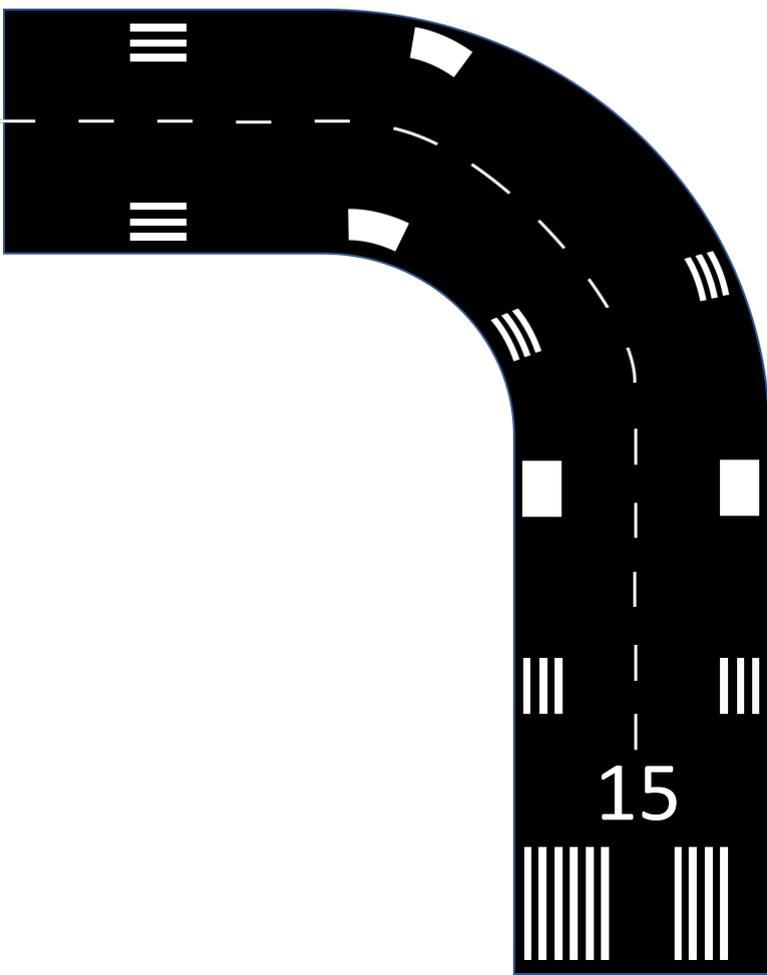


Wesley
Male, 26 years-old
Streetwise Programme (SWP)

As a child, Wesley never had anyone to look up to. His mother was stricken with an illness while his father had to work long hours as a taxi driver to support the family and pay for his mother's medical bills. As a result, his Father was seldom at home.

Wesley often felt that it was unfair for his family to suffer. In secondary school, he met a bunch of friends who were gang members. With them, he felt an unprecedented sense of belonging. Thus, he began to join their gang activities.

"I thought life was pretty exciting then. We hung out, smoked, and it was an easy way to pass time without having to think about the problems that my family faced. I guess for me, it was a form of escape."



Eventually, at the age of 14, Wesley was caught for gang involvement and charged for assault with a deadly weapon. Resultantly, he has to undergo 2 years of probation. His father was devastated but, as usual, he didn't have time for Wesley since he was the sole breadwinner. Wesley was referred to YGOS under the Streetwise Programme where he was mentored by Steven.

"I was too young and wilful to think that my Dad didn't care for me. During my probation, I reoffended and was charged the second time for drug abuse and assault. Consequently, I had to stay in the Singapore Boys' Hostel for 2 years."

Wesley's mentoring relationship with Steven continued even after he was discharged from the Hostel.

Unfortunately, Wesley's mother could not take the blow when the police came to handcuff him at home. She fainted because of a stroke. An insurmountable sense of guilt engulfed Wesley ever since, as he felt that he was the cause of his mother's stroke. Sadly, Wesley's mother passed away soon after.

"I really felt that I failed her as a son and that I was always a burden to the family with my deviant behaviours. On her deathbed, she whispered to me to tell me to turn from my wrong ways. I cried until there were no tears left. I felt that I was an unfilial son who was not there for my mother during her last days, and now she would never see how I have transformed."

Wesley truly regrets that he was a step too late. But that marked an important turning point in his life. With the appreciation of the care YGOS has given to him, Wesley decided to leave the gang and was determined to start life anew. Ever since then, he decided to become a Youth Worker at YGOS. He is convicted to help other youths who are like him to turn their lives around too.

"My next step forward is to pursue a degree in Social Work so that I can be a qualified Social Worker and pay it forward to impact more lives ahead."