

**SPEECH OF MR MOHD ALI MAHMOOD, CEO**  
**PPIS FTI BRIDGING & HUMANIFYING FAMILY THERAPY PRACTICE CONFERENCE**  
**19 OCTOBER 2016, 9AM, CROWNE PLAZA CHANGI AIRPORT**

*Assalamualaikum Wr Wb*

Minister for Social and Family Development, Mr Tan Chuan-Jin

Honoured guests, speakers and participants

A good morning to all, and welcome to the inaugural Family Therapy Practice conference organised by the PPIS Family Therapy Institute, or better known as PPIS FTI.

1. We are here today because of families, because we are all part of a family and because we all help families in our profession. Family therapy is still new to the region and so are practice conferences on family therapy such as today's.
2. PPIS' core work has always involved families, and in our mission of inspiring women and strengthening families, our efforts are focused at addressing the changes that families go through in their family life cycle and provide the holding space for them to grow, experience mutual learning and become stronger and resilient.

**Mutual Learning**

3. Mutual learning is what PPIS FTI hopes to achieve in the next two days. PPIS FTI is a newcomer to the field, and it is because of this that we want to learn from you and we want to learn together. Through sharing of practice-wisdom and insights from both speakers and participants, perhaps we can discover or view the old with different and useful lenses, and perhaps through mutual

learning, we will be able to marry the humanistic evidence-based practice of the West with the Eastern spiritual and cultural perspectives on families. PPIS hopes to be in the forefront of creating mutual learning in our work in dealing with families.

### **Holistic Practice**

4. A well-known cultural anthropologist, Catherine Bateson made an observation that (I quote) “The family is changing, not disappearing. We have to broaden our understanding of it and look for the new metaphors”. Our world is experiencing a state of flux. Individuals, couples and families are changing and are experiencing instability in multiple complexities.
5. You, my fellow practitioners and social policy makers, have been working towards stabilizing and strengthening individuals, couples and families. Their struggles are acute and diverse, requiring a holistic intervention.
6. Just what does it mean to work holistically?
7. We propose holistic to mean creating opportunities by meandering around the issues compartmentalized by the self, the family and the larger system.
8. Have we, in providing intervention to fit the general masses for cost efficiencies, ignored the essence and shelved the idea of culture, religion and belief in our work? Have we been inclusive and considered the essence of the individual, in cultural and spiritual contexts?
9. In the words of John Shotter, “It is not so much about how **I** can use language in itself that matters, but it is the way the I must make **YOU** into account in my use of it.”

## **Learning Institute**

10. PPIS FTI is a learning institute, we learn about families, with families and for families. A learning circle that is often complex and never easy.
  
11. We constantly ask these questions from time to time:  
How sure are we, of strategies that we put in place in our work with families to help them see, deal, and overcome the complexities?  
Are we humanifying our approaches?  
Are our approaches appropriated to our local context?
  
12. As an institute, we are discovering the need to humanify our approaches and stances. Our programmes such as *Dear I See You*, a Couple Development Programme, is an upstream effort to offer couples space to recognise and reconcile with differences.

## **Professional Development through supervision**

13. Moving forward, we too have our hearts for fellow workers. Who is taking care of our fellow professionals? Where can they go to seek help when they have personal and professional dissonance and concerns?
  
14. PPIS FTI recognizes the need to pay attention to these professionals as they themselves meander around their own complexities. We believe it is important to support and nurture professionals towards enabling them and humanifying their practice with families. This brings me to the *Enriching and Reaching out to Professionals* programme, which is one of our ways of providing 'holding spaces' for fellow workers.

## **Launch of publication**

15. Today, we also witness the launch of the book, "Finding Rhythm in Misfits of Families". A manifestation and commitment of our conviction, the book documents the different types of divorce patterns, compiled reflections of our therapist and a potential area of research on a familiar topic. This

publication is PPIS' contribution to the social service sector towards the development of family therapy practice in Asia.

## **Conclusion**

16. Therefore PPIS FTI seeks to connect with international and local practitioners with the aim to consult, concur and challenge current practices. Today's conference is a testament to our commitment in humanifying family therapy practice in our local context. It is just the beginning of our journey and evidently, an invitation to everyone present today, to be part of this process.

17. Finally, I would like to thank Minister Tan Chuan-Jin, guests, speakers and participants for your presence here today. We hope that you will come out of this two-day conference with increased awareness and knowledge towards serving the community through learning from, and with each other. To my colleagues, thank you for your efforts. We look forward to more of such conferences in the years to come.

*Wa'alaikumsalam Wr Wb*