OUR AMBITION IS TO INSPIRE THE YOUNG PEOPLE WE WORK WITH, AND BE A PARTNER TO THEIR SUCCESS IN DRIVING CHANGE AND TRANSFORMATION IN THEIR LIVES FOR A BETTER FUTURE.

Trybe is a social service agency that specializes in Youth-At-Risk services.

Our ambition is to inspire the young people we work with, and be a partner to their success in driving change and transformation in their lives for a better future.

At Trybe, our doors are open to youth from all walks of life. We understand that every story is different, every adversity faced unique to each individual. Each path differs and the road to success is owned by every individual we guide and support.

Success is not defined by a national standard, but one that is carved and shaped through personal experiences and tenacity. Our aspiration for every youth we work with is for them to take charge of their lives in defining their own success story. We empower them to carry this determination into their future, inspiring others to make a positive impact to their communities.

The stories on this publication show how the youths’ determination and resilience, with the support and guidance from the community, can overcome all kinds of adversities in life and steer young people towards a better future.
Growing up, Adli Syazani’s parents seemed to be perpetually absent. “They were always busy,” Adli says. “They didn’t have time for me and my siblings, and I had a hard time living like a normal child because I had to survive on my own.”

As Adli got older, he found himself picking up illicit habits to deal with the pressures of life. “I used to look for the easy way out of my problems,” he says. When he was nine years old, he was caught stealing a bicycle, but the transgression only made him bolder.

Eventually, he began mixing with gang members, and by the time he was in secondary school, he was deep in the throes of drugs. As his consumption escalated, he began selling the very substances he was taking so he could support his habit. Then, consequences followed and at 16, he dropped out of school. It didn’t take long for the law to catch up, and shortly after, he found himself apprehended by the Central Narcotics Bureau.
TRANSITIONING TO GREENER GROUNDS

Adli spent three weeks in prison before being admitted to a drug rehabilitation centre then managed by Trybe. Trybe provides rehabilitation for youths with drug addiction, while teaching them life skills so they may make informed choices once they reintegrate into society. Adli spent six months within its premises, and things began taking a turn for the better.

"Trybe helped me a lot," Adli says. One of the most valuable lessons for him was that "they teach you how to engage and bond with someone who can support you in life." And one of those people happened to be Nathan Parreno, a staff at the centre.

"When I first met Adli, it was weird," Nathan laughs. "He was going through withdrawals, and at the time, he didn't know what to do with his life." But one night, Nathan noticed an anxious Adli pacing the centre's balcony. "What's up?" Nathan had asked innocuously. Adli then confided in Nathan about an unrequited romance, and the two begin to talk.

"Would you believe me if I told you that I have 24 exes?" Adli had asked. "With a face like that, who wouldn't believe you?" Nathan replied. It was a moment of comic relief, and the two became fast friends.

STEPping UP TO THE PLATE

In time, Nathan also offered Adli the chance to be part of the Building Eco-Systems (BES) service. Set over several months, BES assesses, trains and matches youths to partnering companies for employment.

Keen to transition from part-time gigs to a stable job, Adli joined BES eagerly, and was assigned to Agape—a social enterprise that provides communication specialists for external companies. Agape is also known to employ individuals with a troubled past such as ex-inmates, priding itself on providing equal opportunities and reskilling to all.

Today, Adli's role as customer service officer sees him working at the call centre, fielding calls and queries from customers.

"It's not as easy as it sounds because it's quite a lot to learn," Adli admits sheepishly. "You need to know everything the client has and you need to respond to the callers’ enquiries."

However, the payoff is rewarding.

Adli’s supervisor, Nooren Binte Rabu, recalls the first time they met. "He used to be very distant. When you give him a task, he'll do it, but it was difficult to build a relationship with him. But I understand he's worried about what people think of him, and that he won't fit in."

With much support and encouragement, Adli assimilated easily and in just a few weeks, Nooren found Adli opening up and responding positively to his new working environment.

"He's like a stone with rough edges that you have to sharpen so he would shine," says Nooren. "He took the challenge, and is doing well. He's now more jovial and he laughs and jokes a lot. He communicates two ways and can talk more."

Adli also seemed surprised by how quickly he gravitated towards the role. "I thought office work meant that you have to be in one cubicle by yourself. But I was wrong. The office vibe actually feels like school. You can talk to people, joke with each other, but at the same time, take work seriously."

On a professional front, Nooren also ensures that Adli has a mentor every step of the way. "While I know this is a great opportunity for him, I need to make sure he has support because I don't want him to give up if it's too difficult."

When asked about his change, Adli laughs. "I'm still the same guy, just with a different lifespan." However, Nathan and Nooren recognise Adli’s progress far more.

"One thing that is striking with Adli is his willingness to learn and weigh consequences," says Nathan. "He used to be very impulsive, but now he's willing to sacrifice [temporary gratifications] for a better outcome. Adli has also learnt how to treasure and see the value of responsibility."

Nooren attests to Adli’s betterment. "When it comes to products and system, he's really good and is such a fast learner," says Nooren. "His communication skills will also be better because of the work he's handling right now, since it needs good, proper communication."
NEW HOBBIES ABOUND

Despite the headway he’s made, Adli is still human and prone to err. The most challenging commitment he has right now is to himself, and it’s to stay away from drugs. “Once you touch drugs... it’s like eating something really delicious, and now you can’t. It’s difficult,” he admits. “But I notice that if I keep myself busy, I don’t think about it that much.”

One way that Adli keeps himself occupied is by exploring the great outdoors. “I didn’t even know I liked hiking until Nathan asked me to go,” Adli chuckles. “My favourite place? It’s MacRitchie. It’s the best.”

His newfound love for exploration has also lifted Adli out of his tunnel vision. “I don’t just learn more about myself, but also about Singapore,” he notes. “When I went through my dark period, I didn’t see Singapore as something great because everything was the same to me. Like, this is just another HDB block, and there’s the police. But there are actually quite a few beautiful places in Singapore,” Adli reflects.

I'M STILL THE SAME GUY, JUST WITH A DIFFERENT LIFEPATH

Trybe’s services like BES are instrumental in helping youths map out and embark on their new life journeys. “Life in general is stressful,” Adli says. “Because when you don’t know what to do in the future—that’s stressful. You don’t know if you’ll be someone’s burden in the future.”

The programmes Adli engaged in not only equip individuals like him with life skills, but also illuminate an alternate pathway lined with opportunities for a better future. This vision of a new, different lifepath is crucial in allowing youths to see that they have something promising to work towards, and that illicit habits are not the only escape from their existing reality.

Nathan, a counsellor at Trybe, agrees: “When you have this passion and you experience that drive, it’s something that motivates you to do well in life.”

Nooren, on the other hand, also recognises that not all responsibility falls on the individuals. “I believe everybody should be given a second chance because you’ll be surprised how people turn out. I know there’s hope and we, as a community, should give that chance so they can shine.”

As for companies who are looking to bring individuals like Adli onboard, Nooren believes that they should be willing to build rapport with the individuals. “Hiring them is easy. But for you to be a part of their journey and help them grow—you really need to get to know them,” she says.

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—NOREEN BINTE RABU

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PAVING A NEW PATH

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As with all journeys, the people who surround each individual matters. “Before Trybe, I was living in the dark, but now—positive vibes,” Adli beams proudly. “Just, the people around me—my workplace supports me a lot. They also went through life like me last time, so they understand how I feel.”

He also credits Nathan for his new perspective on life. “Nathan has supported me ever since. I used to have no chill and was bad-tempered. But Nathan helped me learn a lot of stuff,” Adli says.

Ultimately, Adli believes that it’s vital for youths with troubled backgrounds to have someone they can look up to. “Thinking back, if you have someone who has gone through what the youths have gone through, they will be much more comfortable to engage,” says Adli. For example, when he asked his friends to take up office work like his, they were reluctant. “They have doubts because they’re not comfortable”—just like Adli was before he worked at Agape.

Adli believes that if he’s able to weather through his journey and emerge triumphant, other youths might be more inclined to follow suit. He also intends to pursue a diploma in social service, so he’d be able to extend the same help he received during his stormy times as a youth.

“Right now, after my life has changed—I’ll take every opportunity available and I won’t let it pass,” says Adli.
Two—that's the number of years Gene* would have to serve in prison should he re-offend.

Growing up, Gene had a short fuse. Quick to anger, he would often get into physical fights. "I used to get in a lot of trouble," Gene recalls. "Sometimes I don't really mean to be violent. But when I get very mad, I just lose it." Then, consequences followed, and at 16, he was sentenced to probation at the Singapore Boys' Hostel—a rehabilitation institution managed by Trybe.

Gene spent 12 months in the hostel. An otherwise clever and funny young man, his aggressive and impulsive behaviour still put him at risk of re-offending. "If I don't control my anger, I will never get anywhere in life," Gene says. "I didn't want my anger to always control me."

With the hostel staff's recommendation, Gene sought guidance from Trybe's Growing Resilient Youth in Transition (GRYT)—an aftercare service that helps youths from institutions to reintegrate back into society.

*Names have been changed to protect client's identity.
“I’m very proud of how much he has changed,” says Shoba. “When he’s not in the gym, Gene trains at home. I would ask him to practice boxing drills then he’d send me his training videos to update me from time to time. That’s how determined he is.”

Gene also built resilience in other aspects of his life. “He has become more disciplined in his eating habits now,” shares Shoba. “I noticed that there’s a shift in his mindset as well. He pushes himself more in training.”

Apart from gaining self-discipline and perseverance, Gene found boxing as an outlet for his emotions. “Training is really tough and tiring but boxing makes me happy,” Gene shares with a big smile. “Someday I want to be able to fight in the ring.”

While he has a long way to go, Shoba believes it is not impossible for Gene to join a competition one day. “At Refuel Gym, we see him as a family member,” says Shoba. “As long as he continues to persevere and stay focused, we’ll be here to help him reach his goal.”

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“I didn’t want to lose two years of my life. I would rather change now than regret it later.”

Gene, Trybe Youth

“Changing Attitude

Six months into the GRYT programme, Gene’s mother witnessed how he strived to change. In the past, he has always maintained a level of openness with her but he always refused to take his mother’s advice. “I would always tell him that if all the fighting continues, he might hurt himself or get arrested,” Madam Dy recalls. “But he didn’t care much about that before. In response, he would explode in anger instead. Now, he thinks about his future.”

“I didn’t want to lose two years of my life,” Gene adds. “I would rather change now than regret it later.”

Although his parents stood by him and supported his transformation journey, they thought he would not be able to finish his probation. “I remember the first time we went to court, my husband and I were very worried that he would get into trouble again and end up in prison,” Madam Dy says.

Should he re-offend and get arrested during his probation period, Gene would have to serve an additional 2 years in prison. Much to their relief, Gene showed tremendous improvement and completed his sentence.

“Anger management, attitude, and maturity,” says Gene, when asked about the three things he learned and changed in the past 18 months. He believes that if he is able to control his anger better and foster a positive attitude towards others and his future, he can progress in life.

“Seeking Maturity and Wisdom

Aside from his family’s encouragement, Gene credits his achievement to his Social Worker, Joseph. “Joseph was consistent in checking up on me but also respected my space and maintained a good distance. I felt that he genuinely cared about me without pressurizing me,” Gene says.

“I don’t expect him to become a completely different person in 18 months so this is just the first step,” Joseph clarifies. “But the changes that he willingly made—though they may seem small to him, they are worth celebrating and I couldn’t be more proud of Gene.”

“Both of them used to have a bad temper so they clash a lot,” Madam Dy adds. “My son wouldn’t share much with my husband because of this.” While still a work in progress, with both father and son eager to change, their situation at home is getting better.

*Names have been changed to protect our client’s identity.

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n his younger years, Jon was impulsive and unmotivated to seek for a more purposeful life. “I had no ambition and goals,” Jon says. “I was just too lazy to think about those things. All I cared for is having fun.”

A thrill-seeker, he began mixing with gang members and was subsequently involved in illicit activities without thinking of the repercussions of his actions. Loyal to a fault, Jon would do anything for his friends even if it meant getting into trouble. It didn’t take long for the law to catch up, and eventually, he found himself sentenced to probation at the Singapore Boys’ Hostel, a rehabilitation institution managed by Trybe.

*Name has been changed to protect our client’s identity.*
BREAKING THE WALLS

Demoralized and disheartened, Jon was not ready to open up to anyone during his first few days in the hostel. “It was a very low point in my life,” he recalls. “I didn’t want to talk to anyone. I didn’t expect that being confined within the walls of the hostel will make me miss home and my freedom.”

“When I first met him, I saw that he was down and distracted about a lot of issues,” his Social Worker, Alex Tay, says. “He kept to himself and struggled to get along with other people in the hostel. But I knew that behind that hard exterior and careless behaviour is a young man who is wise beyond his years.”

Jon’s Youth Worker, Brandon Lim, can attest to that. “He was quiet, but articulate, in a sense that he knew what he did wrong, and he had one goal in mind—to finish probation.”

Like most of the residents in the hostel, Jon eventually opened up to his Social Worker and Youth Worker, and things began taking a turn for the better.

“As he slowly opened up, I noticed a shift in his mindset and our conversations began to change as well,” Alex recalls. “From being nonchalant about the future, he started to show interest in taking the Workplace Literacy and Numeracy (WPLN) assessment.”

Jon was determined to take the exam, but had to face yet another challenge. “On the day of his WPLN test, he went to the wrong assessment venue,” Brandon shares. “He had to come back to the hostel and that definitely put a dent in his morale and motivation. Alex and I, together with the hostel team, managed to urge him to not give up and continue trying.”

SHIFT IN PERSPECTIVE

With the encouragement of Trybe staff, Jon decided to take a step forward and bravely take on the WPLN assessment. After committing to tuition for roughly 4-5 months, his hard work was rewarded with excellent results that further encouraged him to take his studies seriously. "I thought I should put in extra effort to see if I can get anywhere and see what I like," he says. “But more than anything, I am determined to show my father how far I can go. My time inside the hostel made me realise that the only thing that he asks of me is to do good and study.”

Prior to his stay in the hostel, his family was not the focal point of Jon’s life. But this has changed as he witnessed his father step up in improving their relationship and made a conscious effort to reach out to Jon more. “He’d always message me to check if I have eaten or if he wants to share a new TikTok video with me,” he laughs.

“I AM DETERMINED TO SHOW MY FATHER HOW FAR I CAN GO. MY TIME INSIDE THE HOSTEL MADE ME REALISE THAT THE ONLY THING THAT HE ASKS OF ME IS TO DO GOOD AND STUDY”

Jon, Trybe Youth

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MAKING BETTER CHOICES

Trybe provides rehabilitation for young offenders, while offering them pro-social support that will inspire them to lead crime-free lives. Jon credits his Social Worker and Youth Worker for his new perspective in life. “Not everyone has the ability to inspire people like me to do better,” he shares. “But Mr Alex and Mr Brandon managed to bring out the best in me.”

During the circuit breaker period, Jon was faced with a serious test when he was called to be involved in a gang fight. But his new found loyalty and commitment to his future made him think about the repercussions of his actions. “I can’t risk my freedom, hostel is the only chance I am left with,” Jon recounted. He chose not to go down bearing in mind the consequences awaiting him if he was apprehended again. The new him wanted to do things right and be accountable to his loved ones.

“I couldn’t be prouder,” Alex says. “He is not just making decisions for himself now, but also for his loved ones that care about him and who are important to him.” While he knows he has a long way to go, Jon also wants to show his girlfriend’s parents that he can be a responsible and dependable family man.

“I believe one of his motivations was to make his dad and grandmother proud,” Brandon says. “He has shared before that not being able to see his grandmother often, upsets him. He has really done his best to change his life around for his family.”

Contemplating more about his plans, he is still deciding between further progression in his sales and marketing job or pursuing a career in Sports Science and Management.

His journey of self-realization and redemption has not been easy but Jon has endured all trials and tribulations to be the changed man he is today. When asked for a message to all youths with troubled past, he only has this to say “Freedom is gold. When you are given a chance to make things right, do not take it for granted,” says Jon.
Established in 1995, Trybe is a social service agency that specialises in working with youth facing adversities. Our vision is “Every Youth a Success Story”. We believe that all youth are able to reach the fullest of their potentials to live successful lives. Thus, we are united by our mission - to journey with youth who face adversities to lead purposeful lives; inspiring them to impact others.

Trybe, an Institution of Public Character (IPC), is a member of the National Council of Social Service (NCSS). Our corporate values are resilience, integrity, service, and excellence.

Through our Community & Youth Services (CYS) Division and management of the Singapore Boys’ Hostel (SBHL), Trybe provides youth with guidance and offer support for their families and communities, creating a complete ecosystem of care from community-based interventions to individual aftercare services.

Every Youth A Success Story

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