



Hospice
Foundation of
Taiwan

HFT Newsletter

Forever Love, Endless Care

February 2022



2021 Hospice Film Festival Has Its Online Debut

[more >](#)

Finding the Meaning of Life Through Memories

[more >](#)

Unhindered by the Pandemic, Love Is Your Companion to Healing Your Mood

[more >](#)

Hospice Foundation of Taiwan
www.hospice.org.tw

No. 45, Minsheng Road, Danshui District, New Taipei City 25160 Taiwan
Tel: +886-2-28081130 Fax: +886-2-28081137 Email: hospice@hospice.org.tw

Like us on Facebook

Like us on Instagram





2021 Hospice Film Festival Has Its Online Debut

Even though the shadow of the COVID-19 pandemic still looms over Taiwan, the Hospice Foundation of Taiwan moved its annual *Hospice Film Festival* online this year so that people can watch the beautiful and moving high-quality movies in the safety of their homes, and still feel the spirit and meaning of hospice and palliative care. At the same time, they may be inspired to think more deeply about the value of life.

For five consecutive years, the Hospice Foundation of Taiwan (“HFT”), by way of the *Hospice Film Festival*, has participated in the grand event with the whole world on World Hospice and Palliative Care Day. Through selecting wonderful films related to life issues, HFT hopes to lead the public to better understand hospice and consider about the most important life issues through the reflections and emotions brought alive by the films. This time, the HFT selected ten wonderful works, consisting of different themes, years, and shooting methods, as the focus of this year's film festival.

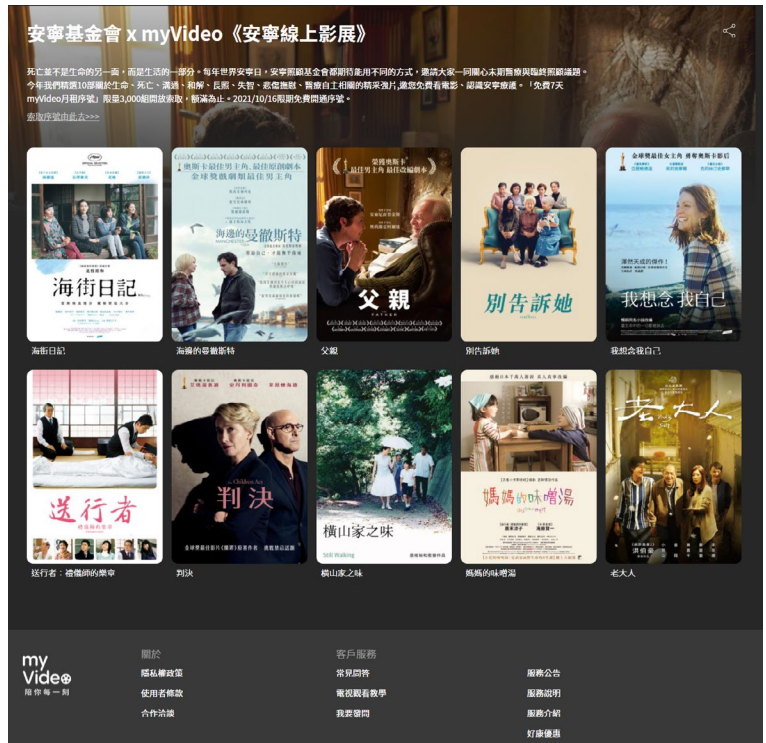
As the curator of the Hospice Film Festival, Associate Professor Ya-Wei Wang spoke about the power of drama, that it can not only lead the audience into "their" story as if they were characters in the drama, but also open up reflections through the approachable plot and make them ponder the taboo and often avoided topic of death. "Let dying well and death be part of life education in the most natural way!" he insists.

Sparkling stars cheer on life at online film festival

Different from the past film festivals that invited guests to interact with the people on site and watch movies together, this year, given the pandemic prevention measures in Taiwan, the Hospice Film Festival cooperated with the film viewing platform myVideo and was held in the form of an online film festival.




The viewing time of the online film festival was flexible, and it was not limited by space. The themes were more suitable for the entire family to watch together as well. To attract more people to participate, HFT invited ten well-known hosts, entertainers, physicians, and other industries, to introduce the ten selected films. The stars were glittering, and helped the films to shine online.



Peaceful life and death in rituals; life and death issues under the law

The well-known hostess Shu-Li Chen especially recommended the Japanese drama film *Departures*, which was released in 2008. The film, based on Shinmon Aoki's memoirs *Coffinman: The Journal of a Buddhist Mortician*, was directed by Yojiro Takita and starred Masahiro Motoki, Hirosue Ryoko, and Tsutomu Yamazaki. The protagonist in the play was originally a cellist in an orchestra, but he becomes unemployed because of the dissolution of the orchestra. Therefore, he cannot but take his wife back to his hometown and become a mortician in the funeral industry by mere accident.






Shu-Li Chen said that *encoffinement* is one of the most important rituals for the Japanese. Accompanied by family members, the deceased can be encoffined with dignity and grace through purification and makeup. In the process, the hero resists the job of a mortician at first but later realizes that he is responsible for being the bridge between the deceased and his family. In the work of contacting the family again and again, he witnesses the departure of the living and the dead. Finally, he lets go of the hatred that has been entangled in his heart for many years, and forgives his own father, encoffining him himself, and bids a good farewell to his father.


In one scene of the movie, the executor of the crematorium points to the door of the incinerator and says, "This is the door of death, because after passing through this door, we will go to another world." This sentence in this scene became the most impressive scene of the whole film for Shu-Li Chen. She said: "None of us can avoid entering the door of death, but maybe at this moment while we still live, we can start thinking about *how* to leave and pass through the door of death in the future."

The subject of death is not far away, and in the long journey of life, the choices we have to make are numerous.

Wan-Ting Hsieh, director of Palliative Medicine Department at Chi Mei Medical Center, recommended the movie *The Judgment*, which was adapted from the novel of the same name, written by author Ian Russell McEwan, who was also the screenwriter. From the perspective of a female judge of the London High Court who deals with many cases of difficult family and medical issues, the movie tells how this self-disciplined judge needs to face her own marriage problem and the trial of a case of a juvenile who refuses blood transfusion because of his faith and is about to die, which elicits people's thinking about life choices.

The heroine Fiona is highly respected in the legal profession for her intelligence, fairness, and rigor. One day she takes on a tricky lawsuit: A boy with leukemia who is dying refuses blood transfusion due to religious beliefs, but the hospital, based on humanitarian values, requires forced blood transfusion. Facing with the decision whether to respect the boy's religious beliefs and let him die naturally becomes the most difficult judgment Fiona has encountered in her legal career.





Wan-Ting Hsieh, who has been devoted herself to the field of hospice for many years, saw the love between the judge and her husband in the movie and also the love of the juvenile for his parents. Every character is trying their best to explore the meaning of freedom, autonomy, and life and death. Considering the responsibility of the court to interpret the law, she asked, "Can the law measure and determine the value of life, and how does it protect these seemingly conflicting powers?" She continued, "The process of finding the answer is difficult. We can only listen patiently and let mutual respect lead us all forward."

Floating and sinking in memory, but ready to face dementia

This online film festival shared a number of movies on the topic of dementia, which also became a highlight, for example, *Still Alice*, which has won multiple international film festival awards. The heroine in the film, Alice, works at Columbia University. She is a linguistics teacher admired by her students. She has not only a successful career, but also a warm family as her strongest support; unfortunately, at the early age of 50 she finds that she is slowly losing her memory.

Alice not only begins to forget her memories, but she even forgets the words and sentences for daily communication. In her process of going from resisting seeking medical help to the doctor's diagnosis of early-onset Alzheimer's disease and her family's acceptance, she also falls deep into the valley of melancholy and even tries to commit suicide. It is not until she discovers that this gene might have been inherited and that one of her daughters also has inherited the same gene that Alice begins to have a fighting spirit and becomes determined to face the coming days well. She finally instills courage in hoping to spend the last moments in comfort, quality, and good planning.

The film's introducer was a well-known entertainer Cong-Sheng Tang. He said that this film can bring audiences a lot of reflection on issues such as dementia, hospice and palliative care, and the meaning of life when one is facing the end of life. "During the pandemic, when we don't need to go out, I hope that everyone can watch the movie online at home together with the elderly and children in the family to get to know the world and life in advance."

Also about the subject of dementia is the film *The Father*, which won six nominations in the 93rd Academy Awards. It is about something different from



the early-onset of Alzheimer's disease discussed in *Still Alice*. In *The Father*, well-known 83-year-old actor Sir Philip Anthony Hopkins plays the leading role of an elderly person suffering from dementia and trapped in hallucinations. As the course of the illness progresses, the world he knows gradually becomes unfamiliar, and the closest family members in life become the people who have the most conflicts with him. When the time sequence in his memory grows more and more chaotic, the old man finds it hard to distinguish between reality and fantasy. He becomes lost in his own disease, and his most beloved daughter is also exhausted in the long-term care center and even worries from time to time that her dear father will forget her one day.



"We can experience the deepest weakness and frustration of families with dementia, as well as the hardship and helplessness of the main caregivers, especially since such plots are actually staged in many

families every day." Yuh-Cheng Yang, chairman of Hospice Foundation of Taiwan, also asserted that in order to reduce regret, when an elderly member in the family begins to have symptoms of dementia, family members should help the dementia patient seek medical treatment as soon as possible, and discuss future medical treatment methods and related preparations at the early stage of the disease.

Facing the differing life issues between Eastern and Western cultures

When bad news hits, will you resist or accept it in the very beginning? Does the patient have the right to be informed? The 2019 movie *The Farewell* was adapted from the personal experience of director Zi-Yi Wang. In the movie, Billie, who grew up in New York, hurries home right after learning that her grandmother is at

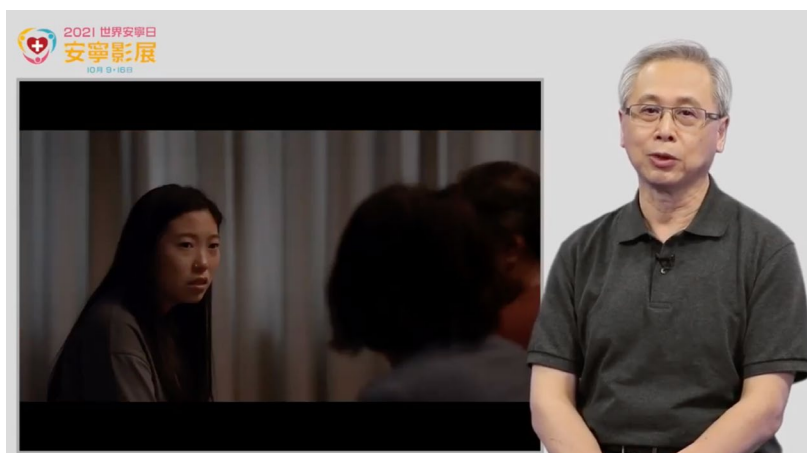


the terminal stage of lung cancer, only to find that her family is preparing a fake wedding to cover up her grandmother's condition so that other family members from different places will come back to see her grandmother for the last time. Billie, who has received Western education since she was a child, cannot accept the deception of her family, and as a result, many conflicts arise.

Ying-Wei Wang, director of the Center for Palliative Care at Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital, asked the question that, with the conflicting viewpoints between Eastern and Western cultures, what is the most humanitarian spirit? What is the best thing to do for the grandmother? "There are actually no standard answers," he responded. In the movie, he noted that one can see Billie's change in concept, the interaction in communication, and the exchange of affection with her grandmother. As such, "This process is worthy of everyone's attention."

Ying-Wei Wang recalled that there was a student who used the communication differences between Chinese and Western cultures as the theme of the master's thesis. The thesis pointed out that Eastern people use more circuitous and story-telling methods to present their own ideas, while Western cultures were good at directness. *The Farewell* also uses a very delicate technique to describe the conflicts between Chinese and Western cultures on the issue of death.


"What is the best? There is no fixed answer. We simply need to be understanding," said Ying-Wei Wang, who as a doctor, believes that the best and most appropriate communication and interaction can be



achieved through a comprehensive assessment from the perspectives of patients, family members, and culture together.

Companionship to walk through an unbearable past

In the face of death, some people will choose to accept it, some will resist, and still others will be stuck in a sad situation for a long time, unable to free themselves.



The protagonist of *Manchester by the Sea*, Li, is a depressed repairman. After learning the news of his brother's death, he returns to his hometown Manchester to deal with his brother's funeral and take the role of the guardian of his nephew, which is his brother's last wish.

Facing his nephew's unwillingness to leave the familiar environment and friends, Li seems very anxious. He doesn't want to stay in his hometown for too long, due to a memory that has hurt Li's heart and tortured him for a long time. The haunting event of many years ago, which can be attributed to his own fault, resulted in his three children dying in a fire, and his wife leaving him for this reason. What was once a happy family fell apart overnight.

You-Lung Hei, chairman of Kuangchi News Agency, provides a high evaluation upon *Manchester by the Sea*. He and his wife even watched it twice. Each time he watched the movie, he felt ripples in his heart, saying, "There are joys and sorrows in life. There are so many setbacks and failures in life. What kind of nourishment is needed to refresh a person?"

For Mr. Hei, the answer is clear and simple. The movie reminds viewers that time has not washed away the great sadness in Li's heart. "Knowing how to share emotions and communicating with each other are the keys to recovery," concludes Mr. Hei.

Working together to see the inside story of the hospice ward

In addition to the online film festival this year, HFT also cooperated with the Taipei Public Access Channel Association to broadcast *Walking in the Valley – a special program for World Peace Day*. In the two-hour program, several real cases of hospice wards filmed by HFT were used to help the audience feel peace and also see the events that occur at a hospice through every moment.

"Even though hospice and palliative care has been developing in Taiwan for more than 30 years, for some people, the word hospice is still a symbol of waiting to die," reflects Yu-Zheng Yang, who hopes that every hospice story promoted by the special program can help the public to understand that even though life will come to an end, before it does, "hospice care can help the patient to obtain a better quality of life and heal the family members along the way so that they can live a good life even after their loved one dies."





Finding the Meaning of Life Through Memories

Life review is one of the many methods of spiritual care. Through reviewing the experience of past achievements in life and discovering the meaning of life, the clients are helped to move towards the future with peace of mind in appreciation, praise, gratitude and letting go.

In addition to physical pain control and psychological grief soothing, what else can hospice and palliative care do? Domestic front-line staff who devote themselves to hospice care understand in their hearts that *spiritual care* is also an indispensable and important piece of the puzzle. What exactly is spiritual care? How should we carried it out?

Sister Teresa Hsieh DC (Daughters of Charity) said frankly that the content of *spiritual care* is extensive, and there are many ways to deal with it and be involved. She focuses on the skills of *life review and transformation*, saying, "Through listening to the life stories of the client, we help him or her find the meaning and the unity of life."

Changing your mentality to find lost value from memories

Time never goes back. What has happened can neither be changed nor erased. The good and bad of the past will remain in the memory. As a result, some people have been tortured by this fact and some cannot escape.

But memories are not just memories. People can also find meaning from these life experiences. "It's not about lingering on the glorious past and sighing at present with regret. It's also not about being stuck in a painful experience that we can't bear to look back at. We can appreciate it, too. We can accept it, and then take these fruits to the future," said Sister Hsieh.

A middle-aged woman once told Sister Hsieh of her miserable childhood. Due to the long-term disharmony between her parents, she had been facing a scenario where her parents could separate at any time. Subsequently, she was always anxious and fearful that her mother would leave the home one day and never return.





"So when my mother went out in the middle of the night to buy goods from wholesalers, I would get up and follow her," the woman shared. The dark roads and the bright and noisy wholesale market, the scenes from decades ago were as if it were just yesterday in her memory. "In the six years of elementary school, I spent every night like this. After I arrived at the wholesale market, my mother would ask me to stand in front of a store and wait for her. I thought I was so pitiful at that time."

The childhood memories were tragic, but Sister Hsieh did not follow the woman's dark mood. Instead, she smiled and praised her, "How brave you were! You could accompany your mother to the wholesale market when you were only six years old." Sister Hsieh leaned forward so that the woman could see her sincerity. "At that time, you must have been the greatest strength that supported your mother. Think about it. Your mother was so young, only in her 30s, and in the middle of the night, she went to a place full of men to buy wholesale. It was because of your company that she could brave through those days."

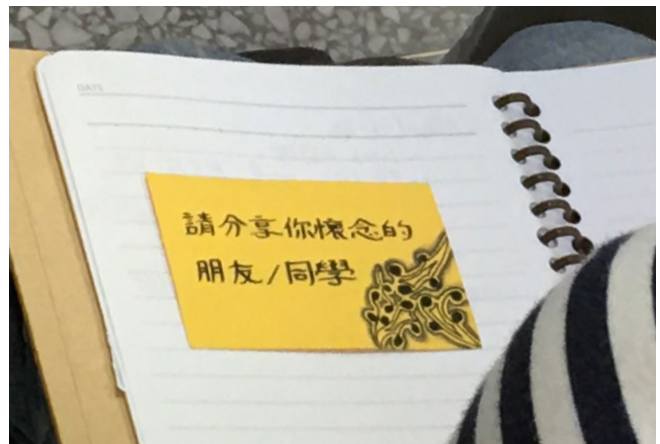
These few words enlightened the woman. "Yes, my mother always said in her old age that I was a very devoted daughter," the woman began to laugh. Then she said, "At first I felt that my misery always happened in the dark, for example, accompanying my mother to buy wholesale, the prompt decision I had to make to reply to the doctor whether my husband would receive first aid when he was in an emergency, and packing alone to move to another place in the middle of the night when my husband passed away."

At this time, the woman looked at Sister Hsieh with gratitude, "Think about it now. The dark nights are actually when I have power." What used to be the desolation back then now bears a completely different definition for this current moment.

Finding the source of spiritual power in the darkness

Sister Teresa Hsieh said that the focus of life review is to guide clients to improve their self-worth in appreciation and acceptance, and to take this inspiration to the future. Therefore, life review is not only aimed for people who are dying or old. Like the middle-aged woman in the story, everyone is suitable to have their soul soothed through life review.

Whether a memory is deep in the valley or high in the bright peak of life, it is a topic that can be used to be inspected in the life review process. However, on the clinical front line, Sister Hsieh saw the hesitation of many service staff, especially when confronting the sad memories of the



clients, they didn't know what to do. Therefore, she is cooperating with Hospice Foundation of Taiwan to write a brief manual on spiritual care in the hope of providing guidance and reference for clinical staff in the future, so that they can understand that darkness is never just darkness, but that it is a ticket to soothing the soul.

"When we listen to people telling stories, we all see the dark side. But why is there darkness? Isn't it because there is light on the other side?" questions Sister Hsieh with a smile. Just like in her eyes, from beginning to end, hope and love will always be in the people and things she meets. She affirms, "A place with shadow must have a source of light. The larger the shadow, the stronger the light. Therefore, our frontline personnel should not be frightened by the shadow, or even feel sorrow with their clients; instead, they should find where the light is and believe that the power is there."



Unhindered by the Pandemic, Love Is Your Companion to Healing Your Mood

“Out of your vulnerabilities will come your strength.” - Sigmund Freud

"Daddy will help you complete the junior high school registration! I'll also buy the uniform for you, don't give up. " Xiao-Xun's father was a visitor to the *Peace-of-Mind Online Meeting Room*, which was recently launched by the Taichung Veterans General Hospital's hospice team as an online video calling service. His 12-year-old daughter Xiao-Xun was admitted to the intensive care unit due to a severe brain injury and unstable condition, and since the severe COVID-19 pandemic affected visits, his family could not see her in the hospital every day. As a result, the short times they have on the video call became the most precious moments for the entire family.

Communication technology in isolation wards

While reading a picture book by the bedside at Taichung Veterans General Hospital, art therapist, Ms. Hua-Wen Wang observed that Xiao-Xun had more emotional and physical reactions to parent-child related stories or movies. Ms. Wang observes, "Even if she couldn't express herself verbally anymore, she must have been missing her father very much in her heart!" In order to comfort Xiao-Xun, the *Peace-of-Mind Online Meeting Room* for the father and daughter was started.

During the video conference, Xiao-Xun's father always told her about the current situation at home and their thoughts and concerns about her from her family. The familiar voice gave Xiao-Xun a great sense of security as can be seen when her condition was more stable, she would open up her eyes and look at her father on the video screen.



She even tried to reach out her hand to touch the screen, perhaps hoping to feel the warmth from her father.

Ms. Hua-Wen Wang also invited the teachers and classmates of Xiao-Xun's elementary school to record a few messages and play them by the bedside to cheer her on. "Xiao-Xun, we all miss you so much! Don't give up! When you come back to school, we'll have class and play together!" "Xiao-Xun, this is Yi-Chen. You have to get well soon. Let's go to junior high school together."

Peace-of-Mind Online Meeting Room

Negative emotions are not uncommon during the pandemic prevention period, but whether it is the loneliness and helplessness of hospitalized patients, or the anxiety, loss and guilt of family members due to the inability to visit their loved ones, they have to be temporarily silenced under the premise of pandemic prevention as a top priority. This kind of helplessness is especially evident in terminal patients who are approaching the end of their lives.


Saddened about people's anxiety and fear of not being able to see their loved ones for the last time, Ms. Hua-Wen Wang and the team's psychologists jointly started the *Peace-of-Mind Online Meeting Room* through the use of video or telephone and other communication technologies to keep patients and their families in contact with one another. It helped to maintain heartfelt company for them under the strict pandemic isolation policies.

Goodbye Xiao-Xun



Such online meetings also accompanied Xiao-Xun all the way to the end of her life. Under the guidance of Ms. Hua-Wen Wang, Xiao-Xun's father grasped tightly and emotionally during the last moments of his daughter's life, and expressed gratitude, love, apology, and farewell to Xiao-Xun through the technology which enabled these moments.

"Thank you, Xiao-Xun, for being your father's beloved daughter for twelve years. Please don't blame your father for helping you decide



to donate your corneas. I hope you can contribute to society and help people in need. From now on you are free from illness and are a free and happy little angel.”

In addition to his blessings, the father also said goodbye to his daughter: "Goodbye Xiao-Xun. You'll be the eyes of others in the future. Don't be naughty and make fun of others!" Although there is no way to be with his daughter anymore, with the aid of the *Peace-of-Mind Online Meeting Room*, the father and the daughter could live and die without regrets, which is also the greatest comfort for the hospice team.

Are you OK? I miss you

The father of six-year-old Xiao-Wei and three-year-old Xiao-Kai was a terminal patient with oral cancer. He usually received hospice and palliative care at home. The team not only took care of the father, but also always paid attention to whether the two young children could face and adjust to the impact from their father's departure. Due to pandemic prevention regulations, Ms. Hua-Wen Wang, who had been caring about the family for a long time, could no longer visit them with the team because of Covid-19 pandemic. The work of guiding the children to face the father's illness, constructing the concept of death step by step, and the art therapy for loss and grief had to be temporarily suspended.

Just after the patient passed away, the family found that Xiao-Wei became more and more depressed. When he saw his mother crying, he would still be sensitive and uneasy. So when the home hospice team carried out care for the bereaved, the family took the initiative to seek assistance. With children who are not good at expressing themselves in words, art therapy can help them resolve their inner conflicts and enhance their self-knowledge and expression. In addition, in the process of artistic creation, non-verbal communication methods are also less threatening, especially suitable for children whose language abilities are still in the developing stage. Therefore, Ms. Wang decided to use video calls to invite Xiao-Wei and Xiao-Kai to come to have an online *art meeting*.

Ms. Wang sent a large package of creative art materials to their home. The gift-like package brought a long-expected smile to Xiao-Wei's and his brother Xiao-Kai's face. After getting online at the arranged time, Ms. Wang read the picture book *What Happens Next?* and chatted with Xiao-Wei about issues like: "Whom did Dad meet after he went to heaven? What do they do together? What will Dad become to protect us?" Under the guidance of Ms. Wang, the brothers gradually became able to talk in the language levels of their respective ages and share the details of the life



they had with their father. It also opened Xiao-Wei's heart so he could talk about his dad's sickness and passing, something he once previously refused to engage in conversation.

Then, Ms. Wang led the children to use the art supplies to make artistic creations as a way to express their memory of their father. Xiao-Wei made a Spider-Man out of clay and said, "This is what Dad changed into to protect Mom, me, and my younger brother, but because he also has to protect other people, he was too busy to come home."



"Then let's help Spider-Man Dad make a tent like the one you had when you went camping, so that he can have a good rest when he is tired," replied Ms. Wang.

The sorrow and departure the children couldn't express was projected onto the creations to commemorate their father through paint, clay, colored paper, fur balls, and etc.

Unfinished art for the pandemic marathon

The COVID-19 pandemic is a marathon that has hit the world by surprise and still has no finished line in sight. Countless people's lives have been forced to change and adapt suddenly. Many industries have also stagnated under the pandemic prevention policies and some have even closed due to their inability to operate profitably. This has been a huge blow and predicament to people's livelihood and economy. The whole society, due to its anxiety about disease and death, may not be able to go back to the past, but needs to develop a *new normal* for the future. At the same time, the hope of spreading care and blessings has also been restricted by the pandemic.

Art therapy has the characteristics of non-verbal communication and expression, combined with the application of psychotherapy in video communication and interaction with patients, family members, and survivors. Even during the isolation period, the team is still providing the warmest and strongest support with available means, so that mutual love has not been hindered by the pandemic.

