

NACC NEWSLETTER

May - July 2013

Editorial

By the time you read this newsletter, NACC Malaysia would be two years old! NACC was officially registered with the Registrar of Societies on May 9, 2011. While we are just "a toddler" in terms of organization age, the Lord has enabled us to organize 3 annual conferences (including the upcoming one on June 14 - 15 2013) and 6 workshops on life span issues (*Building Emotionally Healthy Children, Raising Morally & Courageous Teenagers and Understanding Developing Stages for Smart Parenting*) and counseling approaches (*Crisis Intervention, Understanding & Managing Depression and Conceptualizing Mental Health Issues from Multiple Perspectives*).

Going along the same pathway, we have themed this year's conference as *Effective Christian Counselling: Integrating Psychology and Theology for Effective Counselling across the Life Span*. Based on past registration and feedbacks received, we are expecting about 300 participants, if not more. Do sign up early to avoid disappointments, especially on the selection of certain workshops due to space constraints.

We warmly welcome over a hundred new members who have joined us in 2012, making a total membership of nearly 400 members. While we aim to build a credible mass of trained Christian counselors for eventual representation, what the future holds is truly beyond our comprehension. 1 Cor. 2:9 states, "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man, those things which God has prepared for those who love Him" Do continue to pray for the Board as we meet to deliberate and strategize for the future. We are already



thinking of booking international speakers for next year's conference!

Meanwhile, we encourage those of you who have been attending the past two conferences to bring along a copy of your accumulated contact hours for this third conference so that we can upgrade your status from Associate to Ordinary member of the society as you would have accumulated the 30 contact hours after this year's conference. In this regard, we also take this opportunity to inform that those of you who have accumulated the 30 contact hours will be given an exemption for one module of 3-credit hours by the Bible College of Malaysia and Malaysia Bible Seminary for any of their counseling programmes.

We look forward to seeing you at our Annual Conference in June!

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF

NACC
Malaysia

CHRISTIAN COUNSELLORS

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Dr Evelyn Biles
Dr T. Maniam
Dr Goh Chee Leong
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Focus of Third Annual Conference

This year's conference seeks to address some pertinent issues faced by individuals in various stages of their life's development.

Childhood

Dysfunctional behavior like extreme anxiety or control in adult relationships could be traced back to attachment bonds that were not properly developed during childhood years. Understanding this principle will help parents focus on the necessary areas of their relationship with their children during their developmental years. Understanding this principle will also help adults to evaluate their own lives vis-à-vis their relationship and seek the necessary interventions, be it prayer and/or in-depth counseling. As a marriage and child therapist, Charis Wong understands this concept well, helping her clients with both prevention and therapeutic interventions. Come and be enlightened by her keen insights.

Adolescence

Most parents encounter a difficult time when their sweet young angelic children enter into teenage life. Some suspect that their children have been influenced negatively by bad company while others think that some evil spirits have taken control over their children. While media such as rock music, MTV and role-playing computer games do have negative influence on adolescents such as violence, sex, tobacco and drug use, parents need to understand that their children are undergoing a stage in their lives which need their support, love and understanding. Instead of seeing adolescence as a time of rebellion, crisis and deviation, we must understand that it is a time of evaluation, decision making and identity formation. The greater the parents understand this, the more

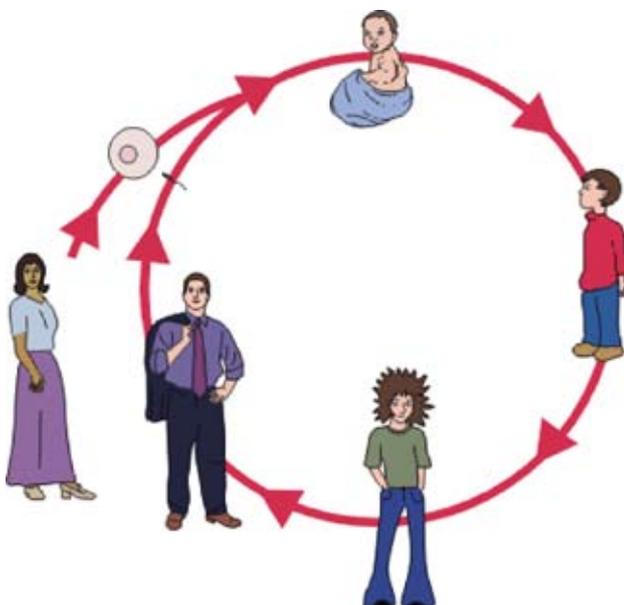
effective they will be able to help their teenagers develop positively into confident adults with a healthy self-image. Dr Goh Chee Leong is no stranger to youth development, being an advisor and mentor to many young people in the university and church context.

Young and Middle Adulthood

For a long time, society used IQ to measure one's intelligence, hence one's employability, career success and social standing in society. But over the past decade, they find that it is not necessarily true because people with high IQ do not necessarily contribute to the overall success of the company or even his or her own family. More and more people are now talking about EQ (Emotional Quotient) instead. Emotional intelligence (EQ) is "the ability to understand and regulate one's own and others' feelings and gaining the ability to guide one's thinking and actions. It consists of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. Emotions have the potential to get in the way of our most important business and personal relationships. Thus, having a high Emotional intelligence will lead to emotional excellence in your family and workplace. Dr. Yong has gained international recognition for his research and consultancy work on creativity and emotional intelligence. Based on his pioneering work on the LEONARD Personality Inventory (LPI) & the LPI Software, and its use in helping individuals to develop their Emotional Intelligence (EQ) & creativity, Dr. Yong has consulted and conducted numerous training workshops on EQ and Creative Thinking for leaders in many international organizations such as Motorola, Intel, Cathay Pacific Airlines, Reuters, Maybank, and Petronas

Middle Adulthood

Middle age (40 – 60) is the time where our bodies begin to decline. As the physical body ages, individuals begin to experience the graying and loss of hair and lose keenness in hearing and vision. Strength and vitality also diminish. As the BMR begins to slow down, weight begins to accumulate. Women undergo menopause and experience hormonal changes which can cause much physical discomfort and mental despair. While men may not have hormonal imbalance, many men go through mid-life crisis, a term that some researchers used to describe the psychological effects caused by the physical and mental slowing down. Many individuals begin to lose their job's efficiency and performance, and this factor can affect their self-confidence and esteem. Others fall into depression or sexual scandals. What can be done to compensate for these losses and boost up their cognitive abilities? Rebecca Chong will be addressing these and other issues of middle adulthood during the conference.



Late Adulthood

Along with aging come various disabilities and diseases such as arthritis, Alzheimer and dementia. How can we cope with aging parents and relatives? Before we can help them to cope with their debilitating malaises, care-givers need to understand their condition and the accompanying frustrations. While youth doesn't last forever, advertisements tell us otherwise with anti-aging creams, hair restorer and health supplements. While we should take care of our physical health, we may not be too vigilant to examine their psychological and spiritual health as well. Erickson the famous developmental psychologist said that this life stage is characterized by either integrity or despair. While wholeness and fulfillment describe the former, regret and sorrows fill the hearts of those in despair, especially seeing their peers slowly passing away one by one. What can we do to prepare senior citizens to face their golden years with grace and cheer? Dr Vincent Wong, an established psychiatrist, will be addressing such issues in this workshop.

This year's conference will also expose participants to certain counseling approaches including strengths-based therapy, brief therapy, systemic and prayer therapy by Dr Ng Kok Mun, Dr Maniam and Rev Nancy Quay respectively. The speakers will address their strengths and limitations, giving conferees practical tips in knowing how to apply them in their local churches and communities. Please refer to the conference brochure for more information on the speakers and their topics.

AGM and New Board (2013)

At the Annual General Meeting held on 30 March 2013, the following were elected to hold office for this year:

President : Dr Edmund Ng
Vice President : Rev Nancy Quay
Secretary : Dr Vincent Wong
Asst Secretary : Karen Karn
Treasurer : Lucy Tan
Committee : Rev Irene Ong, Phua Ah Eng & Wee Sian Li

Upcoming NACC Workshops

1. Neurobiology of Depression (Advanced Level)

This workshop is suitable for clinicians and those having psychological or counseling background. Dr Yen will be sharing some recent updates on the science behind depression, including the changing conceptualization on Major Depressive Disorder and the treatment implications. He will also discuss gene-environment interaction, seizure progression, effects of anti-depressants and some clinical implications.

Date: 24 August 2013 (Sat)

Time: 2 – 5 pm

Venue: NACC Office

Cost: RM25 for NACC members,
RM50 for non-members

Speaker:

Dr Yen Teck Hoe served as a lecturer and psychiatrist in Faculty of Medicine, University of Malaya. He was the Past President of the Malaysian Psychiatric Association. He is currently involved as a consultant and an advisor to governmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, pharmaceutical industries, media and college and has a private practice in Kuala Lumpur. His interests centred on psychopharmacology, psychiatric assessments, Christian-based counselling and sleep disorders.



2. Parenting Trends and Family Development

This workshop explores contemporary trends, internal and external pressures that are stressing present day families. It will help participants understand the core principles in building strong marriages, the stages of children's development and corresponding parenting styles. It is open to parents, church workers and anyone who wish to be more effective to work more effectively with children, youths and families. It will also provide a biblical framework to strengthen marriages so as to create strong families.

Speaker:

Patrick Cheng works with the National Association of Christian Counsellors as its Executive Director. Prior to this, he has been in Christian full-time ministry in both the church and para-church context for more than three decades. Besides his theological training, he also has post-graduate training in counseling. He has been married for 29 years and has two sons, aged 25 and 20. Patrick also serves as a board member of Focus on the Family Malaysia.



6 July 2013 (Sat)	20 July 2013 (Sat)
<i>Time</i> 3.00 – 6.00 pm	<i>Time</i> 2.00 – 5.00pm
<i>Venue</i> Straits Baptist Church, Melaka	<i>Venue</i> Canning Garden Baptist Church Ipoh
<i>Fee</i> Contact host church	<i>Fee</i> Contact host church

Educational Article:

The Nature of God and Christian Counseling (by Eric Johnson, Ph.D.)

Humans have needs for food, water and in order to live. . . . and social relationships in order to develop (as children) and live well (as adults). The triune God, by contrast, has no needs. He is the embodiment of love (1 John 4:8), has life in Himself (John 5:26) and so, requires nothing outside Himself in order to thrive. Being triune – Father, Son and Spirit – God has always existed in perfect, fulfilling social relationship and unthreatened contentment. This makes Him very different from us and desirable as a resource in therapy.

Jesus prayed to the Father: “This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God (John 17:3). According to Christianity, humans are not at the center of the universe (contrary to the implications of modern therapy). God is. Knowing in our hearts that He is absolutely self-sufficient is deeply reassuring to us as needy creatures. It is good for us to know, in the midst of our contingent, unpredictable lives, that God is never drained, burned out, or feeling out of control, and is therefore inexhaustibly able to care for us (though His care will sometimes involve teaching us how to reinterpret what our *truest* needs are). God is never fearful, anxious, depressed, or hopeless. Focusing our attention daily on a God who is His own everlasting support gives support to our souls that cannot be undermined. His all-sufficiency meets the ultimate needs of our insufficiency. Secular mindfulness therapy promotes the acceptance of one’s limitations and contingency, but offers no transcendent relational consolation. From a Christian standpoint, its solution is an ultimately isolating cultivation of self-regulation skills. Christianity also encourages the acceptance of reality, but does so through experiential knowledge of a God who is an overflowing fountain of superabundant goodness and who, because of our relationship with Christ, is always with us and for us.

Since we are born in sin, all humans wrestle with shame and guilt. Those who grow up in chronically critical families, however, are saddled in adulthood with enormous shame, and many who have committed sins are weighed down with guilt. Everyone needs some way to protect themselves from these negative, self-conscious emotions. As a result, most people maintain various defences and hide themselves beyond a superior image of themselves - a false self – that gives the illusion they are better than they actually are, an illusion that can be easily challenged by life experiences. Being in a love relationship in Christ with an eternally secure God and meditating on His self-sufficiency can, over time, soften our defences and give us the courage to risk becoming more honest with ourselves and live less in a false self.

People who struggle with what is popularly called codependence, and those with dependent personality disorder, can also be helped by fostering a safe and secure attachment relationship with God who is stable in Himself and eternally committed to the well-being of His children. The unresolved needs that cause people to be overly dependent on other humans in unfulfilling, and sometimes sinful ways, can gradually be healed in some measure through learning how to open up one’s soul to the infinite Source of all goodness.

Narcissism is a common disorder in our day that is best addressed in a growing relationship to the real Center of the universe. Meeting this stable God regularly in Scripture and being moved by His radical self-giving nature on our behalf as seen in Jesus Christ helps to undermine one’s deficit motives for self-aggrandizement. Ongoing exposure to the beautiful combination of His greatness and humility leads us to love and worship Him and in turn, reorients our soul’s deepest concerns toward the One who is truly worth magnifying. In addition, the experience of God’s eternal affection for us in Christ can go a long way toward re-mediating the deep, unmet relational needs that foster narcissism. Becoming grounded on the absolutely self-sufficient God also enables us to grow in our ability to acknowledge our own limitations and sins. Modern psychotherapy can only help narcissists become more sophisticated and skillful in their self-centrism. However, a religion centered on a God infinitely full of love and goodness is able to adequately undermine it.

Troubled people, of course, have difficulty connecting with God, just like they have difficulty connecting with others. Most Christians cannot just look to God and derive immediate comfort without being trained how to do so. The foregoing, therefore, does not minimize the role of therapists in the healing journey. On the contrary, among other things, counselors are needed to image something of the patience, constancy, and compassion of this eternally stable God. The point here is simply that one part of the Christian counselor’s job is to help counselees avail themselves of the unique therapeutic resources of their faith.

Eric Johnson, Ph.D., is the Lawrence and Charlotte Hoover Professor of Pastoral Care at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and the director of the Society for Christian Psychology. He has edited *Psychology and Christianity: Five Views* and written *Foundations for Soul Care: A Christian Psychology Proposal*.

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