

# Experience in the workshop, “Have, U Can”

## A brief introduction of myself

My name is Joseph Liu. I was a student at United Christian College (Kowloon East) and am going to Great Britain in the coming academic year.

To not hide any of my personality from you, I am a person with relatively low EQ compared to other people of the same age as me. Sometimes, I cannot really control my mood when something that I find unfavorable happens to me, and subsequently, I may scold or argue with others. As a result, some teachers in my school may consider me to be a troublesome student. Moreover, my dream is to become a doctor, a highly ranked job. In order to reach this objective, I know that I have to score very high academic results, and unfortunately, this is where most of my stress comes from. My skills of encountering stress are very weak, which may lead to mood swings that make a strong impact on my behavior and my social life.

After sharing a bit about myself, I would now like to tell you about my experience, or in other words, my story of how I changed after the participating in the “Have, U Can” workshop conducted by Dr. Cecilia Chan in April and being a mentor for it in July.

## My experience as a participant

Why did I join this workshop? To be honest, I was forced to join by my teacher in order to become a more positive person, since something happened to me just before the program started.

In the beginning, I did not really want to put in any effort during the activities. The reason is because something had happened at school, so I was forced to withdraw from the original Easter program, a trip to Macau to visit a church and do volunteer work for them, and of course the best part, buying food and souvenirs. The destination of my Easter program ended up to be this workshop which I initially thought was useless, boring and a waste of my time. Moreover, some of my friends were not paying any attention in the workshop too and played with their phones. Being influenced by my peers, my attitude was worsened even more. I used my phone and as a group member, I neither made any contribution to the tasks given nor gave any response to my mentors (this attitude can be described as “HEA”). Since I was too “HEA”, Dr. Chan gave me a nick name “AH HEA”.

I only started to try to contribute to the workshop before the end of the first day after my teacher had a very long talk with me about why he wanted me to participate. He told me that he wanted me to learn something and change in this program. I felt that he really cared about me and wanted me to gain some benefits from the workshop, so not wanting to disappoint him and aware of my behavior, I started becoming more involved in the workshop. The start of my involvement was also encouraged by Dr. Chan and my mentors who gave me a lot of support and showed patience even though I did not follow the instructions in the beginning.

The first activity I had contributed to was the “Knots of Hearts” charms, which were very hard to make. There was a step that needed me to pass 4 pieces of string through a tiny hole of a bead. Everyone else

was using a bead with a bigger hole, so wanting to be different and to challenge myself, I tried to do it with a smaller one and did it. This brought me a feeling of success and encouraged me to involve myself in the workshop with more passion. Moreover, the last step of making the charm required me to use a lighter which I was afraid to use. However, I gave it a shot because mentor said that it was safe and encouraged me to try.

Unfortunately, I was not feeling well on the second day and was away. However, moving on to the third day, I think I really made a big improvement. I started to follow the instructions given by my mentors and be more responsive. Moreover, I chatted with them and shared something about my life. After lunch, there was an activity named "Stories of Hong Kong People", and we were asked to interview a person on the street about his or her story. Many people rejected us, but we did not give up and finally, we found a man who was willing to have an interview. He talked about his life and encouraged us to study hard so that our parents will be happy, and also to contribute to the society. When it was my turn to ask him a question, I was really scared since my self-confidence was not high. I am the only son in my family and seldom talk to others, and I am also quite shy and nervous when I talk to strangers. However, I still tried my best to finish it. After this activity and presenting our findings to our peers, teachers and mentors, I found that I could speak and talk more and more comfortably in front of others and my self-confidence was increasing step by step. Through that day, I made a lot of progress (at least I think so) in self-confidence, respectfulness and communication skills, which are very useful in my life.

On the last day, there was a competition which required us to build a bridge using spaghetti and compete with other groups to see which bridge can sustain the greatest weight. It required our creativity and carefulness since spaghetti is really brittle. It was a very demanding activity, but I think it made the biggest impact on me. Before it began, I was not familiar with my groupmates since even though I was more active, I was still too passive to get to know them more. Our groupmates needed to cooperate with one another in order to build the best bridge and I was worried about how I would work with them. However, a groupmate asked if anyone was good at physics and I quietly said I took it, but was not very good at it. They asked for my opinion and I ended up leading my team to finish the bridge. Unfortunately, we lost since other groups said that it was not a bridge, but it was a great experience to try something new and that I was encouraged to be active to lead my team even though we did not win. Moreover, I felt satisfied, delighted and had the feeling of success. I did not think that my group would listen to my opinion in the beginning, but things were beyond my expectations. They really treasured my opinion and respected me as one of their groupmates, or even a leader in this activity. Furthermore, this experience taught me that using physics theoretically and applying physics are different things since it was hard to apply my knowledge of physics when building the bridge.

Afterwards, a lunch party was held and some professors and university students were invited over to give us some information about entering Hong Kong University as well as some advice on our future careers. I think that it was really useful since I got some information on entering Hong Kong University's medicine program by non-JUPAS. Moreover, the professors and university students also gave us lots of advice on studying and whatnot. At the end, Dr. Chan commented that I made a huge improvement and she awarded me in front of other students which made me felt very happy.

As a student, I think the program was extremely meaningful and useful in developing a positive personality and a variety of life skills (for example, communication skills and managing my mood) through different activities, which will help a lot in my future career as a doctor (if I can achieve it). The

mentors were very patient and were aware of what students needed and how students felt. Furthermore, they presented a positive image so that students may follow them, and I was one of them. It affected me a lot since I changed quite a bit after joining this workshop. For example, I have a more positive attitude and my self-confidence has significantly increased. As a result, it was a very good experience that greatly changed my life.

## My experience as a mentor

After the workshop, I got Dr. Chan's contact. Initially, I just wanted to know more about applying for Hong Kong University's medical program through non-JUPAS, so I contacted her using WhatsApp. After talking with her, she offered me a job since she wanted me to learn more and be more positive by working with the mentors. I accepted it since I wanted to gain more experience and get a reference letter for applying to Hong Kong University in the future, however, my mind has changed after I started working.

On the first day, I stayed at the office for most of the day doing some paperwork. I only joined the workshop as a mentor for about two hours so I was not familiar with my groupmates. However, I think that working was quite satisfying that day as a mentor. In the next three days, I worked for the full day as a mentor and it was beneficial to me.

The first activity on the second day was a debate between groups. After the preparation time, the debate started but some of the students were still working on their notes, so I stopped them. Maybe I was not friendly enough or not familiar with them, so they called me annoying. I have mentioned that I am not usually patient, so I really wanted to scold them because of their bad attitude. However, reminding myself that I was a mentor, I tried my very best to control my mood and not to scold them, and I succeeded. When I look back at this experience, I think that I have grown up as I can control myself to not be childish and try to argue back like how I was in the past before joining the workshop and being a mentor. I think my patience has also improved and I have a better control of my mood.

After having a filling lunch, we went out and did a mission that requires the students to finish a series of tasks. Although my job was taking care of the students, I still learned something from this activity, such as how to manage the students. Also, one of the students, Kammy, taught me a lesson. By observing what she was doing as a leader of the group, I understood leadership skills better and was encouraged by her braveness when she was interviewing strangers. I felt that I should be braver in doing things that I am not used to since she was able to, even though she is about four years younger than me.

The activities "Tell Me a Story" and "Stories of Hong Kong People" were held on the third day. There is not much to say about "Tell Me a Story", but still, the activity brought us a lot of laughter. After lunch, we went out to interview people again and ask about their story. We met a man, and when the students started interviewing him, the other mentor in my group stood beside me as there was no seat for her. To be considerate, I left my seat and stood with her for almost 2 hours. It was the first time that I stood for such a long time, so I think I was much more patient and considerate than I was before joining the workshop.

The last day of the workshop had the “Spaghetti Bridge” activity which was nothing new since it was just like the one I had done before. There was also an activity where everyone shared their dreams. This activity also showed interviews with the parents of some of the students, talking about whether they wanted \$20 million or to achieve their dream. This stimulated me to reflect and think more on and beyond my dreams, for example, “What I should do more to achieve my dream?” and “Do I have any other dreams?”. It gave me a clearer idea about what I should do to achieve my goals.

By being a mentor after being a student participant, I got to experience the feeling of the mentors who were leading my team, since when I was a student, my group was troublesome and made our mentors frustrated. As I experienced being a participant, it was easier for me to take up the role of a mentor. For example, mentors should tell the students what to do, like not to use their phone after a specific time, and let them know you trust them, such as by not repeating the same instructions two or three times to show trust and respect. This helps establish a good relationship between a mentor and the students so that it will be easier to look after them and have a better impact on the students. Moreover, I think that I learned things that I would not be able to as a student, like taking care of younger students and becoming more considerate. I also learned many other skills to help me improve my personal qualities, and this helped me be a better person now.

If there is another chance to be a mentor, I would like to take it. This is because I think being a mentor is satisfying since observing the students achieving their goals makes me feel good. Also, I think helping others to become better developed is very meaningful as a mentor. It is also for my own benefit, becoming a doctor requires excellent communicating skills and self-confidence in order to talk to patients naturally without nervousness, and mentoring would be a good medium for me to have an adequate practice and preparation for this face-to-face interactions with others.

## Overall

After both being a student and mentor, I think that I can really use what I have learned. My relationship with my father is not that good, or maybe only the way I treat him is not that good, and not very long after I finished mentoring at the workshop, it was my father’s birthday. In the past, even if it was his birthday, I would not say something very impressive or something that came from my heart. However, this time, I made a big step to help to improve the relationship and said “sorry” and “I love you” to him, which is something I did not say for years. Maybe you will think that it is easy to say but for me, it is really hard. Moreover, I am a person who hates doing housework and almost never does it, but one time I did since I knew my dad was a bit sick and I think this shows consideration. I think this change was after seeing the video of the parents’ interviews and how the students acted when they saw it. This stimulated me to reflect on my attitude when facing my parents and made me feel very guilty. Also, after listening to other mentors’ views in the focus group, they reminded me that my parents love me very much and give all the best things they have even if I am naughty or behaving badly, so I decided that I should treat them better. My father told me that he appreciated it and this made me feel very happy and proud of myself and the improvement I had made. I also think that I grew up a lot, not just physically, but mentally.

I, even you may have thought that this kind of workshop cannot bring any impact to the participants, but you should trust me that this workshop, “Have, U Can”, can really make a great impact. The changes

I have been through is evidence to support what I said is real and not something that is fake or just any normal nice story.

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We have received consent to share by the student.