

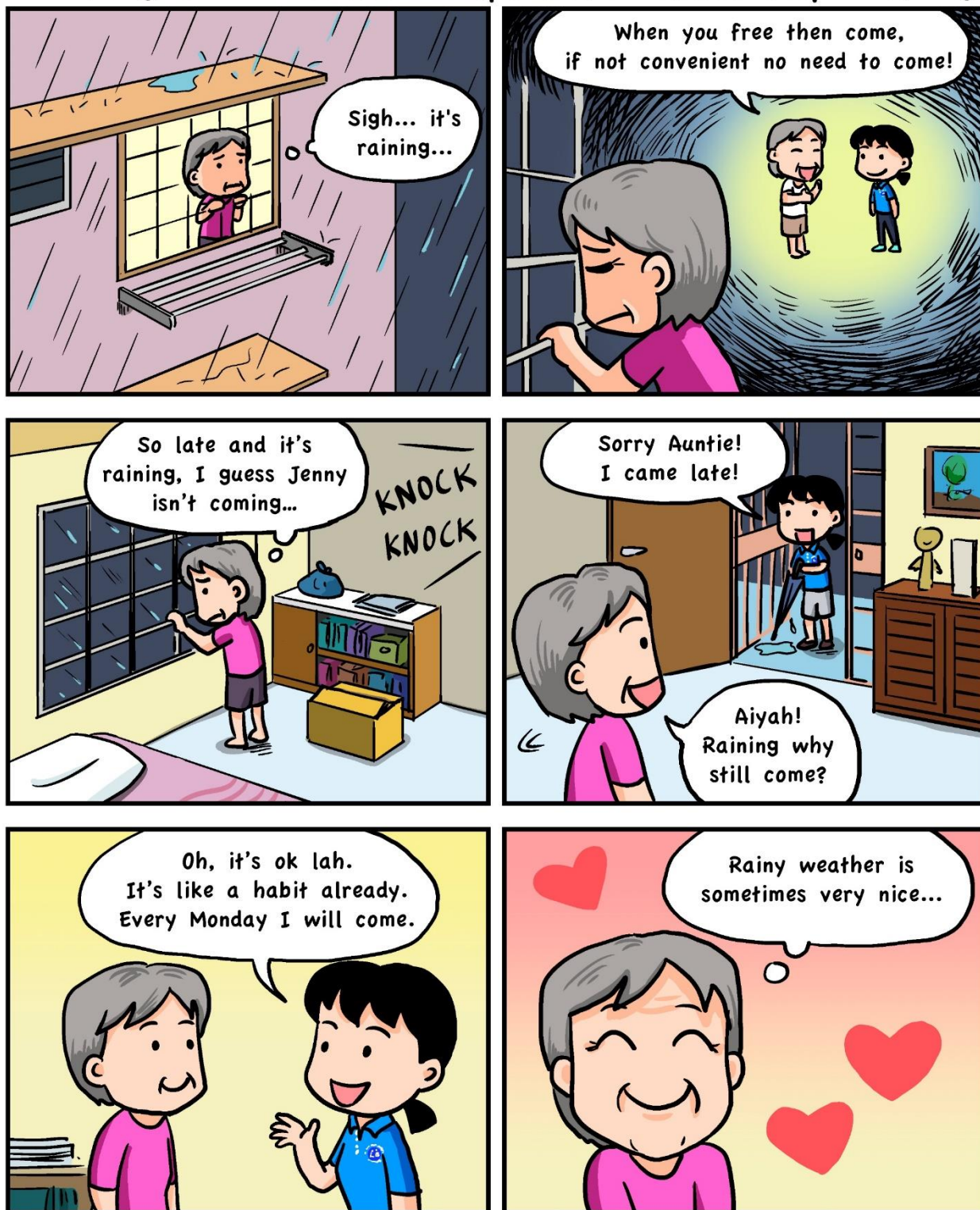
Knock Knock Who's There?

Tips and stories from befrienders to befrienders



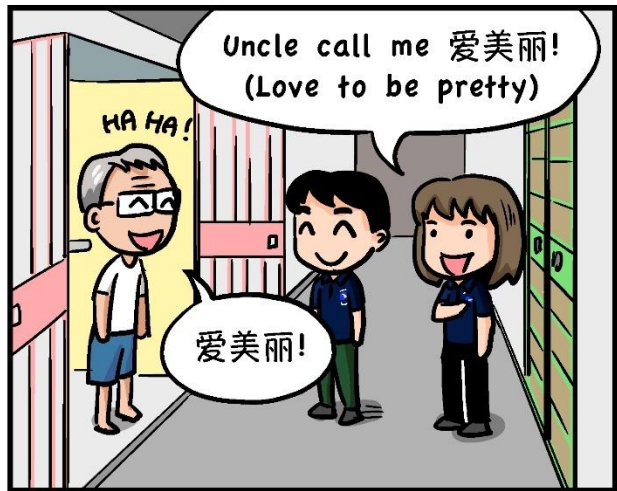
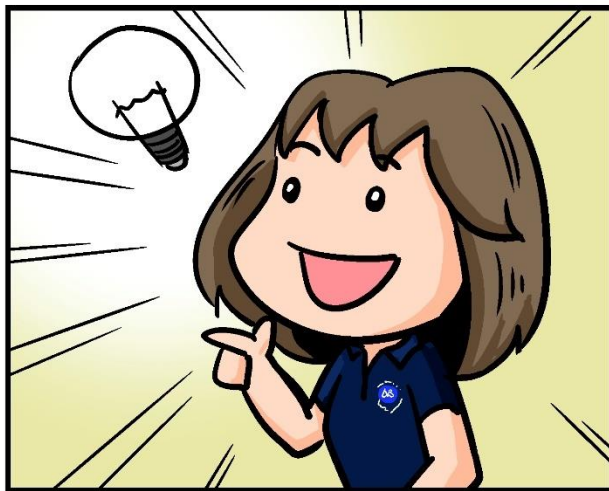
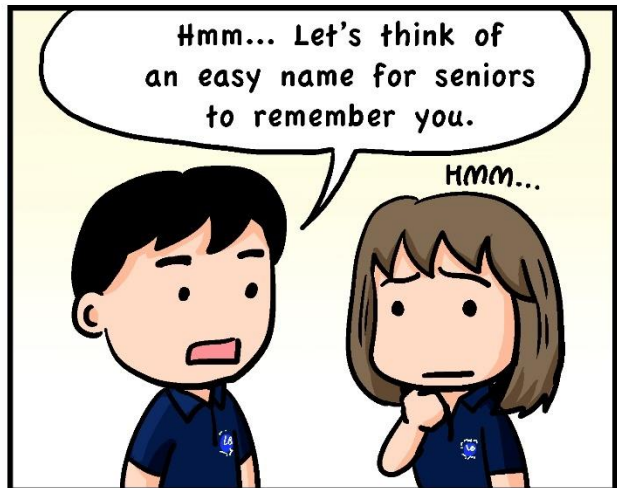
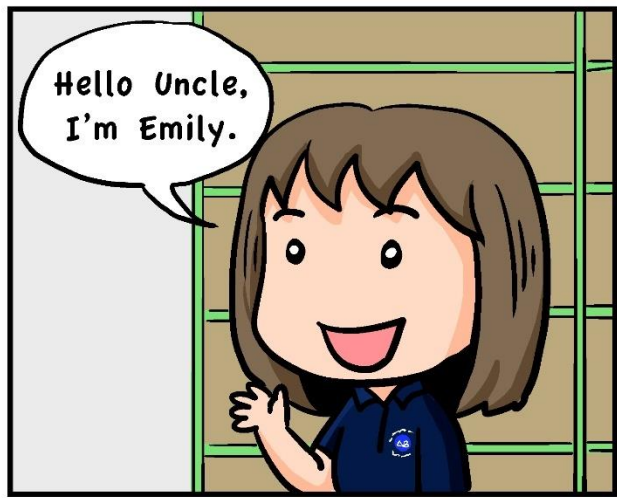
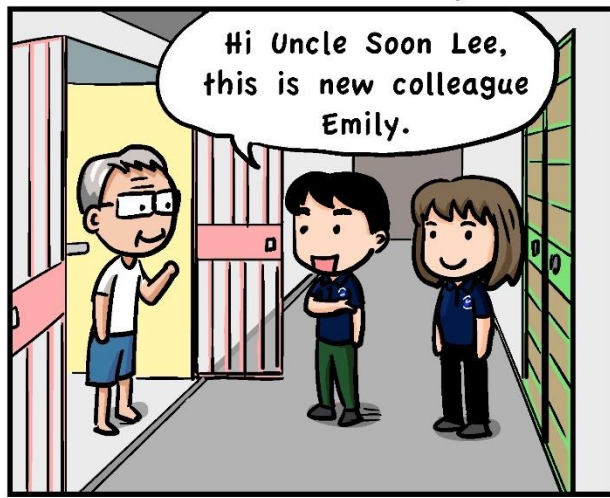
Connecting Seniors,
Enriching Lives®

Showing our dedication helps with relationship-building



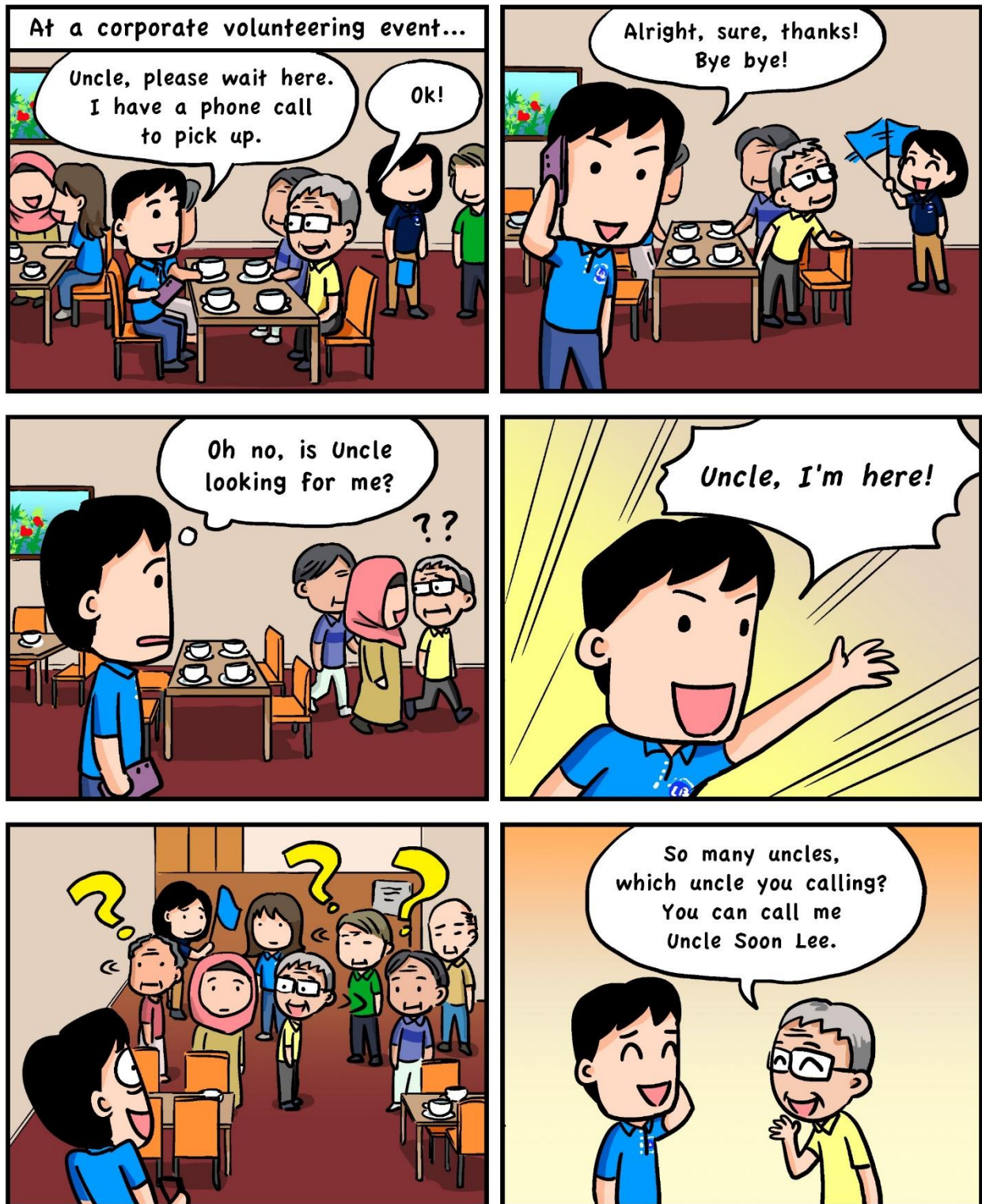
Sometimes our seniors may be worried of possibly inconveniencing us, and ask us not to visit them. However, going the extra mile to honour our commitments in our visitation dates and timings can help to build trust between the seniors and us. If you need to cancel your appointment, do inform our seniors ahead of time, so that they would not be left waiting indefinitely.

Choosing an easy name for seniors to remember



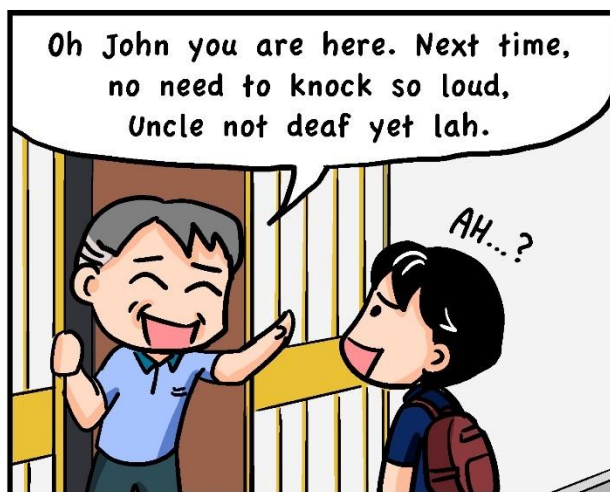
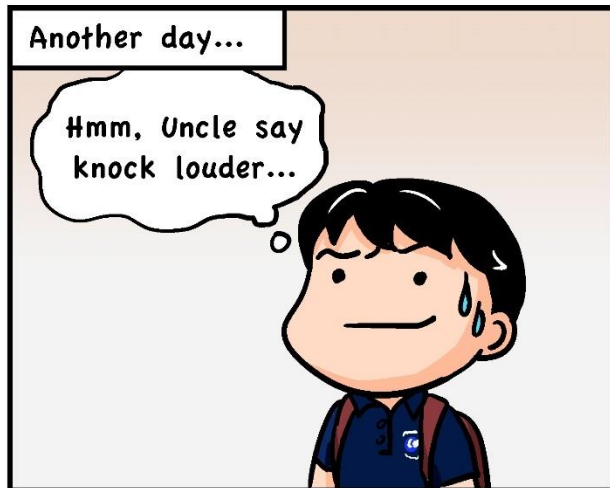
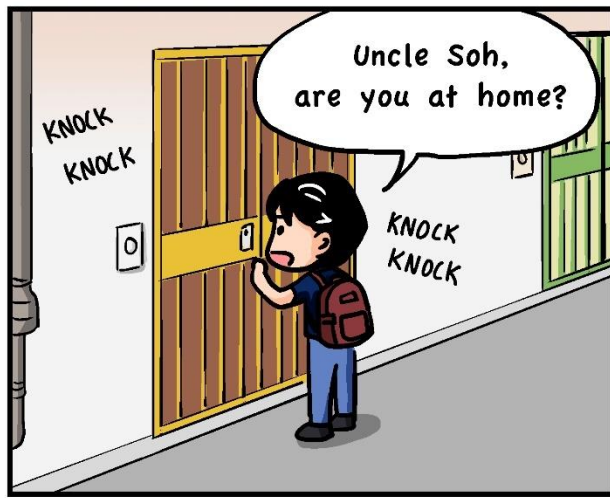
Some names may not be commonplace to seniors and might confuse them on how to address you. Introducing yourself with an easy to remember 'nickname' makes a more lasting impression with the senior and allows a smoother introduction!

Adding a personal touch to befriending



Addressing seniors and getting to know their names help us in looking out for them and add a nice personal touch when we are addressing them in a crowd. Putting a name to the face would also aid us in remembering certain traits about them.

The Art of Door Knocking



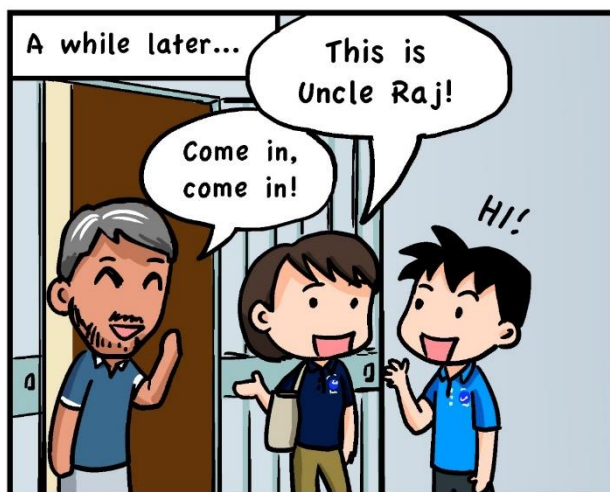
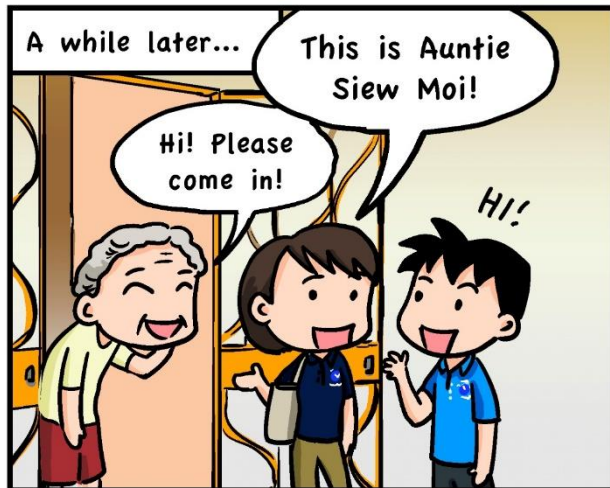
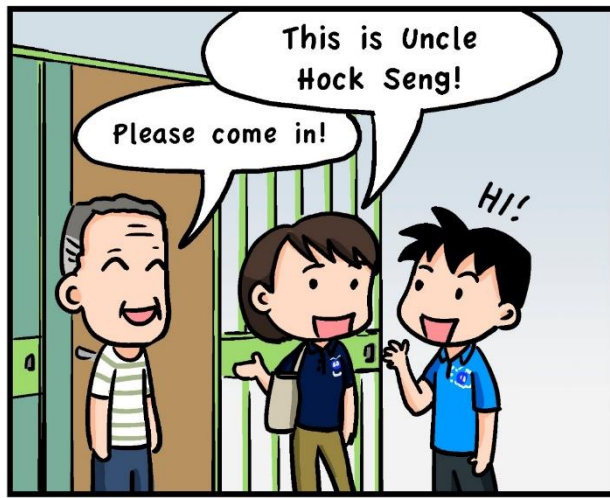
Every senior is unique and has their own set of personalities, and it takes time to discover them all. Do not be quick to take offence at their comments. Instead, reflect on what we can do to find that sweet spot in between that would make everyone happy.

Befriending is a two-way street



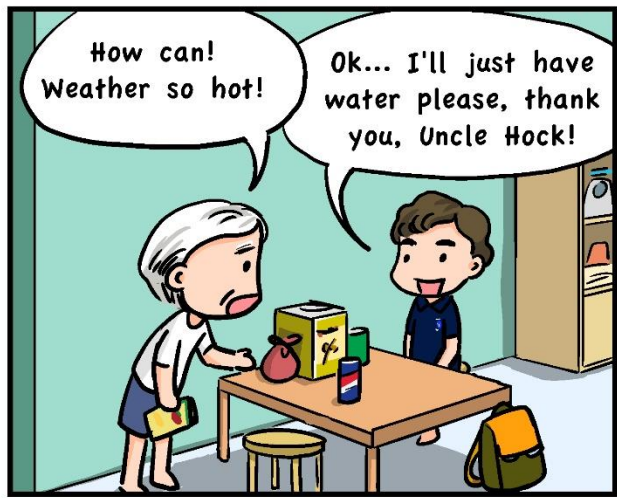
In this story, the senior did not realise that when the befriender said "not enough sugar", it referred to low blood sugar condition. Yet, the senior took the initiative to show care towards the befriender in his own way. Sometimes, the seniors may not always fully comprehend the context, but their sincerity in caring for us always leaves us feeling thankful.

Dressing comfortably, dressing sensibly



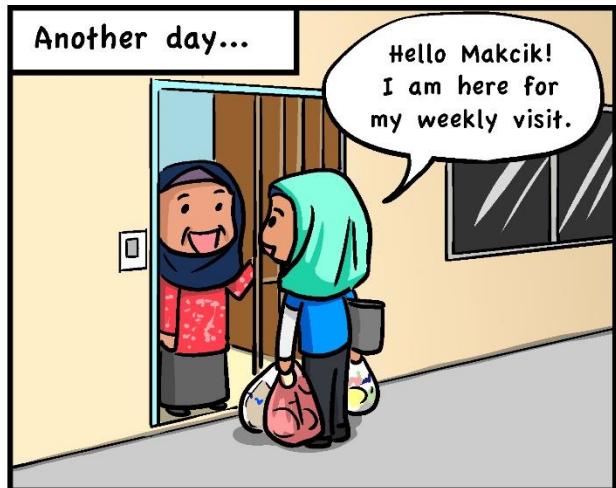
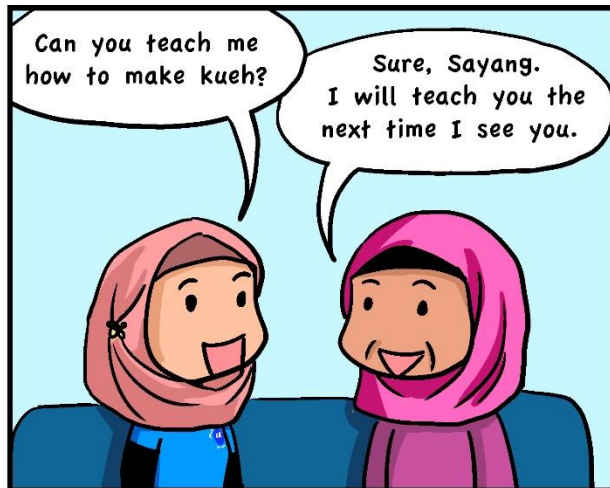
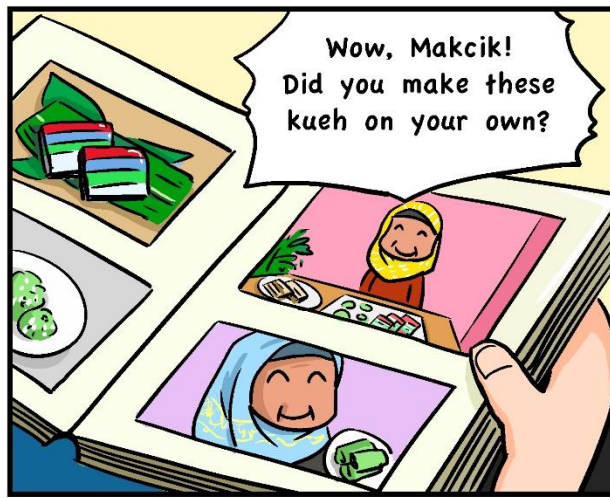
We hope to make home visits to seniors hassle-free for befrienders. Hence while we encourage befrienders to dress appropriately out of respect for our seniors, we recommend befrienders to also dress comfortably as well!

Tactfully declining offers from seniors



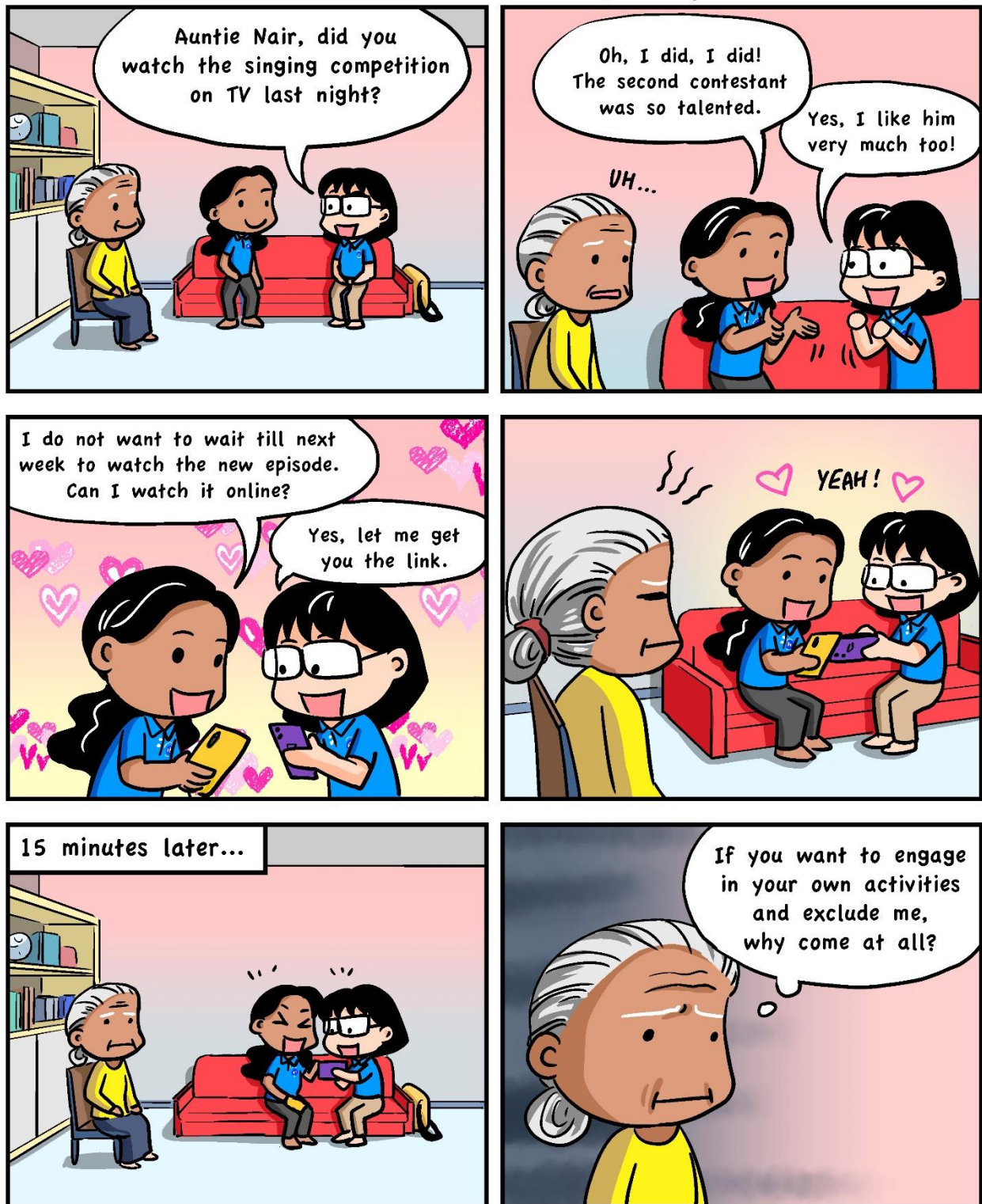
While we are sometimes shy to accept the hospitality of seniors, some seniors may take our refusal of their hospitality the wrong way. Letting the seniors know our reasons i.e. taken lunch already, will allow them to understand our refusal better.

Finding common interests with elderly



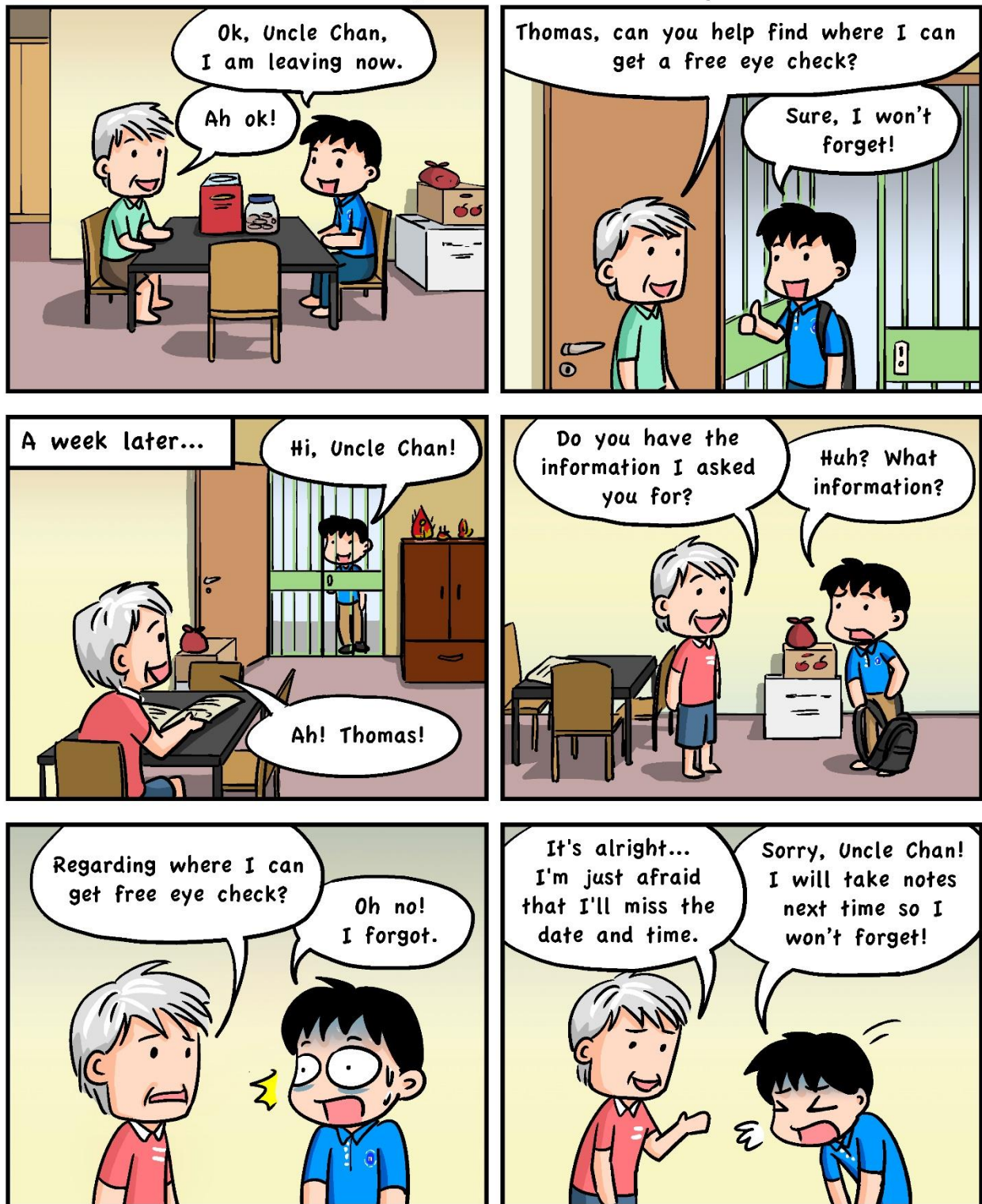
Finding common interests can be a great conversations-starter with your seniors when you visit them. Take note of things in their homes that could indicate their hobbies and interests (e.g. mahjong, arts and crafts, etc) and if you have similar interest, it would be a great way to bond with your seniors!

Avoid talking amongst yourselves or excessive messaging on your phone



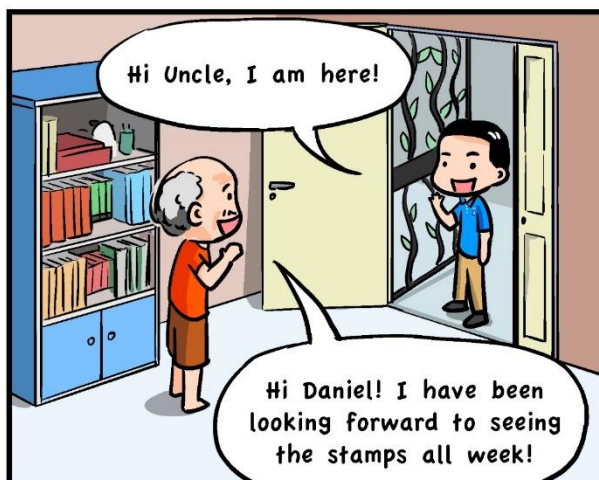
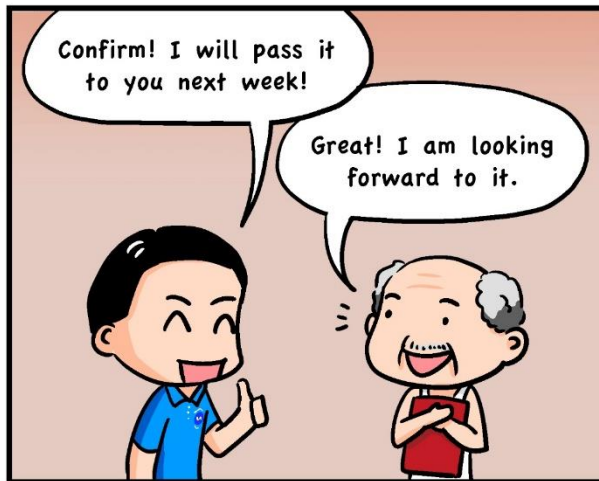
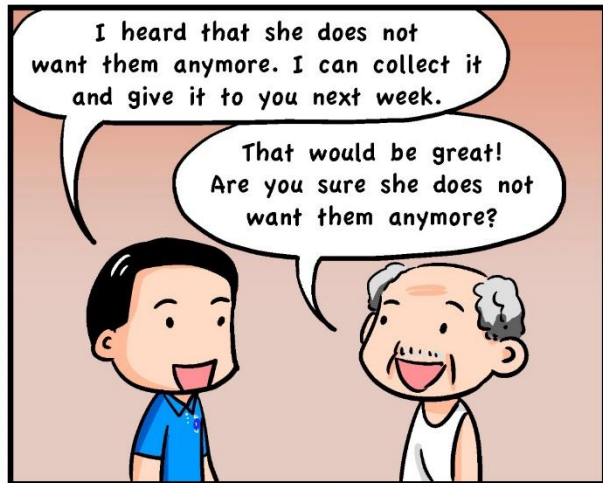
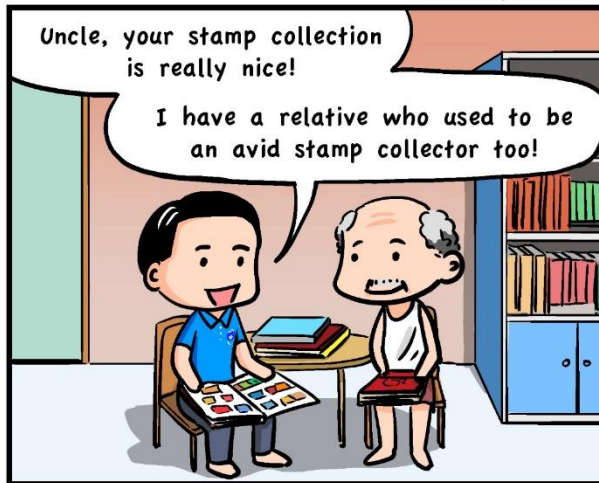
Seniors are able to observe whether we pay attention in our interaction with them. Including our seniors in the conversation makes them feel respected. The same goes for not using your handphones excessively around seniors as this might make them feel that their presence is not acknowledged.

Taking notes of what was spoken before so that you can follow up



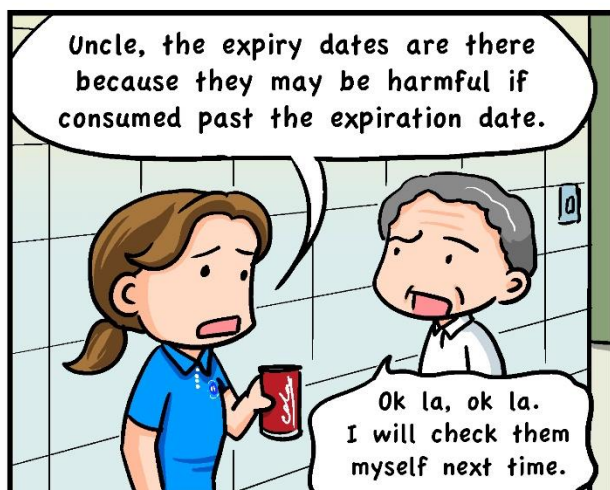
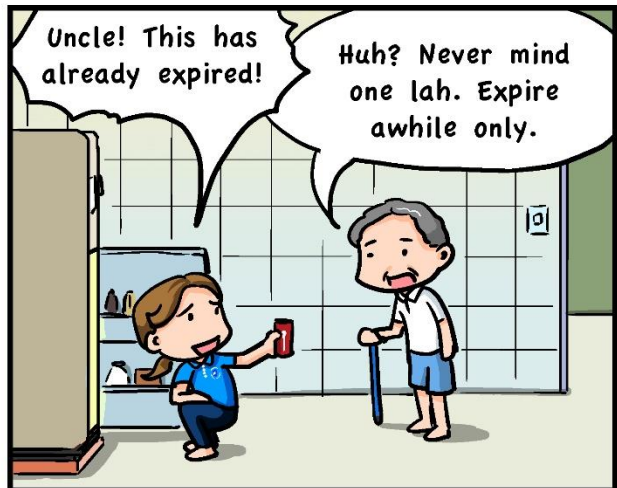
Taking notes of your conversations with seniors can help us to keep track of their well-being and let us know if they require any assistance (e.g. medical appointment reminders). Also, it allows the senior to know that we are listening to what they are saying and which gives them the assurance that we care for them.

Keeping Our Word



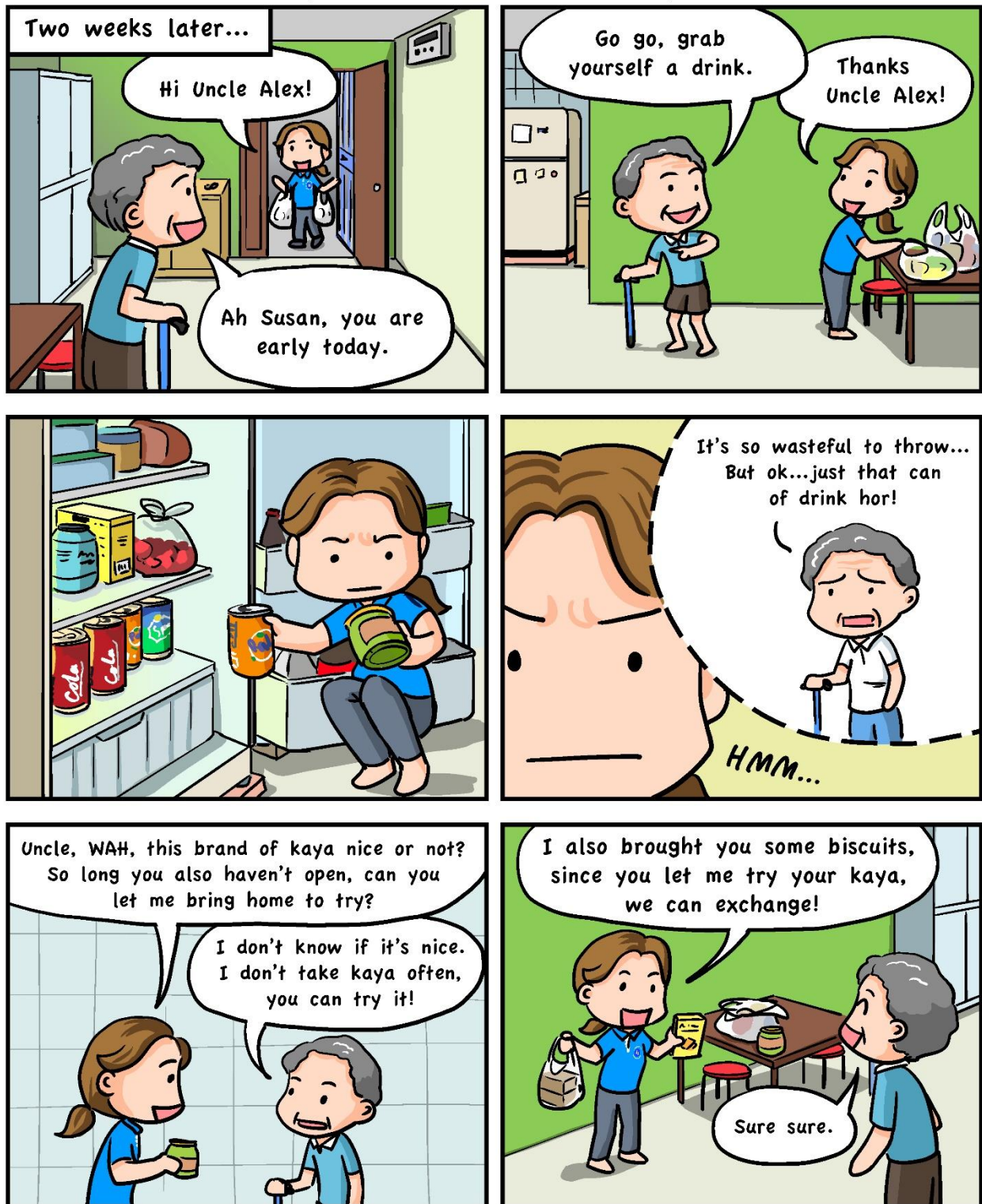
Rather than making a promise upfront, it would be wiser to say that you will check first before agreeing to something with the senior. We could unintentionally raise their sense of hope but disappoint them later. If done too often, it may hinder trust-building with the senior.

Part 1: Checking for Food Expiry Dates



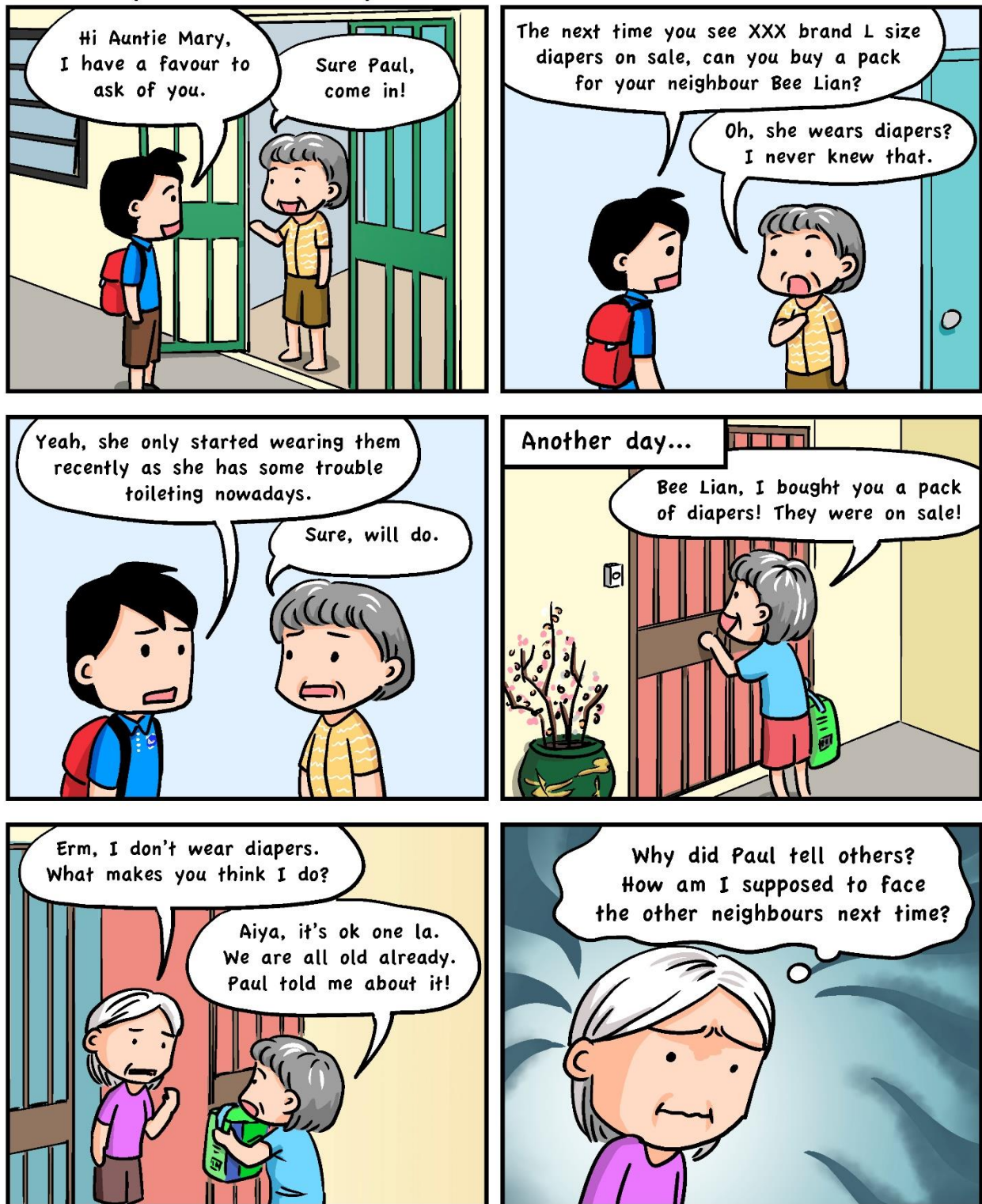
There may be items that are left unchecked for a long time in some seniors' homes. Observe which items are frequently consumed by senior, especially perishables with shorter shelf-life i.e. bread, crackers, kaya and milk. Then find appropriate opportunities to seek consent and make regular checks on their expiry dates.

Part 2: Exercising creativity and practising sensitivity when helping seniors clear expired food



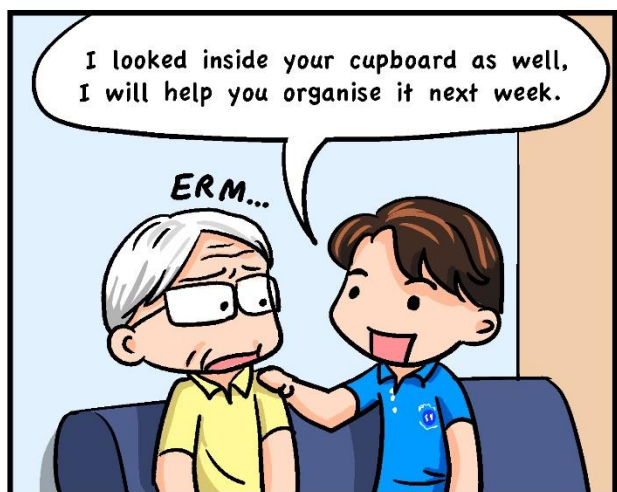
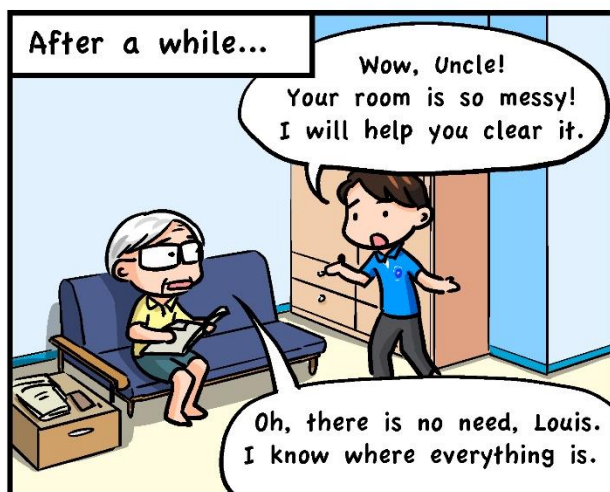
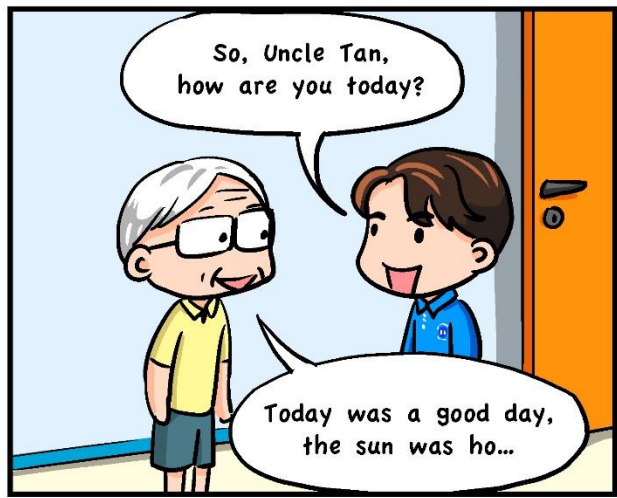
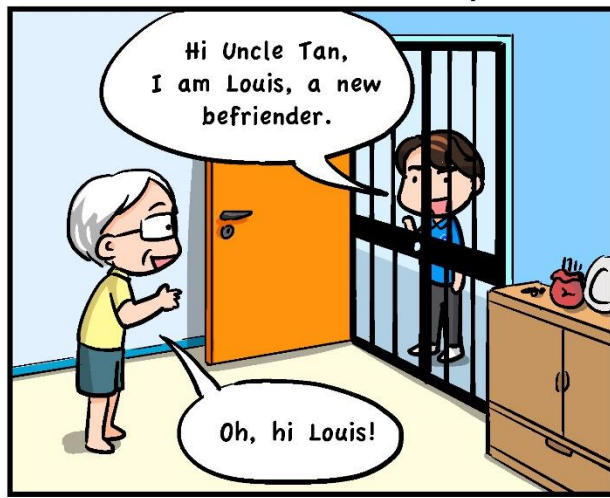
Our seniors have been taught to be hardy and thrifty. Show understanding if they resist clearing their expired food. Be careful not to be high-handed lest they reject our help in the future. Exercise some creativity i.e. some form of exchange can buffer their sense of loss. There are other tactful ways but **ONLY** attempt this when you have good rapport and remember to ask for consent.

Keeping seniors' personal information confidential



Sometimes in our eagerness to help, we may accidentally slip out other seniors' personal information to others. This can lead to embarrassing conversations or awkward feelings. As the Asian saying goes, certain matters should be kept close to one's dearest friends and family. It is a privilege that we are in this inner circle, so let us preserve their dignity and not breach our seniors' trust.

Respecting boundaries



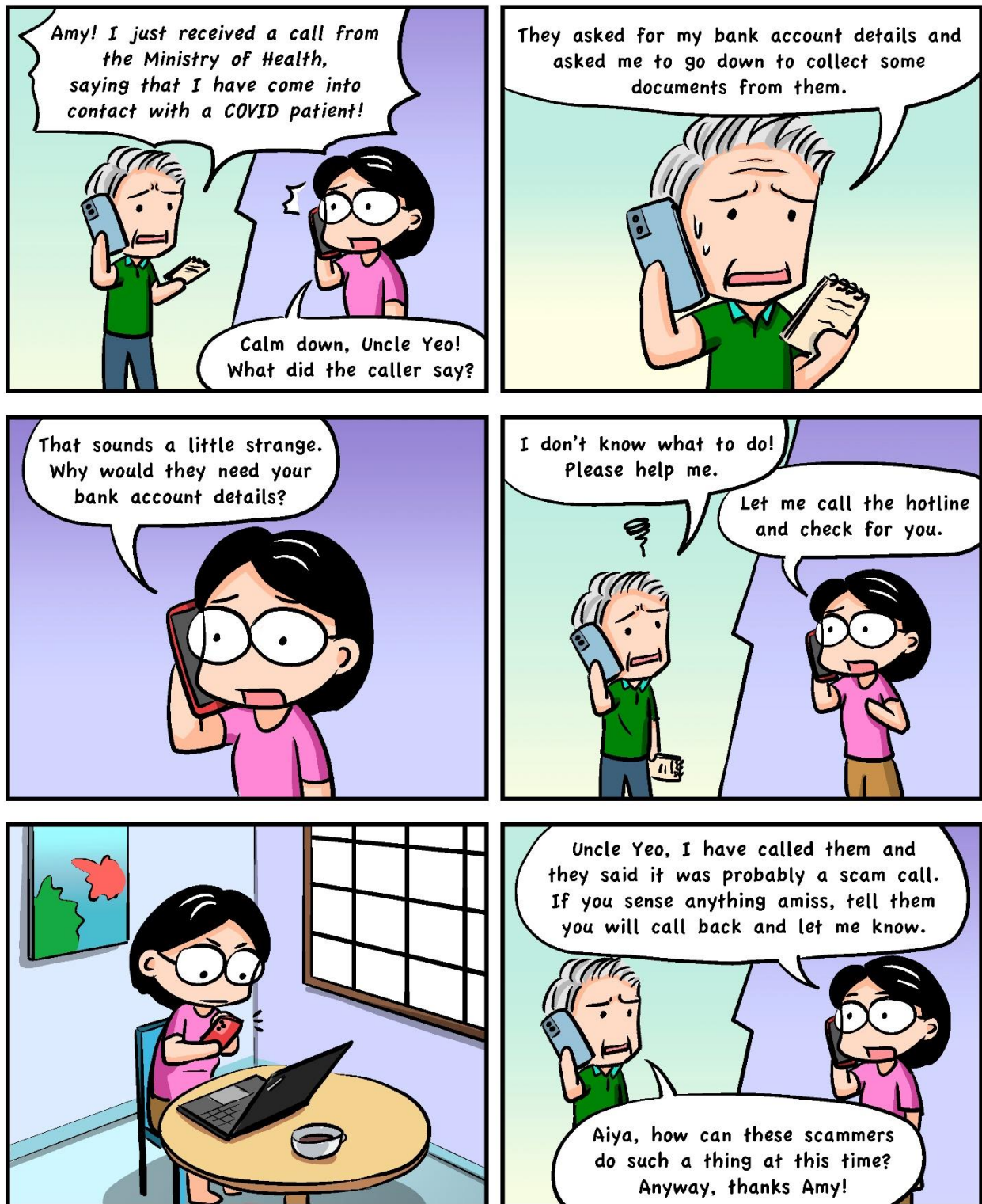
Respect our seniors' privacy and personal space. Always seek permission before entering areas in their homes that are apart from where you usually conduct your befriending conversations. When reading seniors' letters, do look at the letterhead after opening the envelope. Inform the senior which organisation the letter is from and ask for consent if you could continue reading the letter.

Dispelling misconceptions



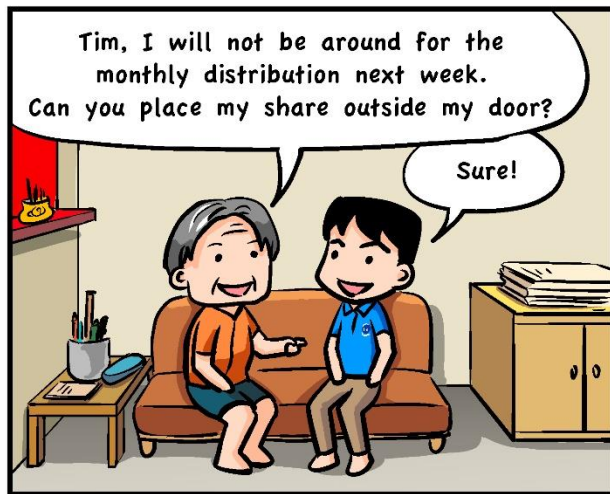
The COVID situation has impacted us tremendously.
Never underestimate any form of contact we have with the seniors.
We still have an important role to play during this period.

Reassuring seniors who are targets of scams



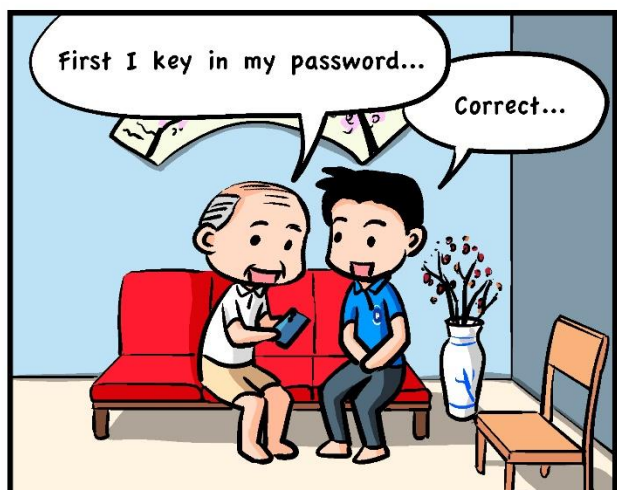
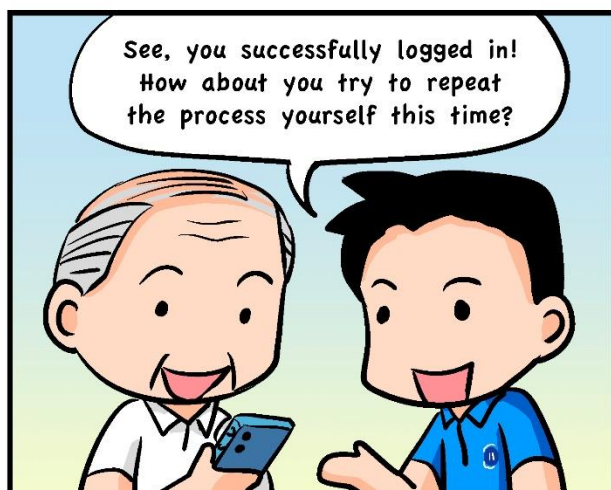
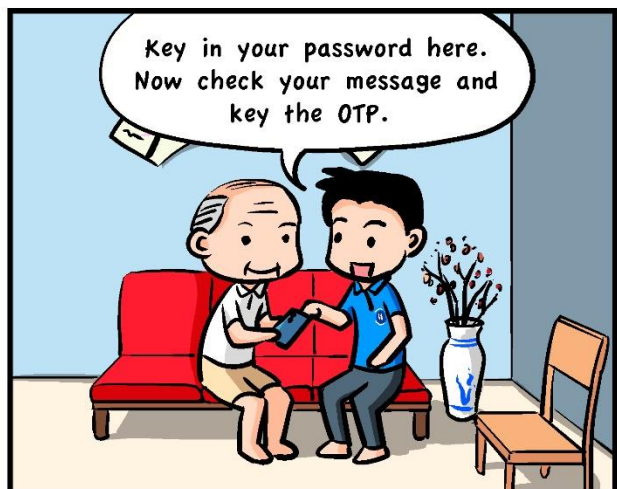
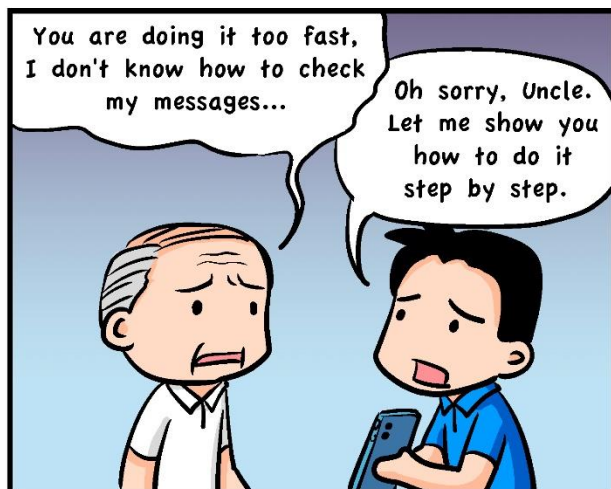
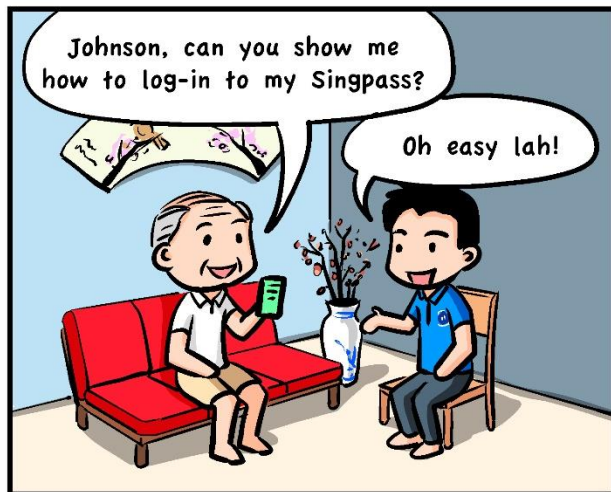
We can do our part to minimise the risk of scammers by looking out for the ministry advisories and passing them on to our elderly.

Placing of items if senior is not in



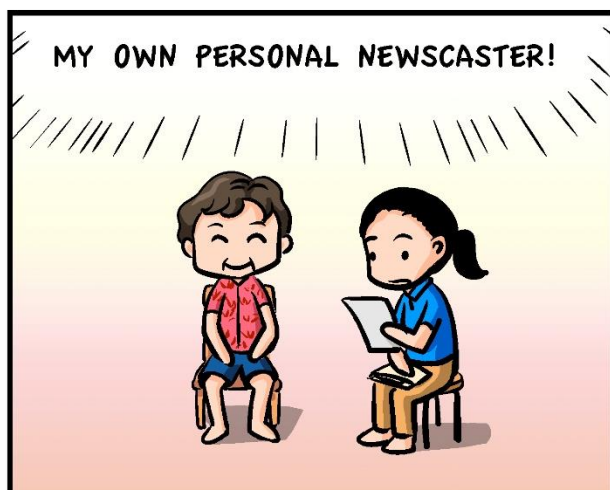
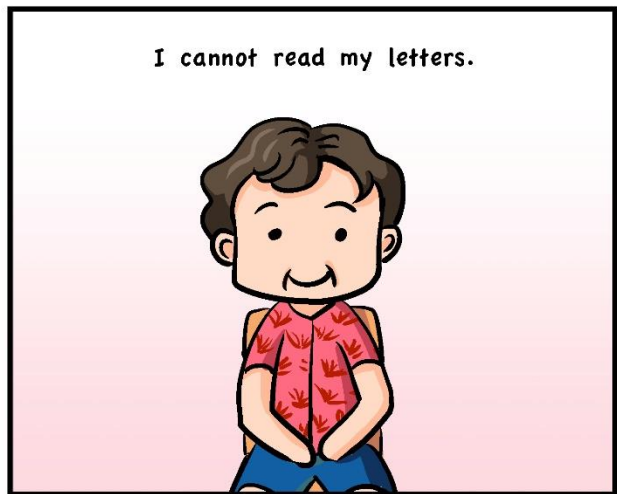
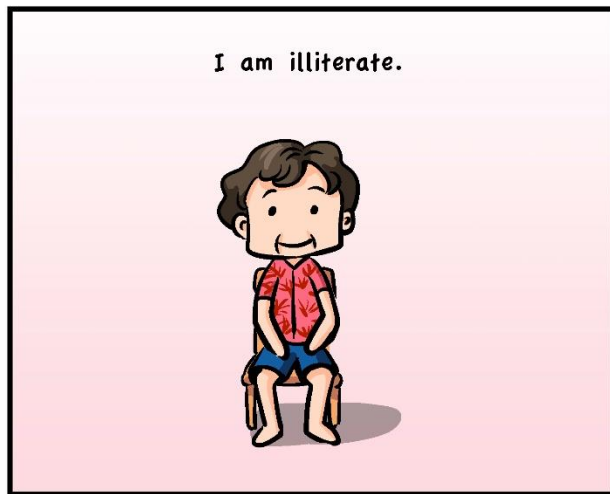
Placing items outside the house of a senior may run the risk of animal attacks, theft and other scenarios where the item/s may be damaged. Whenever possible, try to leave the items in the care of someone else to pass on to the senior later on.

Learning at different paces



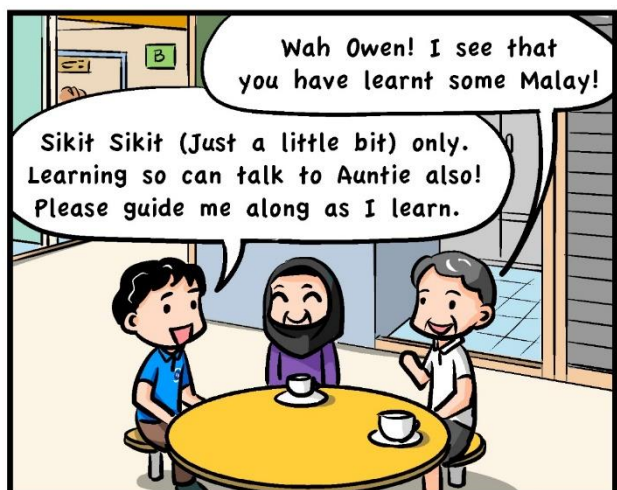
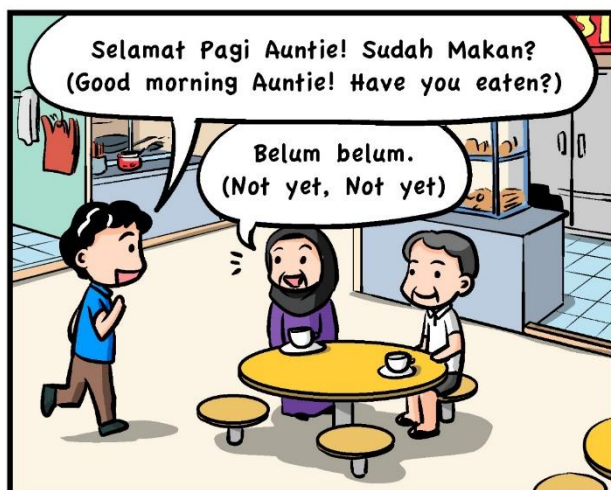
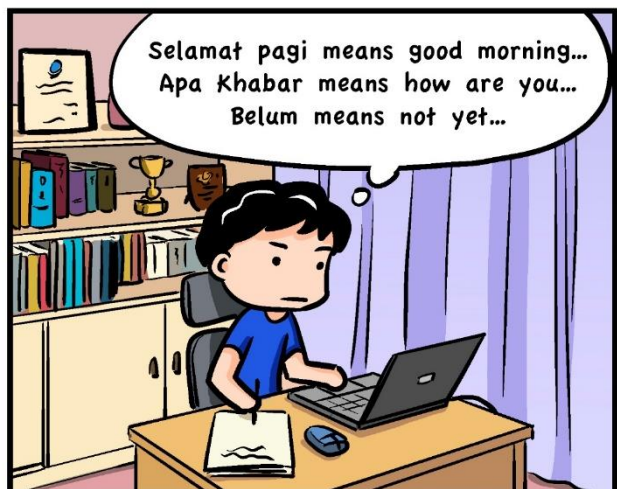
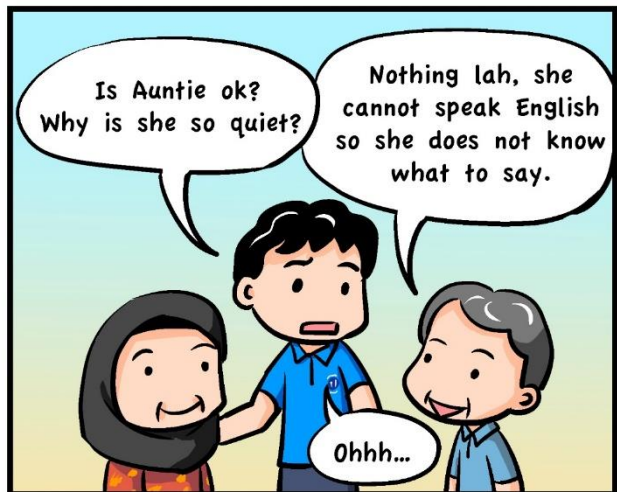
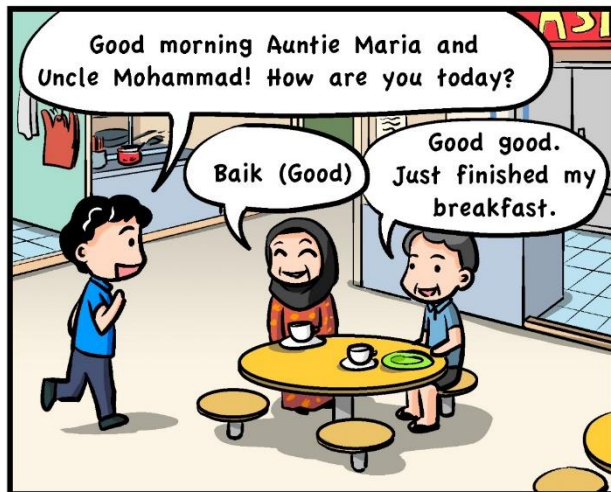
Seniors may not be able to grasp technology as quickly as we do. Avoid using jargon while guiding them. Also, do not take it for granted that what is common knowledge for you would be the same for them. Show them every step of what you are doing.

Broadcasting? Befriending?



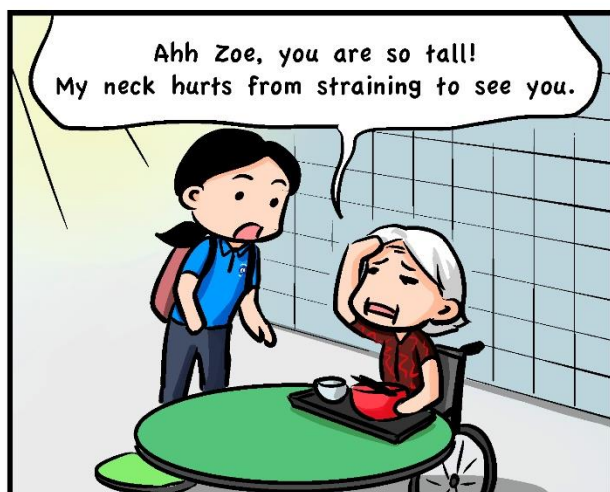
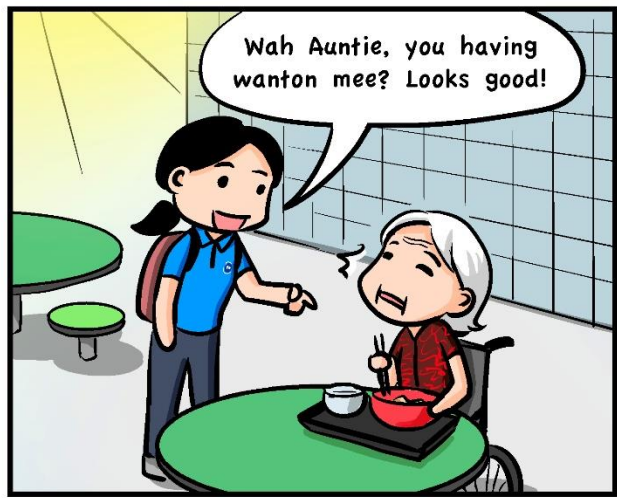
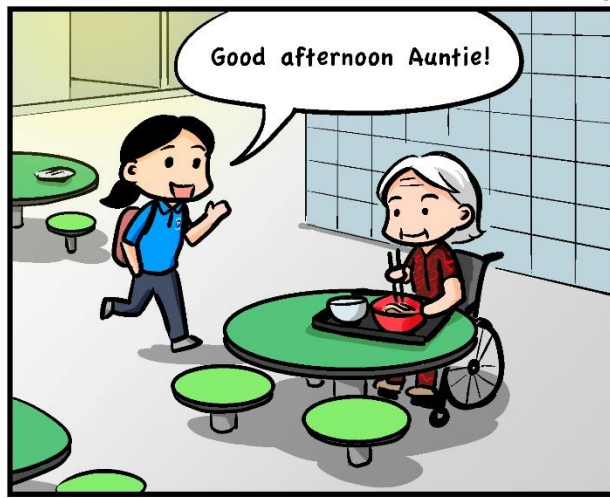
Taking some time to create a weekly bulletin of important news (elderly related news, estate related updates, general local/foreign news), is a good way to keep your elderly informed about the latest developments around them. Before every visit, look at the noticeboards by the lifts to see if any upgrading/maintenance works are upcoming.

Learning new languages



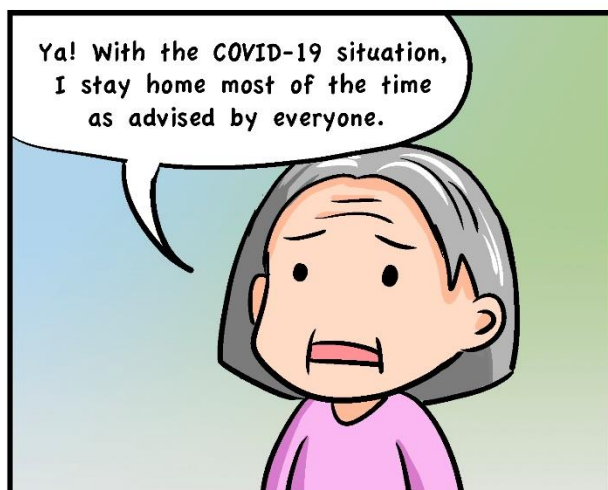
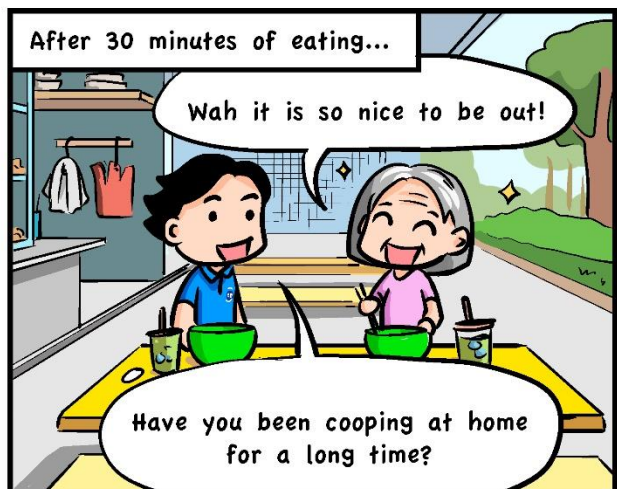
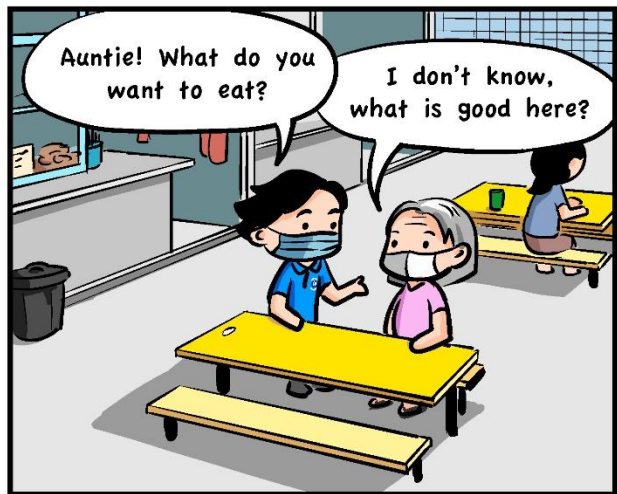
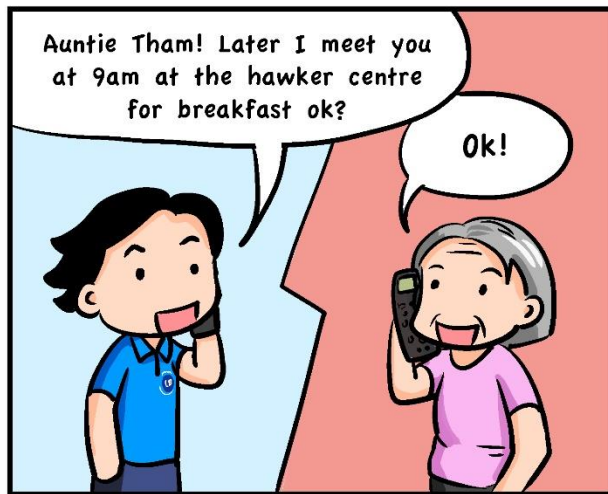
In the course of befriending, taking the initiative to learn a language an elderly is familiar with may increase the variety of the topics that can be touched on.

Maintaining eye level contact



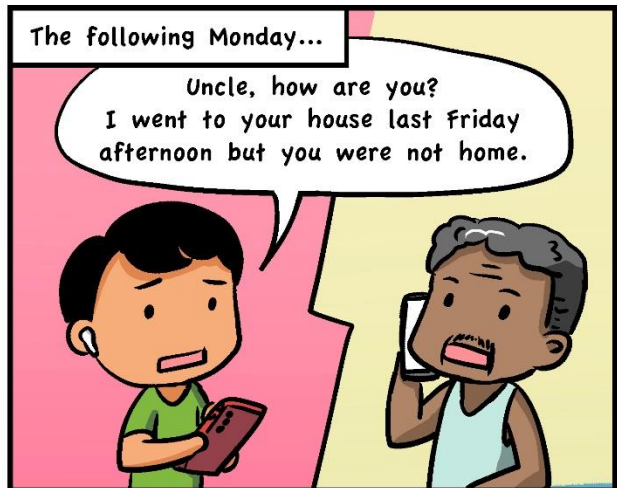
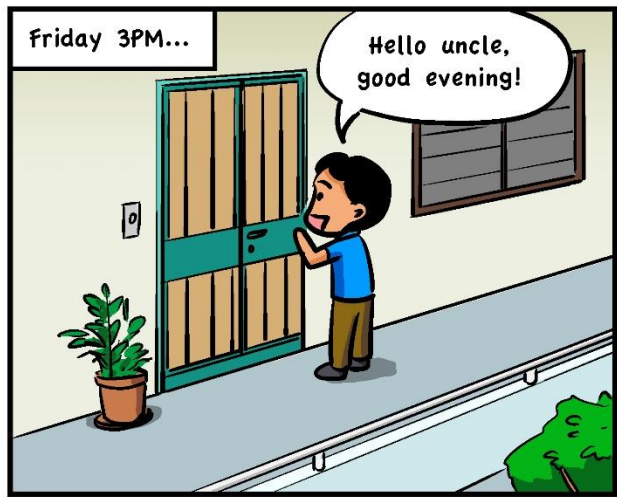
Maintaining the same level of eye contact not only shows the senior that you are giving them the respect, it also makes them comfortable that you are sincerely trying to engage in a proper conversation.

Having a meal with the seniors



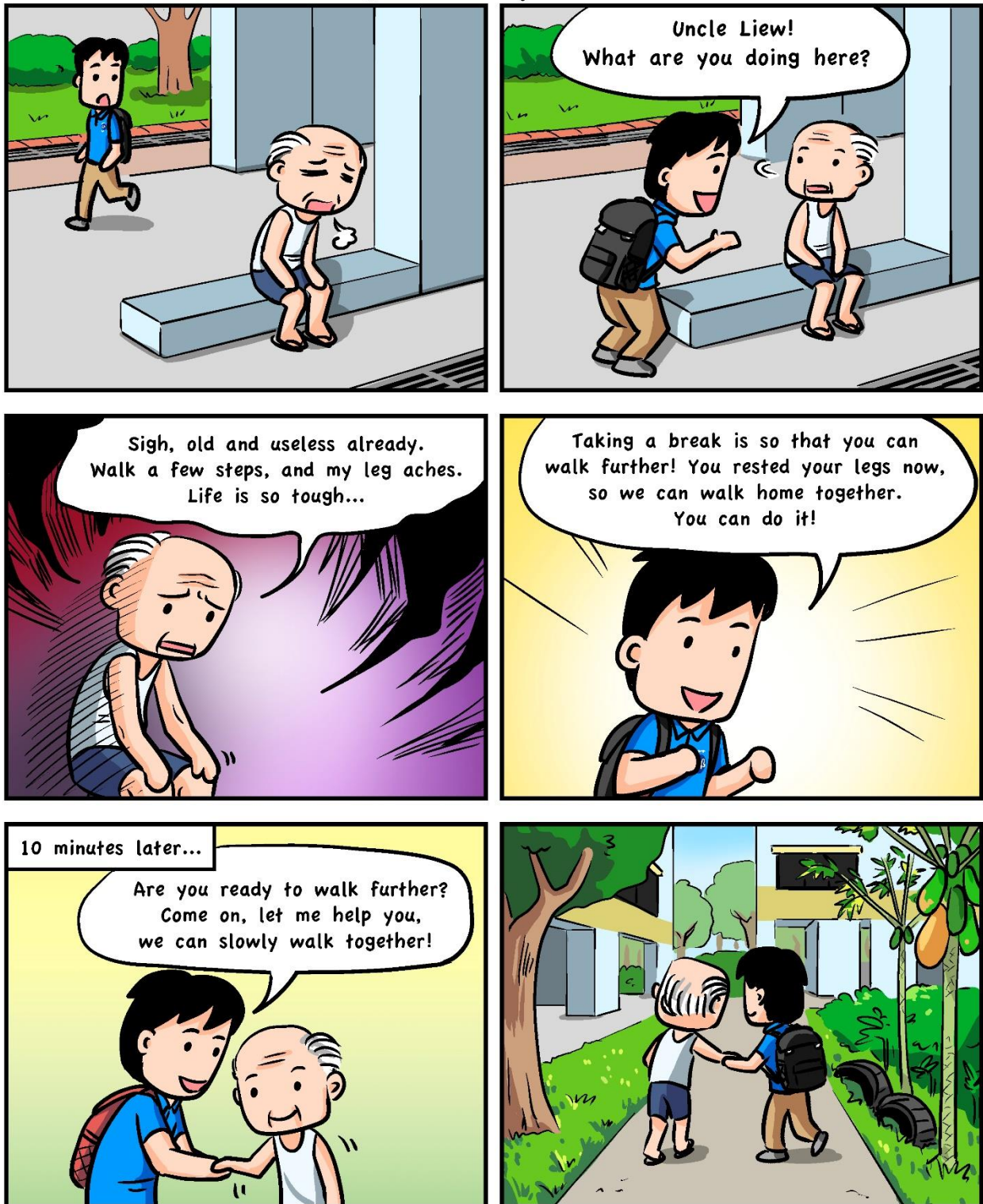
During the Covid-19 pandemic, a short meal together outdoors can be a nice activity change as much as an alternative to home visits where it is more well-ventilated.

Calling before visits



To prevent a wasted trip, it is a good idea to call them again before visiting, a day before or on the day itself to serve as a gentle reminder to seniors.

Exercising creativity on seniors who voice out negative expressions



Providing the seniors with encouragement shows them another perspective and assures them that they are still cared for.

Short Stories

With creativity and patience, Befrienders can help seniors expand their perspectives

Auntie Low is single and lives alone.
She has mobility issues and
is relatively homebound.



She has a traditional mindset and feels
paranoid that her health would be
affected by radiation exposure.

Hence, she is resistant to technological
devices, fearing that they emit radiation.
She even plugged out her home phone.



Over the years, many have tried to
tell her the convenience of a handphone,
but she refuses. Resultantly, it was always
difficult to reach her except to physically
go to her home.



In comes a new befriender, Jen.

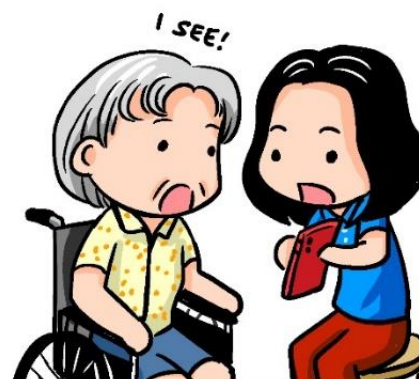


Auntie has many interests. She likes
to sing and talk about Traditional
Chinese Medicine (TCM) health benefits.

Jen is observant and attempts to keep up
with auntie's interests by researching online.



Although Auntie Low is resistant to
technology, she does not stop Jen from
using her handphone to check things for her
on the internet during visits.



Jen gets creative. She goes to YouTube to find songs to sing together. Knowing that auntie is interested in health facts, Jen also shows her health videos.



One day, auntie received a second-hand phone.

Auntie Low was in a dilemma at first. But when she remembered how Jen showed her interesting videos via a handphone, her resistance wavered.



Auntie asked Jen repeatedly if the handphone would impact her health. Jen reassured auntie and she finally agreed to learn how to use a handphone.



Now, Jen and auntie have proceeded onto WeChat. When auntie was not feeling well recently, Jen was able to show concern to auntie more conveniently.

Their relationship has since deepened.



Seniors are unique in character, and in their perceptions towards different things. When we share information in a casual and non-coercive manner, we can slowly help them understand and break down their resistance that stems from the lack of knowledge.

Setting goals and never giving up

Befrienders Simon and his wife Angie have been visiting Uncle Lee for some time.

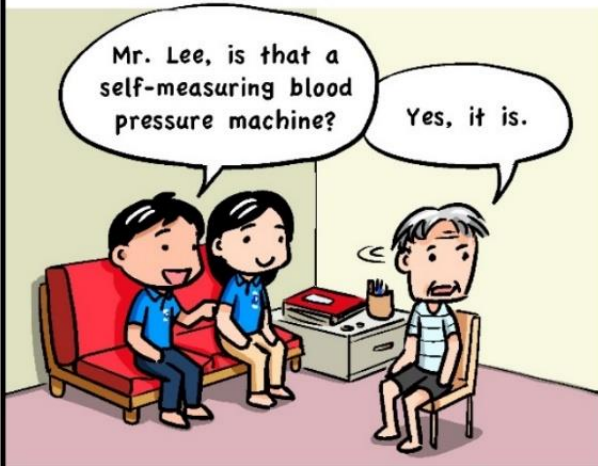


However each time they visit, uncle would hardly speak. Sometimes, he looked sad but would not say much.

After attending LB's Befrienders Certification course, Simon had learnt to actively set befriending goals during visits.

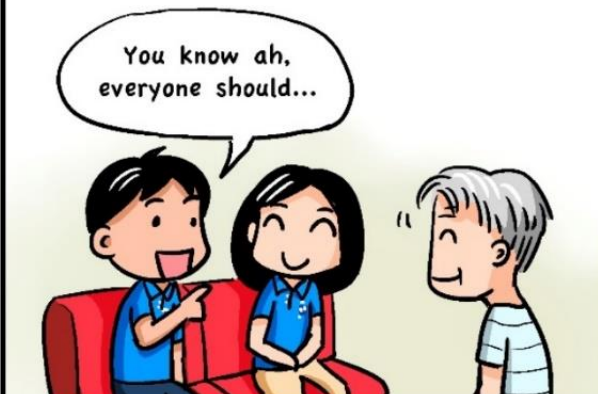


Simon decided to spend more time with Uncle Lee, hoping to find topics to engage him.



And so every week, Simon will measure his blood pressure and take the chance to engage Uncle Lee.

Simon would joke about his own blood pressure and how everyone should keep healthy and uncle would just gently nod his head.



As Simon spent more time with Uncle Lee, uncle slowly began to converse more.

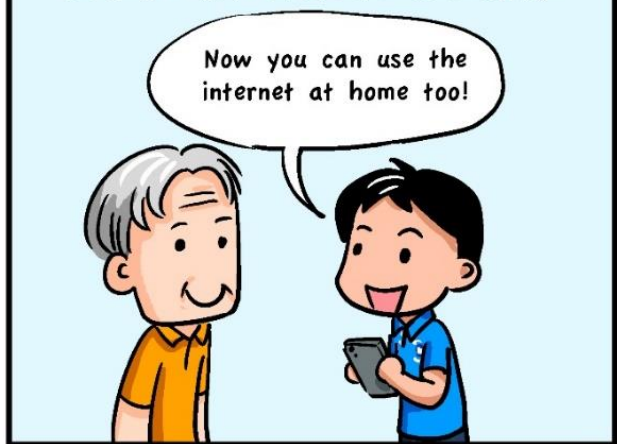


Our staff also noticed that uncle's mood gradually improved.

At one point, Uncle Lee became active enough to go for an IT course for the elderly. He sought Simon's assistance to pick an affordable netbook for him.



Additionally, Simon also helped uncle apply for IMDA's Home Access programme to get subsidised fibre broadband connectivity.



Simon then taught uncle how to find old films on YouTube and horoscope readings on Google. They also practise typing on the keyboard weekly.



Through much effort and time, Simon achieved his befriending goal of finding something to engage Uncle Lee, who seems happier and more engaged now.



It could be harder to achieve breakthrough with some seniors. In fact for others, sometimes breakthroughs might not even come. We like to thank all our befrienders who attempt to try and who continue to persevere.



Being open to befriend a lonely senior living with their estranged families

Uncle Yang resides at a purchased 4-room flat. Despite staying with his wife, son and daughter-in-law, he is very lonely.



He is an amputee.

He has nearly no contact with his family daily. They leave home early in the morning and are not back when he sleeps at night.



His relationship with his children is weak. He is estranged with his wife.



Despite staying in the same unit, they sleep in separate rooms and will often get into heated arguments.

Uncle Yang is lonely, and face challenges in getting his meals and bathing. These daily activities are made harder since he is wheelchair-bound, hard of hearing and has very poor eyesight.



Uncle Yang was reported to have suicidal thoughts before due to his health, financial and living conditions. He stayed in his room most of the time and was very moody.



LB accepted Uncle Yang's case and matched Befriender Wan Ling to him.



Wan Ling was open-minded and willing to befriend uncle even though he lived with family.

On her first visit, Wan Ling noticed that uncle's bedroom was lined with many LED lights due to his poor eyesight.



He found it hard to watch tv so he had 7 radios to listen to Cantonese and Hokkien songs/stories.

Wan Ling conducts regular visits as much as she can and buys fruits for uncle sometimes.



She also went the extra mile to 'burn' Cantonese and Hokkien songs/stories into thumb drives for uncle to listen. Through her actions, Uncle Yang found someone who showed care and concern for him.



Despite his bad memory, uncle remembers Wan Ling as "my friend" and looks forward to her visits.



Now, Uncle Yang often mentions how Wan Ling's befriending has improved his life.

Loneliness and risk of social isolation can hit any senior. Evolving societal and familial issues require us to expand our Befriending perspectives, such as extending support towards seniors who do not fall under the traditional single, living alone and lower income profiles.

Taking seniors from scattered regions and wheelchair or home-bound seniors out

Some seniors rarely got to go on outings because they needed more assistance with walking (i.e. walkers) and/or when they live in far and *scattered regions.



As it is logistically more challenging, staff explained that limited number of sponsors would go to different pickup points for outings. Wheelchair-friendly transportation were also more expensive.



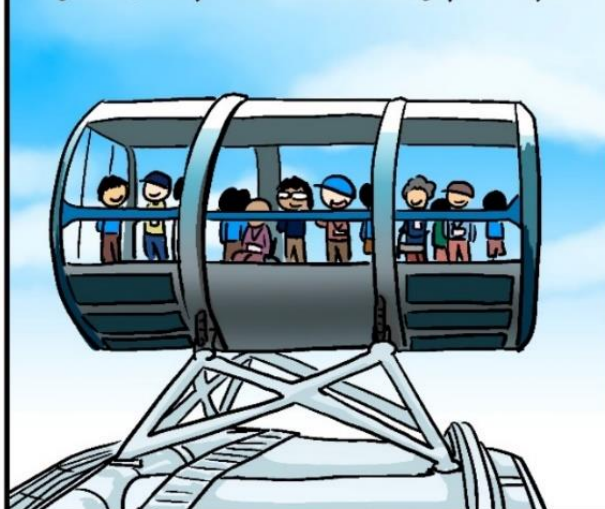
Despite the logistics challenge, the befrienders decided to take their seniors, who are not very mobile for an outing.



The seniors selected included Uncle Tan, who had a rare form of muscular dystrophy, as well as other frailer seniors.



Together, they went to the Singapore Flyer...



...and also went to eat "Tze Char" lunch. Uncle Tan, who otherwise would not have been able to go out, was so excited about this rare social activity that he wanted to pay for everyone.



The entire outing took a long time because all befrienders and their friends needed to take extra care to help their frail seniors up and down their mini bus and around the destinations.



It was tiring and at the end of their 6-hour trip, everyone fell asleep on the bus on the way home.



Before getting off, the seniors praised the volunteers and said that they were deeply touched by their actions.



It was worth all the hard work to see the smiles on their seniors' faces.



Outings for seniors on wheelchair or homebound seniors can be more tiring and which require more coordination and time, but are extremely rewarding because these seniors rarely get to go out and they treasure such opportunities. We like to thank Befrienders who bring together extended sources of help to make an even greater difference to our seniors.

*Scattered regions: Regions where seniors stay far from one another, unlike rental blocks with many elderly living in the same block

----- *The End* -----