



The

# LIGHTHOUSE

Helping People | Changing Lives

1008 Bathurst Street • Toronto • ON M5R 3G7

416-535-6262

Summer 2016

## Counselling In a “Save Face” Culture

Tracy Nguyen

The Lighthouse’s Vietnamese ministry provides a unique service for the Vietnamese community. As one of the few Vietnamese counsellors in Toronto, Thuy Tran offers a holistic, language specific and culturally sensitive approach to counselling individuals and families from a “save face” culture. A core value of Asian culture is the concept of “face.” This constant and deliberate exercise of “saving face” refers to the desires and strategies of maintaining your honour, respect, reputation to your social circles, and to avoid at all cost any social embarrassment and humiliation.

In an Asian culture, where your social identity is heavily shaped by your relative role and position in your family, friends and peer groups, this ongoing management of “face” can be likened to the management of your social media pages, curating only best posts and pictures to share with your friends and family. Asians beginning at a young age are also socialized to conform to cultural ideals in order to maintain “face” for yourself and your family. This means moderating your emotions and expressions in public, presenting only your best “face” to others, and to never discuss personal failures in order to avoid shame and judgement as to not “lose face.” In this way, the western practice of counselling and psychotherapy, in revealing your innermost hurts and struggles, stands in direct opposition to

the Asian cultural practice of “saving face”, leading to widespread stigmatization and misunderstanding of this western healing process.

*... “saving face” refers to the desires and strategies of maintaining your honour, respect, reputation to your social circles, and to avoid at all cost any social embarrassment and humiliation.*

Counselling is a relatively new concept to the Vietnamese community. Many in the Vietnamese community do not recognize the benefits of counselling and its contribution to mental health as an aspect of their well-being. Here are a few common Asian misconceptions about counselling:

**1. Counselling is only for “crazy” people.** In other words, you would definitely “lose face” and bring shame to yourself if people found out you are attending counselling.

**2. Counselling means all your secrets will be shared.** Speaking to a counsellor means everyone in your community will find out about your secrets and failures.

### **3. We can solve our own problems.**

Asians are strong people; we can fix our own problems at our own pace; and, we don’t need help and support from people outside.

For many immigrant families, who have come to North America with nothing, the migration stress of learning a new language, starting a new life, and loneliness away from their extended family, takes a significant toll. As immigrants slowly acclimate to Canadian culture and practices, many struggle with this new cultural identity, and so they cling strongly to their original cultural identity and practices in this transition. For Asians, “saving face” is one of the practices that have persisted through migration and time. To “save face,” Asian communities discourage and shame people from getting the help they need, frowning upon assistance like counselling even in the midst of severe migration stress, family discord and deteriorating mental health to appear strong and respectable to others. Asian men in particular, are more prone to the practice of maintaining “face” in difficult times so as not to appear weak and shameful to his family and peers. This prevents any consideration of seeking external assistance, such as counselling to avoid revealing any flaws to others and “losing face.”

*Continued on page 3...*

## Meet Our Team of Summer Students

### Yao Dan Cao

Hello! My name is Yao and I recently graduated with a Bachelor of Science from the University of Toronto. I attend Broadview Vietnamese Evangelical Church, where I occasionally take part in teaching in the children's ministry.



### Megan Broekema

Hello, I'm a nursing student at the University of Ottawa. I am looking forward to spending this summer at The Lighthouse contributing to and participating in the ministries they offer. I currently attend Immanuel Christian Reformed Church in Brampton.



### Timothy Chang

My name is Timothy Chang and I am entering my 4th year of nursing studies at Ryerson University. I have been attending Zion Alliance Church in Markham for the last seven years.



### Shannon Cheung

Hi, my name is Shannon Cheung and I am currently a student at Brock University studying Child Health. I currently attend Richmond Hill Christian Community Church where I am serving in the Children Ministry as a Sunday school teacher.



### In Memory of Thong Van Vy

(Born April 8, 1956 Died February 18, 2016)

Thong first came through the doors of The Lighthouse in January 2015. He came to access our food bank. Over the months, Thong offered good company to many in our community with his calm and quiet demeanor. He was also a friend of the Churches on the Hill Food Bank.



In December 2015, Thong started counselling sessions with Thuy Tran at The Lighthouse. That same month he decided to put his trust in Jesus Christ.

Thong was a selfless and patient man, always putting others first. The Lighthouse will always remember Thong and all he offered our community. It has been a blessing and privilege to serve and get to know you, Thong Van Vy.

As we transition from spring to summer, we would like to express a big thank you to our dedicated and industrious student interns, Jelle Koersen and Rachel Hammerton. Thank you for all your hard work with the food bank and ESL program.



The Lighthouse is looking for individuals interested in volunteering on its Fundraising Committee. If you are interested and like a challenge, please contact Rob at [rob@lighthousecentre.ca](mailto:rob@lighthousecentre.ca) or 416-535-6262.

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Without adequate support and assistance, problems stemming from migration stress often persist years after immigration, negatively affecting the whole family. As children of immigrant parents grow up within this new cultural environment, Asian parents often force their traditions and dreams onto their children, which they have clung onto during the immigration process, not realizing or understanding the dreams and aspiration of their children in this new cultural setting. Succumbing to the familial pressure, children easily fall into the depressive moods and develop anxiety to “save face” for their Asian family and social groups. Often they do not get proper help in time, eventually developing severe mental health problems. When someone in the family has mental health issues, it is extremely shameful to the family, so immigrant parents often blame issues on their children. Counselling then becomes a last resort for Asian immigrant parents to “fix” their children to conform to their cultural ideals, without realizing that parents themselves are in need of counselling and support in order to build strong and healthy relationships within a harmonious family.



The goal of the Vietnamese Ministry at The Lighthouse in its unique nature is to educate the Vietnamese community on the benefits of counselling and the importance of seeking help. We offer a safe and respectful environment for individuals, couples and families to address their needs. In addition to counselling, the Vietnamese Ministry also offers a variety of programs for clients to learn new skills and make new friends. From these new friendships, new community groups are born. For example, the Vietnamese Ministry offers a Women Supporting Women group and Parents Supporting Parents group during the school year. In the summer, we offer a therapeutic family summer camp for parents and children, which utilizes play therapy to build family relationships and to encourage positive family interactions. This is the unique contribution of the Vietnamese ministry in building a strong and genuine community beyond a culture and appearance of “face.”



## Upcoming Events

Ride for Refuge - October 1

Annual Dinner & Silent Auction - November 5

 /thelighthousecenter

## Welcome!

### New Board Member: Marieke Vandekolk



Marieke is a Senior Policy and Strategy Analyst at TD Bank Group with a passion for human rights, culture, entrepreneurship and financial literacy. Prior to joining TD Bank Group's innovative Office of the Chief Data Officer, Marieke worked as an

Advisor to the Ontario Minister of Finance and as the Program and Communications Officer with former Prime Minister Paul Martin's Aboriginal Education Initiative. In these roles she advanced multi-lateral, cross-cultural partnerships to develop inclusive government programs throughout Ontario and education initiatives with Aboriginal communities across Canada. Her favourite pastimes include politics, yoga and discovering new places both locally and abroad; she has travelled to over 30 countries and counting.

## Income Tax Clinics



The Lighthouse has a long history of completing tax returns for low-income individuals and families. Rita

Wong, our Chinese program coordinator, started the clinics in 1983, and since then a whole host of volunteers have been involved over the almost 30 years.

This year, our team of 19 volunteers filed over 350 returns during the months of March and April. A warm thank you to our phenomenal volunteers for your dedication and hard work to providing superb service to all those in need in our community.

## A Big Lighthouse Thank You!

The generosity of many, together with the gifts of time and commitment from a group of volunteer callers, made our PHONE-ATHON campaign a success. Your donations contribute significantly to The Lighthouse's ministries and programs. If you have not yet had a chance to respond to the phone-a-thon, there is still time!



Together, we are impacting the lives of people by offering community, food, healing and hope in the name of Jesus.

## From the Desk of Rob

Over the past few months, I have attended forums and gatherings focusing on helping refugees, especially Syrian refugees. These events have been very informative and were attended by churches, organizations and individuals who are sponsoring refugees. Everyone is willing to help and welcome the stranger.

During one such gathering at Holy Blossom Temple, Rabbi Satz stated “that the command ‘Don’t oppose the stranger’ is only mention in the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) and not mentioned in other religious books.” He also noted that “all religious books along with the Hebrew Bible state that we are to help the poor and the widow.” Rabbi Satz used these statements as reasons for the Jewish Community along with other communities to help refugees.

Working with refugees will always be a focal point for The Lighthouse. There are many obstacles and challenges refugees face. To help them with these challenges, The Lighthouse provides critical programs and important services. However, The Lighthouse cannot do this alone. We need your help.

How can you help, you ask? One way is to provide a financial donation to The Lighthouse to continue to provide programs and services for refugees. Another way to help is by “planning your gift to Charity” or “adopting a child called Charity.” Contact The Lighthouse to learn more on how you can leave a legacy for The Lighthouse.

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On October 1, 2016, The Lighthouse is participating in Ride for Refuge event. Support The Lighthouse ministry by participating as a rider, forming a team or sponsoring a rider. There are different locations which are hosting this event and you can choose to ride for “The Lighthouse” at a location near you. For more information contact Rob at rob@lighthousecentre.ca or 416-535-6262.



### Board of Directors

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### Helping People Changing Lives

*Thank you for being partners with us in this ministry.*



Yes, I would like to help with a donation of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Cheque enclosed

VISA  MASTERCARD # \_\_\_\_\_ Expiry Date. \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

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#### Other Ways to Help - Contact us for details

- PAR PreAuthorized Remittance
- Monthly Visa or MasterCard donation - makes it easy for you and for us
- Canada Helps on line at [www.canadahelps.org](http://www.canadahelps.org)
- Giving through Christian Stewardship Service
- United Way Payroll Deduction - just provide our CRA # and address
- Matched Corporate Giving - many companies match employee donations

Please mail your contribution to:

**The Lighthouse**  
**1008 Bathurst Street**  
**Toronto, ON M5R 3G7**

Receipts will be issued in the New Year.  
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