

epworth moments



Giving the **Best**
to Your Child

Pg 6

The Greatest
Supporter is
YOU

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ABOUT US

Epworth Community Services is a Social Service Agency (SSA) that helps at-risk children and youths from needy and disadvantaged families. We want to create a better world for them so that they can develop their potential. Our work focuses on promoting the mental well-being of children and youths by building strong families and imparting skills for resilient living.

VISION

Strong Families, Resilient Living, Beautiful Minds.

MISSION

To reach out in Christian love, by providing quality programmes and services to all children, youths, parents and their families, of all language, race and religion, and nurturing each family member in body, mind and spirit.

EPWORTH MOMENTS

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MCI (P) 012/09/2019

Editor

Tan Khye Suan

Production Editor

Angie Lee

Contributors

Benjamin Wong, Carol Aw, Chow Kit Seen, Diana Koh, Esther Che, Jane Lim, Kate Pun, Shalom Fung.

Design Elements

www.freepik.com

CONNECT WITH US

☎ 6562 2211 / 6569 8038

☎ 6715 3737

✉ community.relations@epworth.sg

🌐 www.epworth.sg

f [EpworthCommunityServices](https://www.facebook.com/EpworthCommunityServices)

📷 [epworth.sg](https://www.instagram.com/epworth.sg)

📍 **Epworth Community Services**

Blk 106 Bukit Batok Central #01-217
Singapore 650106



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STRONGER FROM A CRISIS

By *Angie Lee, Community Relations Executive*

It is almost 6 months since Singapore recorded her first case of Covid-19. The impact of Covid-19 is drastic and it has brought about many new challenges to businesses and families. With new measures to avert the spread of the virus and even as Singapore exits the Circuit Breaker, both adults and children have to learn to adapt and change their way of life. Working from home, home-based learning (HBL) and online meetings are some changes that we have learnt to adapt to and become familiar with. HBL means that children will have to learn from home. Parents learn to juggle between work and supervising their children at home. We have taken to various online platforms to communicate with our loved ones to remain connected with them.

Virtual contact is just not the same. The lack of real physical contact has strained family ties. Countless articles point to how the global pandemic has led to added family stresses and an increase in family violence because family members are confined within the limits of their homes. Helplines have seen an increase in the number of calls on domestic violence over this period. While the gamut of restrictive rules and regulations helps to prevent the spread of Covid-19, they seem to have also contribute a strain in family relationships.

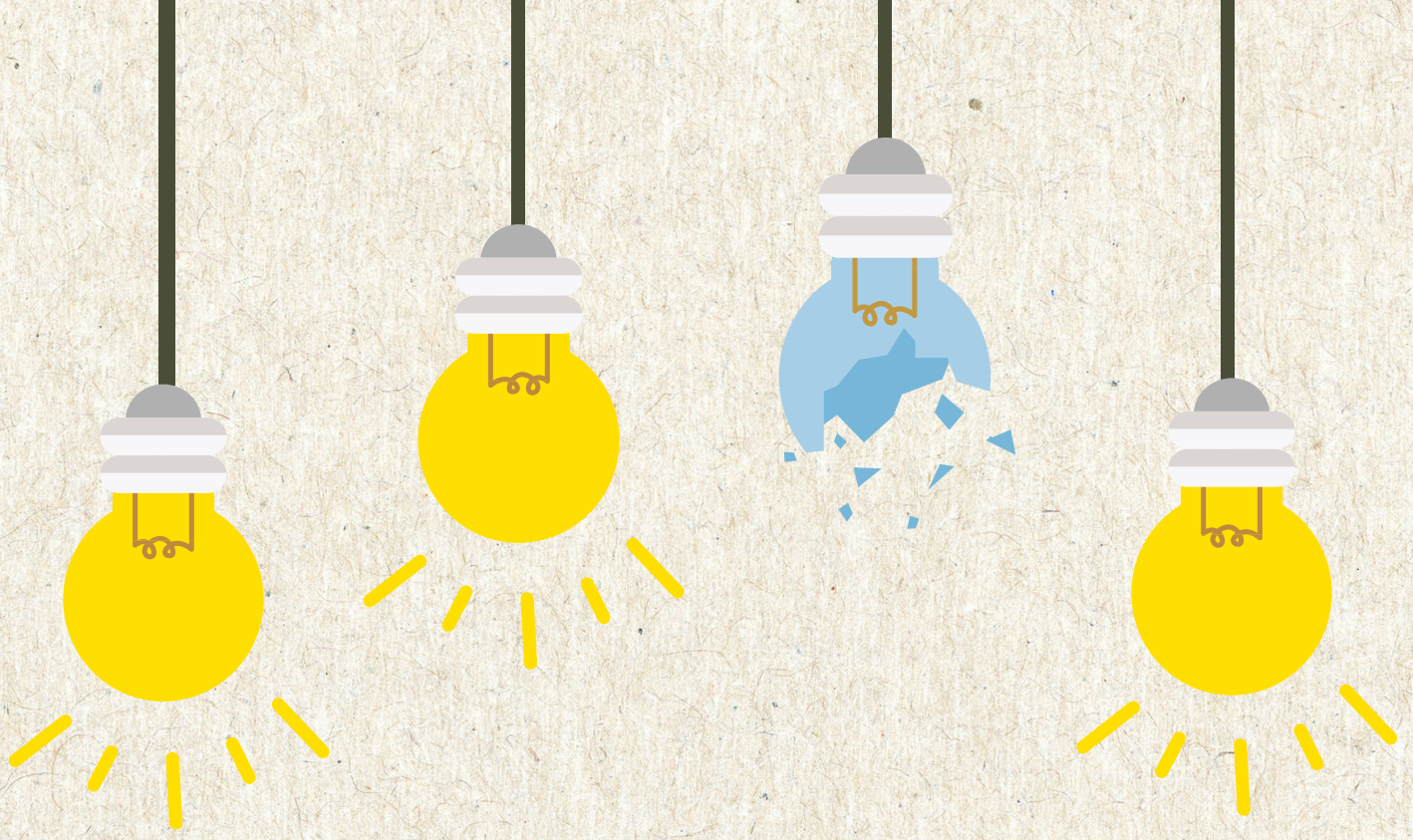
With the need be online, and in cases where there is a lack of parental supervision, many children can access and become exposed to unsavoury materials in the cyberspace. In a time of crisis such as this, we can only hope for families to emerge even stronger and better than before.

With more time spent with your children, it would not be surprising if they behave in manners that displease you. You just did not notice it before because they were in school and you were at work. All children misbehave at one time or another. What is important is understanding why they misbehave and how parents should respond appropriately to these misbehaviours (p. 4 – 5). In an interview with our Senior Social Worker, Ms Chow Kit Seen, we explore one common reason for a child's misbehaviour and how this strains the relationship between parents (p. 6 – 7).

The cyberspace promises an endless supply of information and greater connectivity. However, there is a growing concern over the prevalence of cyber-bullying. We have a few tips for parents on how to help your child when faced with such a situation (p. 8 – 9). Finally, staying at home can be fun too! We have included a few interesting activities to do with your children at home, especially over the weekends (p. 15).

It is our responsibility as parents to build an environment that allows our children to thrive and develop to their fullest potential. In this trying time, let us make building of strong families, enhancing skills for resilient living, and strengthening mental well-being a goal for all of us.





MANAGING CHILDREN WITH CHALLENGING BEHAVIOURS

By *Esther Che, Assistant Psychologist at Epworth Literacy*



Parenting is partly frustrating, worrying, enriching but, yet, rewarding. It can be exceptionally stressful dealing with a child's challenging behaviour during this period when parents still have to work from home. Being stuck at home more than before, is likely to lead to more conflicts and stresses for some families. Yet, just as nothing in the world is perfect, there is no one parenting approach that can perfectly address all situations.

When your child misbehaves, it is important to know that your child is not the "enemy". Take time to understand the reason and purpose behind your child's misbehaviour. It will help explain why your child is behaving in that way; and equip you with the right "tool" to manage that misbehaviour effectively. In different contexts, your child can have a different purpose for the same misbehaviour. Here are some practical tips when communicating with your child when he/she gets difficult.

WHAT IS CRITICAL IS NOT ABOUT ADOPTING A PARTICULAR PARENTING APPROACH. IT IS **ABOUT THE WILLINGNESS TO UNDERSTAND, TO LEARN AND TO GROW TOGETHER WITH YOUR CHILD.**

Let's finish up your math homework.

I want to play games now, now, NOW!

INSISTENCE

What would you do if your child insists on having things go their way? Pause to think about how you would react before reading on.

DOS

- ✓ Keep your calm; be firm; and maintain your stand.
- ✓ Acknowledge your child's feelings and wants. For example, *"I know that you are upset because you cannot play now."*
- ✓ Teach them the appropriate behaviour. For example, *"I need you to complete 2 pages of work first before we can play a game."*

DON'TS

- ✗ Give in to your child's behaviour and accede to whatever request he/she makes. This will only increase the likelihood of them exhibiting more challenging behaviours in the future just to get what they want.

Let's finish up your math homework.

Okay. But I need to go to the toilet.

I need to look for my pencilcase.

Wait. I need to get my waterbottle.

I forgot to flush the toilet. Let me do so now.

AVOIDANCE

There are endless number of reasons that children can give in order to avoid something that they do not want to do. Can you recount some of these experiences with your child?

DOS

- ✓ Find out what is it that your child is avoiding; and why he/she is doing so.
- ✓ Eliminate common excuses by asking your child to do what he needs to first. For example, using the washroom before starting the session.
- ✓ Provide your child with guidance for the task that he/she is avoiding due to its difficulty.
- ✓ Set small and manageable goals. For example, allow for a 5-minute break after completing 3 pages of homework.
- ✓ Praise your child's for each of his/her success and obedience. This encourages and reinforce the good behaviour.

DON'TS

- ✗ Allow your child to escape and avoid the task at hand.

LOOK AT MEEEEEE! I can balance on the chair with one leg!

ATTENTION SEEKING

Children seek attention for different reasons. Through trial-and-error, they figure out what gets them attention and what don't. Thus, it is important to teach them how to get attention in appropriate ways.

DOS

- ✓ Ignore the inappropriate behaviour and allow your child to calm down.
- ✓ Give positive attention to your child throughout the day. This improves the relationship with your child and reduces the need for him/her to clamour for your attention.
- ✓ Take every opportunity to praise your child for good behaviour and making wise choices.
- ✓ Teach your child to know when and how to seek attention appropriately. For example, to come to you when you are taking a break from your daily work/chore.
- ✓ Encourage your child to sit next to you and talk in an even tone.

DON'TS

- ✗ Being engrossed with your own work or chore. Not interacting with your child throughout the day.
- ✗ Ignoring your child's good behaviour.
- ✗ Ask your child to play on his/her own.

GIVING THE BEST TO YOUR CHILD

Interview by *Angie Lee* and *Shalom Fung*

Raising a child is one of the toughest jobs in the world. Yet, it is the most fulfilling one. We spoke to Epworth's Senior Social Worker, Ms Chow Kit Seen. With 25 years work experience of counselling individuals, couples and families, here are some questions we have asked her on behalf of parents.

Given your extensive experience in counselling, what is one common mistake that is often made by parents?

Inconsistency. Parents need to be consistent in parenting. If parents have set a rule for their children, they have to make sure that it is being enforced.

What is so important about consistency in parenting?

Being consistent in parenting guides the children in what they should or should not do. One example is setting the bedtime rule for the children; say, they must sleep by 10pm. Apart from very special occasions, which must be extremely rare, both parents have to ensure that the bedtime rule is well enforced. When the rule is not consistently enforced, children become confused. They will also take advantage of the inconsistency. They will argue with their parents and, at times, manipulate one parent against the other. They will give 101 plausible reasons why the bedtime rule need not be obeyed, citing examples of when one or both parents allowed the bedtime rule to be broken.

Will inconsistency in parenting affect only the children?

It affects the parents as well. When children can manipulate the situation to their own favour, it is likely to lead to arguments between parents. I have witnessed the "blame game" between fathers and mothers about who is at fault for their children's disobedience and misbehaviours. Such arguments strain the couple's relationship and affect the children. When such arguments get ugly, turning into quarrels and aggression, children can start to blame themselves for their parents' anger.

What advice would you give to parents who are in such a situation?

Parents have to calm down first. They will then have to discuss and come to an agreement on the rules they wish for their children. The rules have to be realistic and consequences have to be agreed on when these rules are broken. These rules and consequences should be made known to the children before implementing them. Parents will then have to stand together on the rules they have agreed upon.



Chow Kit Seen

Senior Social Worker at Epworth
Family Welfare Department.
Bachelor of Arts in Social Work.
Masters in Family and Systemic
Psychotherapy.

One parent should not allow the children to bend the rule in the absence of the other parent; no matter how hard the children try. Parents should be accountable to each other by keeping each other informed of their interactions with the children. This helps to maintain consistency as both parents are equally responsible for their children's obedience.

Would it work better if one parent plays the "good guy" while the other plays the "bad guy"?

Such a strategy only serves to reinforce inconsistency. This will only make matters worse. Children will manipulate one parent against the other, undermining the authority of one parent or the other. Relationship between parents will quickly spiral into an open conflict with each other.

What should parents do to ensure that their children follow house rules?

Firstly, parents will also have to abide by the house rules that they set. So, if children are required to eat at the dining table, then parents should also abide by the same rule. Parents should not bend rules to suit themselves, like eating in front of the television or the computer. In this way, children can emulate their parents. Another example is, if parents tell children that they should be polite and not shout, parents should also behave likewise.

Secondly, children need a structured environment, with rules and accompanying consequences which are reasonable. With structure comes predictability. Then children will learn discipline and good

behaviour. The structured way of life should be cultivated from an early age, as young as possible.

Thirdly, consequences for misbehaviour should be reasonable and match the rules that are broken. For example, if the rule requires children not to use their mobile phone during dinner, then the natural consequence could be not using the mobile phone for the next 2 hours after dinner. It should not be depriving the children of dinner in the next two days. For older children, it may be possible to work with them on the agreed consequences if rules are broken. In this way, they can also take ownership of the rules set.

Finally, parents will have to remember that the overarching principle is to be consistent all the time.

There are no perfect parents in this world. This is also no "silver bullet" in parenting. Parents need to know what "drives" their children to misbehave. Parents need to innovate and find out what works best for different misbehaviours in their children. This may be a trial-and-error process. Regardless of your struggle, it may be of comfort to know that you are not alone. All parents are constantly struggling with their children, trying to ensure that they grow up well to be useful members of our society.

Feel free to send us questions on parenting by scanning the QR code below. We will try to answer them. These questions may even be featured in our next issue of our newsletter!

SIMPLY
SCAN
HERE!



MATHS WITH PIZZA!

Turn your pizza meal into a simple lesson on fractions!

* Disclaimer: Do **NOT** try this on an empty stomach!

- Count the number of slices of pizza in the pizza box.
- Prepare a piece of paper to write out the fractions.
- If your child is new to fractions, introduce simple fractions. For example, $\frac{1}{2}$ and $\frac{1}{4}$.
- If the child is older, introduce addition and subtraction with fractions.
- Remember to reward your child with an additional serving of side dishes if he/she gets it right!



Bullying can leave physical and deep emotional scars. Your child should not face this alone.



THE GREATEST SUPPORTER IS YOU.

By *Diana Koh, Assistant Manager of Epworth Community Relations*

Most parents would not hesitate to step in to help if they find out that their child has been bullied. The term “bullying” is used to describe a range of situations in which a child experiences “intimidation, threat, ridicule, being ostracised or hurt, whether, physically, socially, emotional or psychologically”. Different factors like age or the way the child is bullied will determine how parents should respond to help the child. Here are some steps that you can take to support your child when he experiences bullying.

LISTEN

Remember that your child looks to you as a role model. Maintain your calm and listen to your child as he shares about how he was bullied. Do not be too quick to jump to conclusions. This is not a time to adjudge or to blame anyone. If we do so, your child may just stop sharing.

Children may not want to share that they have been bullied for various reasons. Some feel embarrassed; some are afraid of how their parents will react; others are afraid that the bullying will get worse if perpetrators found out that they have been reported against. Therefore, it is important to listen attentively and be sensitive to how your child is feeling; whether your child is feeling hurt or fearful.

Your involvement matters.

Research has shown that parental involvement positively affects your child's well-being. When you are aware that your child is bullied, do not be quick to solve the problem for him. Instead, guide your child through the process and assure him that you will always be there for him.



COMFORT & ASSURANCE

Attend to your child's feelings. Sometimes, children might think that it was their own fault that they were bullied. Children need to know that were not responsible or the cause for being bullied.

When your child talks about a bullying incident, assure and encourage them that it took a lot of courage for your child to share it with you. Reassure your child with love.

MUTUAL PROBLEM SOLVING

Take time to engage your child in creating a list of possible responses to the bullying situations. Allow your child to freely give suggestions. Do not correct your child's suggestions or contribute your own. If your child is unable to come up with any suggestions, you can prompt your child using simple words as cues for your child to pick up and build on. For example, "How about...". It is important that your child is participating to build up the suggested response. This will help the child take ownership so that the response will be acted on.

Together, evaluate the responses and choose the responses your child feels most confident of carrying out; including your child making it known to the bully that the teacher and parents will be told about any bullying incidents.

The responses may be your child making simple statements to the bully that can be used to stop bullying behaviour. For example, "Please do not take my belongings. I am sure you will not want someone to do the same to you." Or, "I appreciate it if we all can be polite to each other. It does not feel good to be bullied. I am sure you would not like it if someone does the same to you." And, "If you continue to bully me, I will have no choice but to report on you to the teacher or my parents."

ROLE-PLAY

Role-playing is a fantastic way of restoring your child's confidence. Depending on the choice of responses that both of you make, parent can take the role of the bully in the role play while your child practise the response. You may choose more than one appropriate response and role play each of them. Practise until your child is reasonably confident

to carry out the responses.

You can also take the role of a teacher while your child practises how to report a bullying incident to the teacher. Teach your child to make eye contact and speak clearly and firmly.

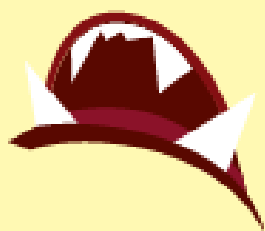
MONITOR THE SITUATION

When the child is ready to respond to the bully, parents should also address some of the child's anxiety and apprehension. Reassure your child of your support and that you will always be available with patience and with listening ears.

If the bullying persists or becomes worse, let your child know that you are stepping in to get support from the school. Make an appointment with his class teacher to discuss the matter. Be calm and make it a point to work with the school to resolve the bullying problem.

Stand together with your child and continually build confidence by teaching appropriate responses. It helps to empower your child and prevent future bullying situations.

TYPES OF BULLYING



VERBAL

Hurting and shaming another individual through the use of mean words. This could involve name-calling, threatening or passing demeaning and disrespectful comments.



PHYSICAL

The use of physical aggression or force to intimidate another person. This could involve pushing, hitting, restraining and, taking away or damaging another person's belonging.



RELATIONAL

This is indirect bullying, using exclusion tactics. It also involves deliberately damaging relationship of that person with others; or, preventing that person from being a part of a group of friends.



CYBER

Spreading online rumours, false information and saying mean things about a person.

A NEW OPENING

By **Carol Aw**, Assistant Supervisor of Epworth Student Care Centre at ACS(J)

In January this year, we started a Student Care Centre (SCC) at Anglo-Chinese School (Junior). We are thankful for the overwhelming response from parents. By the time we closed the second registration exercise, almost all available space was taken up. One parent shared that they waited 5 years for a school-based SCC at ACS(J); their son is already in Primary 6.

To start this brand new journey at ACS(J), the Pastor-in-charge of Cairnhill Methodist Church, Rev Dr William Sam, led a blessing ceremony. ACS(J)'s Principal, Mrs Chaillan Mui Tuan; Vice-Principals, Mr Richard Chia and Mr Tony Tan; and, Epworth's Executive Director, Mr Tan Khye Suan, were also present. A cross was presented to the centre, reminding all that we are connected together as Methodist institutions with Christ as our head. We are thankful for the support given by the school and the church.



Presentation of the cross by Rev. Dr. William Sam to Ms Julie Chu, Head of SCC.



Writing down their personal strengths and weaknesses.

Epworth Student Care is a place for students to grow and flourish. We strive to develop every student to their fullest potential.

Apart from helping the students to study and complete their homework, we also conduct value-added programmes every week. One such programme is Character Development Programme (CDP). In CDP, we teach students important values in life and help to reinforce the school's vision.

There are holistic development programmes that help students identify their personal strengths and overcome their weaknesses. Our dedicated teachers are constantly developing lessons that are fun and interactive, so that students can make the best use of their time at the SCC.



THE MARCH SCHOOL HOLIDAY

School holidays are always the time that our students look forward to. During the March holiday, about 40 students came back to our SCC everyday. A series of activities were planned out for them. We kicked off with a team-building challenge. Students participated in exciting games that had difficult challenges at every stage. These challenges were designed to develop motor skills as well as communication skills. By working in teams, a spirit of camaraderie was built among the boys.

The boys also made their own time capsules. The purpose of this activity is to help them discover about themselves; understand themselves better; and, help them to identify some goals that they would like to have and achieve them in the years ahead.

Apart from all the fun, we ensured that our students were kept safe within the centre, teaching them to observe good hygiene practices. We engaged "The PinkSchoolBus" to conduct a science workshop, teaching them about virus and how to practise good personal hygiene. This is especially helpful in the light of the evolving Covid-19 situation then.

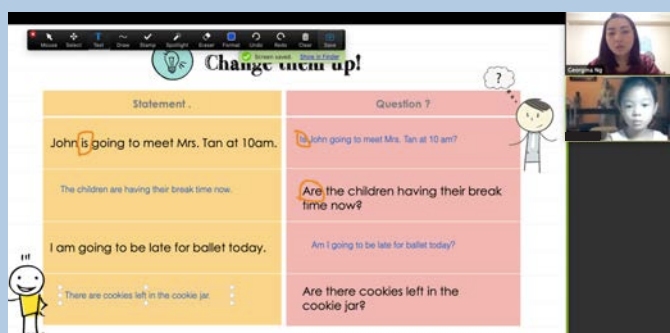
The students' positive response to the March School Holiday programme exceeded our expectations. The boys enjoyed themselves and also spent their time meaningfully. Seeing their smiles and how they grew in confidence encouraged our staff to want to do more for them! Hence, we press on! The best is yet to be!



Our Literacy Teachers bringing the love online.

— GOING ONLINE —

Epworth Literacy classes are still ongoing amidst the Circuit Breaker. Our dedicated and adaptable teachers have successfully delivered engaging classes over the past few weeks. There were even feedback from parents about how their children enjoyed the classes!



The meticulous guidance of our Teachers and the use of educational games made online learning for our students fun.



Listening attentively to Teacher Joyce!

LET ME INTRODUCE MYSELF

Epworth HomeSweetHome is a stay-in treatment facility for children who have experienced abuse, with complex trauma and aggressive behaviour. We spoke to one resident and one staff to get to know more about the Home.



Stepping into Epworth HomeSweetHome (HSH) for the first time, I felt very nervous and anxious. However, these feelings were short-lived. I managed to make new friends and these negative feelings were replaced with joy and excitement. Now, I even have some close friends at HSH.

During my stay at HSH, I was taught a number of ways to regulate my emotions. The staff guided me on how I could improve my behaviour. With their continuous support, I managed to develop and practise my own Safety Plan and Emotion Regulation Drills. These help me to manage myself and my emotions; and keep me calm.

Drawing and colouring activities are especially helpful for me. I also like playing with my toys! The staff would always check in with me to find out how I was feeling. They would comfort me when I was feeling down. I like them very much.

I like the close friends that I have made at HSH. I also like the delicious meals cooked by Auntie Bee. My favourite is Lemak Chilli Padi. I am very happy whenever she cooks this dish.

The most memorable time of my life at HSH was when I could show-off my dance moves in front of an audience during HSH's 6th Anniversary celebration. Getting the opportunity to learn how to dance and then performing the dance before an audience was the best thing that happened to me.

If I had superpowers, I will use it to help every child in HSH to recover and get discharged!

Resident at Epworth HomeSweetHome



As a Residential Care Worker (RCW), I have to take care of children in trauma. Due to the nature of my job and the children under my care, everyday is different. There is not one day that is the same as another. Everyday is challenging! Hence, I strive to do my best each day, hoping to leave a positive impact on the children. It does not matter how small the act may be. What matters most is that the children can feel loved because I did something positive for them.

Since most of the children come from disadvantaged backgrounds, some having experienced unduly harsh abuse, it was especially challenging for me to build a rapport with them. However, with time and effort, they eventually got comfortable and were willing to

relate with me.

Unexpected situations at HSH have taught me to make wise decisions and to think on my feet. To ensure the best for the children, I would always discuss with my colleagues on how I could improve and perform better at the next shift. De-escalating a situation effectively is a priority skill that I have learnt to keep the children safe at all times.

I am also assigned as Primary Care Worker (PCW) to work closely with a particular child over the course of his treatment. This, not only gave me a chance to positively impact his life, but also allowed me to bond closely with him. There are times when I get discouraged when this child goes through difficult patches as he struggles with recovery from

trauma. But the fulfilment I get from seeing him overcome his challenges; and, witnessing the improvements and progress in his recovery, is irreplaceable.

Not only have I learnt to care for children in trauma, I have also learnt to take care of myself. From being a RCW to a PCW, I have gained much insight and invaluable experiences. I am always learning something new from the children. The job I have is both enriching and rewarding.

Benjamin Wong
Primary Care Worker at Epworth
HomeSweetHome



TAKE A MINUTE

Why not reverse the role of teacher and student with your child?

Get your child to teach you one thing (bayblade, acting, etc.) that he/she is good at.

Look out for and affirm your little teacher for the strengths, skills and values shown.



More
resources
here!



FUN AT HOME



By Kate Pun, Programmes Executive at Epworth Literacy

With time, effort and a pinch of imagination, spending time at home can be fruitful and fun! Here are some engaging and budget-friendly activities that you can do with your children at home. Remember to involve your children when planning for the activities! You never know the interesting ideas that they will be able to come up with.

Reporter For A Day

Is grandma's name really just "grandma"? What was the bravest thing grandma has done? Host an interview session with grandma (or anyone else, really) over the phone! Guide your child in coming up with a list of questions that they can ask. Help them to role-play as a reporter. Not only will your child learn more about their loved ones, but it is also an opportune time for them to practice their social skills and develop curiosity!

A Family Trip At Home

A trip to Disneyland in Japan or taking your children to the S.E.A Aquarium is possible even in your own home! Set up fairy lights, a few props, and play Disney's music in the background to transform an ordinary room into a magical one. Or take out your snorkelling gear, display different toy fishes on the floor to get an immersive experience of being close to the sea animals. It may sound silly but it opens up doors of creativity for your children. It's time to bring out the inner child in you!



Experiment With A Treat

Spare just three ingredients for a delicious homemade ice cream, sprinkled with laughter and fun! Here's what you need:

- 1 gallon-sized Ziploc bag
- 1 quart-sized Ziploc bag
- 1 cup of full-cream milk
- 1 tablespoon of sugar
- ½ teaspoon of vanilla extract (or your favourite flavouring)
- ⅓ cup of salt
- Food colouring (optional)
- Lots of ice

Here are the directions:

1. Pour the milk, sugar and flavouring into the smaller Ziploc bag. Seal tight.
2. Fill the larger Ziploc bag ¾ full of ice, then add salt to the ice.
3. Place the smaller bag inside the larger bag and seal it tight.
4. Shake the bag vigorously for 6 to 10 minutes.
5. Take out the smaller bag and rinse it with cold water before opening.
6. Enjoy your homemade ice-cream!

HAVE FUN!





Community Services

HOW YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE



SUPPORT US

The important work of Epworth Community Services is funded primarily by generous well-wishers who strongly believe in our cause. We invite you to join us in making a difference in the lives of children and youths under Epworth Community Services.



VOLUNTEER WITH US

Volunteers play an important role in our programmes and services. Volunteers can choose to be engaged in ad-hoc, short- or long-term programmes and are matched to programmes according to their time and interests.

For donation or volunteering enquiries, visit www.epworth.sg or contact us at community.relations@epworth.sg or call 6562 2211.

In order for us to keep you up to date with Epworth's happenings, contact us at admin@epworth.sg or call 6562 2211 to update your personal particulars.

STRONG FAMILIES. RESILIENT LIVING. BEAUTIFUL MINDS.