

HIGHLIGHTS



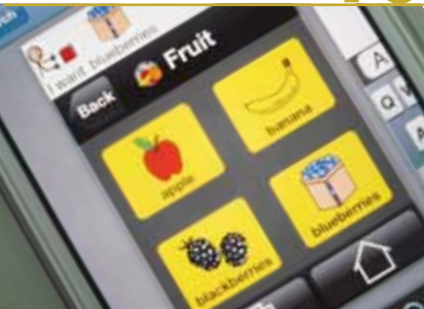
Greater employment opportunities await persons with disabilities **3**



The K-Wave hits SPD **5**



A chance to shine **10**



Apps for communication **14**

Making Singapore a more accepting society for people with disabilities

As part of efforts to mark the International Day of Persons with Disabilities on 3 December (IDPD), SPD embarked on a survey that gathered the nation's perception of people with disabilities.

This initiative formed an integral part of our on-going 'I Accept' campaign, which aims to encourage members of the public to accept people with disabilities as equal members of the community, workplace and everyday life.

The nationwide survey, which ran mainly online from 1 to 28 December 2011, mirrored an earlier survey conducted in 2009. The 2009 polls showed that acceptance of people with disabilities had improved marginally since

2004, but remained low due largely to the lack of knowledge on possible means to assist them.

Results of the 2009 survey found that six out of 10 people thought that people with disabilities have difficulties in dealing with day to day activities and they are dependent on others, while four out of 10 felt it is difficult to interact with people with disabilities.

Nonetheless, there were strong indications that Singaporeans were attitudinally ready to include people with disabilities into mainstream community.

Continued on page 2 ►



Making Singapore a more accepting society for people with disabilities

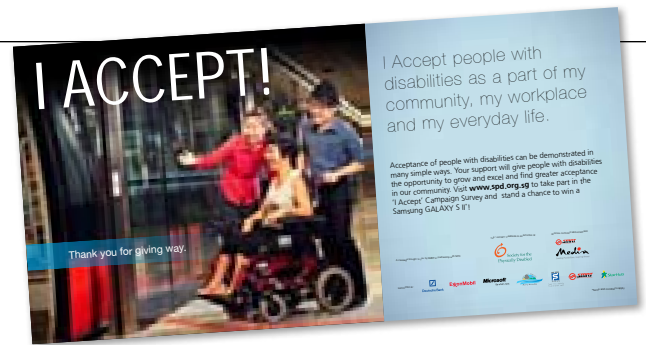
◀ From page 1

Besides knowing how Singaporeans felt towards people with disabilities, the 2011 study would make it possible for meaningful comparisons to be made to the results from the past, and to see if sentiments have improved over the last two years.

As part of IDPD, a series of three posters was also installed in SMRT stations encouraging commuters to demonstrate their acceptance of people with disabilities through simple acts such as giving way and extending support to them on public transport, in the workplace and within the community. These prints were up from 1 to 28 December, courtesy of the generous sponsorship of SMRT Media.

The overall success of integrating people with disabilities into mainstream society depends largely on the public's perception of and willingness to accept them. Among the key results found through the recent survey which garnered over 900 responses, there was a significant decrease in the number of people who feel disabled people are dependent on others all the time (see Key Results of the 2011 Survey on the right).

While it is clear that there is greater acceptance and support for people with disabilities in Singapore today, we hope more will be done in every aspect of life that will ensure the full integration and inclusion of people with disabilities in society, so that they can truly and surely be a part of all.



KEY RESULTS OF THE 2011 SURVEY

Statement	Year	Agree	Disagree
People with disabilities are dependent and need other people to help them all the time, which can be troublesome	2011	13%	62%
	2009	47%	39%
It is harder to communicate and deal with people with disabilities than non-disabled people	2011	25%	47%
	2009	43%	45%
People with disabilities do not have enough opportunities to come into contact with the general public	2011	68%	15%
	2009	58%	32%

- **93% agreed** that more can be done to help people with disabilities on public transportation in Singapore
- **96% agreed** that members of the public should give way to people with disabilities who are getting into lifts and boarding trains
- **90% agreed** that they would not hesitate to help people with disabilities whom they see might need help

Of the 61 respondents who were in a position to hire:

- **80%** was willing to hire a person with physical disabilities
- **59%** was willing to hire a person with intellectual disabilities
- **62%** was willing to hire a person with hearing impairment
- **48%** was willing to hire someone with visual impairment

contents

in & around

- 1 Making Singapore a more accepting society for people with disabilities
- 3 Greater employment opportunities await persons with disabilities
- 4 Technology for special education
- 5 The K-Wave hits SPD

- 5 Tribute to the late Nancy Chia
- 6 Fundraising events
- 7 Vestibular rehabilitation therapy
- 7 Join us for our Flag Day in 2012
- 8 Year-end revelry
- 10 A chance to shine

11

overheard

- 11 Volunteer Appreciation Day 2011

out & about

- 12 Therapeutic conditions for individual and group counselling
- 14 Apps for communication

in colour

- 16 SPD Rehabilitation Services

Greater employment opportunities await persons with disabilities

The last Microsoft Unlimited Potential Scholarship Award Presentation and IT Apprenticeship Graduation Ceremony gave recipients the opportunity to rub shoulders with enabling employers.

The Microsoft Unlimited Potential Scholarship Award Presentation and IT Apprenticeship Graduation Ceremony 2011 included two key establishments – the Tripartite Alliance for Fair Employment (TAFEP) and Singapore National Employers Practices Federation (SNEF) – to connect scholarship recipients and graduates with prospective companies for employment possibilities.

Co-organised by the Infocomm Accessibility Centre (IAC) and TAFEP, and supported by Microsoft Singapore Pte Ltd, SNEF and the Enabling Employers Network (EEN), the award presentation and graduation ceremony was held at the 'Towards Inclusiveness in the Workplace: Employing Persons with Disabilities' event on 14 October and saw a total of four students with disabilities receiving scholarship grants from Microsoft Singapore and 17 graduates presented with certificates from the IT Apprenticeship Programme (ITAP).

This year, scholarship recipients and ITAP graduates had the opportunity to meet and interact with employers at the event to find out more about the employment opportunities available, while employers also shared their professional experience on how persons with disabilities could contribute to furthering their businesses. This was a great leap forward in achieving IAC's long-term goal of enriching the lives of persons with disabilities by helping them find greater independence through securing jobs of higher value.

SPD's director of technology Chia Woon Yee, sharing how IAC has progressed and what it has achieved thus far, said: "Since July 2008, the IAC has made significant progress in fine-tuning



the depth and breadth of its courses to better prepare its trainees and graduates for the needs of the working world. We are delighted to have TAFEP, SNEF and EEN on board this year as co-organisers of this year's Microsoft Unlimited Potential Scholarship Award Presentation and ITAP Graduation Ceremony, and we are confident that their involvement will complement our goal of securing more employment opportunities for persons with disabilities in Singapore."

Joining IAC as a co-organiser for the first time was TAFEP, which promotes the adoption of fair, responsible and merit-based employment in Singapore. Andrew Fung, general manager of TAFEP, said, "We are delighted to be co-organising this event with IAC. TAFEP encourages employers to be fair in their hiring practices. This means for employers to hire on merit, based on the skills required for a job. Being fair and hiring on merit is not just about doing the right thing. Doing so makes good business sense as well, especially in today's tight labour market. Employers who hire on merit use objective criteria when evaluating

and selecting potential candidates for the job. This allows them to have a wider pool of candidates to tap on, and select the person who can do the job best."

Microsoft Singapore, a pivotal supporter of the IAC since 2008, has been an important partner in providing structured, industry-relevant, on-the-job IT curriculum, software and training for persons with disabilities to pick up skills needed in the workplace. The technology giant has committed \$2.2 million to SPD for the period of 2007 to 2013. This commitment has enabled the IAC to enhance the apprenticeship curriculum and offer new services, such as opportunities for job placement and additional support for trainees undertaking Microsoft-related apprenticeship training.

Microsoft Unlimited Potential Scholarship 2010 recipient Lewina Tan can attest to the benefits of receiving the scholarship. "Microsoft's generous scholarship grant allowed me to pursue my dreams and complete my studies in information technology at a local polytechnic early

Continued on page 4 ►

◀ From page 3

Greater employment opportunities await persons with disabilities

this year. With the diploma qualification, I was able to find a job working as an IT support officer in a government agency. I am truly grateful for this opportunity to excel and develop my interest in information technology."

Ms Jessica Tan, managing director of Microsoft Singapore, said "Technology is an empowering tool that offers persons with disabilities a new avenue to seek fulfilment and employment. Microsoft is excited to have the opportunity to leverage our expertise and resources to help maximise their potential, in close partnership with SPD. We have seen the exemplary display of commitment and faith in all our Microsoft Unlimited Potential Scholarship recipients to date, and we're certain that this year's cohort will continue to be great inspirations to us. We look forward to working more closely with the IAC in the coming year, in exploring new avenues to further the success of the centre."

SNEF, another key supporting partner dedicated to helping employers achieve excellence in employment practices, works with companies to create job opportunities for persons with disabilities.

Mr Koh Juan Kiat, SNEF's executive director, was pleased that SNEF was part of the event. He said, "Since 2006, SNEF has been partnering the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports and EEN to create employment opportunities for persons with disabilities and also recently to facilitate training to help them to be job ready. The IAC is another excellent initiative to help prepare persons with disabilities for work. We hope that our participation this year will help motivate a larger pool of businesses to come forward and be part of this effort."

Since the inception of IAC in July 2008, 4,325 training places comprising IT training sessions, apprenticeship training sessions and assistive technology training sessions were offered to more than 1,200 persons with disabilities.

Technology for special education

An opportunity to share about how information technology can be incorporated into special education (SPED) curriculum came about at the inaugural SPED Conference 'Special Education: Embracing Possibilities, Forging Ahead' which was held at Resorts World Sentosa Convention Centre on 2 November 2011.

Ivan Tan, the Vocational Training Division's head of training services, and Sarah Yong, head of clinical services at the Specialised Assistive Technology Centre, gave a presentation on the topic, sharing success stories of how training in information technology and assistive technology can enable a person with special needs and help to bridge the digital divide.

The conference was held in conjunction with the SPED Learning Day and the Outstanding SPED Teacher Award (OSTA) and Innovation Award Ceremony, and comprised a keynote address by Dr Juliana Taymans, Professor of Special Education at The George Washington University USA, concurrent sessions on topics pertaining to SPED conducted by industry professionals, an exhibition and an art gallery featuring the works of SPED students.



The K-Wave hits SPD

Thanks to the support of the Embassy of the Republic of Korea, and in particular Ambassador Oh Joon, SPD has of late been privileged to enjoy partnerships with various pockets of the Korean community in Singapore.



to promote mutual understanding between SPD and the Korean community in Singapore.

Charity Golf and Dinner

On 24 October, the Embassy of the Republic of Korea and the Korean Chamber of Commerce jointly organised a Charity Golf and Dinner to raise funds for SPD. A cheque of \$20,000 was presented to SPD at the dinner.

Visit to SPD

In an effort to better understand the programmes and services SPD offers to people with disabilities, His Excellency Oh Joon, Ambassador of the Republic of Korea, Chairman of the Korean Chamber of Commerce Mr Jung Young Soo, and journalists from the Korean media based in Singapore, made a trip to the SPD Ability Centre on 20 October 2011. The visit, which included a tour of the centre, helped



Korean Film Festival

SPD's clients were guests of the Embassy at the opening of the Korean Film Festival on 25 October at Shaw Lido Cineplex, which saw the movie 'Barefoot Gibong' being screened. The Korean movie is based on the true story of an intellectually-disabled 40-year-old man whose love for his mother motivates him to train for an amateur marathon competition.

The event's guest-of-honour was SPD president Ms Chia Yong Yong. This event is part of the Korea Festival 2011 which comprised 12 events including contemporary art exhibitions, a dance performance, Korean cooking classes and a Taekwondo event.

Tribute to the late Nancy Chia



The staff and management of SPD are saddened by the demise of Ms Nancy Chia, former member of SPD's Board of Management and a long-time advocate for people with disabilities. Nancy passed away on 16 November 2011.

Nancy is a familiar face at SPD, having served as a member on our Board of Management from 2002 to 2007, and stepping up as Honorary Assistant Treasurer from 2004 to 2007.

Within the social service sector, she is well-known for her relentless passion to improve the lives of people with disabilities. She has made significant

contributions over 30 years, and was involved in the setting up of dedicated transport services for disabled people, working with the Building & Construction Authority to formulate the Code on Barrier-Free Accessibility in Buildings and ran the only driving instruction centre teaching disabled people to drive.

In November 2010, she was awarded the President's Social Service Award, the highest accolade for volunteers, in recognition of her contributions.

The passing of this dedicated volunteer is a loss to the community. She will be dearly missed.

Fundraising events



MICROSOFT SANDCASTLES FOR HOPE 2011

The 'Microsoft Sandcastles for Hope 2011', an event organised under the President's Challenge, was held at Palawan Beach, Sentosa Singapore, on 11 November. Participants comprised Microsoft's staff and partners who were treated to food and games, performances and a sandcastle-building competition. As the Guest-of-Honour, President Tony Tan Keng Yam presented a cheque of \$270,000 to the Infocomm Accessibility Centre on behalf of Microsoft.



STARHUB BEACH CLEAN-UP

On 9 December 2011, StarHub enabled clients from SPD to do their part for the environment by helping to clean up some parts of Changi Beach Park. At the event, StarHub presented SPD with \$300,000 from the StarHub Sparks Fund, which would go towards providing transport, assistive technology subsidies and subsidies for continuing therapy for SPD clients under the Paediatric Rehabilitation Programme.



LONGINES SINGAPORE GOLD CUP 2011

This year, as one of the beneficiaries of the prestigious Longines Singapore Gold Cup, SPD received a cheque of \$150,000 from President Tony Tan Keng Yam, who presented the contribution on behalf of the Singapore Totalisator Board at the Singapore Turf Club on 13 November 2011. That day, a total of \$1.5 million was presented to 23 beneficiaries.

We would also like to thank the following organisations for their efforts in helping to raise funds and for their consolidated donation of more than \$300,000 to SPD:

- CapitalLand Hope Foundation
- Chew How Teck Foundation
- ConocoPhillips International Trading Pte Ltd
- Deutsch Bank AG, Singapore
- FMC Technologies Singapore Pte Ltd
- Lee Foundation
- M+W Singapore Pte Ltd
- Maxi-Cash Group Pte Ltd
- McConnell Dowell South East Asia Pte Ltd
- Mellford Pte Ltd
- Warren Golf & Country Club

Vestibular rehabilitation therapy

Everyone is born with a vestibular system. The peripheral vestibular system is made up of structures in the inner ear which co-ordinate with the brain to manage balance, standing upright, and moving through space. The vestibular system also co-ordinates information from the eyes, muscles and joints, fingertips and palms of the hands, pressure on the soles of the feet, jaw, and receptors on the skin. All of this information is sent to the brain and may result in a change of heart rate, blood pressure, muscle tone, limb position, immune responses or arousal.

The vestibular sense is also called the balance sense and tells the body how to weight shift with movement. This is demonstrated when a person who is thrown off-balance reaches out an arm or leg to avoid falling.

Vestibular disorders can result from the system being damaged by disease, ageing, or injury. Symptoms may include vertigo, dizziness, disequilibrium and imbalance. Vertigo refers to a spinning or whirling sensation, as if the individual or the environment around a person is moving. Dizziness is a lightheaded, floating or rocking sensation. Disequilibrium is a sensation of impending fall or of the need to obtain external assistance for proper locomotion. Difficulty walking straight or turning a corner, clumsiness or difficulty with co-ordination may indicate imbalance. Functioning in the workplace, going to school, performing routine daily tasks, or just getting out of bed in the morning may be difficult for some people with these symptoms.

Vestibular rehabilitation therapy (VRT) has become one of the main treatment modalities for patients suffering from vestibular dysfunction. Patients are referred for VRT with the aim of helping to relieve them of symptoms of dizziness, gaze instability, disequilibrium and to improve their functional status.

SPD's Rehabilitation Centre offers a customised programme of exercises and activities designed by trained physiotherapists to address the needs of people with vestibular dysfunction. For more information on VRT, please contact Debbie Chow at Debbie_CHOW@spd.org.sg, or call 6579 0764.

Join us for our Flag Day in 2012

Volunteer your help at SPD's Flag Day and improve the lives of people with disabilities.

The Flag Day is one of SPD's major fundraising projects in the year, raising the much-needed funds so that we can continue to provide essential programmes and services to maximise the potential of people with disabilities and enable them to be self-reliant and independent.

Our next Flag Day will be held on Saturday, 31 March 2012, and registration for volunteers has begun. If you and your group of friends are interested in offering your help, send us an e-mail at information@spd.org.sg or call Alice Hue at 6579 0708 for more information.

We look forward to hearing from you!



Year-end revelry

4 Oct
2011

Recognising the healing power of animals in improving physical and emotional well-being, volunteers from Mutts & Mittens Foundation began bringing their pet animals to SPD's Day Activity Centre (DAC) from 4 October as part of a Pet Assisted Therapy programme. The animals were an instant hit with the clients who look forward to their monthly visits.



The DAC ran its second Final Singing Challenge for the clients on 2 December. The activity provided a platform for training for both the contestants and audience. The participants spent many weeks training in their singing, movements on stage, clapping and cheering which helped to empower them while building confidence and self-esteem. Volunteers were invited to be judges.

2 Dec
2011

The December school holidays saw the Freedom Adventure Club (FAC) collaborate with Tag Team Inc to organise a laser-shooting event for the clients from the SPD Education Programme on 26 November. Safe and painless, the laser-tag game was an exciting bonding activity for the participants, and one which enabled them to realise more of their potentials.

26 Nov
2011



With games and a sumptuous spread to be expected at the Christmas and year-end parties organised by SPD's corporate partners, it is no wonder that the clients look forward to attending them. The fun and games this round included the following:



10 Dec 2011



Karaoke cum lunch Christmas celebration for SPD Education Programme clients organised by Rotary Club of Suntec City and held at the Geylang Serai Community Club



20 Dec 2011

Christmas party for DAC clients by Holiday Inn Atrium at the hotel's ballroom

Hilltop Celebrations, a Christmas party by The Jewel Box, for SPD Education Programme clients

30 Nov 2011



Thank You!

We take this opportunity to thank all partner organisations, including those not mentioned here due to space constraints, who put in time and effort to organise activities for our clients.



A chance to shine

Ang Yu Kiong, 24, was diagnosed with monoplegic cerebral palsy since young but has always been independent and leads an active lifestyle. However, his pursuit of employment and financial independence was met with barriers that threatened to break his resilience. We find out how Yu Kiong finally overcame the odds to achieve his goal of being gainfully employed.

Yu Kiong has mild cerebral palsy which causes him to speak with a slur and restricts his movements. Since young, he had always put in extra effort in all the things that he did in order to be on par with his peers. When studying, the Republic Polytechnic graduate would revise more than six hours a day, memorising the main points so that he could write succinctly and quickly to make up for his slow writing speed. He also involved himself in sports such as table tennis, badminton, soccer and wushu. Nothing was too difficult for him until he graduated from his studies.

Finding a Job

When Yu Kiong graduated with a Diploma in Business Application in 2008, he embarked on what would become a difficult journey to find a fulfilling job in the open market.

He recalled, "I never thought it would be so tough for me to find a job. I felt that people tended to judge me differently when I went for interviews. Sometimes the interviewer would even say that it was a mistake that I was asked to go for interview." After seven months of searching, he decided to settle for a job as a clerk doing administrative work at half the pay his peers were getting.

Yu Kiong decided to quit two years into the job as he wanted to realise his

full potential. He decided to seek job placement assistance at SPD to improve his prospects.

Learning New Skills

At SPD, Yu Kiong signed up with the Web Design Track under the IT Apprenticeship Programme (ITAP) in October 2010 where he took up the challenge of learning new skills in design software applications such as Adobe Photoshop and Dreamweaver. While at ITAP, he also learnt to create web design layouts, design web graphics and worked on web-based content management systems.

He was given internship opportunities where he was expected to be meticulous and to take ownership and responsibility for his designs. He was made aware of the importance of teamwork and developed problem-solving and communication skills.

The experiences and exposure gained through ITAP gave him more confidence. "I am glad that I was given a chance to receive training in ITAP where I learnt not only software skills but also life-skills, interview skills, tips on how to handle work stress and interacting with people, all of which I found useful.

The commercial projects that my trainers assigned to me gave me a better understanding of what it would be like in a

real work environment, with deadlines and all. I learnt to work in a team and handle problems that might occur and solve them step by step."

Finding Employment

In June 2011, Yu Kiong managed to secure a job as a project assistant at an engineering consultancy company through SPD's Employment Support Programme (ESP). He was required to create and simulate building models using computer software. Yu Kiong's job placement officer Jackson Low, who lined up interviews for him, had nothing but praises for him. "He is a very hardworking and humble trainee. He always strives to do his best when work is given to him. He will be an asset to his employer," Jackson said.

Yu Kiong is happy with his job now. He is now self-reliant and finds dignity in being able to manage on his own hard-earned money.

"I am grateful for the help that SPD has given me through ITAP and ESP. The whole process definitely gave me more confidence in whatever I do. I learnt to be more independent as having a job allows me to lessen the financial burden for my family. I am now able to live proudly on my own hard-earned money," he said.



"Being disabled doesn't mean having no talent. The challenge is whether I want to work hard as practice makes perfect."

– **Day Activity Centre (DAC) client Bernard Teo** who took part in the Final Singing Challenge 2011 organised by and held at the DAC

"From being on the receiving end of others' charitable efforts, it is now (the SPD clients) who are helping the community. We hope that by giving them this opportunity, they will be imbued with a greater sense of pride and independence."

– **StarHub's chief executive officer Neil Montefiore** on SPD's clients taking part in the StarHub beach cleaning activity held at Changi Beach on 9 December

"There are employers who are very interested in hiring disabled people but are unsure whether or not they'll be able to cope with the job or whether they'll be sickly. Also, people sometimes think that they can only do very simple manual work. I think these are misconceptions.

Given the proper IT training and the right opportunity, disabled people who have potential will be able to fit into other jobs as well."

– **Chia Woon Yee, SPD's director of technology and vocational training** in an interview with Channel NewsAsia on disabled people receiving IT training

Volunteer Appreciation Day 2011

SPD's volunteers are invaluable to the organisation, many times working behind the scenes and offering the extra hands needed in our various programmes and services. In appreciation of their contributions, we strive annually to come up with creative ways to thank them for actively providing help to us in the year.



This year's Volunteer Appreciation Day took the form of a prawning session held on 3 December at Pasir Ris Town Park. About 35 volunteers turned up and enthusiastically took up the rod. A sumptuous lunch was also provided.

Although none could boast of a big catch at the end of the day, we were satisfied to see the smiles on the faces of all, and trust that they were there because of a day well spent in the company of others just as dedicated towards the cause of improving the lives of people with disabilities.



Therapeutic conditions for individual

People may seek counselling for help in coping with their problems or they could be referred for counselling as others perceive that they need help. As there are therapeutic conditions that could facilitate or hinder successful outcomes in counselling, it is important that counsellors are aware of and do their utmost to foster these therapeutic conditions in their counselling sessions. In this article, Ruth Lim, senior social worker at SPD's Vocational Training Division, shares the therapeutic conditions and factors recommended by Carl Rogers and Irvin Yalom through their years of practice and research.

Carl Rogers built his Client-Centred Approach to Therapy on the basic trust in the person. He believes that individuals have within themselves the ability for self-understanding and altering their self-concept, attitudes and self-directed behaviour. However, these resources can be tapped only if certain conditions can be provided by the counsellor and these conditions must be experienced or perceived by the client in order for counselling to be effective.

Individual Counselling

1. Congruence

The counsellor must be genuine during counselling sessions with the client and not put up a false front of being 'professional' or playing a role. There should be close matching, or congruence, between what is being experienced by the counsellor at the gut level and what is expressed to the client.

2. Unconditional Positive Regard

The care the counsellor feels towards the client should be one that is not possessive and which demands no personal gratification on the part of the counsellor. Carl Rogers believes that when the counsellor is experiencing a positive, non-judgmental and accepting attitude towards the client, change is more likely to take place in the client.

3. Empathic Understanding

The counsellor senses accurately the feelings and personal meanings of the client and communicates this understanding to the client. The counsellor is able to enter the private world of the client and clarify meanings of which the client is aware, or even those just below the level of awareness. Such active listening is one of the most potent forces for change, according to Carl Rogers.

Group Counselling

In individual counselling, the client only interacts with the counsellor and receives his full attention. This, however, is not reflective of our social reality. In group counselling, the group is a microcosm of the individual's universe. The group resembles a family in many aspects as they are authority figures as well as peers who may be likened to siblings. Some clients may find group counselling less threatening or of greater benefit due to the following therapeutic factors, which Irvin D. Yalom elaborated in his book 'The Theory and Practice of Group Psychotherapy'.

1. Instillation of Hope

Instilling hope is crucial to keep the client returning for counselling sessions so that other therapeutic factors may take effect. Faith itself can be effective as seen in faith healing and placebo treatment. Many of the self-help groups place heavy emphasis on the instillation of hope. It is vital that counsellors believe in themselves and in the effectiveness of their group.

2. Universality

Many clients feel that they are unique due to their extreme social isolation. After hearing other members disclose concerns similar to their own, clients report feeling more in touch with the world and describe the process as "We're all in the same boat". As clients perceive their similarity to others and share their deepest concerns, they benefit further from the accompanying catharsis and from ultimate acceptance by other members.

3. Imparting Information

Formal instruction, also known as psycho-education, is necessary and has an important part to play in many group



and group counselling

counselling programmes such as those catering to patients with mental illness or treatment groups for addiction and violence.

4. Altruism

Clients may be demoralised and feel that they have nothing of value to offer others. The experience of finding that they can be of importance to others is refreshing and boosts their self-esteem. Clients extend mutual help by offering support, reassurance, suggestions and insight. Group members will accept observations from another member far more readily than from the group counsellor. Sometimes it is simply the other members' presence that is sought and treasured.

5. The Corrective Recapitulation of the Primary Family Group

As the therapy group resembles a family in many aspects, early familial conflicts are re-lived but that they are to be re-lived correctively. Fixed roles must be constantly explored and challenged, and ground rules for investigating relationships and testing new behaviour must be constantly encouraged. For many clients, then, working out problems with counsellors and other members is also working through unfinished business from long ago.

6. Development of Socialising Techniques

Social learning, the development of basic social skills, is a therapeutic factor that operates in all therapy groups. Some groups have rules encouraging open feedback. In this way, clients may obtain considerable information about maladaptive social behaviour. For individuals lacking intimate relationships, the group often represents the first opportunity for accurate interpersonal feedback.

7. Imitative Behaviour

Clients may model themselves on aspects of the counsellor as well as of the other group members. They may 'try on' bits and pieces of other people. This process has strong therapeutic impact as finding out what we are not is progress towards finding out what we are.

8. Interpersonal Learning

The psychotherapy group evolves into a social microcosm which is a miniature of each client's social universe. The group members, through feedback from others and self-observation, become aware of significant aspects of their interpersonal behaviour, their strengths and limitations, their interpersonal distortions and the maladaptive behaviours that elicit unwanted responses from other people.

9. Group Cohesiveness

Cohesiveness refers to the attraction that members have for their group and for group members. The members of a cohesive group are accepting of one another, supportive, and inclined to form meaningful relationships in the group. This safe environment encourages greater self-exploration, expression and acceptance in the individual. At the same time, it enables the individual to relate more deeply to others. He learns that the social behaviour required for acceptance by group members is socially adaptive for him when he relates to others outside of the group.

10. Catharsis

Catharsis is intricately related to cohesiveness. Members who express strong feelings towards one another and work honestly with these feelings will develop close mutual bonds. The intensity of emotional expressions is highly relative and must be appreciated not from the counsellor's perspective but from that of each member's experiential world.

11. Existential Factors

Existential factors play an important but generally unrecognised role in psychotherapy. The following existential statements strike responsive chords in clients. When counselling is effective, clients come to accept that:

- Life is at times unfair and unjust.
- Ultimately there is no escape from some of life's pain or from death.
- No matter how close I get to other people, I must face life alone.
- I must take ultimate responsibility for the way I live my life no matter how much guidance and support I get from others.

Conclusion

Significant learning takes place in counselling under the right conditions, and it is bi-directional. Clients bring into counselling their maladaptive behaviours and the new behaviours and attitudes learnt during counselling is carried over into the client's social environment. Gradually an adaptive spiral is set in motion, at first inside, and then outside of counselling.

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Apps for communication

In this article, Sarah Yong, head of clinical services at the Specialised Assistive Technology Centre, examines the various considerations of using apps for Augmentative and Alternative Communication, and reviews the pros and cons of these apps.

There has been great hype of late in the Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) world about apps for communication.

Apps, an abbreviation for 'applications', are software which can run on the Internet, your computer, phone or other electronic device. The apps for communication are usually a series of overlays and symbol sets which can be downloaded onto mobile devices like tablet computers such as the Apple iPad or Samsung Galaxy Tab, or smart phones.

Advantages

As these mobile devices have touch screens, individuals with communication impairments can access the icons by touching the screen and in some apps, a digitised voice would read out the message. Individuals with communication impairments can download and use these apps as their AAC system for communication.

There are currently about 100 different apps available for downloading in Apple's iTunes store with different features and prices designed for individuals who have communication impairments to communicate more effectively.

When apps for communication was introduced, there was much hope that these apps would replace dedicated devices. Dedicated devices are AAC devices that are designed specifically for purposes of communication. They are often sturdy and allow for multiple ways of accessing the device, such as with a switch or direct selection. With a range of dedicated devices, it is possible to find a device that specifically meets an individual's communication needs.

By comparison, an app costs a fraction of what a dedicated device would. To illustrate, a high tech

dedicated device such as the ECO-14 may cost about S\$20,000. In contrast, an app which may be downloaded on a mobile device may cost under S\$200.

A mobile device is also much lighter and smaller than most standard voice output high-tech AAC devices. Clients who are mobile may find these devices more portable whereas dedicated devices, with their rechargeable batteries, are generally heavier and therefore may pose a challenge to cart around.

As apps are relatively affordable, options for using AAC can be made available to a greater number of individuals from different income brackets. Individuals who previously found AAC devices unaffordable can now have access. As mobile devices are used by the mainstream population, individuals with communication difficulties may be motivated to use them so as to be part of the crowd. Moreover, with the 'cool' factor, mobile devices are also great conversation starters.

Other Considerations

However, there are also various factors that need to be considered when using mobile devices. These are typically accessed through a touch screen which would require a specific amount of precision and motor control. Individuals with disabilities who have difficulties with motor control may be unable to access the touch screen. For example, an individual with cerebral palsy may have uncontrollable movements and therefore need to use a switch or key-guard to access a communication device. Mobile devices do not provide the option for these individuals to do so.



Another point of consideration is the availability of vocabulary options. There are a variety of dedicated devices, each with vocabulary sets which cater for clients of different language abilities. Often, AAC companies work with AAC specialists to develop these vocabulary sets. With apps, however, choices of vocabulary sets are limited. Furthermore, many do not follow principles of good practice and hence may not include symbols or do not let the user string together words to create novel sentences. Some also crash frequently or have poor quality speech.

Dedicated devices are usually prescribed by a speech therapist trained in the area of AAC. Often a detailed assessment is conducted. However, with apps being easily accessible and downloadable, individuals may not undergo an assessment to check for suitability before using an app so there may be greater possibility of a mismatch between the individual's communication skills and the device he/she is using for communication.

Conclusion

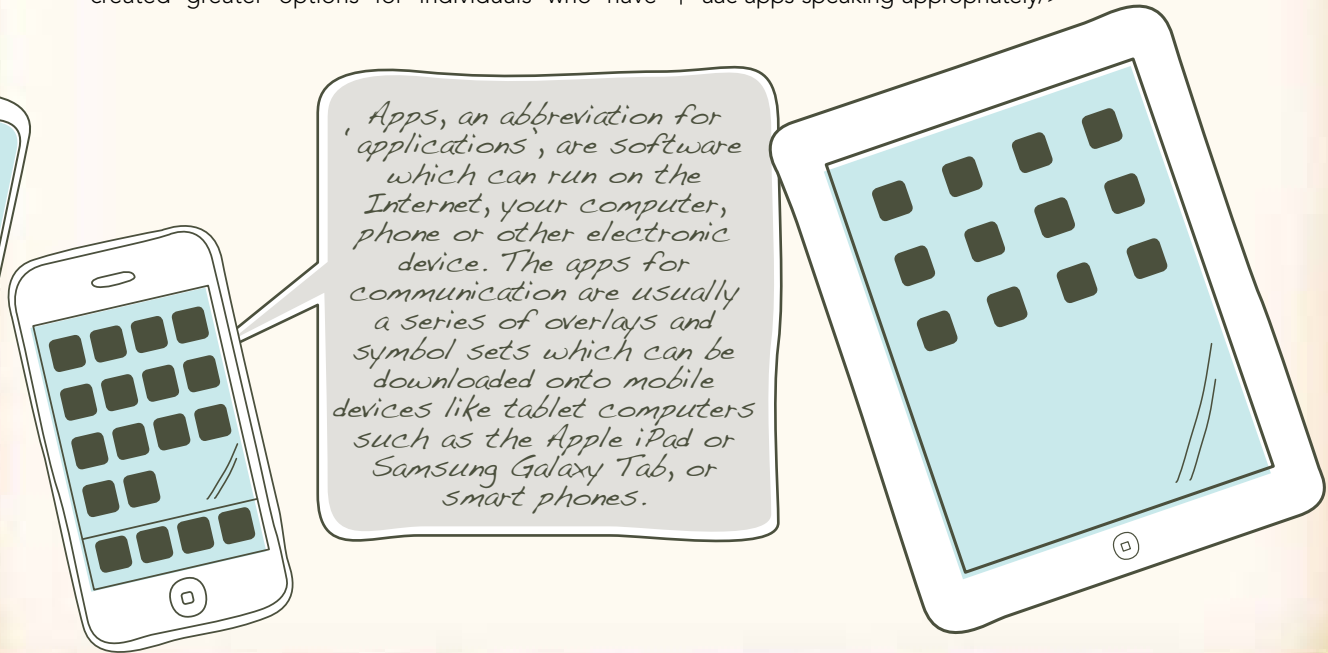
Apps for communication have in general created greater options for individuals who have

communication impairments who may need AAC. It is undoubtedly an exciting development in the AAC world. However, there are many issues which one should consider when looking at an app as an option for AAC. Before any AAC option is chosen, a comprehensive assessment, which includes consideration of an array of communication options and devices, should be done in order to determine a communication option which is best for the user.

Use of apps for communication is dependent on the user's physical, cognitive and linguistic abilities. Some individuals I have worked with have come to use apps successfully. In other cases, these apps may not be as beneficial or able to meet the individual's communication needs. Ultimately, it is important that the app fits the communication needs of the user, and to ensure this, the user should consult a professional trained in AAC before considering one as an option.

References

AAC Apps – Speaking APPropriately. November 2011
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Apps, an abbreviation for applications, are software which can run on the Internet, your computer, phone or other electronic device. The apps for communication are usually a series of overlays and symbol sets which can be downloaded onto mobile devices like tablet computers such as the Apple iPad or Samsung Galaxy Tab, or smart phones.

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