



**NANYANG
TECHNOLOGICAL
UNIVERSITY**

SINGAPORE

OG Distinguished Undergraduate Awards AY2022/2023
Post-Event Report

Ng Wan Zhen Janice
Care2Connect (28 October 2023)

Table of Contents

1. Project Overview	2
Project Background	2
Event Objectives	2
Project Delivery	2
2. Event Execution	2
Planning Timeline	2
Event Day Programme Flow	3
3. Post-Event Feedback	13
Event Impact	13
Future Directions and Areas for Improvement	13
4. Acknowledgements	14

1. Project Overview

Project Background

Chronic illness refers to conditions that last a year or more and that could require ongoing medical attention and limit one's ability to carry out daily tasks. For caregivers of chronically ill children, the duty of long-term care is often heavy. They often suffer alone from depression and anxiety, maintaining a strong front to reassure and make decisions about their child's health. Yet, their emotional needs are often overlooked by people around them.

Beyond individual struggles, issues in the relationship could arise in face of the overwhelming negativity and the challenge of illness. Specifically, the relationship between the child and their caregiver tends to be defined by illness more than it should, which was further exacerbated by the physical and psychological separation during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Event Objectives

Therefore, Care2Connect aims to:

- (1) **Care for the overlooked caregivers:** to empower them to practice self-care to combat burnout using journaling via a care package
- (2) **Connect the child-caregiver dyad:** to provide a platform for the dyad to re-define their relationship beyond that of merely a patient and caregiver through dyadic games and scrapbooking

Project Delivery

In collaboration with NTU Welfare Services Regular Service Portfolio Operation Hope and their partner organisation, 25 pairs of children-caregiver dyads participated in a 3-hour long event including dyadic bonding games and scrapbooking. Dyads were recruited from Operation Hope's partner organisation, and included children aged 1 to 16 afflicted with chronic illnesses (e.g. cerebral palsy) and their caregivers. Refreshments and care packages were provided to all participants at the end of the event. This was facilitated by 25 volunteers, who were recruited from NTU Welfare Services Club and the partner organisation.

2. Event Execution

Planning Timeline

Date	Milestone
26 March 2023	Meeting with Partner Organisation

28 July 2023	Finalisation of Event Execution Details with Partner Organisation
4 August 2023	Logistics Procurement + Final Draft
7 October 2023	Dry Run of Games
14 October 2023	Final check of Logistics
28 October 2023	Actual event

Event Day Programme Flow

Upon discussion with the participating partner organisation, the Care2Connect project was delivered as part of a Halloween-themed sports carnival to encourage physical activity for chronically ill children. Volunteers were involved as station masters or facilitators. (Photographs included in this report are censored as per participants' request)

Time	Activity
0900-0930	Early set-up & Volunteer Briefing
0930-0945	Buffer
0945-1000	Briefing & Grouping of Participants
1000-1045	Station Games
1045-1100	Mass Games
1100-1130	Scrapbooking Activity
1130-1145	Buffer
1200	Refreshments, Caregiver Care Package Distribution & Dismissal

Station games and mass games were planned accordingly to encourage bonding and collaboration between children and caregivers. Participants were split into three groups and cycled through the station games in a round-robin fashion, before coming together for mass games. Photographs were taken and printed on the spot for use in the subsequent scrapbooking activity. Aside from encouraging the chronically ill children to stay active, it also provided an opportunity for the child-caregiver dyads to bond.



Station Games in progress



Station Game 1: Colour Fishing



Station Game 2: Dribble and Shoot



Station Game 3: Mini Golf



Mass Games in progress



Mass Game 1: Fill the Bucket



Mass Game 2: Pass the Balloon

Through the scrapbooking activities, dyads reflected about their day together, and about their relationship with one another. Photos from the event, as well as other photos taken together were printed. The previous bonding games provided a common experience for dyads to connect and thus facilitate further reflection. Participants were also encouraged to share their reflections with other dyads in their group.



Scrapbooking in progress



Reflecting on the day together and the child-caregiver relationship

Finally, a curated care package aimed to encourage journaling and other self-care activities was distributed to caregivers. Centred around journaling, this included a journal, pen, as well as journaling prompt stickers targeted at caregivers. A self-care guide was also designed and printed to educate caregivers on self-care. Other items in the care package included small self-care items like candles, essential oils, steam eye masks and some food and drinks.



Pre-Event Care Package Packing



Contents of the Care Package (Self-Care guide, Journaling Prompt Stickers, Journal, Pen, Essential Oils, Candles, Snacks)



1 Taking care of your mental health

3. Taking Time to Breathe through Meditation

- Here are 7 easy steps you can follow as part of your morning/night routine:

1



Sit up straight on a chair or a big, firm pillow.

2



As you inhale, tense up your entire body – arms, legs, buttocks, feet. Scrunch up the muscles in your face too.

3



Hold for 2-3 seconds.



Exhale and relax (repeat twice).



Take a deep breath; let your belly expand.

6



Exhale and relax (repeat twice).



Breathe normally and be aware of your thoughts for five minutes.

Meditation is about observing your thoughts, without focusing on them. No thoughts are wrong or right, and you can simply label the emotion attached to a thought and let it pass.

3 Simple activities for self-care

1. Reflecting through Journaling

- Expressing your thoughts in writing can help reduce stress, compassion fatigue and burnout.
- Reading through your previous entries in times of struggle can help you understand more about yourself and gain insight on positive changes you can implement.
- Using the journals and jar of journaling prompts provided, begin penning down your thoughts.

2. Capturing Life in Photos

- Taking photographs of subjects you find beautiful or meaningful to you on your walk can make walking more enjoyable and memorable, and serve as a form of relaxation.
- You can also invite a few friends or loved ones to engage in this activity with you.

1. Exercise Frequently

- Walking after meals can do wonders for maintaining your health, lifting your mood, and provide opportunities for socialising.



Aim for 30-40 minutes of walking, otherwise try 5-10 minutes!

2. Eating Right



- Eat a balanced diet, including two servings of fruit and two servings of vegetables daily.

**Getting good nutrition is important in giving you energy and maintaining your health!*

- Try to avoid high-fat or calorie-dense foods in favour for fresh produce. Read the nutrition labels on foods before purchasing.

2 Protecting your personal time

1. Seeking External Support

- Caregiving is a marathon, not a sprint.
- Know when to seek help from those around you, or external caregiving services. If you need to, discuss potential arrangements with your loved ones. Breaks are necessary to keep you going.
- If you need to, confide in counsellors or neutral third parties, or even through journaling.
- Getting a few hours or days to yourself could be important in protecting your mental health.

2. Creating a Respite Zone

- Having your own dedicated space at home to unwind helps in grounding you and preserving your sense of personal space.
- Do set aside the specific time periods you would be using this space, and plan the activities you would engage in this space. Modify the space as you deem necessary to help you relax.
- When you are using this space (e.g. during naps or alternative caregiving arrangements), close the door, curtain or screen to help you get some privacy. You can also listen to some music if it helps you.

Self Care Guide provided (order is in printing order for a double-sided booklet)

In the past year, you have been an absolute fighter! When were you the proudest of yourself?	Look at the bright side - jot down 5 things that make you smile.
In the past year, list the ways you have actively practiced self-care. If you have not, write at least 5 activities you would like to do as a form of self-care. Jot down a brief plan to make it happen!	What do you wish others knew about your role as a caregiver?
Take some time to pen down any thoughts or feelings you find hard to express to others.	If you had a friend in your current situation, what's the best advice you would give them?
In recent years, what was the greatest challenge you had to overcome? What did you learn from it? How would you approach future challenges?	Who are the people who are supporting you right now as you go through this? How are they supporting you?
Write down the moments you feel supported and cared for, or how you would like to be supported and cared for. Do communicate this with your loved ones!	Write a letter to your future self.
What are some healthy habits you have adopted in the recent year? If you have not, write down some you would like to try (e.g. adequate sleep, more exercise, new hobby)!	What is an expectation you have of yourself that you're struggling with? How can you let this go?
What are some skills or traits you possess that make you feel proud of yourself?	What was the most difficult time in your life? How did you get through it? How have you grown since then?
Write about the last time you had an emotional breakdown or outburst. Reflect on your thoughts and feelings back then, and how you would like to approach similar situations moving forward.	What are 3 things you would like to be doing for the rest of your life?
Write about your hobbies and interests. What makes it special to you? Are there other hobbies you'd like to explore?	If you could tell your past self something, what would you tell them?
Write about your favourite memory from this year.	Write a letter of forgiveness to yourself.
What was the best thing that happened this month?	
What are you the most grateful for in your life at this given moment?	
What did you do today? Take a photograph you feel represents how today felt.	
What or who motivates you the most?	
Draw something that represents you on your present life stage, be it shapes/colours/symbols.	
Write down the names of everyone you are grateful for and whom have supported you throughout your life. Include the memorable moments you've shared with them if you'd like.	
What did you do today? Take a photograph you feel represents how today felt.	
What do you fear most? Have your fears changed throughout life?	
What are you the most grateful for in your life at this given moment?	
What three ordinary things bring you the most joy?	

Journaling Prompt Stickers provided

Refreshments were also provided at the end of the event through a Polar snack box. Post-event feedback was also collected through Google Forms.



Refreshments and Care Packages provided



The volunteers who made it all possible!

3. Post-Event Feedback

Event Impact

A total of 17 responses were eventually collected from the 25 participating caregivers.

Overall, the event was well-received based on participants' comments, especially the scrapbooking event.

Most respondents found this event effective at encouraging connection between them and their child (76.5%), and found the scrapbooking activity meaningful (82.4%).

Some relevant comments include:

- "A recollection of cherished memories and a reflection of the significant benefits"
- "Good activity to let the family connect in a different way, and it's a nice keepsake to put at home."
- "Great bonding activity"

Regarding the caregiver package, respondents found the included items to be relevant (82.4%) and helped them feel better equipped to practice self care (88.2%).

Participants also looked forward to having similar events being held in future (94.1%).

Future Directions and Areas for Improvement

Given the positive reception of this event, this event could be scaled up in future to reach more child-caregiver dyads. It could also be adapted for other groups of caregivers who experience similar burnout and impacted relationships (e.g. elderly, adult patients).

Areas of improvement raised regarding event execution includes the need for more breaks or earlier refreshments, which should be taken into account for future events in terms of execution.

4. Acknowledgements

It has truly been an honour to be one of the recipients gifted with the Mr Tay Tee Peng Distinguished Undergraduate Student Award (DUSA). I would like to sincerely thank OG Department stores for giving me this precious opportunity to embark on this project and help support these child-caregiver dyads in their journey navigating chronic illness. This is a cause that is close to my heart, and having it come to fruition and help the dyads was immensely fulfilling.

I would also like to thank my collaborators, Shanice Chia and Dr Teoh Chin Sim, for their unwavering support and valuable advice offered every step of the way. Their insight ensured that every aspect of this project was aimed to best serve the child-caregiver dyads' needs.

I am also grateful towards the coordinators at NTU, Ms Irene Tay and Mr Nicholas Ang Siong Lim, for their patient guidance throughout the project in various aspects.

Lastly, this event would not have been possible without the volunteer team from NTU Welfare Services Club. A big thank you to the volunteers for taking time from their busy schedules to support this event, from the prior months of planning and preparation to the set-up and facilitation on the event day itself.

Based on the positive feedback from this event, I look forward to inspiring more caregiver and/or patient-based initiatives to encourage self-care and connection to better support this group of inspiring individuals!