

epworth moments

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Epworth Community Services
November 2021

Building Emotional Resilience In Children

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An Open Letter To Teachers

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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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ED'S MESSAGE

CHRISTMAS: A SEASON TO BLESS

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

Towards the end of the year, Executive Directors of various Social Service Agencies (SSAs) would usually craft messages to persuade people to donate to their organisations or causes. We will strive to give compelling reasons and appeal to people that Christmas is a time of giving. I am no different. I have been asked by my Community Relations team to do the same.

I thought about it for a few weeks, not knowing what I should write. Then it dawned upon me that after having served 20 years in Epworth Community Services (formerly known as MCYC Community Services), I never once wrote about my journey into social service. Therefore, I have decided to share my story this Christmas. I know I am writing to an audience with different religious beliefs. However, I cannot separate my story from my faith as a Christian. Hence, God is freely mentioned in this message.

Twenty-three years ago, I had a comfortable job as a Town Planner in a Statutory Board. It was a stable job that paid relatively well. But I felt restless. Some called it mid-life crisis, some said that I was looking for a deeper purpose in life, and others said that it was a Godly calling. Whatever it was, I eventually accepted that it was God bringing me out of my comfort zone to a life of adventure, and to experience His grace, love and power.

At the end of 1999, I took the step of faith and left the security of a comfortable job and started an adventure of discovering God and His purpose for my life. The experience of this journey was both frightening, yet exciting. I had to fully depend on God's grace and provision. I am thankful for my wife who stood by me through this journey.

Before I stepped into the social service sector, I was self-employed for two years. On weekdays, I ran a landscaping business. At night and on weekends, I was a real estate agent. It was a difficult time. God taught me to be humble; yet, be resourceful and resilient in the face of challenges; and, to depend on Him.

Finally, in April 2002, I was employed to lead this organisation which was very small then. To grow my career in the social work sector, I did a part-time programme at the National University of Singapore to obtain a Graduate Diploma in Social Work. The first years were challenging as the learning curve was very steep. But God was gracious and helped me through many challenges. As I plodded along in this journey, I found that my passion had always been to help children and youths; and to help them lead a stable and meaningful life as adults. As a result of God's guidance and blessings, we were able to grow our organisation to help more people.



The organisation's growth in work with our clients was nothing less than a miracle. Today, our programmes and services are supporting over 1,400 children, youths and their families a year! We focus on promoting healthy mental well-being of children and youths by building strong families and imparting skills for resilient living. Many of those we are helping come from poor, disadvantaged and for some, dysfunctional families.

As I recount the years I spent working in Epworth, I cannot help but be thankful to God. There were many times when we did not have enough resources to run our operations. But God always provided. God worked through many people who supported our work by donating and by volunteering. I thank God for His great blessings to Epworth!

Today, as I write this article, I believe that God can use many of us to help those who are disadvantaged and in need. We, as an organisation, are happy to receive your blessings. So, this Christmas, you can be part of our work!

Even as Jesus came down to earth as God's gift and a blessing to mankind, you can also do the same by being a blessing to others. You can donate to Epworth Community Services so that we can help more children in the community.

Do visit <https://www.epworth.sg/make-a-donation/> or scan the QR code below for more information.

I sincerely thank you in advance for your generosity, and most importantly, for the positive impact you will make in another's life.

Blessed Christmas!



BUILDING EMOTIONAL RESILIENCE IN CHILDREN

By *Diana Koh, Assistant Manager of Community Relations*



From the day of birth, children tend to face many changes which can bring about stress. Naturally, they would use their emotions to cope. Children respond differently when their needs are not met; babies tend to cry, toddlers throw tantrums, and older children do not hide their displeasure as well.

Some children progressively adjust and cope when met with unfavourable circumstances, while others might experience emotional meltdowns of varying intensities. The ability to generate positive emotions during stressful situations or crisis is known as “Emotional Resilience”. Besides their physical and mental well-being, children’s demographics, environment and exposure to significant life altering events, would also affect their emotional resilience.

Many might perceive positive emotions as good and negative emotions as bad. However, all emotions,

whether positive or negative, enable us to know ourselves better. Both are essential in the development of emotional resilience.

Emotional resilience is a value that can be inculcated in children. Here are some steps to help them develop emotional resilience.

The ability to generate positive emotions during stressful situations or crisis is known as Emotional Resilience.

Teach Children the **Vocabulary** to Express their Emotions

For younger children, parents could use simple vocabulary to help them identify their emotions. As older children might have greater vocabulary for expressing their emotions, parents could help to relabel these emotions, e.g. anger could be relabelled as annoyed/upset/frustrated/furious. By doing so, children would be educated on the range of emotions, thus, expanding their ability to express themselves more accurately.

Address **Negative Emotions**

Parents should acknowledge the negative emotions that their child displays, and talk about what has brought about these emotions. Rather than avoiding, having open conversations would help children to normalise their emotions. Such interactions also allow parents to gain insight into their child’s thought processes.

Discuss how to **Approach Negative Emotions**

Instead of simply telling children how to respond to negative emotions, parents can explore different kinds of responses and explain to them about the possible consequences. After which, parents can guide them in choosing an appropriate response.

Allow for **Ample Practices** (parents included!)

As the saying goes, ‘Practice makes perfect’. Every time negative emotions arise, it gives children an opportunity to practise their responses. Over time, they will learn to adjust their emotions to cope with change and stress. Parents also play an important role in modelling responses. While parents do also make occasional blunders, they could take this opportunity to exemplify acknowledging and choosing to respond better.

Establish **Helplines**

It is important for parents to reassure their children that every emotion has a purpose. Rather than feeling ashamed or hiding their negative emotions, children could be taught to seek help from an adult. Identifying adult figures whom the child can trust and turn to will provide them with alternative resources.

Given that changes and stress are an essential part of everyone’s lives, parents would have ample opportunities to guide their children in building emotional resilience.

However, keep in mind that building emotional resilience is not a one-day process; it is an ongoing process that requires time and effort to build and maintain.



KEEPING A HAPPY AND HEALTHY MIND

By **Deborah Long**, *Community Relations Executive*

Good mental health is not only about the absence of mental health problems. It is also about how we think, feel, and act as we go about our daily lives. It determines how we handle stress, relate with others and make decisions.

It is important to recognise that mental health plays a key role at every stage of our life, and caring for our mental health is just as important as taking care of our physical health. In order to manage life's ups and downs effectively, building mental resilience is crucial.

Here are some tips to get you started on your journey to better mental health!

Eat Well

While we are often taught that healthy eating and having a balanced diet is great for physical health, do you know that eating well is also a contributing factor to a happy mind?

Research has shown that our diet has an effect on our mood and mental well-being. A healthy diet is known to be associated with a reduced risk of depressive symptoms. While comfort foods can provide temporary relief from stress, the intake of food that are high in sugar and fat should be limited. Swap them out for non-processed or whole foods such as fruits, vegetables and grains.

Get Adequate Rest

Sleep is necessary for an individual to function. Do you know that on average, a person spends about one third of their lifetime sleeping?

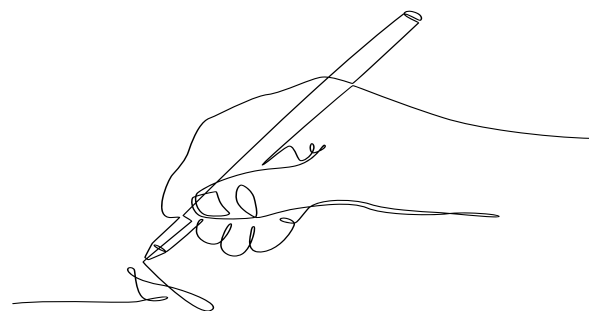
Poor sleep has shown to make one more irritable and less able to handle the stresses of daily life. While poor sleep can affect one's mood, it might also be a sign of underlying mental health issues such as high stress levels, anxiety and depression. Take a pause, check in



on your well-being and seek treatment if you have been experiencing sleep issues for a prolonged period of time. This will ensure that both your mental and physical well-beings are in check.

Go Outdoors

Spending time outdoors is known to be a natural remedy that is great for one's overall mental well-being. Studies have shown that being outdoors can help lift our mood and reduces stress. A tip we recommend is starting your day with a 15-20 minute walk around the neighbourhood. This helps to set a positive tone for the day, allowing your mind and body to feel more energised for whatever comes ahead!



Journal

Penning down how you feel; your challenges, your wins - big or small, or about your day, can be a great way to clear and calm your mind. In fact, journaling is an effective way to help manage stress and anxiety. While it may not be a direct solution to your challenges, writing down how you feel allows you to better process, navigate, and understand your emotions.

Take Breaks when Needed

In today's fast-paced world, taking some time off is becoming a luxury that many cannot afford to have.

However, this often results in what is commonly known as 'burnout', leaving us feeling more exhausted and mentally drained than before. Sometimes, taking a step back and taking a break is the most productive thing you can do for yourself.



Practice Self-Love

Once in a while, allow yourself to indulge in things you enjoy but have put on hold due to your busy schedule.

These activities do not have to be extravagant. It can be as simple as watching your favourite TV series, going on a hike, or doing a face mask. Remember that feeling unproductive or unmotivated is part and parcel of life, so go easy on yourself!

Triple Berry Smoothie

- 1 banana
- 1 cup frozen strawberries
- 1 cup frozen blackberries, add more for garnish (optional)
- 1 cup frozen raspberries
- 1 1/4 cup almond milk (or choice of milk)
- 1/2 cup Greek yogurt

Perfect Green Smoothie

- 1 1/2 cup unsweetened almond milk
- 1 cup chopped spinach (fresh or frozen)
- 1/2 cup chopped kale (fresh or frozen)
- 1 medium banana
- 2 tbsp. almond butter
- 1 tbsp. chia seeds
- 2 tsp. honey

Healthy Smoothie Recipes

Put all ingredients in a blender and blend!

Superfruit Smoothie

- 1 cup frozen cherries
- 1 kiwi, peeled and chopped (reserve 2 slices for garnish)
- 1 cup almond milk (or choice of milk)
- 1 tbsp. chia seeds

Peanut Butter Banana Smoothie

- 2 small bananas or 1 large
- 1 cup unsweetened almond milk
- 1 cup ice
- 2 tbsp. peanut butter (preferably natural)
- 2 tsp. honey
- 1/8 tsp. pure vanilla extract
- 1/8 tsp. ground cinnamon

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PARENTING FOR A CHILD'S MENTAL WELL-BEING

Adapted from "Parenting For Your Child's Mental Well-Being" workshop by Tan Khye Suan, Executive Director of Epworth Community Services

Just like physical health, mental health is important no matter the stage of life. For parents, supporting and walking alongside children as they go through life is crucial.

Here, we provide some insights on factors that can impact a child's mental well-being, possible signs of mental health issues, and what parents can do to promote better mental well-being in their children.

Factors that can Impact a Child's Mental Well-Being

1. Challenges at Home

Parent-Child Relationships

- The communication style matters. What is the volume, tone, choice of words, and body language?
- The discipline method matters. Does the child get punished immediately, are their mistakes dismissed, or are they guided to identify their wrongdoings and consequences of their actions?
- Parents' support and guidance matters. Is the child being listened to, encouraged, and given the opportunity to explore solutions together with his or her parents or is the child coerced into doing things a certain way?

Home Environment

- Marital problems such as frequent quarrels and threats of divorce.
- The presence of financial problems and/or addiction issues.
- Family members with mental health issues.

Disengaged and Unguided Children

- When there is a lack of parental supervision, children tend to turn to other forms of engagement which may result in more serious issues e.g. excessive screen dependent activities which could lead to addiction issues.

2. Challenges in School

- The pressure to be like others or to fit in.
- Bullying (physical, psychological, emotional or cyber).
- Homework and exam results.



Possible Signs that may Indicate a Child is Facing Mental Health Issues

- Withdrawing from or avoiding social interaction.
- Talking about hurting oneself.
- Drastic changes in mood, behaviour or personality.
- Health issues such as weight loss, insomnia, frequent headaches or stomach aches.
- Difficulty concentrating.
- Change in academic performance.

What Parents can do to Promote Better Mental Well-Being in their Child

1. Spend Ample Quality Time Together

- Engage in activities together; whether it is going to the park or doing something that the child enjoys.

2. Be There for the Child

- Be open-minded; listen and understand from the child's point of view while sharing their viewpoint or advice gently.
- Work with the child to support his or her struggles.
- Focus on the child's strengths and abilities and praise them where they deserve.

3. Incorporate Healthy Daily Habits

- Set a structure and routine for the child to follow.
- Make sure that the child has sufficient rest and sleep.
- Reduce screen-dependent activities.
- Adopt stress management techniques to help both parent and child.

Parenting is a life-long journey and parents must keep in mind that they have to be the example that their child can follow. Remember, there is no such thing as a perfect parent - only better parents!

A VERY HAPPY CHILDREN'S DAY

By Joyce Gan, Literacy Intervention Teacher at Epworth Literacy

At Epworth, we cherish and celebrate our students. On special occasions like Children's Day or Christmas, we would traditionally organise and execute elaborate parties loaded with fun-filled activities and goodie bags thoughtfully put together by our teachers and volunteers. However, with the COVID-19 situation, Children's Day celebrations at Epworth have taken on a different form.

This year, the Community Relations department managed to secure nearly \$2,000 worth of LEGO sets generously donated by LEGO's #rebuildtheworld campaign. As Children's Day approached, the LEGO sets were ready to be given out. We hope that this would bring smiles and joy to the children who received them.



As our students' come from diverse financial backgrounds, many of them were pleasantly surprised by the unexpected gift.

We hope that in the coming days, Epworth will soon be able to hold physical events to engage our students with more meaningful physical interactions! Despite various limitations, we are still thankful that we were able to still reach out and be a blessing to these children.

Happy Children's Day Everyone!

GIVE
and
FEAST 2



Support Epworth's work in building strong families, resilient individuals and beautiful minds.

From the 15th of Nov to 31st of Dec 2021, for any donation of S\$5000 or more (*+), you will receive a 5-course Omakase Peranakan meal for 5 pax, cooked by our Executive Director, Mr Tan Khye Suan, in appreciation of your generosity.

REVIEWS BY PAST DONORS:

"Reminds me of my Grandmother's cooking!"

"My mother said it was delicious and authentic!"

"Delicious. My family finished all the food!"



(*) Scan QR for PayNow transaction or use UEN: T08SS0123D for bank transfer.

(+) Please provide full name, NRIC no. and STAN code (6 digits) for 2.5 tax exemption.

(-) Cheques should be made payable to 'Epworth Community Services'.

Brought to you by:

epworth
Community Services

DEAR TEACHERS AT EPWORTH LITERACY ...

Dear Teachers at Epworth Literacy,

When I was first approached to write an open letter to you, I experienced a mixture of feelings. I felt honoured, and at the same time, undeserving. I consider myself to be incredibly blessed with the opportunity to work alongside a team of talented and committed teachers.

When the COVID-19 pandemic first hit and wreaked havoc, I shared that there was bound to be a silver lining at the end of it. Since then, I have come to realise that it is your display of grit and strength that was the silver lining after all.

THANK YOU, for not giving up despite the many changes we faced. Although it was onerous, your perseverance and efforts managed to get us to where we are at now.

THANK YOU, for adapting quickly and maintaining your passion in educating and imparting knowledge and values into the young lives under your care. This I believe, is what keeps us going. Our clients are able to continue receiving support because of the extra mile you have gone.

THANK YOU, for being an exceptional team player and each other's pillar of strength. "If you want to go fast, you go alone. If you want to go far, go as a team." This saying have since resonated with me so much more, after I witnessed how all of you have worked fantastically as a team.

I came across an article about an author's encounter with the former Prime Minister, Mr Lee Kuan Yew. When he was brought to the top of Marina Bay Sands to look at the stunning Singapore skyline, he was told, 'You built all that'; to which Mr Lee replied, 'No, THEY built all that'. In the same way, I believe that Epworth Literacy was not built on a single person's dream and ambition alone; it is the product of a cohesive effort and tremendous hard work from each and every single staff.

We have achieved many milestones; the expansion of a second literacy centre, and the digitisation of lessons to minimise disruptions during this pandemic. All these would have been impossible without God, and without you.

To close, I would like to leave you with this – in your journey with Epworth Literacy, you need only be who you are. As humans, we may falter, but like the sun, there is a time for us to shine, and a time for us to rest.

Last but not least, I pray that you will be kept in divine protection and peace, and for strength to see you through each day.

Warmest Regards,
Ann Chiam
Manager at Epworth Literacy (Jurong West)

OVER THE SCHOOL HOLIDAYS TIME WELL SPENT

By Cecilia Yip, Programme Coordinator of Epworth Student Care (ACSP)

Students in SCC@ACS(P) had a memorable Mid-Autumn themed September holiday. Enrichment Programmes conducted over the span of the week-long holiday were centered around the festival.

To kickstart the week, students were introduced to stories associated with the Mid-Autumn festival, to learn about its origins. They were also treated to a mooncake and tea tasting session. It was a wholesome experience!

Next, as part of the Character Development Programme, students were educated on the term 'togetherness'. They learnt about the significance of maintaining good relationships with our closed ones – an important element of the festival. In reinforcing this value, they made photo frames out of ice-cream sticks in the shape of a house. The students invested a lot of effort to create a lovely photo frame home.

Undeterred by the strict safe management measures, the teachers came up with a series of team building games. The students worked up a sweat during the game of Treasure Hunt and other mini games such as Charades and Word Searches.

As part of an Art and Craft activity, students were delighted to be able to design their own lanterns using a variety of materials. Many eye-catching and interesting designs were created, and they were most eager to bring their lantern home to show their family.

It was not only a fulfilling September Holiday, but an educational one too!

By Carol Aw, Assistant Supervisor of Epworth Student Care (ACSJ)

During the September holidays, students in SCC@ACS(J) also had a blast with Mid-Autumn Festival celebrations. The teachers prepared a line-up of engaging activities for the students to participate in during their school break. It was a perfect balance between hands-on learning and fun physical activities, whilst learning more about the Mid-Autumn Festival.

The students participated in a thrilling time of Amazing Race where they vied for first place during station games. The students displayed great sportsmanship. It was a day filled with lots of energy and excitement. Even the teachers had a great time facilitating!



The students were taught on the symbolism of the full moon, as well as the significance of unity and relationships. They were even treated to a spread of mooncakes. On top of that, the students also got a chance to recite Mid-Autumn poems relating to the ancient ways of living. It was a fun, educational, and tasty experience altogether!



Two things were certainly glowing when the lights were switched off – the look on the students' faces, and their brightly lit lanterns.

FUN SCHOOL HOLIDAY EXPERIENCES

By Nicolette Lien, Community Relations Executive

With the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and what seems like an endless list of safety restrictions, one may be lost on how to occupy your children during the approaching school holidays. Plans to head out exploring may have been foiled due to the restrictions, leaving many anxious parents and enthusiastic children stranded at home. Parents might find themselves needing to juggle between different roles – a caregiver, part-time entertainer, and for some, an employee.

However, as daunting as it may seem, we have some ways to meaningfully occupy your children during the holiday. In this article, we will be presenting you with some fun ideas. Most importantly, these activities can be done in the safety and comfort of your home.

At Home Activities



Scavenger Hunt¹

This activity is sure to keep your children occupied! It is not only simple to prepare, but it also hones their literacy skills.

Materials:

- Clue cards about items in your house
- Items stated in clue cards

How to play:

- Give the clue cards to your children
- Sit back and relax while they embark on their mission to find the items!

Tell Me A Story²

Allow the children's imagination to run wild while they create their own stories. After which, they can draw or paint parts of the story onto the stones and watch it come to life! If they struggle to come up with their own stories, feel free to give them prompts. Alternatively, they can even recreate their favourite nursery rhymes!

Materials:

- Smooth stones
- Paint pens/chalk/acrylic paint

DIY Musical Instruments³

There are many musical instruments that children can DIY at home. From hand drums to guitars, the possibilities are endless! An interesting one has got to be this rattle made out of mostly natural materials. Not only is it pleasing to the eyes, it also teaches children how things around us can be repurposed into something beautiful.

Materials:

- A forked stick
- Unbroken seashells with holes to thread the elastic band through
- Elastic band
- Colourful yarn (optional)

How to:

- Loop elastic around one end of the fork
- Thread the shells
- Pop the other end of the elastic on the other side of the fork
- To decorate, wrap the yarn around the stick (optional)

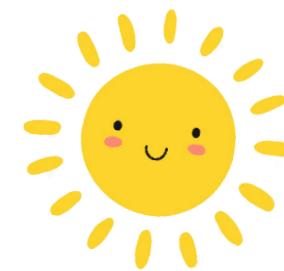


Sources:

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³ Woodley, M., "Nature Crafts – Beach Drift Wood & Broken Shell Rattles." Red Ted Art, <https://www.redtedart.com/nature-crafts-beach-drift-wood-broken-shell-rattles/>

CABIN FEVER... BE GONE!



Here are some places that we recommend should parents be itching to head out for a fun day of exploration and adventure with their children.

A Fun Day Out

Superpark Singapore

This indoor playground promises a lot of fun, while honing the children's social, leadership and motor skills. It remains open, rain or shine.

Address: 3 Temasek Boulevard, Suntec City Mall, #02-477 (North Wing), Singapore 038983



Forest Adventure

Children are sure to work up a sweat at this challenging, but extremely fun adventure park. The different obstacles for children of various ages, will put their physical and mental abilities to test.

Address: Bedok Reservoir Park, Singapore 479244



Disclaimer: In lieu of the COVID-19 pandemic situation, we recommend to check if facilities are in operation before heading down. Some attractions might require pre-booking or have limited capacities.

All images are taken from the respective attractions' websites.



Jurong East Swimming Complex

Going for a swim might be the perfect solution to curb restlessness at home. This swimming complex is not like any other; it contains a wave pool, a lazy river, and thrilling slides that are sure to keep the children entertained for a long time. It is a great way to surely expand any pent-up energy!

Holidays do not have to be daunting. There are many ways to engage and entertain your children. Above all, we hope that both parents and children would be able to spend some fulfilling and precious time together!

Address: 21 Jurong East Street 31, Singapore 609517



BIDDING GOODBYE TO 2021

The year 2021 might have been a smooth-sailing year to some and a bumpy one to some others. Self-reflection provides a better understanding of the things that have happened, and allow us to see from fresh perspectives. Here are some questions to help you get started!

Reflections for 2021

3 Things I Learnt

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Top 5 Favourite Memories / Moments

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3 Things I am Proud of Myself for Accomplishing

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3 Things I Felt I Could Have Done Differently

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Steps I Took to Take Charge of my Mental Health

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Steps I Took to Take Charge of my Physical Health

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Describe the Year 2021 in a Sentence

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Sources:
¹ Kennedy, T., "How Self-Reflection Gives You a Happier and More Successful Life", Lifehack, <https://www.lifehack.org/696285/how-self-reflection-gives-you-a-happier-and-more-successful-life>

Resolutions for 2022

One Word to Describe How I am Feeling as 2022 Approaches

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An Advice I Would Give to Myself as I Begin the New Year

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3 Things I wish to Achieve, Steps I Will Take

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3 Things I Wish to Improve on, Steps I Will Take

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Something I Wish to Try Outside of my Comfort Zone

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How I Will Celebrate Once I Reach my Goals

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Important Relationship(s) I Wish to Improve on

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Activities I Plan on Incorporating Into my Lifestyle to improve on my Overall Well-Being

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A Gift I Would Like to Give Myself This Year

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"Year's end is neither an end nor a beginning but a going on, with all the wisdom that experience can instill in us."

- Hal Borland



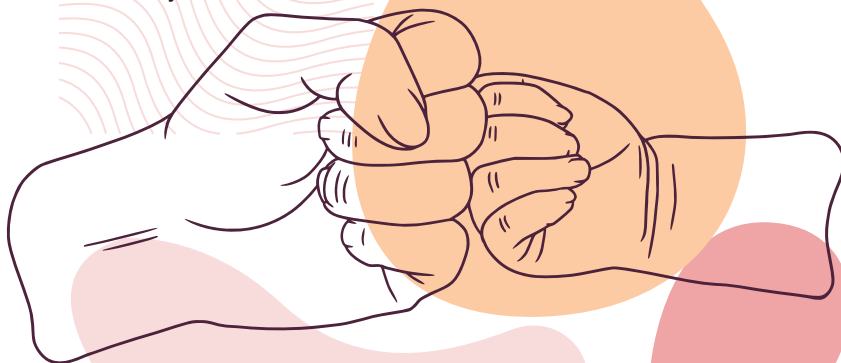
How can I make a **DIFFERENCE?**

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.