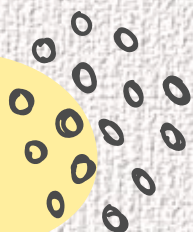


epworth moments



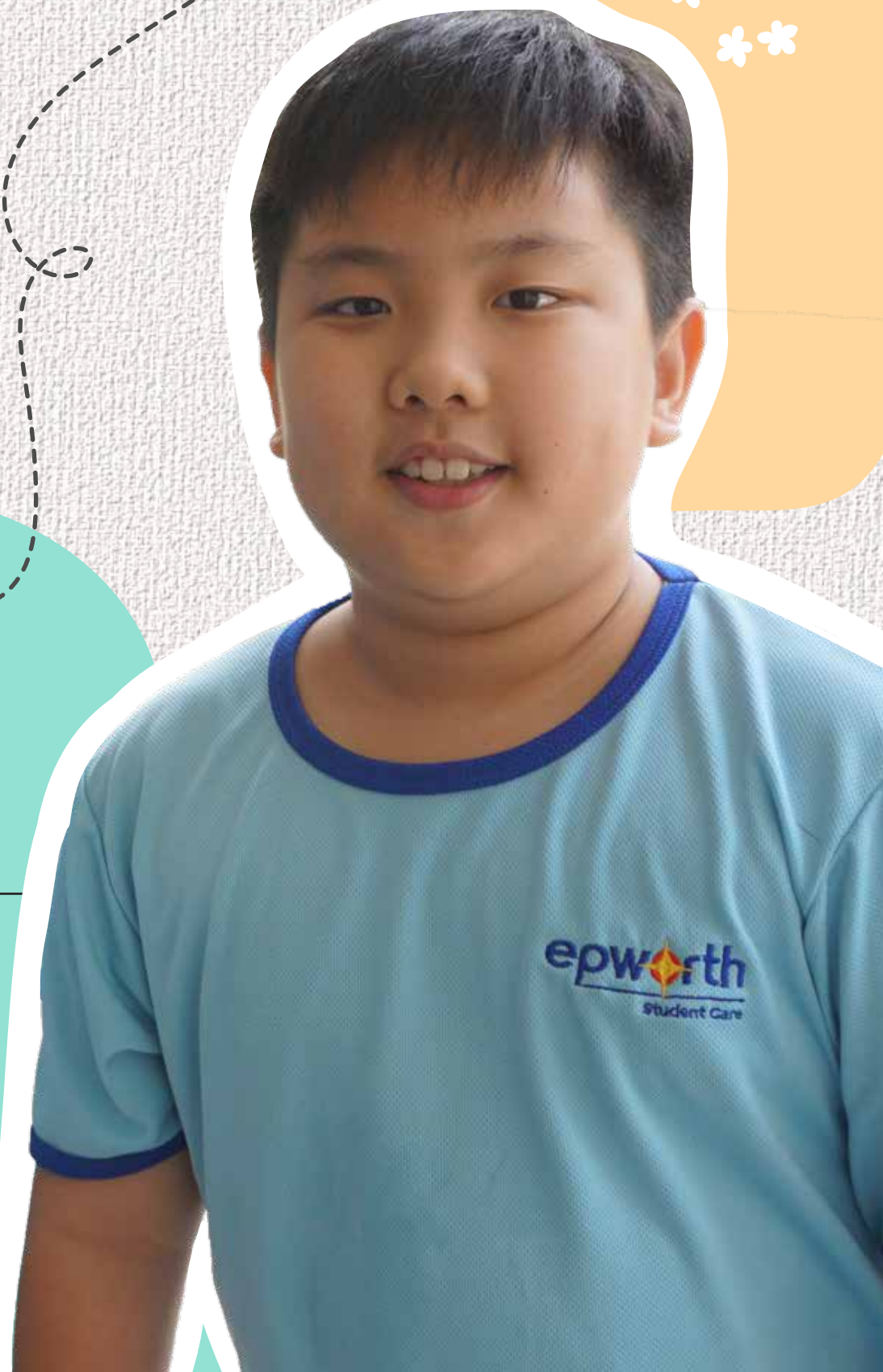
Building
RESILIENCE
Through Change

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A New **Family**

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an official publication of
Epworth Community Services
October 2020



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) 057/09/2020

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MEETING MORE NEEDS

By Mr Tan Khye Suan, Executive Director of Epworth Community Services

At the beginning of the year, I wrote about the impending challenges that we were likely to face in 2020. The impact of Covid-19 was huge. It affected the whole world. As a Social Service Agency (SSA) in tiny Singapore, we saw how our clients, the children and youths, were affected in their education, in their co-curricular activities and in their interactions with friends and family members. This was especially bad during the Circuit Breaker period in April and May 2020.

In the last ten months, the way we lived our lives have evolved significantly. Half of our time was spent working from home. We wear surgical masks whenever we go out of our home. We frequently wash our hands and use sanitiser. We attend webinars instead of physical conferences. We have meetings using virtual platforms. We use e-signatures for documents. If we happen to meet each other outside, we no longer shake hands. We fist bump or elbow nudge. We could hardly make out if we are smiling to each other. This is the "new normal".

Financial Needs

The impact on our economy meant that some families were affected as breadwinners had their income reduced or had lost their jobs. Moving forward, this is expected to worsen as businesses struggle to find their footing. Although safety management measures are gradually relaxed so that some economic activities can resume, some businesses would have already suffered irretrievable damage and will have to be shut down permanently. There will be new business opportunities. But these new opportunities will require new knowledge, skills and approaches. Some older workers may find it difficult to adapt and may require more time to adjust. Hence, unemployment is expected to rise for a while until a new economic equilibrium is reached.

Epworth Community Services will have to support families of clients who have been economically impacted by the pandemic.



Family and Individual Needs

The repercussions are huge! There will be more stress in family relationships: between spouses; between parents and their children; and, between siblings. With relationship stress comes individual stress. Hence, more support for families and individuals are needed. There is already an increase in family squabbles, disputes and violence. Children and youths will face the brunt of these family fallouts. They will not just be physically abused, but they can also be deeply scarred socially, emotionally and psychologically.

Epworth Foster Care and Epworth HomeSweetHome will have to support more cases and more intensively so that families can be successfully re-integrated.



Learning Needs

The needs are greater for the children and youths that we work with. They are usually from the lower strata of the community with limited means. Apart from family breakdowns, their education is affected.

The support we give to those with learning disabilities through Epworth Literacy may be disrupted if we do not provide more financial support to them. If such supports are disrupted, they will fall behind their peers significantly! Then they will feel even more inferior and this will lead them down the path of delinquency.

There is always a potential for a second wave of Covid-19 infection. Then we will relaunch our online learning support programme. In the Circuit Breaker of April 2020, we found out that some of our clients do not have computers for them to benefit from our online programme. Some parents are not computer literate and cannot provide the necessary help to their children.

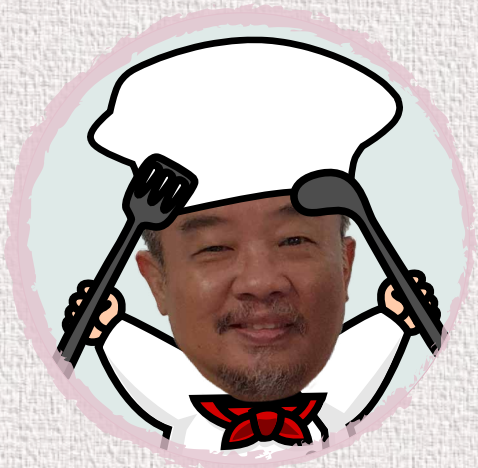
In the new year, Epworth Literacy will have to do more for this group of children and parents. This will be through new and innovative approaches. We will also have to provide more subsidy for them.



YOU can do good together with Epworth Community Services!

Epworth Community Services is not able to meet all our clients' needs alone! We need the support of everyone who have the means. Together, we can bless those who are facing very difficult times now!

Even as we remember the priceless gift of the Jesus Christ given to all mankind, let us remember those that need our support. For Christmas 2020, may I appeal to those who can support our work to donate generously! We hope to raise \$250,000 during this festive season to support our clients!



GIVE & Feast

Lima Ribu \$, Lima Orang Makan

Our Community Relations Department have launched a campaign: GIVE and Feast – Lima Ribu \$, Lima Orang Makan! From **now till 31 Dec 2020**, every individual/group donation of \$5,000 or more to Epworth Community Services*^+ will receive an appreciation 5-course Peranakan meal for 5 pax from the wok and pan of our Executive Director, Mr Tan Khye Suan. Together, the team will cook up a Peranakan storm!

"Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."

Luke 6:38



SETTING UP ROUTINE & STRUCTURE

for a happy Parent-Child relationship

By **Esther Che**, Assistant Psychologist at Epworth Literacy

One of the foundation of a happy parent-child relation lies in the setting consistent parenting routine and structure. Having a fixed routine and structure will help to make interactions between parent and child more predictable, and help form better habits.

This could be accomplished by creating a daily timetable for your child. Besides interlacing fun activities with work activities, any breaks scheduled into the routine should be time specific. It is also important to remind your child of the consequences for not following the routine. For example, reducing play time if your child did not complete his work.

For younger children, reminders should be given in the form of a count down to prepare them to end their play time. For older children, a more collaborative method would work better. Let your child plan his timetable, with conditions on how much time he can spend on certain activities. *For example, "You can decide what your timetable will look like today, but I need you to include in it 20 minutes of exercise, 1 hour of study and 1 hour of doing chores. You can decide what you want to do with the rest of your time, but you may only have 1 hour of computer time."*

Most importantly, praise your child for effort instead of achievements. Praise your child even if they are just doing what they are "supposed" to do. Use labelled praise to let your child know exactly what you liked about their behaviour.

Children Want Happy Parents

Parents, you can only provide good support for your child when your own needs are taken care of. Taking care of yourself will help you to feel your best, so you can be the best parent you can be.

> ALONE TIME

Take some time to be alone, away from all the distractions.

> STAYING CONNECTED

Stay connected with your family and friends. Doing so will impact your mental and physical health positively.

> SLEEP

Having a good rest is vital if you are trying to stay positive and patient.



BUILDING RESILIENCE THROUGH CHANGE

By Tan Xin Ying of Epworth Family Welfare

The Covid-19 pandemic hit us like a whirlwind, blowing away routines built over the years, uprooting the certainty of our future. With unprecedented measures placed upon us, families and individuals alike have to navigate through constant changes while facing ongoing concerns over their financial state and physical health. How then can families remain resilient through these changes?



Single parents and low-income families continue to be some of the most affected amongst us. The reduction in jobs, loss of job opportunities and household income during the pandemic has led to increased emotional stress over future uncertainties.

Parents who have to work from home have to juggle between work and caring for their children. Without a clear demarcation of space between work and rest, work-life boundaries become increasingly blurred, leading to a spill-over effect of work stress into their family time.

Furthermore, physical space within the home is limited. In homes with existing tension, the pandemic intensifies this strain.

In these challenging times, families can adopt the RASE approach in

their lives as we move towards a “new normal”.

Keeping to Routines

In a time of constant change, creating your own routine and keeping to them develops familiarity and informs the mind and body on what to expect. Thereby, decreasing the stress we experience by establishing a sense of control. A simple way of doing this would be to keep to the same timings for sleeping, waking, having meals and productive work. For children, routines can bring comfort and consistency, while helping them to establish healthy habits. In this way, the family models a simple way of staying resilient through times of change to the child.

Adapt to New Circumstances

The key to adaptation is to maintain an open and curious mind while managing expectations. As the proverbial saying goes “every storm cloud has a silver lining”. While we acknowledge the reality of where we are now, we can make a choice to look for opportunities in these circumstances and be thankful for what we have.

Self-Care

The best care that we can give to others around us is a healthy self. Self-care is defined as the intentional ongoing practice of taking care of our mental, emotional and physical self. Basic self-care practices can include:

- choosing to eat healthily;
- having a moderate level of exercise e.g. taking a walk in the



park, swimming, or even doing household chores;

- setting physical boundaries e.g. stopping work at a certain time or setting aside dedicated space for different activities;
- connecting with family members and friends for emotional support; and
- seeking professional help.

Engage, Educate and Empower our children

In addition to the practices above, parents can engage their children by creating routines that the family can embark on together. In this way, the pandemic could be reframed as an adventure for the family.

For younger children, parents can use simple stories to educate them on what is going on in the world. Simple coping skills could be taught through games to help children become more aware of their emotions and physiological responses. Parents can explore with their children on what helps them to manage these emotions and prepare a self-soothing kit for them.

It is important for parents to remain calm in front of their children. They can regularly engage their children in conversations to check in on their physical and emotional state, reassuring them of their continual presence with them.

Feeling Stressed?

Research has shown that a large amount of our stress and anxiety is a result of our minds ruminating on past events or exaggerating on possible stressors.

Although you may not be able to change what is stressing you out, you can control the way you manage and respond to stress. Here are four things that you can do to make yourself feel better.



Breathing exercises are powerful tools to ease stress. Take a deep breath in and let it out.



Showing gratitude helps to improve mood. Pen down three things that you are grateful for.



Exercising reduces stress and is vital for maintaining mental fitness. Time to lace up for a workout!



Journal about your thoughts and feelings. It helps to organise your thoughts and think more clearly.

BEING A FRIEND



(This photo was taken in November 2019.)

Project Lightbulb is a complimentary tuition befriending programme started in July 2019 to provide schoolwork supervision and befriending to primary school children who struggle with their schoolwork. The programme was initially opened to children from Epworth Literacy (Bukit Batok). However, we have extended the programme to children from Epworth Literacy (Jurong West) and from the community in Jan 2020.

More than just a tuition programme, the volunteer befrienders build relationships with the children through interactive activities; they also encourage and support the children in reaching their learning goals.

At the onset of COVID-19, we were unable to resume Project Lightbulb at our premises between Feb to April 2020. After surveying with the Project Lightbulb students and their parents, we decided to move the programme online during the Circuit Breaker so as to provide the children with academic, social and emotional support in this trying time. We are very thankful to our volunteers who were as committed as we were to support the children amidst the pandemic challenges.

By Fyn Wong Epworth Community Relations



Students doing their work diligently, under the guidance of our volunteers.



Having a regular Project Lightbulb session.

Our Mentors



Ms Ho Li Ying

Project lightbulb is a meaningful initiative with an educational purpose of nurturing every child to become self-motivated and joyful individuals. Therefore, through my volunteer journey with Epworth Community Services, it further strengthened my resolve to help each child understand their individuality and learning style, which I truly believe are critical in realising their full potential.

Essentially, I believe by devoting my time to interact and share my knowledge with the children; it is a mutual learning process for me to understand myself better as I grow with them.

Epworth Community Services is a very dedicated organization with an inspiring humanitarian cause. Seeing the passion of the volunteer team as well as program coordinators have been a source of motivation for me. Moreover, they are often very appreciative of their volunteers.

My volunteering experience has been an extremely enjoyable one as it has allowed me to grow with the children.



Ms Erin Toh

The centre-based sessions are engaging and productive. Apart from helping the children with their academic work, there was also a befriending element.

My volunteering journey with Epworth has been a smooth and enjoyable one. The team has been very prompt, open and flexible, and this contributed greatly to the positive experience I have had. The bonds I have developed with the children through Project Lightbulb have also been incredibly gratifying.

I am also glad that the COVID-19 pandemic did not mean that the programme had to be halted permanently, and we could continue engaging the children.



Ms Kong Pek Yan

Although not without its frustrations, my volunteering journey has, without a doubt, been a fulfilling and enriching one, and I'm glad to have been given this opportunity.

I have learned to communicate more effectively online and offline, and to be more patient and observant, so that I can adjust the pace of the lessons to suit my students' current level of understanding and their alertness at that moment.

Through meetings with other volunteers, I have also been able to learn from their experiences and tricks and subsequently apply them and improve.

Additionally, the staff at Epworth are dedicated and warm, which made it easy to work and communicate with them when any problems arose.



Ms Nur Razeenah Binte Abdullah

I've always loved teaching kids, whether it be with regards to schoolwork or recreational activities. When I saw the opportunity to be able to volunteer tutoring kids with learning difficulties through my school portal, I thought it would be a great chance to broaden my knowledge on how to adapt and learn to teach kids better.

It has been a great experience volunteering with Epworth Community Services. I have been volunteering with them since July 2019. I always feel welcomed and am greatly treated by the Programme Coordinators of Project Lightbulb. They are really nice and accommodating whenever I have a sudden change of plans. I truly appreciate it and am looking forward to continue volunteering with them.

Embark on your volunteering journey with us!



Scan here to discover the volunteer opportunities that we have.



(This photo was taken in January 2020.)

TEACHING ONLINE

We had some of our teachers from Epworth Literacy share with us about their experience on bringing their lessons online.



It was challenging when one of my anxiety-ridden student attended class with tears brimming in his eyes. He didn't want to take a minute to freshen up or start the lesson with a game. It was hard for me because he looked like he was about to cry for the first 20 minutes. Yet, there was only so much I could do conducting a class online.

Teacher Georgina

Online lessons have an edge of novelty and is slightly more interesting than pen and paper tasks. In addition, parents get to be directly involved in their children's learning as they sit in for the lessons.

Teacher Amanda

There were a few times during lessons when a hand would appear to shove food into my student's mouth as parents were afraid that he would get hungry.

Teacher Phoebe

One of the most challenging lessons was when my student felt discouraged over his ability to spell. I felt limited in the way I could reach him and encourage him because I could only do so in words compared to when we are in the physical classroom. Non-verbal tools and cues such as a smile, leaning forward or even stooping to the child's level helps in encouraging and assuring them.

Teacher Hazel

The fun thing about online lessons is that we get to see our students in their home environment. The way they act with their siblings or parents around is different from how they are in class, and we get to take a little peek into the different facets of their personality. I have a student that is usually quiet and obedient in class, but he got so feisty when demanding that his younger sister leave him alone. It was funny watching him shout "Go away!" yet his sister being so curious about what we were doing.

Teacher Krystin

Thank you, teachers!

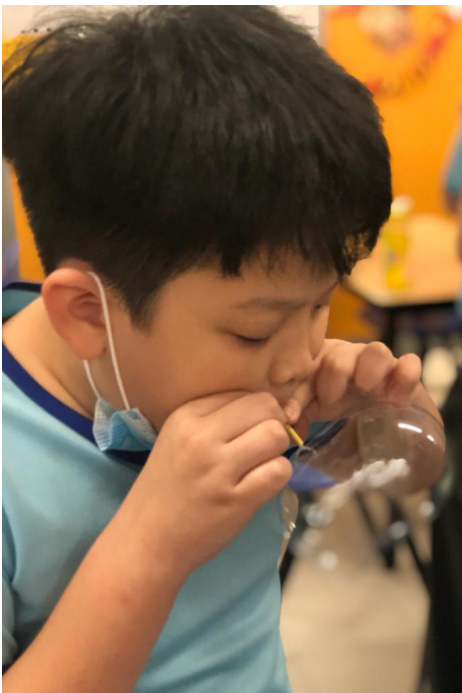
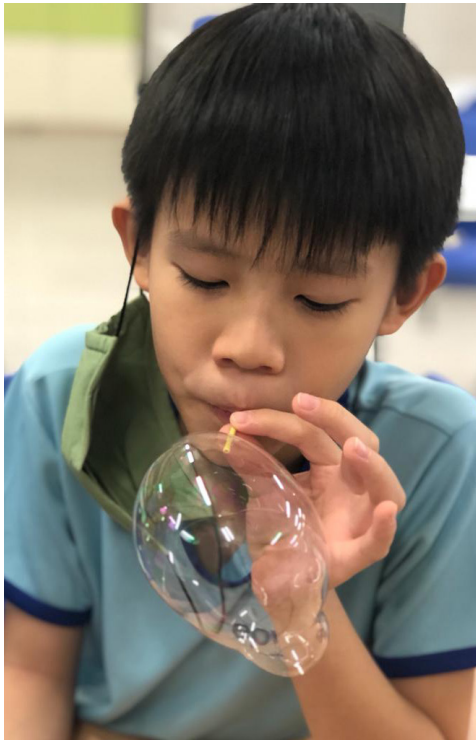


(These photos were taken in January 2020.)

This Teachers' Day, we celebrated our teachers online through a series of short videos, "The Spirit of an Educator," to thank them for their dedication, and for sowing into the lives of our children.



A SNEAK PEAK AT EPWORTH STUDENT CARE



**Our students
doing their best to
blow the biggest
bubble balloon
during an anger
management
enrichment class.**





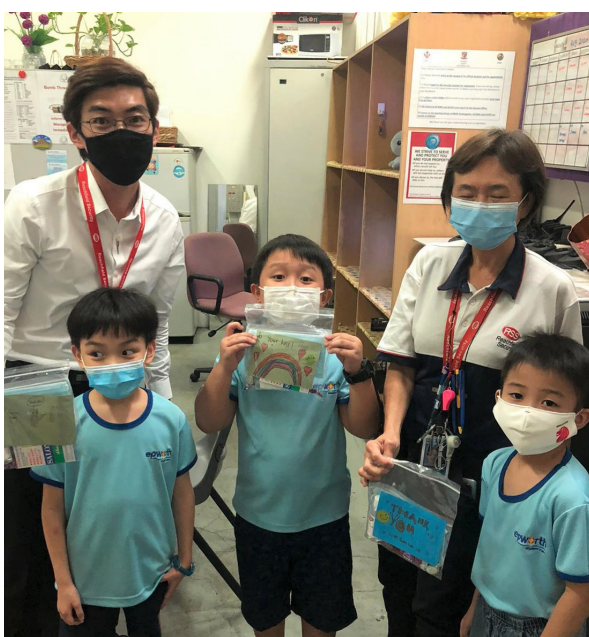
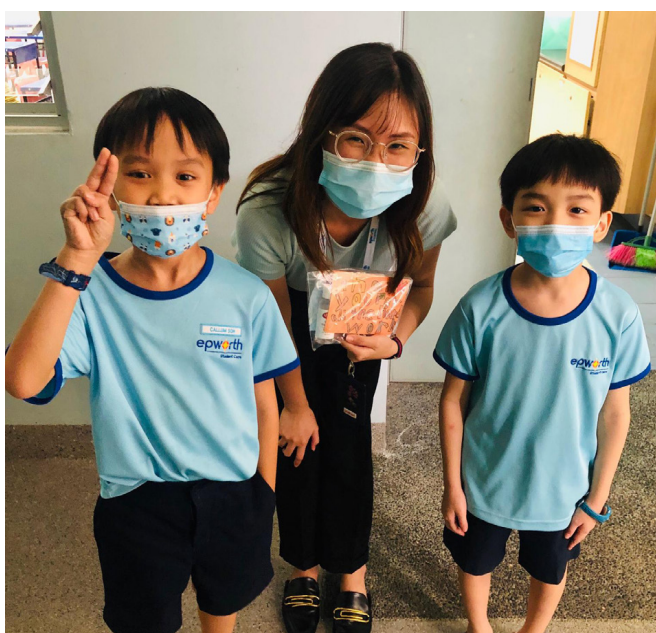
What better mask to wear apart from the one you made on your own? Students armed up with their own masks to battle the virus!



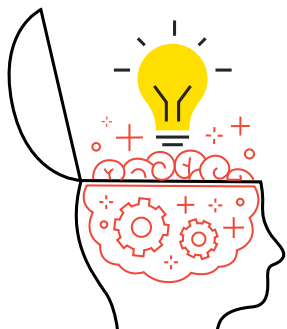
Concentrating on making a mask that will protect me!



Our Primary One students at ACSP prepared and gave out care packs to our staff and the security guards. They even included handwritten notes in the care pack to show their love!



Bringing smiles around with care packs and handwritten notes!



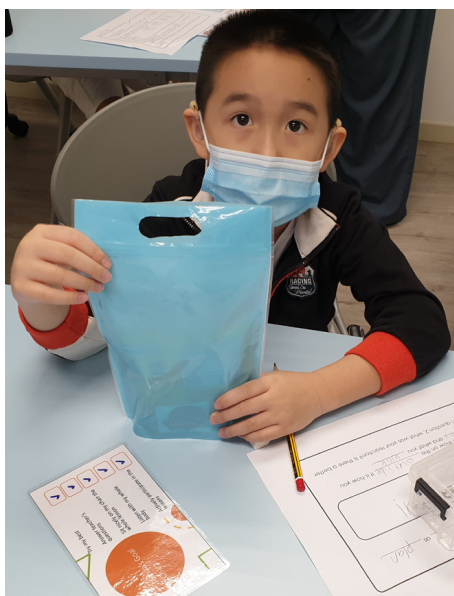
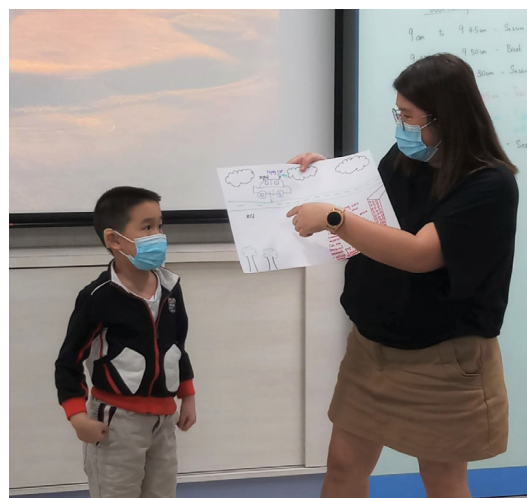
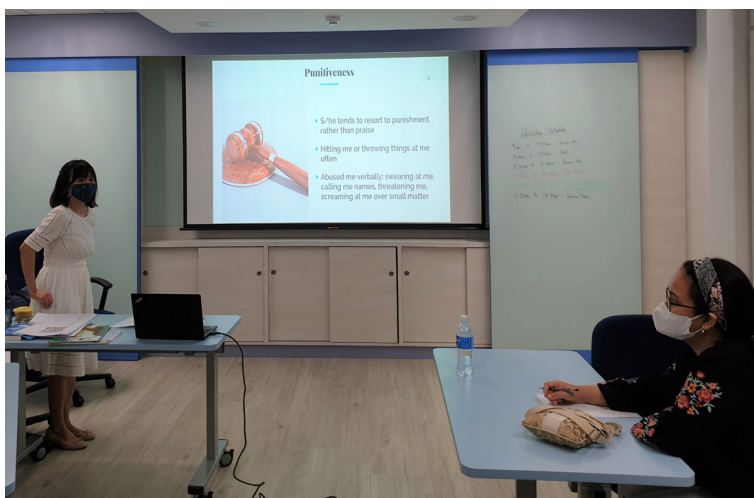
STAR PARENTING & SOCIAL THINKING WORKSHOP



In July, Epworth Literacy (Jurong West) held a STAR Parenting and Social Thinking workshop for the students and parents of Shuqun Primary School.

The parents explored different ways and strategies to nurture their interactions with their children. The children learnt to observe and consider their own behaviour, thoughts and feelings, as well as others'. This will help them to behave in a more appropriate manner.

During the workshop, a competition for the best poster was held for each pair of parent-and-child to design a poster of their perception of an ideal world. The children's excitement to win the competition drove their parents to action. They all had a fun time designing the poster together.



Poster that a parent-child pair did on how an ideal world looked like to them.

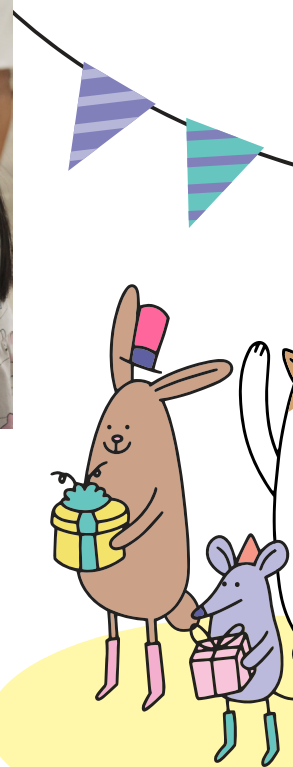
CELEBRATING OUR CHILDREN



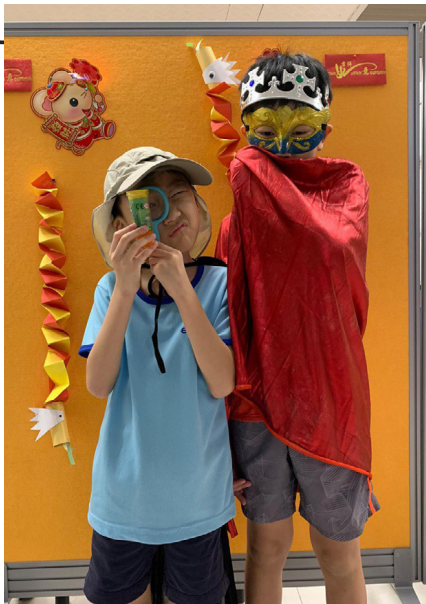
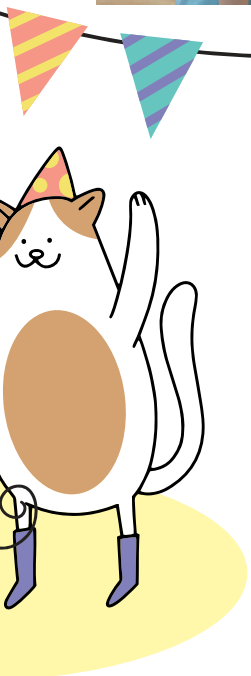
On the week of Children's Day, Epworth Literacy (Jurong West) held a mini carnival for our students. Various station games and snacks were prepared, with many attractive prizes to be won. Can you see the smiles behind these children's masks?



Guessing the item in the box without seeing.



Another mini carnival was going on at our Student Care Centre (ACSJ). Long queues could be seen at every station, in particular the balloon sculpting and bodyart station. After a hearty lunch, our students excitedly donned on their costumes for the costume parade. We were glad to be able to make this day a special one.



Students cheering for their friends during the costume parade. Who wears it best?

A NEW *family*



A photo of Mr and Madam Tia, and their family.

Foster care is the most ideal placement for children when they are unable to live with their birth families due to unforeseen circumstances.

There are about 1,150 vulnerable children and young persons who are in Out-of-Home Care. However, less than half of them are in foster care.

We spoke to one of our foster mothers, Madam Tia, who had 4 children of her own. Here, she shares about her fostering journey which began in 2017, and some practical advice for those considering to foster.

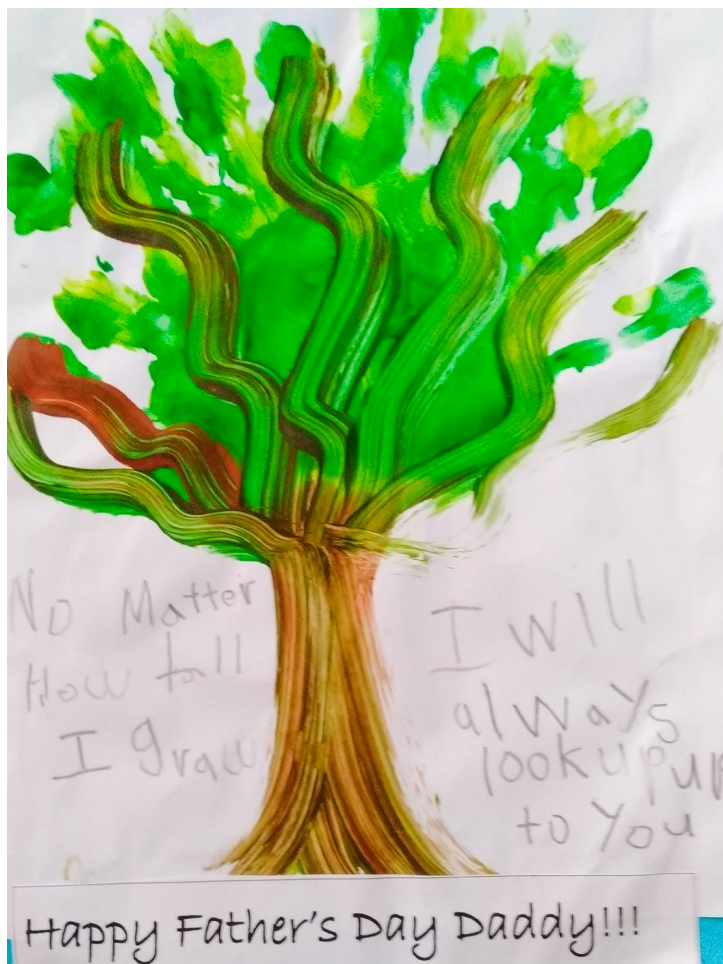
Interview by *Edwina Poh* of
Epworth Foster Care



Some games that the foster children like to play!



Making chocolate banana ice cream.



Billy's* Father's Day Card to his foster father.

Our fostering journey finally began in 2017. We have fostered 3 children since.

What were some of your concerns on fostering?

Providing proper care for the foster children was one of our greatest concerns. We were also afraid that our youngest child would be jealous of having our attention divided among more children. There were also other practical concerns such as getting extra furniture.

What were some steps you took when you decided to foster children?

My husband and I made several preparations in our journey towards fostering. We attended courses organised by MSF to prepare ourselves to be foster parents. We prepared our birth children emotionally to accept a new member in the family. Our extended family was also informed about our new addition.

In order for the foster child to feel comfortable and accepted, we made sure that our house was sufficiently equipped. A space of his own was given to him.

Most importantly, window grills, gates and doors were checked as we wanted to create a safe place for our foster child to be in.

What made you take the first step to foster children?

It has always been on my husband's heart to foster children. However, I would brush the idea aside, saying that the family is "not ready" and that "our children are still young". It was pushed to the back of his mind since.

It was until one day when Vivienne Ng, a psychologist from Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF), came to deliver a message on foster care at our church. Upon hearing what she shared, both my husband and I were touched by the Holy Spirit to foster a child.

Before making a decision, we went to find out more about foster care by attending tea sessions by Epworth Community Services and Home For Good.



Seeing young children having to battle with their internal struggles at such a young age broke my heart. They had to go through being taken away from their birth family, then placed into an environment with complete strangers (foster family). The little inconveniences my family had to go through was nothing compared to all these terrifying experiences these young children went through.

There are both memorable moments and challenges encountered as foster parents. With a foster child, Madam Tia's entire family had to adjust and change their daily routine.

There had to be constant reassurance and love for Billy* due to the background that he came from..

Through fostering, Madam Tia and her family have learnt to be more understanding and patient, leaning on God for His provision and help. They have learnt to see the foster child's needs more than their own wants.

* Name has been changed to protect the identity of the child.

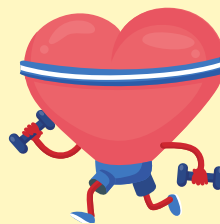
YOU CAN BE A FOSTER PARENT IF YOU...



Are a resident of Singapore.



Have attained secondary school education.



Are medically fit to care for children.



Have a minimum household income of \$2,000 and a per capita income of at least \$700.



Have experience in caring for children.



Are at least 25 years old and married.



Are willing to work with MSF and other professionals for the child's best interest.



Are willing to provide and ensure a child-safe home environment.



BECOMING A FOSTER PARENT

New to fostering? Here are some of Madam Tia's advice on being a foster parent.

Space can be created.

Once your heart is open, space will be created naturally. It is important to let the foster child feel welcomed. This gesture provides him/her with a sense of security and assurance that their new home is a safe place.

Open communication.

To ensure the best for the foster child, parents must agree with each other on the rules and ways so as to help him/her grow and feel secure emotionally. Not only will it benefit the child, but the relationship between husband and wife will be strengthened. It is important to support one another within the same household. In this way, it minimises conflicts and prevents burnout.

Lay down clear consequences and be consistent.

By doing so, it shows that, as parents, consequences and actions are not carried out according to moods and emotions. Consistency helps the child understand and abide by the rules. There is no need for harsh words or labelling to make them listen to you. (Refer to our June issue read more on the importance of consistency.)

Look out for social and emotional behaviour.

Every foster child comes from a different background. It is important not to frighten the foster child, or make them feel threatened over their academic results. Instead, look out for their social and emotional behaviour. Be open to talk about their fears and concerns, but only when they are ready and willing to share.

Attend all mandatory training courses.

Children who are being fostered out are special in their own ways. Attending relevant courses can be very helpful. It taught my husband and I different methods on how to better manage a situation e.g. handling behavioural issues and understanding children's trauma and triggers.

Give time.

Let the foster child settle in his/her new home. They would need some time to settle into a new environment and get used to a different company.



A beautiful craftwork on "My Foster Family" by Mr and Mrs Too, and their three foster children. They used the colours green, purple and pink as they are their foster children's favourite colours.



CHILDREN'S DAY

Children's Day is celebrated in Singapore since 1961. Primary school pupils get a holiday on that day, which falls on October 9 this year.

Every child is unique and possesses their own unknown potential. Children's Day is a day to celebrate every child for who they are, and for who they will eventually become.

It is also a good reminder that childhood does not last forever.

Did you know?

Children's Day was first declared as a national holiday by the Republic of Turkey in 1920. Since then, it has been adopted and celebrated by countries all over the world.

CHILDREN'S

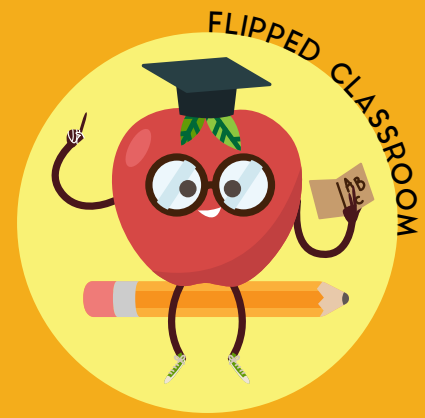
Each child deserves a happy childhood. You play a part in shaping their future; you play a part in developing their potential.

Childhood should always be something to be celebrated. Unfortunately, not every child has a family to celebrate this special day with them.

Take this opportunity to reach out to a child, touch a heart and change a life.



Every child loves surprises! Instead of giving items to your child directly, turn it into an adventure of treasure hunt. Hide items such as toys or candies at different spots in the house. Create a map and provide hints on how they can find those "treasures". Watch the fun as they go on a treasure hunt!



Give children an opportunity to teach. Let the child plan a mini lesson about something that he is passionate about. Guide him as he plans the lesson and listen attentively as he executes it. This builds their confidence and expands their creativity on how they can hold a lesson for you!



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.