakdowns, the crises, and the awkward silences, and you are bound to see a strawberry generation. But enter their world, listen, and journey along the way Mandy and many others continue to do, and you might just start to see what resilience looks like.

Reflecting on the Little Moments with Rui Zhe, a Volunteer Tutor

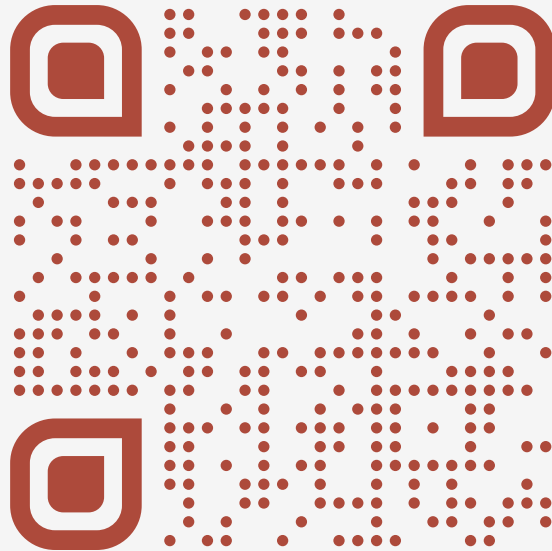
We're pretty fortunate at Impart Education. From time to time, we get to see relationships and growth that venture beyond formal education. One of these we had the privilege to capture in a recent video featuring Ruwen - an Impart youth and his tutor, Rui Zhe.



Learn more about Rui Zhe and Ruwen's journey here:



Learn more about other Stories here:



Special Thanks

Thanks in full, in private and public, are due to so many of you. Impart has always been a community-building effort, and we will be in touch in our own ways throughout the rest of this year.

At this mid-year mark, our special thanks go out to all of our volunteers. You are the hearts and hands that make us who we are, and we wouldn't have it any other way. Thank you for being a part of this community!



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