

# Scholarship Stories: Ms Teng Shu Min

**Master of Arts (Counselling and Guidance)**



**How has the Ong Tiong Tat Master's Degree Scholarship facilitated your journey towards becoming a professional counsellor?**

The impetus to embark on this much-cherished experience as a Tinkle Friend volunteer was largely facilitated by the Ong Tiong Tat Master's Degree Scholarship. The scholarship provided me with the opportunity to serve and help students in need of guidance. It also allowed me to acquire invaluable interpersonal and communication skills. The experiences facilitated by the scholarship have imbued me with the confidence that I can be a competent counsellor to school-going children, notwithstanding the negative circumstances I faced while growing up.

**How has your personal experience with bullying influenced your decision to become a Tinkle Friend volunteer at the Singapore Children's Society? What inspired you to take on this role?**

When I was in primary school, I was a victim of bullying. My peers called me names, pinched my arm, and took away my allowance, all probably because I was physically weaker than them. This past personal experience reinforced my desire to help other children facing similar challenges in school, especially in my role as a Tinkle Friend volunteer at the Singapore Children's Society. Through an online instant messaging platform, I provided emotional support to primary school children, including victims of bullying, on the various challenges they faced in their lives. This was done via an online instant messaging platform, for around two to three hours every fortnight.

## **Please describe your role as a Tinkle Friend volunteer and the responsibilities you undertook.**

During my stint as a Tinkle Friend volunteer, I comforted students who obtained poor test or examination results, and those who were facing family- or peer-related issues. Through my online conversations, I discussed with them possible ways to manage conflict with their family members and peers more successfully and equip them with the skills needed to better control their emotions and cope with schoolwork demands. I also encouraged them to explore various hobbies and to initiate new friendships and lent a listening ear to lonely children who needed someone to talk to.

## **Could you share some memorable interactions from your time as a volunteer, and how they impacted you personally?**

One of my memorable online chats involved a student from a low-income family, whose single parent had to work three jobs just to provide for her. Sadly, the hard-earned pocket money was taken away by bullies, who would hit her repeatedly to force her to surrender her allowance. Another notable chat revolved around a pupil who was bullied by a prefect in her school – one who appeared to be so well-behaved that he was lauded as a model student by both teachers and parents.

Even though both students were initially reluctant to inform their teachers about their situations for fear of negative repercussions, I was able to convince them to do so with some effort. My success in encouraging these students to stand up for themselves and not remain as hapless victims of bullying (as I once was) allowed me to derive much personal satisfaction and emotional fulfilment as a volunteer.

## **What did you find most rewarding about your experience as a volunteer?**

I enjoyed being present for these students and motivating them to resolve their issues independently. I derived immense satisfaction from knowing that I was able to get them to make positive changes to their lives.

## **What inspired you to pursue a Master of Arts (Counselling and Guidance) at NIE?**

I wanted to become a counsellor from a young age because I believed that it would allow me to help others with their psychosocial and emotional issues. Prior to enrolling in a graduate programme, I was working in research-associated fields and data analysis. As much as my job was going well and provided me with a stable income to meet my daily expenses, I kept feeling as though something was “missing”. Consequently, I enrolled in the NIE’s Master of Arts (Counselling and Guidance) (MACG) programme in the hopes of acquiring relevant counselling skills to become a professional counsellor.

## How has NIE's MACG programme equipped you with the skills necessary for a career in counselling?

Courses like Multicultural Counselling enabled me to interact with clients from different cultures with more sensitivity, while others such as Group Process and Counselling allowed me to facilitate clients in group settings with greater ease. The MACG's practicum component further helped to hone my practical skills in counselling before I started on my professional helping journey. The accumulated knowledge, skills and competencies gave me the opportunity to embark on my counselling career with a considerable amount of experience in counselling.

## What attracted you to NIE and, specifically, to the Master of Arts (Counselling and Guidance) programme?

The practicum component of NIE's MACG programme stood out for me. At 400 hours, it was far more rigorous than those offered by other counselling master's degree programmes, which typically ranged from 100 to 200 hours.

In addition, MACG's recognition by the Singapore Association for Counselling further cemented its status as a quality postgraduate training programme for aspiring counsellors.

*Ms Teng Shu Min is a graduate of NIE's Master of Arts (Counselling and Guidance). NIE's Master of Arts (Counselling and Guidance) is a course-work oriented professional degree designed to prepare new entrants into the fields of counselling and guidance as highly competent and caring counsellors.*



*For more information on the Master of Arts (Counselling and Guidance) programme, please visit [https://www.ntu.edu.sg/education/graduate-programme/master-of-arts-\(counselling-and-guidance\)](https://www.ntu.edu.sg/education/graduate-programme/master-of-arts-(counselling-and-guidance)).*