

# LIFE GYM

## POSITIVE LIVING CENTRE FOR MEN



Psychological Services Section 1



## *Objectives*

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LIFE GYM — Positive Living Centre for Men, launched in Stanley Prison in 2018, is the first psychological treatment unit specially designed for male persons-in-custody (PICs) set up by the Correctional Services Department (CSD). Pioneering male-specific psychological treatment programmes among Asian jurisdictions, the holistic psychological treatment programmes at LIFE GYM help the participants desist from crime, cultivate positive masculine qualities and develop positive living, with a view to gearing towards a positive life and a hopeful future.



## *Male Psychology*

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Psychological research and clinical experience indicate that male PICs have unique psychological needs, such as the desire for a “strong man” image, self-reliance in solving problems and restricted emotional expression. Unlike their female counterparts, male PICs show more prominent antisocial sentiments, violent tendency, behavioural addictions, anger and impulsivity, negative peer influence and resistance to seeking help.



## *Programme Content*

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To address male PICs' specific treatment needs, clinical psychologists will provide professional psychological assessment and then arrange evidence-based cognitive-behavioral treatment group in accordance to their assessed needs.

In view of the need for a “strong man” image, LIFE GYM put groundbreaking emphasis on cultivating positive masculine qualities, e.g. being a responsible provider for the family, taking concrete caring actions, riding out difficulties with perseverance and teaming up for a common goal, breaking the constraint of traditional remedial approach to tackling personal weaknesses.





## Programme Characteristics

LIFE GYM initiated **male-responsive treatment strategies** by incorporating innovative elements to better engage the male PICs without undermining their self-esteem, enhance treatment motivation, and optimize their learning of psychological skills.



**Diagram 1 Core and elective modules in treatment programme**



Innovative technology generally appeals to men. Embarking on a new era of digital therapeutics, CSD is pioneering virtual reality skills-training in LIFE GYM. Clinical psychologists have tailor-made two VR scenarios for local PICs to practise psychological skills in a safe and immersive virtual environment, resolving conflicts without aggression and desisting from crime by resisting peer pressure. The latest development involves the digitalized psychological programme Psyber Space - the multi-media, interactive therapeutic exercises installed in tablet computer help consolidate the learned psychological skills.



Men generally have an interest in sports. Working in partnership with a voluntary sports association, professional sports coaches disseminate sports knowledge and deliver systematic sports training, during which practice of psychological skills can be integrated into sports activities. Having overcome the challenges in sports activity like riding smart bike not only boosts self-esteem and fosters healthy living, but also strengthens the masculine quality of perseverance.







## Programme Characteristics

As most men are natural extroverts and enjoy competition, LIFE GYM has incorporated into the treatment programmes a wide range of competitive games, such as educational video games and board games, to offer opportunity for applying problem-solving skills, assertive communication skills as well as rule compliance in game situations.



Men are practical beings who are inclined to take concrete actions to solve problems and pursue personal development. In addition to traditional talking therapy, LIFE GYM has launched the "Inter-generational Life Review Programme" to allow young participants to produce life review booklets for the elderly participants, during which they practise "caring in action".



Partnering with frontline custodial staff, clinical psychologists cultivate a therapeutic environment that encourages mutual support for positive change among participants through communal living. Apart from participating in group therapy, participants consolidate the learned psychological skills in daily life for the ultimate goal of positive living.



## *Future Direction*

LIFE GYM has achieved preliminary positive results during the first-year trial run. Aspiring to an evidence-based psychological service, the programme development of LIFE GYM shall be informed by ongoing research. To further enhance the male-responsive treatment programmes, clinical psychologists will commit to leveraging innovative technology for psychological intervention, with a view to continuously advancing the digitalised psychological programmes Psyber Space and the Positive Living e-Programme.