

YEO BOON KHIM MIND SCIENCE CENTRE

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Training the MIND A different kind of GYM

You wouldn't think twice about hitting the weights to keep your body in shape, but did you know your mind could use a workout too? Just as muscles grow stronger with regular exercise, our mental fitness strengthens when we learn to notice the ebb and flow of thoughts, emotions, and sensations without slipping into automatic, sometimes destructive, habits. By cultivating gentle, non-judgemental awareness, such as pausing before reacting or observing rather than judging, we empower ourselves to make more conscious choices in every moment.



Tucked within Alexandra Hospital's D.S. Lee Foundation Mind Art Experiential Lab (MAELab), MindGym is a dedicated space for evidence-based mindfulness training and practice. Designed to support mental well-being and resilience, it offers a suite of mindfulness programmes. Here, two of our lead trainers – Dr Virginia Lien and Adj Assoc Prof Mabel Yap – share how two mindfulness-based programmes, Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) and Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy for Life (MBCT-L), have benefited them personally

Meet Our Trainers



Dr Virginia Lien
Medical Doctor, Psychotherapist
and Mindfulness Teacher
Director, The Mindful
Compassion Project

"MBCT was originally designed for patients with recurrent depression," explains Dr Lien. "Successful trials indicate that teaching people how their minds work—being mindful of low mood, body responses and automatic negative thoughts—can help them choose more helpful ways of coping, and is as effective as antidepressants in preventing relapse."

She highlights MBCT's focus on cognitive reactivity, which refers to the way our minds respond to stress through rumination, rigidity, and negative thought patterns that aggravate suffering. Adapted from the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) programme for chronic pain, MBCT brings together breathwork, body awareness, mindful movement, and thought observation to build resilience.

Many assume mindfulness means long, silent meditation, but Dr Lien reminds us that it can begin with small, simple steps.

"We teach ultrashort practices such as three mindful breaths, the STOP technique, a gratitude pause, mindful walking or simply savouring a drink that busy healthcare professionals can fit into any schedule."

Adj Assoc Prof Mabel Yap
Medical Doctor and Public Health Specialist
Ministry of Health, Singapore and
Duke-NUS Medical School



"MBCT-L has profoundly impacted my life by equipping me with tools to maintain balance and mitigate stress," says Adj Assoc Prof Yap.

"Understanding that stress arises from my perception of situations, rather than the events themselves, has enabled me to respond more effectively."

Professionally, these skills were invaluable during the pandemic, helping her remain present and focused for her team. Personally, mindfulness supported her through profound loss:

"During a personal bereavement, mindfulness helped me stay grounded and present, allowing me to process my grief and show compassion towards myself and others."

Her advice to beginners is both practical and profound:

"Be patient and kind to yourself. Start with just a few minutes a day such as mindful eating, walking or listening and gradually build up. Practising with a group can make all the difference. The goal is not perfection but consistent effort. Celebrate small successes and do not be discouraged by setbacks. Over time, mindfulness will become a natural and integral part of your life."



▲ Dr Virginia Lien and Adj Assoc Prof Mabel Yap leading a mindfulness session for healthcare professionals as part of the Exemplary Leader Development Programme for NUHS staff. Participants were introduced to practices such as mindful eating, empathetic communication and being a supportive listening ear.

Mindfulness for HEALTHY MIND *at Every Age*

Mindfulness practices can help us manage stress, reduce anxiety, and stay present—and may also offer long-term cognitive benefits, such as slowing the onset of dementia and supporting overall brain health.

One mindfulness programme showing this potential is Mindfulness Awareness Practice (MAP). It is integrated as one of the core components of the Mind Science Centre's Age Well Everyday (AWE) Club programme, a translational research initiative in the community that explores non-drug approaches to cognitive resilience and dementia prevention.



At its core, MAP teaches the “three S’s” of mindfulness: Stillness, Silence and Simplicity. It helps individuals develop greater awareness, calm and clarity, which are inner resources that become increasingly important as we age.

To bring these benefits to the community, mindfulness trainer Mrs Wee Geok Hua, along with her students Mr Han Thong Kwang and Mr Roy Cheng, teaches MAP to AWE Club volunteers, who then guide seniors at their respective centres.

During the MAP workshop, volunteers were introduced to a range of foundational techniques, including mindful breathing, body scans, mindful walking and mindful eating. These exercises encourage present-moment awareness, gratitude, and a deeper appreciation of everyday experiences.

Mindfulness as an Anchor in Later Life

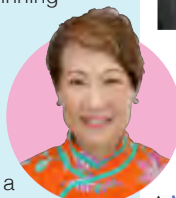
Later life presents many new challenges—slower routines, health concerns, and shifting social circles. Mindfulness offers tools to navigate these transitions with composure and clarity.

“Mindfulness helps us face the realities of ageing with grace and steadiness,” shares Mrs Wee.

▲ The Mindfulness Awareness Practice (MAP) course held on 4 May 2025 was conducted for Age Well Everyday (AWE) Club volunteers.

“It’s about learning to respond to life, rather than react, so we are less caught up in past regrets or future anxieties. For older adults, it can provide emotional grounding, reduce loneliness, and bring peace to daily living.”

Each AWE Club session is thoughtfully structured, beginning with physical exercises, followed by activities such as art, music reminiscence, MAP, and more, while monthly health talks help seniors make informed lifestyle decisions, creating a holistic, multi-layered approach to ageing well.



▲ Mrs Wee Geok Hua is a mindfulness trainer and volunteer with the Mind Science Centre's Age Well Everyday (AWE) Programme.



▲ AWE participants practising Mindfulness Awareness Practice (MAP) during their session.

FOLLOW US

Follow @agewelleveryday on Facebook and Instagram for updates on AWE Club activities

MSC RADAR OUR TOP STORIES

1 New Frontier: Brain Health in the 21st Century



At the latest **Greater Good Series (GGS)** luncheon, Professor Simon Collinson, Clinical Neuropsychologist and Visiting Professor at the Yeo Boon Khim Mind Science Centre, explained why it's crucial to start protecting brain health well before dementia sets in.

Dementia develops gradually, often taking years before symptoms become noticeable. He also highlighted the exciting potential of emerging digital tools that can detect early signs and support personalised brain health plans.

One of the earliest warning signs is Subjective Memory Impairment (SMI), a stage where individuals notice changes in memory even when standard tests show no issues. SMI often comes before Mild Cognitive Impairment (MCI) and, eventually, dementia. Alarming, one in nine adults over 45 experience SMI, with many unaware of it.

Urban Calm in the Heart of the City



◀ Curator of Nature's Embrace, Ms See Yee Thien, guiding Mr Tan Kiat How, Senior Minister of State for the Ministry of Digital Development and Information and the Ministry of National Development, through the virtual forest bathing experience.

The Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) recently launched **Well-Being in the City: Innovating Healthy Living**, an exhibition that explores how thoughtful urban design can strengthen social connection and promote mental well-being.

As part of the showcase, MAELab's third curation, **Nature's Embrace**, was featured at the URA Centre. This virtual forest bathing experience, inspired by the Japanese practice of *Shinrin-yoku*, recreates the sights and sounds of a calming nature walk, offering a moment to pause, breathe, and reconnect with nature, all within an indoor space.

Preliminary research from MAELab suggests that even brief exposure to such nature-based digital experiences can help reduce stress and support mental wellness.

MISSED NATURE'S EMBRACE?

You can still explore the full virtual exhibition anytime by scanning the QR code.



Scan this QR code to read more online about all the stories!

Our Mission

With a key focus on Research, Education, and Upstream Intervention Services, we strive to make a meaningful impact on the mental health landscape across the age continuum. We are the first mental wellness centre in the world dedicated to addressing Asian culture, lifestyle, phenotype, and issues—developing innovative, holistic solutions that are uniquely Asian. Our ongoing research explores the potential benefits of engaging in mindfulness, art reminiscence, tai chi, horticulture, rainforest therapy, choral singing, and Chinese ink painting. Support our meaningful cause by funding our research efforts!



HEALTH TIP

SMI is closely linked to cardiovascular and metabolic health. Simple lifestyle changes such as improving sleep, mood, nutrition and physical activity can go a long way in delaying or even preventing cognitive decline.



Spring in Full Bloom at Paragon

To celebrate its 25th anniversary, Paragon presents Spring Soirée, a serene and thoughtfully curated experience running from 17 April to 1 June. This unique showcase brings together art, floral design, and wellness in a meaningful tribute to mental well-being.

We are deeply honoured that the Yeo Boon Khim Mind Science Centre was selected as the beneficiary, with 100% of proceeds from art and floral sales go towards supporting our mental health research and outreach initiatives.

About

The Greater Good Series

Drive impactful change. Inspire actions. Advance mental health initiatives.

The NUS Yeo Boon Khim Mind Science Centre Greater Good Series brings together changemakers in mental health, including leading academics, educators, policymakers, philanthropists and advocates who are driving meaningful impact in mental well-being.

Centred on themes such as generosity, community service, leadership, personal well-being and mental resilience, the series fosters thought leadership and collaboration to address pressing societal and mental health challenges.

This inspiring initiative has been made possible through the generous and sustained support of **Mr Tan Kwang Hwee (Mr K. H. Tan)**, Managing Director of Newsman Realty. His unwavering commitment to advancing mental health has enabled the Centre to organise these impactful talks since 2016.

From nutrition and mental health to youth resilience and dementia prevention, each session delivers insights that spark reflection, action and lasting change, empowering individuals and communities in their journey towards **An Undeclared Mind**.



▲ Emeritus Professor Leo Tan, Chairperson of the Mind Science Centre Art Science Council, with Mr Tan Kwang Hwee at the January 2025 GGS luncheon.

4

RESEARCH

From Lock-Up to Lift-Up: What Helps Ex-Offenders Stay on Track?

Rebuilding your life after prison isn't just a plot twist in a redemption movie—it's a real-life challenge filled with social hurdles, stigma and daily dose of grit. With long-term recidivism rates hovering around 36.8%, it's clear that the journey from incarceration to reintegration isn't easy... but it is possible.

The *Prison Fellowship Resilience Study*, a collaboration between the Yeo Boon Khim Mind Science Centre and **Prison Fellowship Singapore**, spoke with ex-offenders who had successfully stayed out of prison for over five years—individuals who didn't just bounce back, but bounced forward.

What helped these "overcomers" the most?

The top traits reported by more than 4 in 5 participants were:

Positive Self-Image & Optimism

Believing you can change is half the battle.

Spirituality & Faith

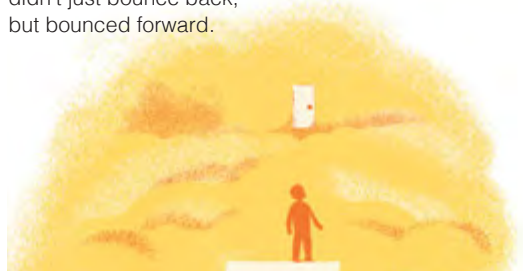
A strong sense of purpose can be a powerful guide.

Social Support

Strong social connections provide emotional support and practical help during tough times.

Confidence & Responsibility

Owning your actions is empowering.



Assoc Prof John Wong with Dr Ramaswamy Viswanathan, Immediate Past President (2025–2026), and delegates from the Philippines.

Associate Professor John Wong Chee Meng has been named a 2025 International Distinguished Fellow by the American Psychiatric Association (APA)

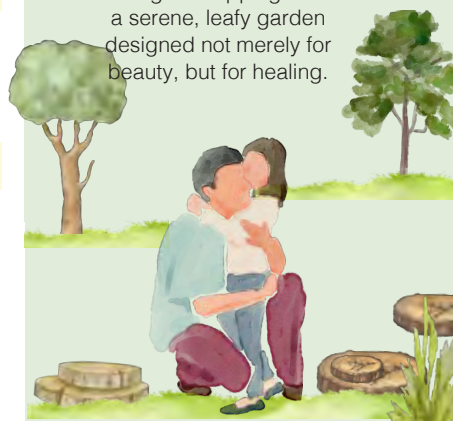
This award recognises psychiatrists outside the United States who have made sustained contributions to the field across areas such as clinical service, education, research, and community engagement. Assoc Prof Wong's work spans child and adolescent psychiatry, trauma, ADHD, and autism, and he has been involved in both academic and clinical roles in Singapore and abroad.

5

RESEARCH

Nature Therapy: A Breath of Fresh Air for Kids and Caregivers

Imagine stepping into a serene, leafy garden designed not merely for beauty, but for healing.



A recent study, conducted in collaboration with **National Parks Board (NParks)**, explored the therapeutic potential of nature-based interventions for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and their caregivers. Over six weeks, families participated in structured activities within specially designed **Nature Playgardens**. The findings were promising: children showed improved behaviour, while caregivers reported better mood, reduced stress, and a greater sense of relaxation. Beyond individual benefits, the experience also strengthened emotional bonds within families. This research highlights nature's unique ability to support emotional wellbeing, promote calm, and nurture meaningful connections. It reminds us that sometimes, healing begins by simply stepping outdoors.

"The ability to give is a blessing." — The late Mr Wee Sin Tho, The Founding Chairman of Yeo Boon Khim Mind Science Centre

As an organisation dedicated to building mental resilience across all demographics in the community, we have committed to ongoing research and implemented evidence-based intervention and prevention programmes. These efforts have touched the lives of more than 14,000 seniors, healthcare workers, and youths. As we are fully dependent on philanthropic support and grants, we sincerely appeal for your generous contribution towards a memorial donation. Your support will go a long way in empowering the Mind Science Centre to continue its mission of fostering mental wellness and resilience.

Propelling Brain Health into the Digital Age



Introducing Associate Professor Tan Tin Wee as the Della Suantio Lee Associate Professor in Mental Health and Digital Science

The Yeo Boon Khim Mind Science Centre is pleased to welcome Assoc Prof Tan Tin Wee as the new Della Suantio Lee Associate Professor in Mental Health and Digital Science. This endowed professorship is made possible through a generous gift from the **D.S. Lee Foundation**, which supports advancing innovation and care in the field of mental health.

A long-time champion of digital innovation, Assoc Prof Tan brings deep expertise in biomedical science, high-performance computing and collaborative research. He was the Founding Chief Executive of the National Supercomputing Centre (2014–2024) and played a key role in bringing supercomputing into Singapore's healthcare system to support clinical research and precision medicine.

Assoc Prof Tan is also internationally recognised for inventing multilingual Internet domain names, earning him a place in the inaugural Internet Hall

of Fame. He pioneered bioinformatics in Asia, led Singapore's first research Internet provider, and has contributed to regional science and technology initiatives. A committed educator, he is an Associate Professor of Biochemistry at NUS, with over 100 scientific publications and decades of mentoring.

A New Chapter: Mental Health Meets Digital Science

In his new appointment, Assoc Prof Tan will explore how artificial intelligence can be used to detect and manage changes in brain health, especially in the early stages of cognitive decline such as subjective and mild cognitive impairment. Drawing on his biomedical IT expertise and personal experience as a dementia caregiver, he aims to integrate advanced digital tools like AI and brain mapping techniques to identify potential biomarkers and understand how memory relates to brain structure.

As part of the SYNAPSE Consortium's Synchrotron for Neuroscience, this work may support early detection efforts and contribute to the development of innovative digital strategies to promote mental health and lifelong brain wellbeing.

Q+A

We Caught Up with Assoc Prof Tan

You're bringing together computers and the human brain. What excites you most about this?

What's exciting is the convergence of high-resolution brain imaging—like Synchrotron X-ray scans—with advanced tools such as AI, connectomics and neuroinformatics. This combination could deepen our understanding of the mind and mental health conditions. It opens up the possibility of more precise and personalised treatments in the future.

How can tools like AI or brain mapping help in everyday mental health care?

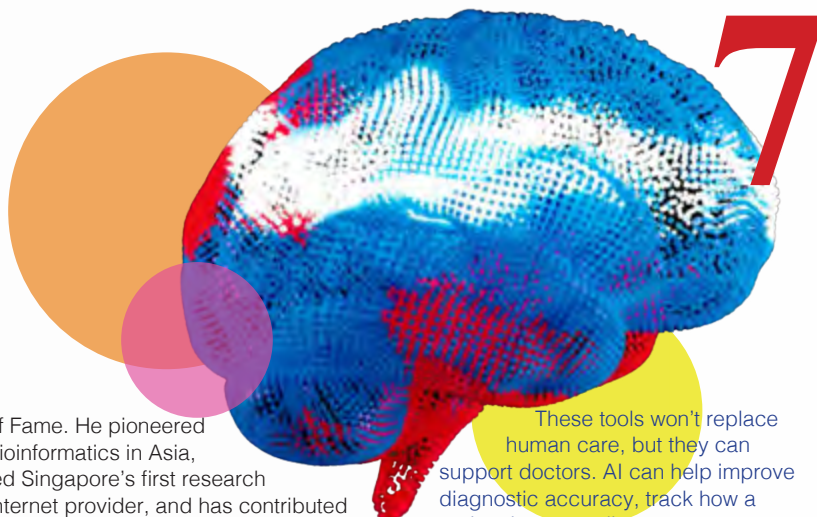
These tools won't replace human care, but they can support doctors. AI can help improve diagnostic accuracy, track how a patient is responding to treatment or suggest more targeted therapies. Over time, these tools could make mental health care more timely, accessible and tailored to individual needs.

What insights have you gained from being a caregiver, and how do they relate to your interest in digital mental health?

Caring for my parents with dementia showed me that there are gaps in our healthcare system. Caregivers can often feel overwhelmed, especially when they are expected to track symptoms, monitor changes and communicate everything to medical teams. This is where technology can help. For example, wearables can monitor sleep patterns and physical activity, giving objective data about the patient's condition or how they are responding to medication. Phone apps can allow caregivers to provide real-time updates to doctors, reducing the stress of having to remember every detail or stay constantly alert. These tools could ease the burden on caregivers and support earlier, more informed interventions.

What are the biggest challenges and opportunities in digital mental health today?

In the era of the generative AI revolution, we are facing changes that go beyond what the IT and Internet ages brought. This shift could challenge what it means to be human, and lead to significant mental stress as people anticipate job losses, career transitions and changes in relationships. At the same time, it will create new opportunities for those willing to re-skill and adapt quickly. We also need to study how these technologies may affect young people's cognitive development. If misused, they could risk dulling an entire generation. Yet paradoxically, these same tools hold great promise in transforming how we diagnose, treat and prevent mental illnesses—and in promoting mental wellness overall.



Seeds of Impact

Planting seeds of hope creates a ripple of change We're grateful to donors who believe in building a resilient, compassionate society. Through their support for mindfulness programmes at MindGym and scholarships for future leaders in mental health, they are helping to shape a healthier, stronger community.



Mr Yeo Keng Joon
(Business '85) &
Ms Kong Yuet Peng
(Business '86)

Donor of the
Malaysian Community Scholarship
for the Master of Clinical Mental
Health and Psychotherapy

“

I was motivated to support the programme after learning about one of our bursary recipients who was affected by a mental health condition. This was further compounded by a lack of financial support from his family. He chose to pursue this Master's course in response to a personal calling, aiming to build a career in the mental health sector and give back to the community through his own lived experiences. The course would also significantly enhance his psychotherapy skills. Being a unique local programme curated for mental health and psychotherapy, it is my hope that the scholarships will increase the talent pool in Singapore.

It is most fulfilling to know that our small contribution has made a difference in someone's journey. It is certainly a joy to share our blessings and support the process of upward social mobility. This joy can be addictive, as seeing the fruits of our support motivates us to continue giving.

”



Mr Michael Lien
Executive Chairman of Wah
Hin and Founder of Leap
Philanthropy

Donor to the Mindfulness Courses
at the Mind Art Experiential Lab –
MindGym

“

Mental well-being is an issue that resonates deeply with me. I support the Yeo Boon Khim Mind Science Centre because I have seen how stress, mental health struggles, and cognitive decline impact individuals and families. The Centre's evidence-based mindfulness programmes drive meaningful change, empowering youth, healthcare professionals and seniors to build resilience, prevent dementia, and enhance cognitive well-being.

I believe mental health should be a lifelong priority, not an afterthought. My hope is for a future where mental health is prioritised, stigma is erased, and mindfulness becomes second nature to all. I invite others to join me in supporting this vital mission, because when we invest in mental wellness, we uplift entire communities.

”

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Official Website
<https://give.nus.edu.sg/YBKMSC>



Secured **PayNow**
platform



Jul — Jan

July 2025 — January 2026

A fresh curation is taking shape.

Where the future of mental health unfolds — and minds meet AI.

How is technology shaping the way we care for our mental health?

MAELab's upcoming exhibition titled "Exploring the Digital Frontier of Mental Health" invites you to discover the evolving role of digital tools in supporting our physical, emotional and cognitive wellbeing. Through engaging infographics, immersive content and hands-on activity zones, explore how mobile apps, wearables and digital interventions are redefining mental health care from early detection to ongoing support.



Photo credit: Neeuro



Explore how digital tools can support mental health by addressing anxiety, depression, memory, and attention



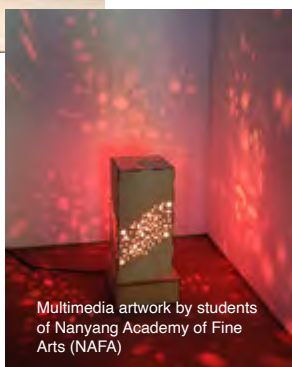
Learn about the latest innovations and emerging research in digital mental health



See how digital tools analyse biometric data to deliver personalised support and identify early warning signs



Discover how digital tools enable creative expression as a form of therapeutic support for mental health



Multimedia artwork by students of Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts (NAFA)



▲Artwork created by a young artist from Cerebral Palsy Alliance Singapore (CPAS)



D.S. Lee Foundation MAELab
Alexandra Hospital, Blk 29, Level 2
378 Alexandra Road, Singapore 159964

Book an appointment:

Email pcmbbox6@nus.edu.sg to book an appointment to view the curation



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Aug

WHAT'S ON

Wednesday, 6 Aug 2025
12:30PM - 2:00PM on ZOOM



Dementia Asia

LIVING WITH DEMENTIA WEBINAR SERIES

How to organise a **AGE WELL EVERYDAY** programme in your community

The first dementia prevention research in Asia was conducted in 2012 at Jurong by the NUS Yeo Boon Khim Mind Science Centre. About 1,000 seniors aged 60 years and older were recruited. The programme included health education, tai chi, art activities, music reminiscence and mindfulness practice. The study was supported by the late Mr Lee Soon Teck and the Kwan Yin Thong Hood Cho Temple.

After 5 years, the prevalence of dementia of the cohort was 3% and depression 4%. The study was selected for special presentation at the World Congress of Psychiatry in Vienna in 2023. This translational research has since been extended to more than 15 centres in Singapore, and there is keen interest from other Asian countries such as Malaysia, Indonesia and China.

SCAN TO REGISTER



Speakers



Surein Sandrasageran

Outreach Director
NUS Yeo Boon Khim Mind Science Centre



Tricia Lim Geok Hong

Team Lead
Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery



Genevieve Chua

Chairperson
RSVP



Moderator

Emeritus Professor Kua Ee Heok

National University of Singapore
Emeritus Consultant, NUH
Mind Care Clinic, Farrer Park Medical Centre

Supported by

The 'Living with Dementia' webinar series is made possible by a generous donation from Emeritus Professor Hong Hai (Nanyang Technological University) and Renhai Clinic.

**Mind-the-Gap 200
MENTAL HEALTH**