

A star in the darkness

In her darkest moment, abused wife and single mother Andrea wanted to end it all. But she lives today to tell how Morning Star provided her a ray of hope.

At the age of 23, Andrea (not her real name) came to Singapore with her four sisters in search of a better life. Her father, the family's sole breadwinner, had just passed away after a prolonged battle with brain tumour. Her mother was suffering from diabetes.

The eldest in her family, Andrea found work in Singapore as a production operator. Shortly after, she got married and was blessed with three sons.

Unfortunately for Andrea, her blissful marriage was short-lived. Her husband turned abusive towards her. The small cleaning business which they had started went into trouble and had to be closed down. But her husband lived off her earnings, and spent indiscriminately using her credit card, leaving the creditors to hound her for payment. As the debts snowballed beyond what she could repay, she had little choice but to be declared a bankrupt. Her husband then chose to walk out on the family, and Andrea was left to fend for herself and her children.

One bad thing led to another. Her troubles caused her to lose her full-time job. To make ends meet, Andrea took up part-time work. With some income, she could pay the bills and provide the basic needs for her family. But with her irregular working hours, it was next to impossible to afford her children with the care and attention they needed.

Her boys, aged between 7 and 12, were very deeply affected by the family situation. They showed a lack of interest in school work and often hung out with their friends. Her youngest son had a reading problem that required more attention than what Andrea or the teachers could provide.

The school referred the family to Morning Star Community Services, a family-centred group



Single parents face tough challenges

that aims to strengthen and enrich family life. Through their student care services, Morning Star helps to look after Andrea's sons and attend to their specific needs. They also provided financial support by subsidising substantially the costs of providing the student care services.

Through the help of Morning Star, Andrea can now concentrate on her work, knowing that her children are being looked after by people who care. Her sons are beginning to take an interest in learning and becoming more independent. The staff at Morning Star has also helped the boys to come to terms with their situation, and understand that all is not lost. They now appreciate what their mother has gone through for their sake.

"My children are good kids and intelligent," said Andrea with pride in her eyes. Her steely composure belies what she and her family have gone through.

She had once upon a time felt so unloved, alone, hounded, stressed and depressed. The bleakest days of her life are deeply etched in her memory, just as the slash wounds on her arms bear testimony to her depressed state during those times. She revealed that she had also attempted suicide by taking an overdose of sleeping pills and contemplated downing a bottle of bleach. Her depression took a toll on her children as she would often scold and beat them. At her lowest point when she had lost all hope and could not bear to see her children suffering anymore, she stood on the parapet of a block of flats, wanting to end all their pain. It was only the fear of what that would do to her children that stopped her.

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Andrea said that the lifeline and hope provided through Morning Star alleviated her sufferings. She has also found love and comfort through its care-givers - the love she has been craving for. She can now look to the future with enthusiasm, and hopes that by sharing her story, others will come to know that "hope exists even in the darkest hour".

With that new-found peace, she wants to find a permanent job that will allow her to put food on the table for her children. Currently, chicken is a luxury for them. Her sons hardly have anything new, not even their school uniform, shoes and books. But they are not complaining; they have learnt to appreciate and cherish what they have now. ♥