

“Yin & Yang”

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Mr. K, a 45-year-old electrical maintenance worker was admitted to the Psychiatry Unit, Teaching Hospital, Peradeniya, due to increased alcohol use, and worsening depressive symptoms during the previous two months. These symptoms had arisen against a background of significant chronic grief for several years. He has previously been a reliable and efficient employee. However, he had missed work during the last few months on a regular basis due to the recent worsening of his depressive symptoms, which had also been noted by his employer.

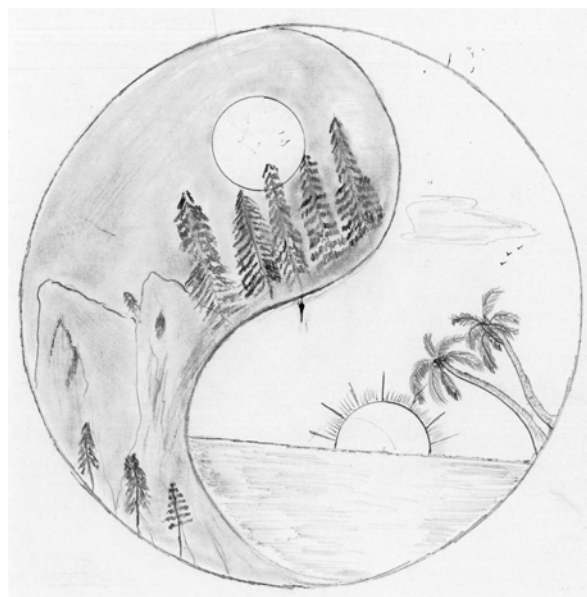
Mr. K recalled a difficult childhood, which included the passing away of his mother when he was a child and a distant relationship with his father and siblings. He said he finally found love, companionship, and a confidante in his wife. However, tragedy struck him again ten years ago with the untimely death of his wife due to dengue haemorrhagic fever. His wife had been pregnant at the time of her death. Mr. K blamed himself for delaying seeking medical advice for his wife and for having had an argument with her prior to her death. After her demise, he had stopped running his business and had been moving from one job to another over the last few years. He had resorted to using alcohol to deal with his grief and guilt and reported several attempts to end his life.

During his inpatient stay at the University Psychiatry Unit of the Teaching Hospital, Peradeniya, we realized that he had a skill at pencil drawings. With the help of the occupational therapist, grief work was initiated. Mr. K found that drawing helped him express his grief more easily than in words and served as an outlet for his unresolved guilt. Mr. K began to use his drawings as an adaptive way of coping with his loss, as well as a means of expressing hope for his future.

The above sketch, is one of many drawn by Mr. K. It depicts the Chinese “Yin & Yang” showing that light (with the sunrise) and darkness (with the moon) invariably follow each other.

Mr. K described this sketch with a caption as follows: “As night follows the day, so shall happiness follow sadness”.

Mr. K gave written informed consent for the publication of his sketch on an anonymous basis.



Author contribution

ATF wrote the initial draft, which was revised by TR. All authors have seen and approved the final version of the article.

Conflicts of interest

None declared.


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