

I Really,  
Really Don't  
Feel Well!



Written by Emily Lim-Leh  
Illustrated by Josef Lee

In collaboration with Epworth Community Services

This fictional picture book is written to depict the possible responses of a child grappling with a distressing situation. Children might express their struggles in different ways.

We also wish to raise awareness that early detection and timely intervention can help children to cope better with distressing and traumatic events in their lives. Such support can improve their physical, emotional, cognitive and mental well-being.

**This book is for families, caregivers and those who work with children aged 12 years old and below.**

This e-book is a voluntary initiative in support of Epworth Community Services' work in early intervention and support services for trauma-informed care. Read about Epworth Community Services' work with disadvantaged children and at-risk youth at <https://www.epworth.sg/>

This e-book is published and based on information as of 8 October 2023.

Recently, Ting has not been feeling well.



Let's scare that chicken!

Heheh

Sudden, loud noises make her jumpy.



Ting's tummy  
becomes queasy.



My  
Stomach  
hurts.



That night, Ting's parents get into a fierce argument.



BANNNGGG!! BONNNGGG!!

Ting's nightmares  
disrupt her  
sleep all night.

SLAAMM!

The next morning,  
Ting feels tired and moody.





No fever...  
Any  
diarrhoea?

NO.



Do you feel  
like vomiting?

NO.



Does your  
tummy feel  
bloating?

NO. I just  
don't feel  
well.

Ting's mum takes her to the neighbourhood clinic to see Dr Pereira.



Hello dear.

Tell me more about your tummy pain.



Recently, I started having pain here.

Dr Pereira examines Ting.

## Wong-Baker FACES® Pain Rating Scale



0  
No Hurt



2  
Hurts Little Bit



4  
Hurts Little More



6  
Hurts Even More



8  
Hurts Whole Lot



10  
Hurts Worst

Can you tell me... how painful is your tummy on this scale?

Maybe 2 to 3 now...

Dr Pereira asks Ting a few more questions.



Ting does not have any worrisome symptoms and signs. Do monitor her pain scores.

If the pain persists, please bring her back to see me. I may need to order some tests.

Two nights later, Ting's parents argue again, more loudly and more angrily.



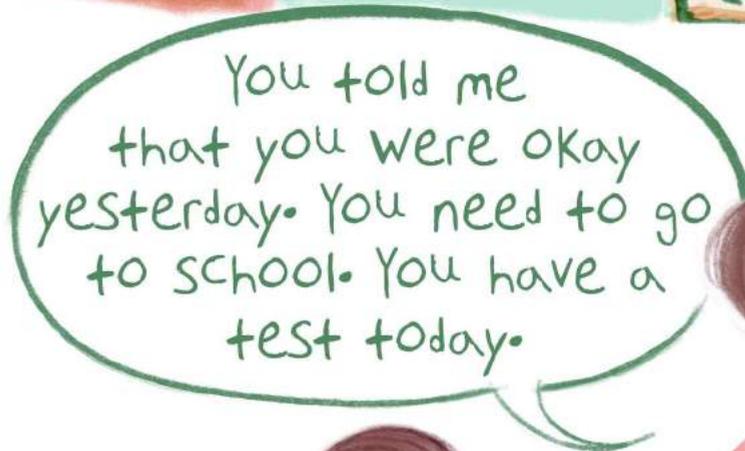
Maybe it's better that I move out for the time being until we both cool down...



Ting has trouble sleeping that night.



The following morning, Ting wakes up feeling exhausted.



At school, the same classmates tease Ting.



Scaredy cat!  
As timid as a mouse!



Ting feels even worse now.



At the staff room...

Mr Zhang  
Ting keeps running  
to the toilet a lot  
lately. She also  
seems very  
nervous.

I'll talk  
to her.



Ting, how are you feeling? Is something wrong?

I really, really don't feel well. I want to go home.

I'll call your mum to pick you up, okay?

OKay.

Mr Zhang speaks to the children who have been teasing Ting. He corrects them on their wrong behaviour.



He also asks Grace, the monitor, to partner up with Ting and help look out for her during this time.



Hmm...I wonder  
What's going on  
With Ting.



I'm going to  
ASK MS JOVINAY  
our SCHOOL  
COUNSELLOR, to  
have a chat with  
you, okay?



1st session

How are you doing?

Tired.

Are you getting enough sleep?

Huh?

2nd session, a few days later

You seem moody today. Did something happen in school or at home?

I don't know.

Music has always been your favourite subject. But lately, you've lost interest in it. Is there any reason why?

Don't know.



I notice that each time Ting hears a sudden **loud noise** at school assembly in the mornings, she becomes jumpy and dashes to the toilet.

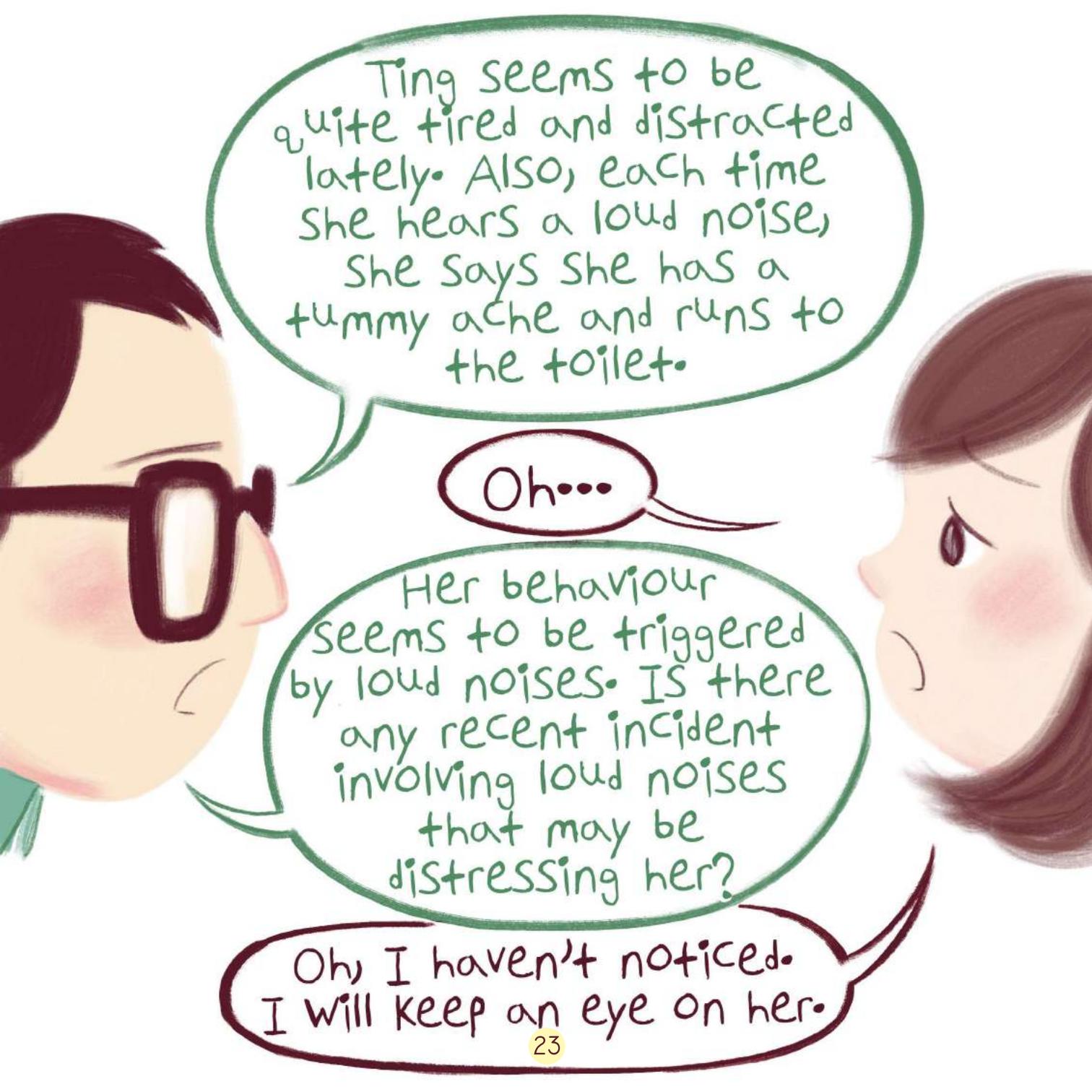
I will speak to her parents and see if they might have an idea why.



Mrs Shen,  
I'm Ting's form  
teacher, Mr Charles  
Zhang. I'm calling  
about some concerns  
that the school  
counsellor and I have  
about Ting.

Oh dear.  
What is  
it?



An illustration of two people in profile, facing each other. The person on the left has dark hair and wears glasses. The person on the right has brown hair. They are surrounded by four speech bubbles containing text.

Ting seems to be quite tired and distracted lately. Also, each time she hears a loud noise, she says she has a tummy ache and runs to the toilet.

Oh...

Her behaviour seems to be triggered by loud noises. Is there any recent incident involving loud noises that may be distressing her?

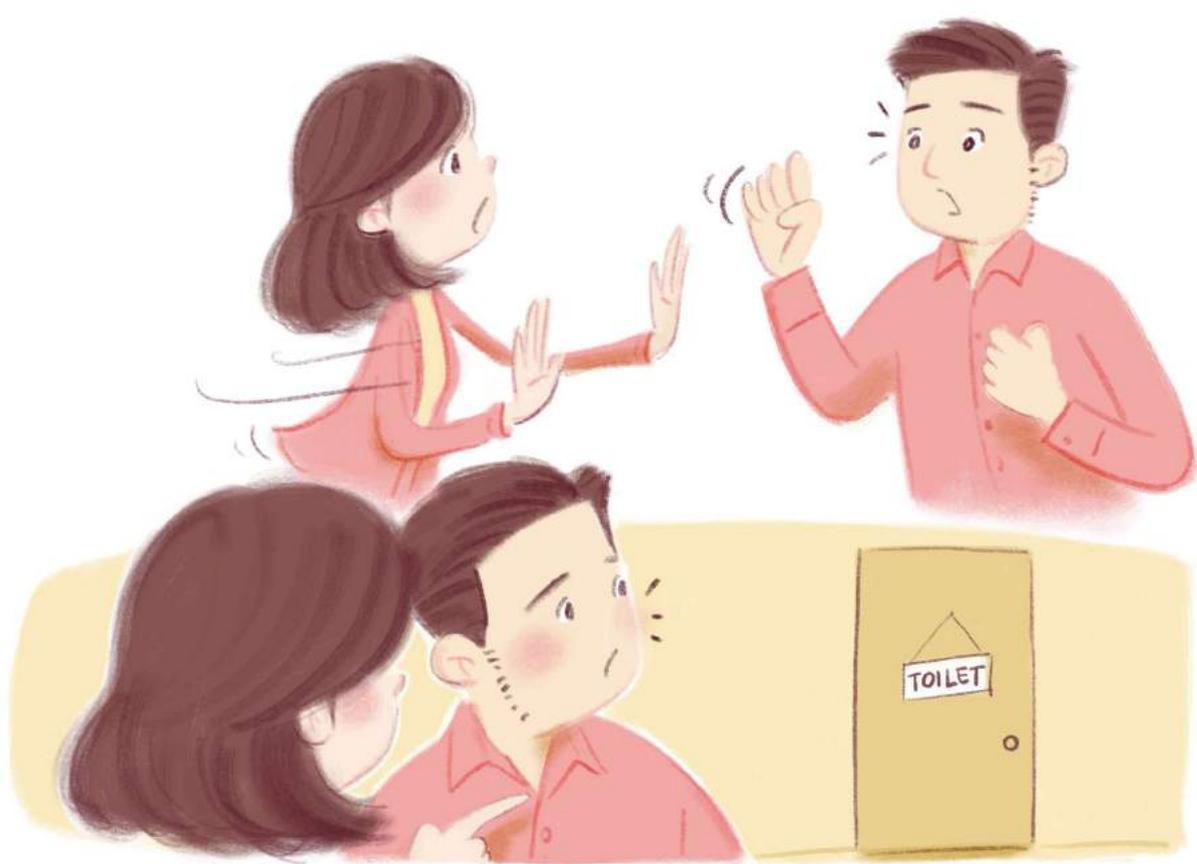
Oh, I haven't noticed. I will keep an eye on her.

That night, Ting's parents have another big fight.



"Is there any recent incident involving low noises that may be distressing her?"

Ting's mum suddenly realises that Ting's tummy aches started at the same time as the recent problems at home.





Ting, I guess you have seen us arguing a few times lately.

Is it because of me? Did I do something wrong?

None of this is your fault. Your father and I have some issues to work through.



Please don't shout at each other, okay?

Okay.



Are you going to break up?  
Are both of you going to leave me?



Oh Ting...



We will always be here for you.



Maybe we  
need to see  
a counsellor  
to work through  
our issues and  
guide us in  
supporting Ting  
through all  
this...

Yah...



Have you  
heard of **Trauma-**  
**Informed Care?**

Did you know that the impact of a child's  
traumatic stress can last well  
beyond childhood?

Hi, I'm Diana.  
I work at Epworth's  
Centre for Positive  
Recovery.

**Diana Koh**

Practitioner of Trauma-Focused Cognitive  
Behaviour Therapy (TF-CBT)

and Functional Family Therapy (FFT)

Epworth's Centre for Positive Recovery

What you have just read is a fictional story inspired by the case of a child who started to experience physical ailments each time she heard her parents arguing loudly and fiercely.

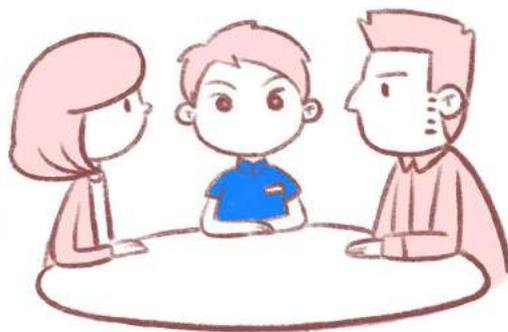


The fears also manifested in other ways, which affected the child's behaviour in school.



For the purposes of this simplified story, we introduced a school counsellor character. In the real-life case, it was more difficult to pinpoint the reason for the child's distress. It took a few months of counselling work with the family at a counselling centre to identify the root cause.

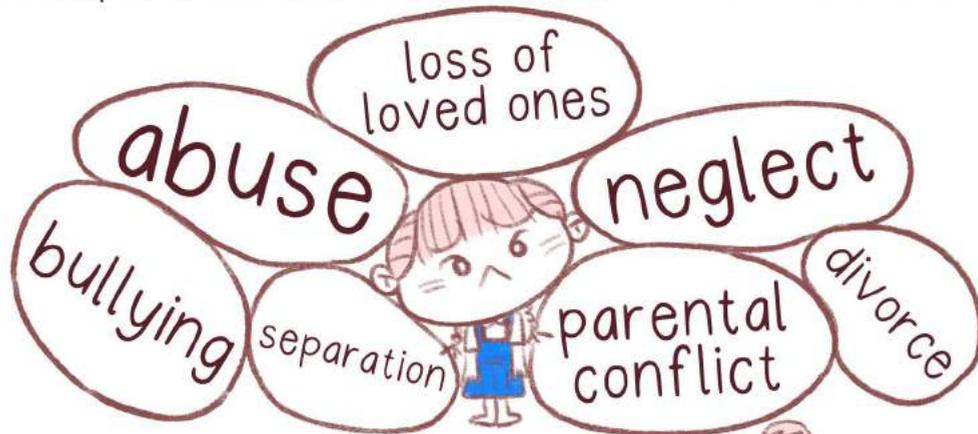
The counsellor also worked closely with the child's parents to help them to understand how their conflict affected their child, so that they could support their child through the process of recovery from such **traumatic stress**.



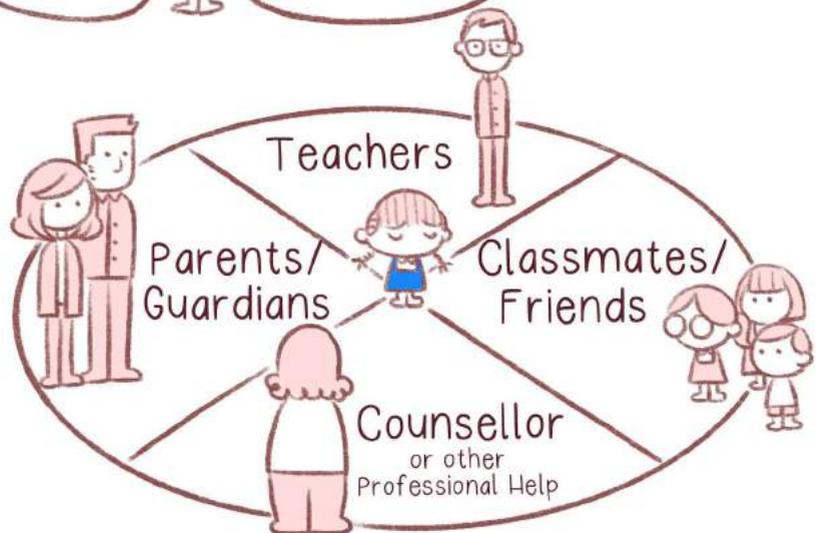
What  
can  
cause



A child can experience **traumatic stress** for various reasons eg.



It takes a circle of  
care to support a  
child going through  
**traumatic stress**.



# How might a child show signs of being under **traumatic stress**?

A child of 6-12 years old may experience some of these symptoms:

## MENTAL

- Loss of interest in activities which he/she used to enjoy
- Develops unfounded fears and anxieties

## PHYSICAL

- Complains of physical ailments eg. headaches, stomach aches
- Loss of appetite
- Experiences nightmares or other sleep problems



- Feels depressed, emotionally numb, or guilty over a traumatic event
- Becomes moody, disruptive or angry

## EMOTIONAL

- Struggles with school and homework
- Drifts apart from family and friends ie. social disconnection

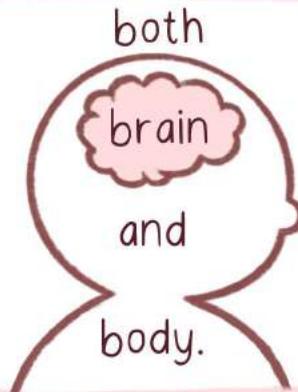
## SOCIAL



How does **trauma** affect a child's development?



Early childhood **trauma** can affect the holistic development of a child -



The brain has many different parts with different functions.

When a child's brain is exposed to early stressful experiences,

the stress response system gets stuck in the 'ON' position.



When feeling stressed, a child who has experienced **trauma** may face difficulty in applying

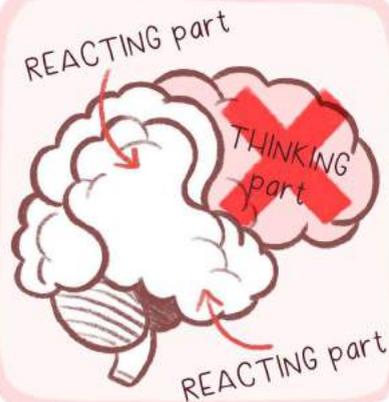
- ~~problem-solving~~
- ~~planning~~
- ~~decision-making skills;~~

and may respond involuntarily to the stressful situation.



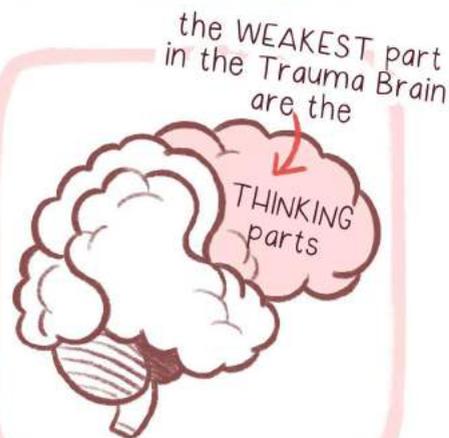
The child may react by going into **Fight, Flight, Freeze** or **Fawn**.

This may impair the 'Thinking Parts', and the 'Reacting Parts' become in charge.



This is why common behavioural management approaches may not always work

as they rely on the 'Thinking Parts'.



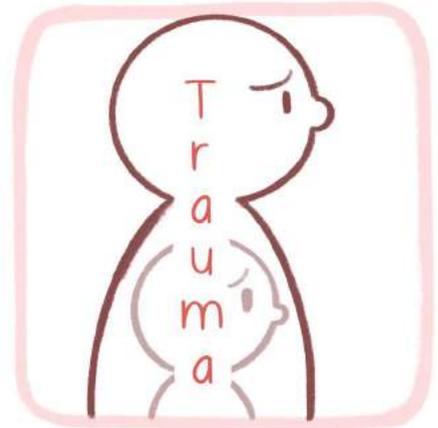
The child can be calmer when the right **behavioural**

and **emotional** approaches are applied at the early stages of stress.



A trusted adult can be with the child to calm his/her emotions and help him/her work through changes.

You can't **outgrow Trauma**. But recovery from trauma is possible over time and with treatment.



You can learn **Your**



to cope with **Trauma**



## How does Epworth's Centre for Positive Recovery help?

Epworth's Centre for Positive Recovery (CPR) provides therapeutic support to children and adolescents between 6-18 years old, as well as their caregivers in their mental well-being.

In particular, CPR specializes in helping those affected by trauma.

CPR has a multi-disciplinary team of psychologists, counsellors, and social workers.

Specialised programmes and services provided include:

- Trauma treatment care for children and adolescents
- Family Therapy and Individual Counselling
- Parenting for Caregivers
- Trauma-informed intervention for foster families

The centre is located at Blk 472, Jurong West Street 41.

Epworth Community Services is a non-profit charitable organisation (with IPC status). It provides quality programmes and services at subsidised rates to disadvantaged children from lower income families. Read more at <https://www.epworth.sg/>

Here's a few helpful resources for children and families facing trauma:

### **Trauma Network for Children Website**

This website provides information about psychological trauma for children, caregivers, and professionals. The Trauma Network for Children (TNC) is a joint collaboration between the Psychosocial Trauma Support Service at KK Women's and Children's Hospital (KKH) and Temasek Foundation. It aims to enhance the capability of the Singapore community in providing psychosocial support to children, youth, and their families after crises or traumatic events.

[www.childtraumanetwork.sg](http://www.childtraumanetwork.sg)

### **KK Women's and Children's Hospital Website / KKH Special Delivery Article**

This article provides tips and advice on building resilience in children and adolescents with psychosomatic symptoms, with weblinks to additional educational resources.

<https://www.kkh.com.sg/news/patient-care/building-resilience-in-children-and-adolescents-with-psychosomatic-symptoms>

### **Tinkle Friend**

A general helpline and online chat that provides support, advice, and information to lonely and distressed primary-school-aged children 7 to 12 years old, especially in situations when their parents or main caregivers are unavailable.

<https://tinklefriend.sg/>

## **We wish to extend our gratitude to:**

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and

- Wong-Baker FACES Foundation  
for granting permission to reproduce the Wong-Baker FACES®  
Pain Rating Scale in this book with no licensing required.

## The faces behind the words and illustrations!



Emily Lim-Leh is an award-winning author of over 40 children's books. She lost her voice to Spasmodic Dysphonia, a rare voice disorder, and was really, really distressed by it. She recovered and has been blessed with a new God-given voice in writing. Emily blogs at <https://mummumstheword.wordpress.com/>



Josef Lee tells stories through pictures. His collection of comics and picture-stories about Life, Love & Stuff can be viewed at <https://joseflee.wordpress.com/>

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