



羅 湖 懲 教 所
Lo Wu Correctional Institution

PSY GYM 健 心 館

女性個人成長及情緒治療中心
Personal Growth and
Emotion Treatment Centre for Women

*Break through **Emotional** Turmoil
Strengthen **Psychological** Capital
for Rehabilitation & **Growth***



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Over the years of working in the Correctional Services Department, I have seen many female persons in custody. They are very special in the sense that they have unique psychological needs and distress. They may have suffered from different degrees of psychological trauma. They may have sad and hidden stories behind their offending behaviours as well. Fortunately, they are willing to face their problems and seek help to find their way out.

Thus, I am much pleased to have the opportunity to participate in the setting up of the PSY GYM -- Personal Growth and Emotion Treatment Centre for Women. Its establishment marks an important step in the development of the rehabilitation services for female persons in custody. By providing structured psychological treatment programmes and applying the new positive psychology treatment approach, our psychological services personnel sincerely hopes that we can help each and every participant to meet their specific rehabilitation needs:

Say goodbye to the past haze
Renew hope in life
Develop a positive thinking
Start a responsible new life



Dr. Judy HUI
Senior Clinical Psychologist
Psychological Services Section 1, CSD

Psychological Gymnasium in Correctional Services – A leading positive psychology intervention in the world

Since Hong Kong trained her first batch of clinical psychologists in the mid 70s, clinical psychology services in the territory have undergone significant development and change. Nowadays, we have strong evidence that psychotherapy works. However, one thing remains unchanged over the past 30 years: our psychological intervention is still focusing predominantly in repairing the worst. Clinical psychologists are perceived as “fault finding” experts and psychotherapy as a vehicle for people to talk about their troubles. Many people resist entering into psychotherapy because of this perception. Some clients relapse after initial recovery because we do not know how to help them to develop a better life after controlling their symptoms.

In the early days of this century, positive psychology has emerged in the USA and this new branch of psychology soon became very popular all over the world. When applying to psychotherapy, positive psychology provides new techniques to help clients to obtain positive things in life through building strengths and cultivating positive characters. Accumulative evidences in recent years have shown that positive psychotherapy techniques, especially when combined with conventional models in an appropriate way, have great potential to improve the efficacy of treatment as well as to reduce recidivism and increase motivation amongst the clients.

Since my establishment of the Positive Psychology Laboratory at the Psychology Department of the University of Hong Kong about 10 years ago, more and more mental health professionals are using positive psychotherapy techniques in their daily work. Yet, to my best knowledge, few forensic settings in the world have attempted to apply positive psychotherapy in such a systematic way as the present PSY GYM – Personal Growth and Emotion Treatment Centre for Women of the Correctional Services Department. I greatly appreciate that the Correctional Services Department is taking a pioneering and leading role in the development of positive psychotherapy in the world. I believe this service will have significant impact on clinical psychology services in correctional settings in the future. It is my honor to be associated with the development of PSY GYM, and I wish this service every success in the future.

Prof. Samuel Mun-yin HO
Department of Applied Social Studies
City University of Hong Kong
Honorary Advisor of PSY GYM



Specialized Treatment For Female Offenders

- **The Difference between Men and Women**

Traditionally, over the world, when considering prisoners' re-offending risk and services need, the male penal population was treated as the norm. The services to male offenders became the mainstream. Women offenders' needs were treated as the same as male offenders'. Hence, the women's programmes often mirrored the male offenders' for decades.

But, are the needs of female the same as those of male?

Does the re-offending risk of women offenders resemble that of their male counterparts'?

In recent years, there are increasing advocacies from *overseas jurisdictions, such as United States, Canada, United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand*, about *the difference in criminogenic risks and needs between women and their male counterparts'* by addressing their *gender-specific needs*.

Women are different from men in the ways to learn, to communicate and to express themselves. Women offenders differ from male offenders in terms of proportion of their problems, role-to-play in crime and their pathway to criminal behaviors. Other than risk of recidivism, their institutional behaviors are also different. The commonly seen problems among female offenders, such as emotional outbursts, self-harm tendency, personality problems, are detrimental to the institutional stability. If these problems are ignored, they will bring harm to the community, especially to their families and offspring in the long run.

Hence, when we assess the risks and needs of offenders, we have to consider the gender perspectives. In order to reduce women offenders' recidivism risk and to rehabilitate them, *reforms with gender-specific programmes* are deemed necessary.

● Gender-Specific Treatment Approach

In these years, overseas jurisdictions such as **United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand** have highlighted the unique treatment needs of female offenders, emphasizing *specialized, holistic, gender-responsive strategies* to be adopted when devising *female-oriented treatment programmes*.

In Canada Correctional Services, a Women Offender Sector was set up to put forth the development of services for women offenders. Vigorous research and female-centred intervention were taking place in respect to female offenders with higher risks and needs. Intensive training was given to staff in order to enhance their knowledge of managing and rehabilitating female offenders.



Our current clinical practice in Hong Kong and the latest overseas development support the development of local specialized services for women offenders. In accordance with the international trend, the **Hong Kong Correctional Services Department** sets up a specialized treatment unit for women offenders: *the PSY GYM – Personal Growth and Emotion Treatment Centre for Women*. This unit is established for women offenders with re-offending risk or emotional/ psychological problems. Its programmes are designed to cater the unique responsivity of women offenders for:

- 👉 Treatment on Emotional Problems
- 👉 Enhancement of Personal Growth



Gender-Specific Risks and Needs

Integrating the overseas and local clinical experience, the Gender-specific Risks and Needs factors are summarized as below:

● **Abuse and Trauma Experience**

Women offenders are *more likely to experience physical and sexual abuse* than male offenders or women in the general population. Overseas researches showed that *60 – 80 % of adult female offenders had experienced some forms of (like physical, sexual or psychological) abuse in their lives*. Handling the psychological sequelae of the abuse experiences is an *important part of the holistic approach for effective correctional intervention*, and at the same time a *requisite in duty of care*.



● Self-harm behaviour

Women offenders *display much more suicidal or self-injurious behaviour* than male offenders. Overseas researches showed that *more than half of the female offenders had engaged in at least one incident of self-harm* at some point of their lives. It was also found that self-harm was *positively correlated with criminal convictions and violence*.

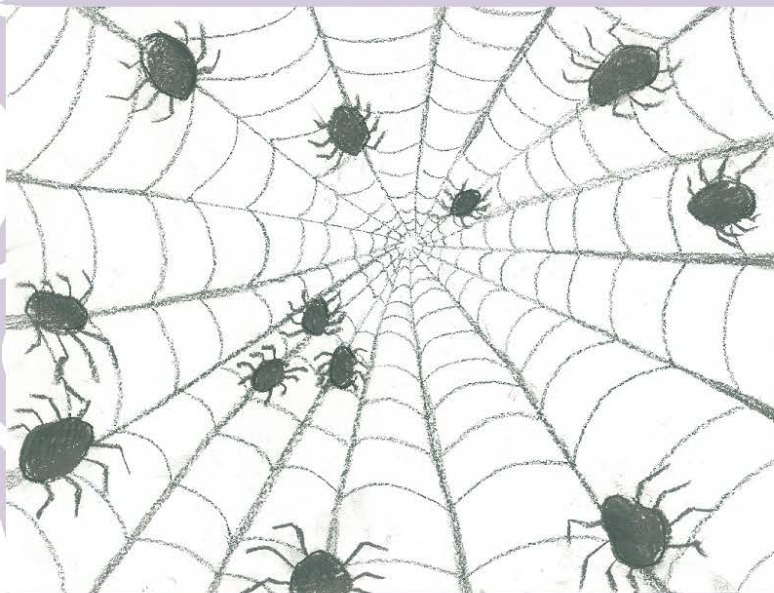
● Self-regulation problem

Women offender's weakness in self-regulation is reflected in their *high emotionality and frequent emotional outbursts*. Their emotional problems are *usually severer and more chronic than male offenders*. A local study found that *more than 50% of the women offenders have symptoms of depression, anxiety and stress problems*.



● Mental health problem

Related to the high frequency of victimization experiences and their self-regulation problems, *various clinical disorders, such as Major Depressive Disorder, Anxiety Disorders, Posttraumatic Stress Disorder, Borderline Personality Disorder*, are commonly seen in women offenders. Rates of *these mental health problems can be multiples of those found in male offenders*. In our local study on women offenders, *significant number* of the sample was found to suffer from different degree of symptoms of mental illness. Many of our clinical cases are receiving on-going psychiatric treatment.



● Dysfunctional Relationship

Dysfunctional relationship is one of the ***strong predictors of prison adjustment problems***. Compared to male offenders, women offenders tend to ***suffer more from interpersonal problems***. They yearn for care and affection. At the same time, their ***trust in others can be fragile*** as they are ***sensitive to exclusion and rejection***. Interpersonal problem is one of the ***major sources of emotional distress*** in women offenders. A ***significant proportion of clinical cases*** in women institutions were related to interpersonal conflicts among prisoners or relationship problems with their intimate partners and family outside prison.

Establishing supportive relationships is ***one of the crucial elements that facilitate successful reintegration*** of women offenders.



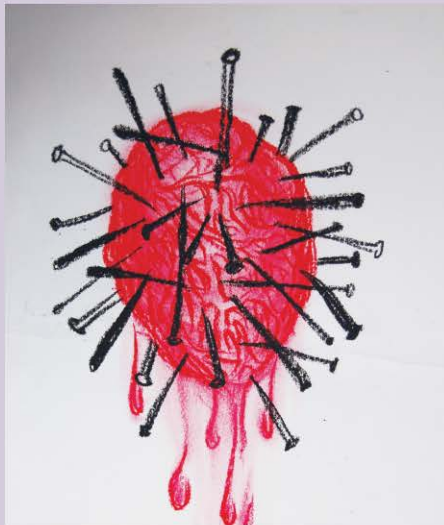
● Parenting stress

A significant proportion of women offenders have young children. Women offenders playing the role as a mother have *additional stress and difficulty in incarceration adjustment*. Quite often, these women offenders *lack effective parenting skills* and have *limited resources to support them raising their children*. In fact, some of them were offenders having *committed offences of child abuse*. It is, thus, crucial to equip them with adequate skills to parent their children and establish healthy parent-child relationship so as to minimize the possible harm bringing to their children and their families as a whole.



● Violence in women

Female offenders play dual roles as *perpetrator and victim in violence*. Women may *turn their aggression towards self* and exhibit violence in the form of self-injurious behaviour. Other than physical violence, women are prone to *verbal violence*, using abusive dialogues as means of attack. They can also turn to *relational aggression*, using social exclusion to retaliate against others. Women's violent behaviour is *highly related to their emotionality and clinical problems*.



Quality & Professional Psychological Services of the Hong Kong Correctional Services Department

The Hong Kong Correctional Services Department ***makes reference to the latest international development*** in gender-specific psychological services in order to develop quality services for female offenders. We also have ***collaboration with academics in the field of positive psychology*** to enhance the professionalism of our services.



Dr. Judy HUI, Senior Clinical Psychologist,
our Clinical Psychologist team &
Dr. Samuel HO, Honorary Advisor of PSY GYM

With the Clinical Psychology service as one of the core services of the Rehabilitation Division, CSD has *a team of dedicated Clinical Psychologists* ready to provide psychological service that can cater the Specific Risks and Needs of women offenders.



● Evidence-based Treatment

Wealth of research evidence supports that *Cognitive Behavioural Therapy* is effective in changing criminality as well as treating various clinical disorders. This is one of the core approaches of the PSY GYM programmes.

To *further enhance rehabilitation* of women offenders and stay *in line with* the emphasis of strength-based and empowerment approaches for women offenders in *overseas correctional programs*, *Positive Psychotherapy* is also *adopted* in the PSY GYM programmes.

Positive Psychotherapy is adopted to enhance Treatment Effectiveness!

● Introduction to PSY GYM

The first personal growth and emotion treatment centre for female adult offenders, the Psychological Gymnasium (PSY GYM), was unveiled on 8 March 2011. Its opening on the International Women's Day marks a new era in the development of rehabilitation services provided by Correctional Services Department.



In the “Physical” Gymnasium, there are personal coaches and various training equipments for strengthening different body parts, which help improving physical health and body shape. Under similar notions, we

establish the PSY GYM (“PsyGymnasium”) to provide ***personal coaching*** and ***therapeutic environment*** for participants of the PSY GYM programmes to keep up ***on-going practices*** so that they can ***establish a habit*** of using their rehabilitated skills and thinking.

*The Correctional Services Department is taking a **pioneering and leading role** in the development of **positive psychotherapy in Asia and even in the world!***

◆ PSY GYM Rehabilitation Model

From Recovery to Growth in 9 Steps



◆ Treatment Modalities PSY GYM

The treatment programmes of PSY GYM – Personal Growth & Emotion Treatment Centre for Women are provided in *different modalities* in accordance with their emotional problems and individual rehabilitative needs.

✧ Structured treatment groups





The treatment activities are tailor-made for the female offenders according to their gender-specific characteristics. Elements of art therapy such as music and paintings are used to facilitate their participation.

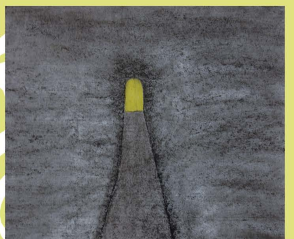
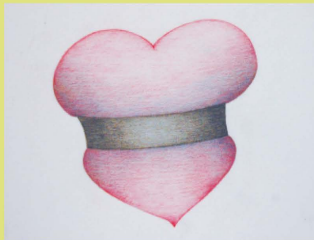
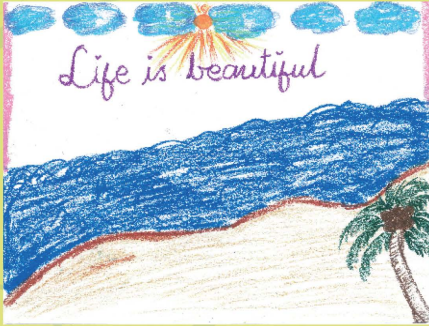
✧ Self-help programmes

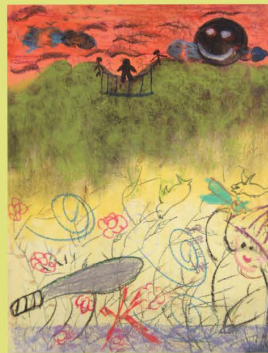


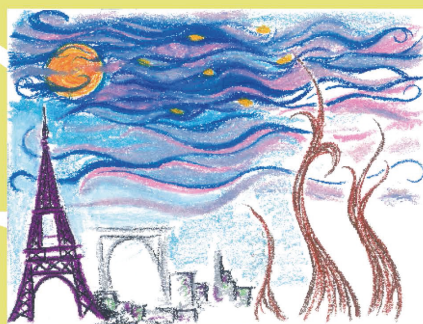
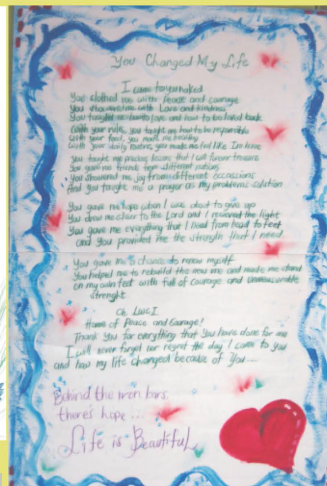
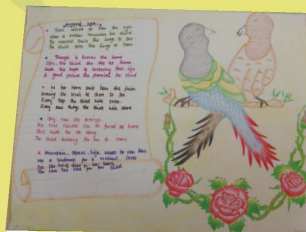
Under the individual guidance of clinical psychologists, the participants are provided with tailor-made audio-visual teaching materials and treatment manuals to achieve the optimal treatment outcome.

✧ In-depth individual psychotherapy











◆ Effectiveness of PSY GYM

A battery of clinical scales is used to measure the changes of participants before and after the programme. Besides, comments from management, frontline staff, clinical psychologists, honourable advisor and participants are collected to evaluate the programme effectiveness.

Clinical Measures

In clinical measures, significant pre- and post-differences suggested that the participants had less depressive, anxiety and stress symptoms. They became more sensitive to the positive stimulations in daily life.

Comments of Management and Frontline Staff

The Management and most of the frontline staff opined that the participants' emotion stability, attitude towards others, and work performance were significantly improved. For instance, participants' emotion become more positive and they can generate more positive thinking.

In view of the positive changes of participants' attitude and behaviours, the Management commented that PSY GYM could assist in performing secure custodial duties in long run.

Comments of Clinical Psychologists

Clinical psychologists commented that the participants' problem solving, mood management, and motivation for change were exceptionally improved. It was considered that, after the treatment programme, the participants were ready to change and to utilize their personal strength to start afresh after discharge.

Comments of Honourable Advisor

The Honorable Advisor of PSY GYM Prof. Samuel M.Y. HO commended clinical psychologists of PSY GYM for accomplishing a remarkable task. The curriculum demonstrated a nice integration of both conventional clinical psychology approaches and positive psychotherapy techniques. This curriculum could help participants to reduce psychological symptoms and to enhance resilience factors at the same time.

To sum up the comments from different parties, the effectiveness results of PSY GYM were impressive.



Comments of Participants

Most of the participants agreed that PSY GYM programme assisted them in managing their emotional problems and developing relevant skills. Some of the participants' comments were cited below: -

The programme helped me to think in a positive way. It helped me to focus on what is important in my daily life and how to handle difficult situation.

I like the activity which allowing us to do hand craft and identify where our strength come from.

I can enhance my strengths by developing them. We can do anything together by agreement. We can change our perception of situations. Accepting others' responses to situations.



Since I join the programme, now I am practicing to develop my strength and at the same time being more positive in a lot of things.

I can control how I think and feel. I have learnt how to understand my emotions and strength. I learn to appreciate life I have. I also have learnt more about live. It's very helpful for our future life.

The Programme is one of the best programmes I've ever attended in my life. It made me understand myself better.

I have learnt that there were many positive things / elements that I could appreciate despite being in prison, e.g.- the friends that I had here, my good health and family.



Public Support

Since the establishment of PSY GYM, there has been positive feedback from media on the first gender-specific personal growth and emotion treatment centre for women in correctional setting. This indicated that PSY GYM was meaningful and valuable to the community in the public's eye.

✧ Report from Media

TV Programme

Different TV programmes regarding PSY GYM were shown below:-



TVB Jade

《Knowing more about Hong Kong Correctional Services》

9 November 2011



TVB Pearl

《Pearl Report---Jailhouse Blues》

27 May 2013



TVB Jade

《Sunday Report---重整人生》

27 June 2013

Newspaper Report

On 8 March 2011, the Opening of PSY GYM, there were newspaper positively reported PSY GYM. These include:

- **South China Morning Post: -
Lo Wu facility offers positive counseling – A brighter life for female prisoners.**
“Always look on the bright side of life – that seems to be the motto of a new counseling service that will be offered at the city’s largest women’s prison.”
- **Apple Daily**
- **Ming Pao**
- **Oriental Daily**
- **Sing Tao**
- **Sing Pao**
- **Wen Wei Po**
- **The Sun**



✧ Gender Mainstreaming Award

On 8 March 2013, the Correctional Services Department received the Gender Mainstreaming Award from the Women's Commission in order to recognize the Department's effort and determination to promote gender mainstreaming.

Gender mainstreaming is the integration of gender perspectives and needs in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all legislation, public policies and programmes. Appreciation was shown to both the Lo Wu Correctional Institution and PSY GYM to act as good example to carry out gender mainstreaming.



The Chief Secretary for Administration, Mrs. Carrie LAM presented the Award to CSD, to be represented by the Superintendent Ms. Sau-wai NG and Senior Clinical Psychologist Dr. Judy HUI.



Our Expectations

All female offenders have potentials and personal goods. We expect that PSY GYM is able to provide them with suitable treatment. Through the on-going practices, they can use their personal strengths to lead a rehabilitated life, thereby promoting a safe and more inclusive society.





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Rehabilitation Division
Psychological Services Section 1
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For enquiries, please contact
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