Research: Men who live alone more at risk of being socially disconnected

Focus help on such people, as well as on older adults in poor health living with family: Study

Chin Seo Fang
Senior Community Correspondent

Retired cleaner Wang Jie Kim lives alone in a two-room rental flat in Marine Parade.

The 68-year-old bachelor spends his days watching television, walking around the neighbourhood and talking to his few friends at the void deck or community garden.

About two years ago, he was befriended by the staff at the nearby Montfort Care Goodlife Centre, where he spends about 30 minutes on weekdays having his blood pressure checked and reading newspapers.

“I prefer to lead a quiet life and don’t like to go to noisy places or join rowdy activities,” said Mr Wang, who has hypertension and feels breathless easily.

Mr Abdul Aziz Abdul Rayman, 65, joined TOUCHPoint @ Yishun 43A, under Touch Community Services, in June 2022. The former drug addict, who is divorced, has been in and out of prison many times.

He was released from prison in 2022, and lives with his brother in a one-room flat in Yishun. However, he is not on good terms, and he feels as if he is living alone.

The unemployed man also suffers from hypertension and diabetes.

“I was able to press on despite my financial problems and strained relationship with my brother, with the support of the Touch team,” said the former drug addict, who is divorced and was released from prison in 2022.

Those who have a lower level of education may also have less awareness of their health issues, and are socially disconnected due to the lack of ability to articulate their psycho-social or health needs, he said.

Lions Befrienders regularly conducts outreach to seniors, inviting them to its active ageing centres to participate in a wide range of activities and expand their social network.

“Gaining the trust of our seniors is the first step towards ensuring that they are socially connected, and this is something that takes place over time through showing the seniors respect and love,” he said.

A spokesman for Touch Community Services said that through its Seniors Caring for Seniors programme, it engages seniors who are doing well but isolated and provide support to at-risk seniors through weekly home visits.

“We have found that being active and productive often serves as a form of motivation for seniors, allowing them to make valuable contributions to their communities,” said the spokesman.