

## Speech by PPIS President, Ms Rahayu Mohamad

### PPIS FAMILY THERAPY INSTITUTE

#### BRIDGING AND HUMANIFYING FAMILY PRACTICE SYMPOSIUM 2018

Rethinking Intimacy and Culture: *Discoursing, Practicing and Researching*

Wednesday, 11 April 2018, 9.15am at Concorde Hotel, Singapore

Guest of Honour Minister of Communications & Information  
and Minister in Charge of Muslim Affairs, Associate Professor  
Dr Yaacob Ibrahim,

My fellow Board Members of PPIS,

CEO of PPIS, Mr Mohd Ali Mahmood,

Distinguished Speakers and Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen

1. A good morning to all, and welcome to the Bridging and Humanifying Family Practice Symposium 2018.
2. An event organised by PPIS Family Therapy Institute (FTI), this marks the **second** instalment of our Family Practice Symposium series where practitioners can find comfort while deliberating on the practices of family therapy practice in Singapore.

3. With that said, it has been close to two years since we last met at our first Family Practice Symposium in 2016. I am heartened to see social service professionals from different sectors such as social services, religious groups, mental and healthcare groups, gathered this morning to explore and discourse about *intimacy* and *culture*, an area which we believe, is very important when working with families within multicultural Singapore.

4. I am even more elated to welcome our international speakers, Mr Terry Real (US) and Dr Gail Simon (UK)! It is your sharing that will make this an eventful Symposium and we genuinely hope that your time be a memorable one as well.

## **FTI's journey so far**

5. Three years in, PPIS FTI remains grounded and is committed to keep learning about families, with families and for families. We too understand the importance of supporting and nurturing professionals towards enabling them and humanifying their practices with families.
  
6. Organising national conferences like this, and providing holding spaces through programmes such as *'Dear I See You'* where couples are able to recognise and reconcile their differences as well as *'Enriching and Reaching out to Professionals'* for fellow practitioners. I am pleased to mention that PPIS FTI has seen a total of **1572** cases since its inception in 2015.
  
7. The institute has also been working hard in making its presence felt regionally and internationally - having been invited to countries like Shanghai and London to present our work.

8. Likewise, PPIS also ensures that our therapists are kept updated and well informed of developments in the industry by participating in regional and international conferences. This not only allows us to widen our network, but also for mutual learning and changed perspectives in family therapy to take place. We hope that all of you are able to achieve the same through today's symposium.

***Why intimacy and culture?***

9. As practitioners working with families, I am sure that you have had the experience of working with couples that are in the midst of going through or have gone through divorces. You would have met couples who were at the brink of divorce or those who came forward to seek help on the issues that they face in their marriages.

10. The top two reasons for divorces under the Women's Charter were "unreasonable behaviour" and "separated for three or more years". For divorces under the Administration of Muslim Law Act (AMLA), the top two reasons were "infidelity" and "desertion".
11. Peeling the layers beyond these reasons, the issue of *intimacy* peeks through from within. Being a fairly conservative nation that holds on strongly to our roots, we believe that the *culture* of talking about *intimacy* in Singapore is still conservative.
12. Talking about *intimacy* is no doubt an intimate matter and not something that everyone is comfortable with, within or out of the therapy setting. To be intimate is perhaps to feel safe enough to express and explore concerns within a holding space that will enhance relationships.
13. As practitioners, we need to appropriate and equip our understanding and the way of holding families to be able to hold a complex expression and acceptance of *intimacy*.

14. Today's symposium hopes to pave the way for practitioners to recognise the importance of engaging individuals, couples and families to expand their ideas surrounding *intimacy* and how they can nurture their familial connect to develop an intimate relationship.

15. For example, by giving them opportunities to spend intimate quality time, becomes an important factor in our efforts towards building and strengthening the families. We will also explore how *culture* is imparting on ideas around intimacy and how we can adopt reflexive writing as a research and writing tool in our practice.

## **Launch of supervision book**

16. FTI would also like to take this opportunity to officially launch our book titled '*Between Spaces: A Book about Supervisions by Supervisees & Supervisors*'. Through our work thus far, we notice that the idea of *intimacy* requires close supervision hence this book. Where our therapists share an interactive reflection as well as the multiple contexts surrounding clinical practice at the institute.

17. This book represents FTI's continued support to the social services sector towards the development of family therapy practice.

## **Closing**

18. Before I close, I would like to thank Guest-of-Honour Minister Dr Yaacob Ibrahim for taking time to join us today. Your presence has helped to set the stage for practitioners to continue learning about their work and to care for themselves, while working with families.

19. I hope that all of you will take this opportunity to embrace intimate learning, open sharing and meaningful conversation about *intimacy* across *cultures* so that we can work towards building a more consolidated approach to the practice of family therapy in Singapore.

20. Wishing you a fruitful two-days ahead. Thank you.