

Scholarship Stories: Ms Kong Tian Yi

Master of Arts (Counselling and Guidance)



How has the Ong Tiong Tat Master's Degree Scholarship impacted your goal of serving the community?

Receiving this scholarship is my ticket to a learning experience that is both enriching and humbling. I am thankful for this opportunity with which I have been entrusted. It is the reason I can serve more youths and families in our community. To this, I am immensely grateful for the Ong Tiong Tat Master's Degree (OTT) Scholarship.

Part of being a holder of the Ong Tiong Tat Master's Degree Scholarship requires you to contribute to the community through outreach activities. How did that influence your personal growth?

As a case manager, Ms Kong Tian Yi, recipient of NIE's Ong Tiong Tat Master's Degree Scholarship, shares with us her journey to becoming a counsellor. From feeling powerless to empowering others to make a change, Tian Yi's path was filled with learning opportunities and treasured moments.

As a recipient of the Ong Tiong Tat Master's Degree Scholarship, I volunteered at the Greentops Senior Activity Centre as a befriender. During the house visits, I got the chance to hear the stories of the seniors who are living in the area. During my interaction with them, I learned that it is important not to carry any assumptions or

prejudice but to lend a genuine listening ear. Through the experience, I realized that the simple gift of listening is the best gift to many. Having an activity centre in the community allows the seniors to come together to bond and form a community of support and companionship.

You started as a case manager. What made you decide to switch to counselling?

During my first three years as a case manager, I came across patients who struggled with various mental health issues. As a case manager, my role was to provide crisis management and supportive counselling work to patients and caregivers. I had seen many teens who battled depression and suicidal ideation. I often felt powerless and helpless, and wished I could provide them with better and more professional counselling support. This started my search for a counselling programme that could enhance my skills and expertise in this field. From my research and upon receiving recommendations from friends and colleagues, I decided to pursue a Master of Arts (Counselling and Guidance) at the National Institute of Education (NIE), Singapore.

Why did you choose NIE's Master of Arts (Counselling and Guidance) (MACG) programme over others? What sets it apart in your eyes?

I was attracted to MACG at NIE mainly due to the range of courses offered. The curriculum provided good breadth and depth, covering courses from Micro-Counselling Skills Lab and Personal Therapy to interesting electives like play therapy and addiction and suicide counselling.

The learning culture in NIE stresses the importance of application of knowledge, individual growth, and development. NIE provides a caring and supportive learning environment for the students to grow and learn skills that benefit professional practice. In our courses, the professors at NIE often incorporated role-plays for students to learn and apply the skills in class. Through these role-plays, we were able to get feedback from our professors and to also work on ways to improve and hone our counselling skills. During the practicum, individual and group supervision were provided to ensure that students received adequate training and care.

How has the master's programme benefited you?

I have grown both as a person and as a counsellor. The breadth and depth of the curriculum have provided extensive knowledge and practical application for my professional practice. I have greater confidence in helping my clients with the skills learned through this programme. Through MACG, I managed to equip myself with the knowledge of intake assessments, various therapy techniques, ethical and multicultural counselling skills. These have helped me to understand my clients better and subsequently provide a better quality of service for them. I also have become more culturally sensitive and competent in dealing with different psychological conditions and clientele profiles.

What will you say to potential students?

Being part of this programme has been an enriching and humbling experience for me. NIE firmly believes in providing rigorous and informative training so that every graduate of the Master of Arts (Counselling and Guidance) programme will become a highly competent and caring counsellor. Having undergone this programme, I have greater confidence in helping my clients with the skills I learnt.