

AWARE

A Magazine for the Women of Hong Kong • May 2019

AWARE

MAY 2019

The American Women's
Association of Hong
Kong, Limited.
Established in 1956

*We are a vibrant organization
of international women. Our
mission is to welcome and
empower women to connect
and contribute in Hong Kong.*

AWARE PRODUCTION TEAM

EDITOR

Stephanie Chan
aware@awa.org.hk

ASSISTANT EDITOR

Samantha Merton

CONTRIBUTORS

Rachel Bourke
Ming Lai Cheung
Georgia Davidson
Alison Doran
J'nee Easter
Annie Fifer
Alison May
Gunjali Singh
Avril York

GRAPHICS

Jacky Ngan

ADVERTISING MANAGER
advertising@awa.org.hk

R&R
PUBLISHING

PUBLISHED & PRINTED BY
R&R Publishing Ltd.
2126 7812
info@rrpublishing.com.hk
www.rrpublishing.com.hk



Contents

News from the Board	2
AWA Enjoys	4
Better Know a Member	8
Five Years of the AWA Buddy Program	9
Serving the Unserved with Christian Action – Centre for Refugees	10
A Welsh Tea Fundraiser	11
10 Strategies for Reducing Stress and Anxiety in Hong Kong	14
A Pig in the Airport and a Dog in the Library	13
The Cabin Chiang Mai	14
The Good Behind Dr. Goodall	16
Tips and Takeaways from AWA WISE	18
Calendar	21

The AWA office is open from Monday-Thursday 9:30am-3:30pm. We are closed on Hong Kong public holidays.

VISIT THE AWA WEBSITE: www.awa.org.hk

LIKE US ON FACEBOOK: www.facebook.com/awahk



FOLLOW US ON TWITTER: @AWA_HK



FOLLOW US ON INSTAGRAM: @awahongkong



Any opinions expressed in this publication are those of the author only and do not represent the opinion of the American Women's Association. Any reliance by the reader upon any recommendation or opinion in this publication is at the reader's own risk. The AWA accepts no responsibility for any loss which may result from such reliance. Copyright 2019. The content of the AWA publication is the property of the American Women's Association. Reproduction in whole or part without permission is strictly prohibited. Information from within the publication may not be distributed without the express written consent of the American Women's Association.



The Cabin Chiang Mai:

Putting a Woman at the Center of Her Story

By Rachel Bourke



The Cabin Chiang Mai RISE team

I RECENTLY HAD the opportunity to fly to Chiang Mai to find out more about a place called The Cabin, about 20 minutes outside of the city. The Cabin is home to Rise, a unique addiction treatment program designed by and for women – but it doesn't look like my idea of where you go to find help for addiction. This place looks like a five-star resort, with beautiful pools, rooms you would see at an Aman property and state-of-the-art gym facilities.

I met with program director Paula Shields, a petite Northern Irish woman with a great sense of humor who would put the most hardened or defensive at ease right away. We talked about how the treatment program conceptualizes addiction not as the central problem for patients, but rather as one effect of lifelong experiences with trauma. When she said this I started to see addiction differently, understanding that for some women, addiction is the end point in a long

chain of events.

Paula said she hears many women tell themselves, "It's not that bad" or "I'm okay today" as part of their story. She said, "This belief is keeping her from addressing the issue because she believes she's functioning. And actually, she isn't realizing [...]: How I look to my family [and] friends is more important than how I'm feeling."

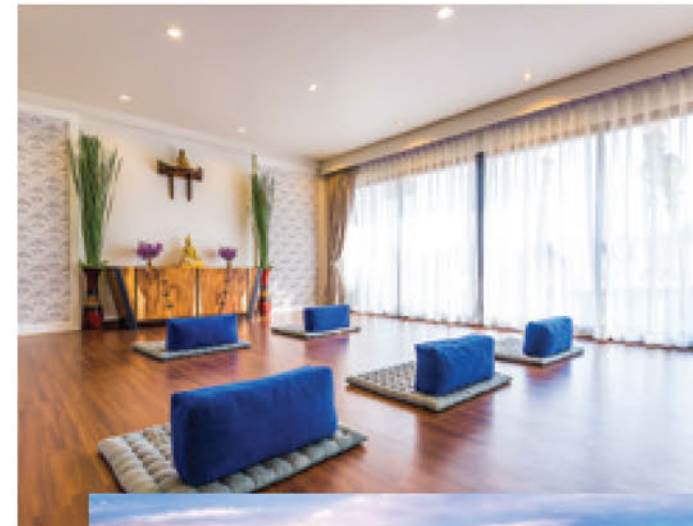
I started thinking about women here in Hong Kong, women who seem from the outside to have it all: kids in school, a wide circle of friends, maybe a few cute pups, and a husband whom they enjoy hanging out with between business trips. Maybe they have a job they love, or maybe they have the luxury

of taking some time off from work. Either way, some of them are surely thinking: "I don't deserve this," or "I can't keep up." What do they do to function? To dull the anxiety of being found out, or the physical and mental pain, so – hopefully – everyone will see they're okay?

This is something I can empathize with. For years I've been pulled down by an enormous rock, tied with a rope to my ankle, dragging along the bottom of a dark blue tumultuous sea as I bobbed up and down in the surf, waves crashing into me. That rock is what my depression looks like.

So I know what it's like to tell yourself a story about how you're so broken, which then develops into an opinion, and that opinion hardens into a belief, and then...

What's appealing to me about going to a place like The Cabin is the chance to focus on yourself, without all the everyday pressures – the things that distract us from



ourselves. To spend 10 weeks with Paula's team, eating well, exercising, and focusing on healing may not sound like hard work. But participants follow a rigorous schedule. I met with many of the primary therapists to hear about (and experience!) some of the techniques they employ.

With primary therapist Carla-Renee Sherwood, I learned about a method called Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR), which helps patients to create a positive image that they can visualize whenever they feel anxious. Carla demonstrated how it works with me and, while it might just be that I'm open to suggestion, I honestly go back to that image every day.

Another fascinating treatment is Trauma Release Exercises (TRE). Sadly, I didn't have a chance to experience this, but I did look it up. If you've never heard of it, take a look on YouTube. It requires no talk therapy, just physical exercises: "TRE is an innovative series of exercises that assist the body in releasing deep muscular patterns of stress, tension and trauma. The exercises safely activate a natural reflex mechanism of shaking or vibrating that releases muscular tension, calming down the nervous system." TRE can be used to reduce stress, improve sleep, or enhance relaxation, yoga, and meditation practices.

Looking online, of course, you will find thousands of websites offering help, and this is a good first step to take. But that's just the first step. If you broke your leg, you wouldn't do a Google search to try to fix it yourself, would you?

To get you started, here are some approaches that worked for me if you can't swing the time at The Cabin right now:

I asked for support from people I trusted. This is easily said, but hard to do. It took me getting to the bottom of a very deep well to call someone for help.

I try to practice self-care (try being the operative word here). My self-care involves watching movies and doing creative stuff, like designing.

I go to therapy often. I had to see many different people and try different therapy models. And FYI, just because you're uncomfortable doesn't mean it isn't working.

What's important is to find the professional help that works for you. Just as you would a dentist who puts you at ease by playing Queen's greatest hits while he fixes your teeth, there is a counselor, program, therapist, or perhaps Cabin for you.

For more information on The Cabin, the RISE program or their outpatient service in Hong Kong, find them online at <https://www.thecabinchiangmai.com/riase/> or contact their Hong Kong office: Unit C, 12th Floor, On Hing Building, No 1-9 On Hing Terrace, Central, +852 3008 5841.

Rachel Bourke's journey to Chiang Mai was paid for by The Cabin.