

Wayward past, purposeful future

Read the story of an ex-delinquent youth who is now contributing back to the society.

31-year-old Chriz Siew has a remarkable life story to tell. Currently a Programme Executive at TOUCH Cyber Wellness & Sports (TC&S), Chriz mentors youths in the area of cyber wellness, helps kids with cyber addiction, and conducts assembly talks in schools. Always confident, cheerful and outgoing, one will never expect the kind of past that he has had.

Chriz was a rebellious child, fighting back at his parents' tight control. He started part-time work at the age of 14 doing odd jobs in fast food restaurants, cutting grass and eventually becoming a dispatch rider after he got his license.

Being exposed to the working world at a young age, Chriz was also exposed to many vices. He joined a gang when he was 14, picked up smoking and ran away from home twice. At 17, he joined a motorcycle gang, took part in street races with friends, and hung out at discos and billiard saloons. His parents were unable to control him and eventually, Chriz dropped out of tertiary school.

After National Service, Chriz sobered up and decided to start studying again. He completed his private diploma course and was even in the top ten percent of his graduating class. However, Chriz ruined his almost smooth-sailing future with one mistake – he smoked his first stick of marijuana. Since then, he had tried all sorts of different drugs. He was especially hooked on marijuana and anti-depressants to numb his emotional pain as he felt that life was hopeless and meaningless. During this time, Chriz had to borrow heavily to feed his addiction. This upset many people and his relationships with his family and friends were severely strained.

The wakeup call for Chriz came when he was caught in possession and consumption of drugs when he tried to drive across the causeway from Malaysia. He was sentenced to prison, but was released earlier and placed on a home detention programme due to his good behaviour. Chriz credits his family and church friends for his recovery. "Throughout the whole ordeal, they stood by me and never gave up on me. My family visited me regularly and my church friends wrote letters to encourage and spur me on. It was through this and because of them that I realised I cannot go back to my old life again," said Chriz.



Chriz enjoys a very close relationship with his family now despite his difficult past.



Chriz appreciates the friendships that were formed with the youths that he has worked with.

For the past three years, Chriz has been totally clean of drugs. "Working at TOUCH has helped me greatly in my journey of rehabilitation. My managers and colleagues have been very encouraging and supportive. They never minded about my past and are genuinely interested in what I can do for the youths."

Chriz now desires to set a good example to the youths that he mentors. Because he understands the agony of addiction, he hopes to prevent other youths from falling into addiction of any kind, in particular, internet and cyber gaming addiction, by sharing with them the right values.



"Although my job at TC&S is highly challenging and fast-paced, I am proud to be a part of the team. They are like family to me. Most importantly, I hope to encourage and help more people to overcome their addictions through sharing my own journey with them."