



epworth moments

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Epworth Community Services
August 2023

Finding my New Voice (by award-winning author Emily Lim-Leh)

Pg 04

How to Overcome Burnout

Pg 08

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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RESOURCE

03 ED's Message: PRIDE with FUN

04 Finding My New Voice

06 Overcoming Burnout and 5 Ways to Deal With It

08 Hear From Our Foster Parents!

HAPPENINGS

10 Sensory Rooms at Epworth Literacy

12 Holidays at Epworth Student Care

14 Epworth's MVPs



Pg. 10



Pg. 12

ED'S MESSAGE

By Tan Khye Suan, Executive Director of Epworth Community Services

Working with PRIDE

Since 2019, Epworth Community Services adopted **PRIDE** as core values that guide us in our work. These core values help us to serve our stakeholders well; in particular, our clients.

We take **PRIDE** in our work! But what is **PRIDE**?

Professionalism

We will apply the highest professional standards when we represent Epworth to stakeholders. We will provide services with great competence, much compassion and deep commitment.

Responsibility

We will be accountable for all Epworth's resources. This also means the way we spend our time at work and ensuring that work is done promptly, responsibly and according to requirements. We will be prepared to answer for the work we do.

We will ensure confidentiality of personal information. We will also be effective in our collaboration with others: government agencies, business partners, donors as well as volunteers.

Integrity

We will be open and honest, even in very difficult situations. Social work is not "a bed of roses". It is very trying at times. But we will not let such demanding situations force us into compromising Epworth's value, policies and regulations. We will endeavour to always uphold Epworth's credibility and reputation.

Discipline

We will comply with all legislation, rules, regulations and Epworth's code of conduct. It is paramount that our staff are committed to seeing a job through to completion. We will not let slip the work we do for our clients; allowing a case drift. This will severely affect their well-being.

Excellence

We will pursue excellence in our work. This may mean having to "walk the extra mile" for our clients. It may be over and above what we will normally do, so that our clients can experience much needed reprieves when they are in dire straits.

We will apply the highest standards in conduct and behaviour.

PRIDE with FUN

While the core values guiding our work is **PRIDE**, we also have core values guiding our corporate culture. To look after the well-being of our staff, we will have **FUN** when we work! This is embodied in the culture of **FUN**, which we having been doing over the years! What is **FUN**?

Family Is Important

While we carry out our work with **PRIDE**, Epworth recognises that **family is important**. We recognise that there is a need to help staff work on family issues as well. We will support staff in the best possible way without any compromise in our delivery of programmes and services.

This is a difficult balance as staff often expect the organisation to compromise. This balance between work and family life can be worked out through open communication within the organisation. Solutions can be found that takes into consideration the needs of staff as well as the organisation, resulting in acceptable arrangements for both staff and the organisation.

United We Stand

In Epworth, we do not expect staff to be working on their own. We have emphasised that "no man (or woman) is an island", and we do not encourage "prima donna" attitude amongst staff.

Teamwork is expected from all staff and we are most glad when staff are helping each other. For the last 20 years, Epworth grew because staff were **united, standing together!**

TEAM stands for: **Together, Everyone Achieves More!**

No Trauma Culture

In the last newsletter, I wrote about our strategic goal of becoming a **Centre of Excellence for Trauma Care**. We cannot be such as centre if we are inflicting trauma on each other within the organisation. Having a **no trauma culture** is important to achieve our goal.

Achieving a **no trauma culture** is very challenging and requires each and every staff to play their part to make this a reality. It is not only about what the management should be doing for staff; but what staff can do for each other. Hence, we encourage all staff to "**SHOP**" to promote a **no trauma culture** by being **Sensitive** to each other's needs; **Helpful** to their colleagues; **Open** in communication; and, **Polite** to each other. We also discourage staff from being **Critical** of each other; not to **Gossip** about each other; and, be non-**Judgemental** of other colleagues.

With these we hope that everyone can contribute to a **no trauma culture** in Epworth.

Having shared about **PRIDE** with **FUN**, I hope that Epworth Community Services will be a social service agency that serve our clients well; meet the expectations of our stakeholders; and, be a cohesive organisation. Then we will truly become a **Centre of Excellence for Trauma Care!**





By Emily Lim-Leh, Author, and Board Member of
Epworth Community Services

FINDING MY NEW VOICE

I was afflicted with a rare voice disorder called *Spasmodic Dysphonia* right after my wedding.
I was 28 years old, newly married and my career was just taking off.

"My whole world came crashing down and I spent the next decade trying to recover my lost voice."

In L. Frank Baum's classic book *The Wizard of Oz*, Dorothy and her friends, the Cowardly Lion, Scarecrow and Tin Man journeyed down the yellow brick road – each seeking answers to something they needed. Likewise, I went in search of a lost voice, courage, clarity of thought and a new heart. My journey along my own yellow brick road led me to pick up a few precious gems along the way:

1. Newfound Courage

I made a trip to Beijing to visit a good friend. One day, I went shopping alone as my friend had to handle matters at Blue Sky Healing Home, a non-profit medical foster home for orphans.

At the shopping centre, a retail assistant reacted rudely when she heard my voice. She shrieked loudly, "Horrific! Horrific! What an awful sounding voice. She scared me to death."

I left in humiliation.

When I reached Blue Sky, I noticed a boy Fu Xia leaning against the sofa in the living room.

"What's your name?" he asked me confidently.

I tried to answer but fear made my voice even worse.

Then, Fu Xia started to roll himself on the floor to get to the bathroom. And I realized that he had no control of his limbs, and probably encountered many more taunts from shrieking passers-by. But he was fearless and he had no problems speaking up.

"I grew a little in courage that day."

2. New Perspective & Heart

During my lost-voice days, I would go on the National Spasmodic Dysphonia Association's e-bulletin board for emotional support. There, we could post questions about treatment options and coping techniques.

One day, I posted a lament on the e-bulletin board about how my broken voice was a huge impediment at work.

A lady in her 50s responded to me. Becky shared how she had lost her job because of her voice disorder and had an ageing parent to care for. She appealed to the goodwill of her employer and finally received some compensation to get by. She ended with these words: "But the bottom line is the grace of God who knows our needs and does provide...only wanted to write and perhaps help and encourage."

(cont)

I did not have an ageing parent to care for and at least my husband could support me financially. Yet, this stranger, who was in worse-off circumstances, wrote to encourage me.

"From then, I approached the days ahead with new perspective and a strengthened heart."

3. New Voice

I finally gave up my job with some trepidation after struggling with my voice disorder for eight years. Not long after, I chanced upon a writing competition for children's books and submitted my entry. My debut book *Prince Bear & Pauper Bear* was published as a Singapore Book Council winner in 2007 with these opening lines:

"Once, there lived a teddy bear in a little toy shop. This teddy bear was poorly stitched...The toymaker had also forgotten to sew him a mouth, so he could not speak."

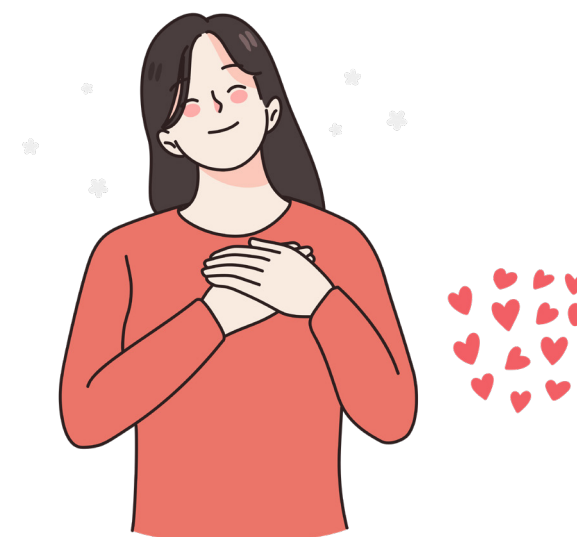
Like *Pauper Bear*, I had felt alone and unable to speak. But *Pauper Bear* is repaired by a boy who stitches him a mouth and restores him. My teddy bear tale had providentially summed up my voice journey in 800 words. I started experiencing divine healing and restoration when I wrote my first children's book.

"With that, I found a new God-given voice and have been writing for over 15 years since."

Emily Lim-Leh is an award-winning author of over 40 children's picture books. She is also a volunteer with Epworth Community Services.

*Emily recently wrote **I Really, Really Cannot Catch These Words**, a voluntary e-book collaboration with Epworth Literacy to create awareness of children with learning needs.*

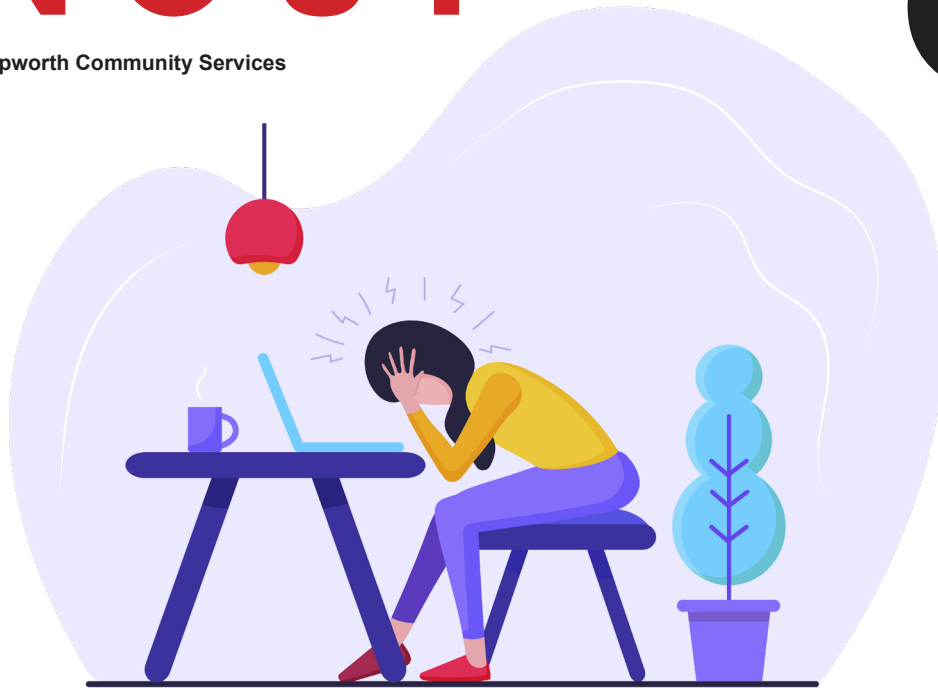
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OVERCOMING BURNOUT & 5 WAYS TO DEAL WITH IT

By Ken Lim, Human Resource Manager of Epworth Community Services

The world we live in has in recent times been characterized by **volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity (VUCA)**. In this VUCA world, burnout is a common problem that affects many - youths, working professionals, and even caregivers. Burnout refers to a state of physical and mental exhaustion caused by prolonged stress and an overwhelming sense of pressure. This is especially prevalent in the social service sector, filled with professionals whose work is dedicated to improving the well-being of others.



Social service professionals such as social workers, counsellors and therapists often face emotionally challenging work situations that usually involves handling complex familial issues, crisis management, and navigating bureaucratic requirements.

Burnout can arise from multiple factors – excessive workload, unclear work boundaries, and the fear of unmet expectations can all drive the rate of burnout.

Burnout also manifests in various ways that affect both our physical and mental well-being: persistent fatigue, insomnia, and compromised immunity to name a few. Mentally, we may start to feel pessimistic, easily irritable, a lack of motivation, and hopelessness.

If left unaddressed, burnout can lead to even more serious health complications.



"However, it is important to note that experiencing burnout is not uncommon. With the right intervention and frame of mind, it is possible to prevent burnout from escalating to something beyond our control."

STRONG FAMILIES RESILIENT LIVING BEAUTIFUL MINDS

Here are 5 ways we can deal with burnout:

1) Familiarise yourself with early warning signs.

Recognising that you are not coping well and being unafraid to show your vulnerability is a step towards building resilience. Revealing vulnerability shows humility and humanity, opening yourself up to receiving support from those around you.

2) Have open conversations with your superiors.

This allows you to address concerns at work early so that they can help identify the root cause, develop a doable plan together and foster a supportive working relationship. Do also check-in with them as they are not spared from burnout either. Look out for each other so that no one gets left behind.

3) Strive to maintain a healthy balance between work and personal life

As working professionals, we often feel pressured to constantly hustle and do well at work while neglecting the need for rest. Keeping a clear boundary between the two can help you disconnect from work and rest adequately during the day. Taking a longer break from work at least once a year is also encouraged. Go for a holiday with family or friends to recharge!

4) Be kind to yourself.

Treat yourself with the same kindness you would extend to your loved ones. Instead of being self-critical, give yourself more grace when faced with setbacks. Learn to embrace your strengths and acknowledge that you have done your best within your ability. And yes, be kind to others as well. Do not be the reason behind their burnout!

5) Seek professional help from specialists when necessary.

If things continue to spiral out of control despite your best efforts, know that it is time to seek help. It is perfectly normal to require additional support in this journey.

In conclusion, burnout is a significant issue affecting many individuals in today's high-pressure society; this is especially so in social service sector. By recognising the symptoms and causes, and being open to receive timely intervention, we can take steps to restore the delicate balance of life and work, preventing the detrimental effects of burnout.



"Remember, you can't pour from an empty cup."

Therefore, while you hustle hard, do not forget to take good care of yourself so that you can take care of others."

HEAR FROM OUR FOSTER PARENTS

By Thong Ling Yun, Recruitment Officer of Epworth Foster Care



“We all want to be superheroes; to be able to make the world a better place, but we have our limitations. However, if by fostering, we can help make life better for these children who need a loving and caring home, then why not?”

Epworth Foster Care aims to provide quality care and support to foster parents, including connecting them to a wider network of resources. While the reintegration of foster children with their natural families are being worked at, foster families will be equipped to ensure the well-being and holistic development of foster children in a safe, nurturing and caring family environment.

Read the interview with 6 of our foster parents below, and find out how Epworth has played a big role in supporting them in their fostering journey!

1) What made you decide to become a foster parent?

L & JH: We chanced upon a documentary featuring vulnerable children with dysfunctional families and we saw how having a loving family was crucial in their developmental years. We were moved and decided to find out more. Our interest grew and though we have no children of our own, our journey began in October 2021, with a three-month old foster child.

A & A: Ten years ago, we first heard about fostering from a close friend. Though we had interest, we were hesitant as we were worried about being too attached to a foster child.

It was during a sharing session by MSF when we heard these words from a foster mother: “We all want to be superheroes; to be able to make the world a better place, but we have our limitations. However, if by fostering, we can help make life better for these children who need a loving and caring home, then why not?”

That was the push we needed. Seven years in, we have fostered six children, including 2 currently under our care.

R & I: We have been fostering for seven years now. I first heard about fostering when I walked past a foster care roadshow. We became interested to foster as we love children and we wanted to do something meaningful for children in need. Long story short, we were blessed with a two year old child after our application was approved.

2) What are some highs and lows of your fostering journey?

L & JH: One of the greatest joys we have experienced is seeing him grow healthily every day. That came at the cost of sacrificing personal time and making changes to our lives to adjust to our foster child. What surprised us was dealing with scepticism from people around us about our decision to foster. However, we were clear about our reasons to foster and were prepared to adapt and respond positively toward them.



A & A: When the child reintegrates with their natural family, it is bittersweet; we grieve over the loss of a foster child as the relationship and mutual attachment are lovingly forged. However, we are also genuinely happy that they can return to their families in hope that it will be a new beginning for the child to receive love, care and attention from their own families.

R & I: After receiving feedback regarding his behavior in school, hours spent researching, asking questions and seeking professional help, we received a proper diagnosis of his special needs. In many ways, our foster son has taught us many life values; he is not afraid to fail, and he perseveres through the numerous challenges in front of him, all the while making improvements in coping with his challenges. This continues to be a challenging journey, but we truly believe love conquers all.

3) What is one thing you would like to say to someone who is considering to foster?

L & JH: This will be journey where you will learn a lot about yourself. Our hearts expanded and we were able to become the strong emotional support to a child who is not our own. Many will say that this is a “reward-less” task, but the reward is found in making a difference in these young lives!

A & A: We have gained numerous life lessons from being foster parents. In loving and caring for them, our foster children have in turn taught us about unconditional love, patience, respect, and more.

R & I: We personally believe that every child deserves to be loved and to have a beautiful childhood. If you are still hesitating, just go for it! No matter the impact, a beautiful memory will last a lifetime for the child. Our lives have been made so much more fulfilling since we started fostering. It is the best decision we have ever made.

"Our lives have been made so much more fulfilling since we started fostering. It is the best decision we have ever made."



Find out more about Epworth Foster Care here: <https://www.epworth.sg/programmes-services/epworth-foster-care/>

SENSORY ROOMS AT EPWORTH LITERACY



By Esther Che, Educational Psychologist of Epworth Literacy

On the 10th of June 2023, the Rotary Club of Garden City and Epworth Literacy had a cheque presentation ceremony to launch the building of two sensory rooms – one in each Epworth Literacy Centre. The Rotary Club of Garden City raised more than \$14,000 in support of this project. The setting up of the sensory rooms will better equip our centres and teachers, and will allow our students with sensory needs to learn better.

A total of 10 members from Rotary Club attended the ceremony together with our Executive Director, Mr Tan, and the Epworth Literacy Planning Team. After the cheque presentation by former president, Ange Dove, we commemorated the collaboration with a toast. What followed was lively chatter and an exchange of experiences in the field of social service, specifically in helping children and youth with developmental and learning difficulties.

Epworth literacy is immensely grateful for the partnership and support we have received from the Rotary Club of Garden City.

We look forward to our sustained partnership as we continue to work together to make a difference in the lives of children and youth in the community.



HOLIDAYS AT EPWORTH STUDENT CARE

By Gerard Lim, Programme Coordinator of Epworth Student Care

During the June Holidays, various activities were organised to engage students at Epworth Student Care. Read on to see what they were up to!

Fun With Kites!

The Epworth students were treated to a day of kite-making and flying. They engaged in lively trivia about kites, and were also given the chance to assemble their very own kites. After which, they went outdoors and watched their own creations soar high up in the sky!



Let's Play Sports!

Students from River Valley High School organised a series of activities, starting with a quick warmup exercise to get the students physically prepared for the sports games that they were about to play.

Although the teams were made up of students from different primary school levels, they were able to take advantage of their strengths and weaknesses by coming up with creative strategies to outplay their opponents.

The students displayed good qualities such as good sportsmanship, and the ability to work as a team to achieve common goals.



An Excursion to the Heartlands!

The students were given an opportunity to explore the Punggol heartlands and visit one of the biggest regional libraries in Singapore: Punggol Regional Library, located at One Punggol. The day began with students playing at the enormous playground outside Waterway Point.



Following lunch, the students visited Punggol Regional Library. The library boasts a large collection of material over different media: books, magazines, and e-books. The students were able to access different areas of the library and pick out books that they wanted to read.

They also got the chance to explore various facilities and amenities such as its Multimedia Zone, where they were able to access the library's digital services.

Games Day by ACJC Volunteers



The students were given a day to enjoy team-building games that were organised by ACJC students. They were split into teams of different levels, and had to compete against each other. It was a fulfilling time for them to bond and work together.

It sure was a great holiday!

EPWORTH'S MOST VALUABLE PLAYERS



Epworth staff from all departments had the chance to nominate their colleagues for the 'Epworth MVP' award. This award recognises the dedication of their colleagues not only in the area of work, but also as a team player.

Our heartiest congratulations to all winners of the Epworth MVP award!

Centre for Positive Recovery

Epworth Literacy (Jurong West)

Epworth Finance



Chong Yeong May



Tan Yann Shaw



Jermaine Lim

Epworth Admin



Deborah Long

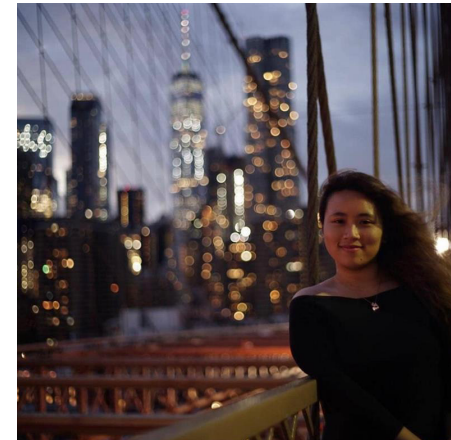


Lillian Seow

Epworth Foster Care



Thong Ling Yun



Shiree Koh



Jessica Chan

Epworth HomeSweetHome

Epworth Human Resource



Anson Poh



Ken Lim

Epworth Literacy (Bukit Batok)



Hellen Goh



Cassandra Lee

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.

All donations are eligible for 2.5x of tax exemptions.
If you require a tax exemption receipt, please email your full name, NRIC, and payment record to admin@epworth.sg.



giving.sg



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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 volunteering enquiries, visit www.epworth.sg or contact us at community.relations@epworth.sg.



STAY CONNECTED WITH US

To stay up to date with Epworth's happenings, scan the QR code or reach out to us at community.relations@epworth.sg with your personal particulars.



STRONG FAMILIES, RESILIENT LIVING, BEAUTIFUL MINDS.