



# epworth moments

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Epworth Community Services  
February/ March 2024

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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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## Editor

Tan Khye Suan

## Production Editors

Abigail Chua, Dawn Lee

## Contributors

Esther Che, Liu Jean Yee, Quek Li Koon, Angie Cham, Felicia Lim, Ruth Tsoi, Nicolette Lien

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## CONNECT WITH US

☎ 6562 2211 / 6569 8038

☎ 6715 3737

✉ community.relations@epworth.sg

🌐 www.epworth.sg

📘 EpworthCommunityServices

📷 epworth.sg

📍 **Epworth Community Services**

Blk 106 Bukit Batok Central #01-217


Singapore 650106

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# ED's Message

## We Always Say: Change Is A Constant But How Prepared Are We For Change?

*By Tan Khye Suan, Executive Director*



All of us love the “status quo”. If life is smooth sailing, where whatever happens everyday is predictable, we feel comfortable. We feel that we are in control as we know how events will unfold. Hence, we do not feel stressed.

In today's world, we realise that changes happen more often than we expect. This is because of changes happening around us: economic uncertainties; geo-political changes; climate changes; rapid technological changes; evolving work conditions and environment; complex and transient human relationships; etc. What makes it worse is the end point of any change is likely to be unclear and unpredictable. This is the reality of living in the VUCA world: Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous. Hence, our mental well-being is constantly being challenged.

We often tell each other, “Change is a constant.” But do we internalise this fact for ourselves? How prepared are we when change happens in our lives? Will we be able to manage it? Are we able to cope?

Here are some suggestions:

- 1) Accept that there will be changes in our lives
- 2) Decide how you want to deal with changes
- 3) Prepare yourself for changes
- 4) Build strong familial relationships
- 5) Be socially engaged
- 6) Look after our physical health

### Accept that there'll be change in our lives

While many of us agree that “change is a constant”, many of us struggle when we need to deal with change. This is because, we naturally like stability and constancy. We have to establish a mindset of acceptance that we will have to deal with changes in our lives; and, more so in a VUCA world.

### Decide how you want to deal with changes

When we come face-to-face with situations that require us to deal with change, we often feel very powerless and hapless. Not dealing with the changes only increase these feelings of being powerless and hapless. We need to know that we can choose how we deal with changes.

We need not be “swept” under the tide of changes. We still have choices. We can decide if:

- 1) How does this change affect my present way of life?
- 2) Is it necessary for us to deal with the change?
- 3) How does it affect my end goal in life?
- 4) If we have to deal with the change, what options do we have?
- 5) Decide and make the necessary choices!

We should not be simply overwhelmed by emotions. We need to stay calm to evaluate the situation and decide how to work on the changes affecting us.

## Prepare yourself for change



We need not allow changes to take us by surprise. Very often, we can see signals of impending changes. These signals usually grow in intensity before it hits us. Hence, if we have a mindset that accepts that “change is a constant”, we should make plans in preparation for these changes. Practical preparations may include training and adjusting our lifestyles. We can also prepare ourselves mentally, psychologically and emotionally.

## Build strong familial relationships

We often hear this adage: “No man (or woman) is an island”. We all need emotional support, love and care, and the family will be a great source of this support. Hence, we should make effort and time to build and reinforce our relationship with family members.

## Be socially engaged

Humans are social beings! Beyond the family, we should be engaged in the community we live in. Good neighbourliness, with friendly interactions, is a wonderful support for our mental and social well-being. We should have groups of like-minded friends to spend time with, doing activities that are of common interest.



## Look after our physical health

While we embrace changes, we may invest inordinate amount of time to manage the change. We need to look after our physical health as well. Hence, we need to set aside time to exercise to maintain our physical health. We must set enough rest and proper sleep every day! We should also make wise choices to eat healthily. It is important to remember that our mental well-being is affected by our physical health! We cannot compartmentalise our lives assuming that mental and physical health are mutually exclusive.

This message is too short to be exhaustive in how we can manage change. However, I hope it gives us some ideas on how to deal with changes that are affecting us. Do find out more about how we can improve our lives in the face of changes! If necessary, seek professional help.



# WHAT ARE THE MOST COMMON TYPES OF LEARNING DIFFICULTIES CHILDREN ENCOUNTER?



*By Esther Che, Education Psychologist, Epworth Literacy*

At Epworth Literacy, we identify and provide assistance to a diverse range of children with various learning challenges in reading and writing. This often manifests as having literacy difficulties, where they struggle with reading and writing demands in mainstream schools. Many of them could also have language impairments, which affect their understanding of vocabulary, as well as written and spoken language. We also see some children with Mild Intellectual Disability who are still attending mainstream schools.

Apart from these conditions, we also support many children with attention and social difficulties, such as those with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) or Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Such conditions will directly impact the children's ability to learn and perform in the mainstream school setting. Children with ADHD often find it difficult to sustain enough attention and focus, to learn well in the mainstream school setting.

Although the percentage of children needing additional support is increasing (5% in 2014 to 7% in 2018), many children with such learning challenges are often undiagnosed. Therefore, at Epworth Literacy, we provide intervention for children who face literacy and behavioral challenges, with or without a diagnosis.

## How do learning difficulties affect children in mainstream schools and later on in life?

In a meritocratic society like Singapore, there is still a very strong emphasis on academic achievements. Having learning challenges often lead to poor academic performance. This may in turn, affect the child's access to future opportunities and progression; including access to institutes of higher learning or even career opportunities in future. Although the education landscape is gradually changing to be more accepting of diverse needs and talents, the entire system is still largely based on academic achievements. This proves to be an uphill battle especially for children with learning challenges.

Besides the direct impact of poor academic performance, the indirect impacts of having learning challenges are even more debilitating, lasting beyond their academic life. These include negative implications on motivation, self-perception/ esteem, and social interactions. Having to struggle and often not "making the mark" affects the child's motivation and confidence in their own abilities.

In many instances, children would give up or even avoid tasks that they think are difficult. Poor self-perception and esteem may also lead to mental health issues and trauma throughout their lives if these issues are not addressed early. Socially, children with learning challenges are also often criticised, misunderstood, and sometimes, even bullied.

Given the repercussions of learning challenges, Epworth Literacy wants to play a part in changing the child's trajectory in life!

## What is the significance / importance of intervention sessions at Epworth Literacy?

Academically, we employ an evidence-based intervention approach to teach literacy skills. The approach is systematic and multisensory, catering to different types of learners to build up the reading and writing skills of the child. In this way, we are teaching our students to learn to read, so that they can read to learn. Therefore, the intervention helps build the fundamental skills required for learning throughout life.

At Epworth Literacy, our work goes beyond teaching them academic skills, as we also strive to create an environment that is safe for the children to grow and improve. The intervention sessions at Epworth Literacy are built on a safe space where the children can experience success through careful scaffolding. Students are also encouraged for their efforts instead of just achievements; and to be able to learn at their own pace. This mitigates some of the negative effects of having learning difficulties. The safe environment that we create also helps encourage and motivate the child to develop grit and perseverance to overcome their challenges they might face in their academic journey.

Furthermore, we collaborate with parents, caregivers, and schools through open communication and Parent-Teacher-Conferences, allowing us to have a more holistic and in-depth understanding of the child's needs and progress.

## How does the work of LC help children with learning challenges gain confidence? Are there any scientific studies to support that?

Many children with learning challenges lose confidence (have poor self-concept) due to the negative experiences they face with regards to learning and academic achievement. Therefore, the work of Epworth Literacy attempts to moderate these negative experiences by helping the children bridge their learning gap and increase their positive experiences surrounding learning. When children can experience success and are encouraged for their growth instead of focusing on their achievements alone, they start to develop better self-perceptions, thereby increasing confidence.

From our biannual progress monitoring, more than 90% of the students on our Literacy and Behavioural Programme showed improvements in reading and/or spelling.

The safe environment that Epworth Literacy creates also plays an important role in helping children develop better self-perception. Various research has consistently shown that positive relationship with teachers has a positive influence on the learning habits and academic aspirations of children (Burchinal et al., 2002). Since positive experiences have been shown to be correlated with positive self-concepts, Epworth Literacy is intentional about creating such positive experiences for our children.



# A BLUEPRINT FOR FAMILY HARMONY



By Liu Jean Yee, Social Worker, Epworth Family Welfare

A thriving family embraces a united purpose and works towards a common goal together. Through assigned roles and a collaborative spirit, we can build a stronger family unit and unlock each individual's potential.

## Setting Realistic Goals

Setting goals harmonises family values and priorities. Having a common goal encourages teamwork, mutual support, and communication between family members.

When a family member struggles to complete a goal, other family members can provide comfort and support, helping to build confidence, resilience, and bonds among the family.

If you're looking for ways to create shared goals for your family, here's a simple method to help kick-start your journey.

## S.M.A.R.T Goal Setting

S.M.A.R.T goals help us to convert our expectations into actional goals. Here is how we can do it:



### Specific

Be specific about the role each family member plays. This makes the goal clearer and more attainable.

### Measurable

Define how you would track progress and success. It could be measured through a numerical scale, or a specific result.

### Achievable

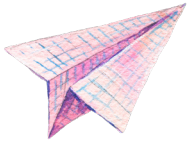
By setting small attainable goals, it helps to keep family members motivated to achieve them.

### Relevant

Consider how your goal is relevant, and can benefit each family member.

### Time-bound

Have a timeline to keep everyone on track. This can also provide a reference for appropriate times to check-in with each other.



It is crucial to bear in mind that establishing family goals do not guarantee immediate improvements or successes. Thus, giving ample time for positive changes in your family dynamics and relationships is vital. Such changes may only become apparent through ongoing and consistent application of efforts over time.

# LI KOON'S 20 YEARS OF MAKING A DIFFERENCE



**By Quek Li Koon, Manager, Epworth Foster Care**

Twenty years ago, I started work at Epworth Community Services, formerly known as Methodist Children and Youth Centre.

I remembered going for the interview and thinking to myself that the workplace was quite a distance from my home. It was, however, a short walking distance from the MRT once I reached the nearest station.

I also recalled that when I first started work, my colleagues and I had to purchase different items such as curtains, chairs and cushions to set up the newly renovated office space.

On top of my duties as a Senior Social Worker, I had the opportunity to assist in teaching a few students in the earlier days when the Literacy Centre was first set up. There were some days when I even got to help out in a Secondary school to take care of a drop-in cabin. I interacted with the students who dropped by after school to chat and play board games.

## "Triple P (Positive Parenting Program)"

In the area of parenting, we conducted and promoted the community programme "Triple P (Positive Parenting Programme)", which is an evidence-based parenting programme. I was involved in liaising with Triple P International for their trainers to train specific professionals in Singapore for a few years. In addition, I had the opportunity to provide counselling, conduct trainings, talks and workshops. These were valuable experiences that entail working with clients from different age groups with different backgrounds.

Through conducting supervised sessions for foster children and their natural parents, it deepened my understanding of certain challenges faced by foster children, caregivers and parents. For a period, our organisation was also engaged by the Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF) to provide training for foster parents and to run support groups for them.







**2002 OFFICE!**

## Singapore's First Fostering Agency

It was in September 2015 when we were appointed by MSF to set up the first fostering agency, and I recalled that there was much to learn and to put in place as a new agency. It marked an exciting new chapter for us. Setting up Singapore's first fostering agency was indeed a wonderful opportunity that opened many doors where we can touch lives, help children, youths, their foster parents and caregivers in the fostering journey.

Looking back, Epworth Community Services has provided me with various opportunities to learn, grow and develop. It is a great place to work alongside my fellow colleagues and to make positive changes to the lives of others.



**2006 FAMILY DAY**



# A DECADE OF HOPE AT HOMESWEETHOME



*By Angie Cham, Senior Manager*

On 12th Jan 2024, HomeSweetHome celebrated its 10th Birthday.

It was a nostalgic event, albeit belated. As someone who was involved in setting up HSH 10 years ago, my heart was filled with gratitude seeing how far we have come. This was a milestone worthy of celebration!

Fast forward 9 years: things are looking up! There are still challenges, but staff are now better trained and equipped and able to manage the boys who are admitted for treatment.

## Our Milestones:

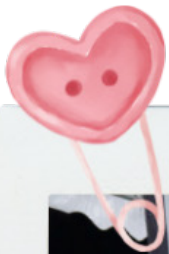
1. Consistently remained a licensed Children and Young Persons (CYP) Home (licensed by the Ministry of Social and Family Development) including the recent 24-month licence in January 2024
2. Halal-certified kitchen
3. Achieved TST certification for high number of staff
4. Maintained positive presence in the Children's Home sector as a Therapeutic Group Home
5. Ability to manage clients with different presentations and needs
6. Good staff retention due to supportive working environment
7. Being consistently ranked by former staff as one of the best workplaces



On that note, I would like to extend my appreciation to every one of our staff who persevered in HSH. Their contributions to the 41 lives who graduated from HSH and their families, the tenacity to overcome obstacles, the dedication to impart life skills to the residents, as well as to protect and care for the boys, deserve a salute from all of us.



Social work is demanding, especially working with clients who have experienced trauma. The pain, fulfilment and joy that our HSH team experienced reminds us that it is important to care for ourselves, so that we can continue 'to help every boy restore the ability to form appropriate bonds with loved ones, recover from the hurt suffered and be renewed with optimism for a better future'.



**YEARS OF HARD WORK**

# CHANGEMAKERS SPOTLIGHT: EPWORTH VOLUNTEERS IN ACTION!



*By Nicolette Lien, Community Relations Executive, Community Relations*

During the December holidays, Epworth brought together various volunteer groups like Recruit Express and River Valley Girl Guides to run festive programmes for the children from Literacy and Student Care Centres.

## Christmas Carnival by Recruit Express

Christmas arrived early at our literacy centres last year. Staff from Recruit Express presented an exciting Christmas-themed carnival for our students. Our students had a go at the bouncy castle, took part in various Christmas-themed station games, brought home memories from a photo-booth, and even got to meet Santa and Rudolph!

We'll let the pictures do the talking as they sure did have a jolly good time!



## Well-being Workshop by River Valley Girl Guides

We recognise that self-care is, and has always been, an important aspect of our overall well-being, and practising it at a young age will bring long-term benefits. Hence, River Valley Girl Guides planned an interactive 4-day "Well-being" workshop, for our Student Care students.

A group of them came down to our Student Care Centres, which involved hands-on learning through physical games such as charades, and art and craft. Some of these games incorporated the use of technology. Through these activities, our students were taught ways to cope with stress, and how to monitor their overall well-being.

A huge "Thank You" to all our volunteers who have partnered with us in our work. Your dedication will go a long way in making a positive and lasting impact in the lives of the beneficiaries we serve!





## A LITTLE KINDNESS WILL CHANGE MY STORY

Sharing just \$20 a month  
will help build a better  
future for many!

## JOIN US AS A RESILIENT CHAMP AND CHANGE LIVES

To ensure we have an unhindered stream of resources to help our beneficiaries regardless of the ebb and flow of economic tides, we would like to invite you on our quest to help at-risk children, youths, and families as one of our 750 Resilient Champs by pledging.

Make a Monthly Pledge:  
[give.asia](https://give.asia)




<https://give.asia/charity/epworth-community-services>

Find out more:  
[epworth.sg](http://epworth.sg)



[www.epworth.sg/get-involved/become-a-resilient-champ](http://www.epworth.sg/get-involved/become-a-resilient-champ)

Your giving is eligible for 2.5 times tax exemptions.

 : [community.relations@epworth.sg](mailto:community.relations@epworth.sg)

 : 9645 8491



# DIAMONDS IN THE ROUGH: UNMASKING CRYSTAL'S STORY



*By Nicolette Lien, Community Relations Executive, Community Relations*

We recently had the privilege of having a singer-song writer named Crystal, who ran a lyric-writing workshop for the residents of Epworth's HomeSweetHome. She was diagnosed with a rare condition called Spasmodic Dysphonia (SD) in April 2011 which affected her ability to sing.

In our interview with Crystal, we found out how she turned her adversities into strengths, to positively impact the lives of underprivileged children through creative means!

## 1 How did you become a singer/songwriter?

My dad's love for singing played a huge part of in influencing my life. Being sensitive by nature, I enjoyed expressing my emotions in songs and later found confidence to pursue music as a career.



## 2 What were some major challenges you have faced along the way?

I lost my voice to SD in April 2011. SD caused the voice to have a "strangled" quality. It is probably every singer's nightmare. It was also mine as I was no longer able to sing at gigs and social gatherings with friends.

## 3 How has that changed you as a person?

I had a mentor who encouraged me to continue singing and writing songs. One day, she shared with me about a bible story of a barren lady who found the strength to sing, with me. The story described how this barren lady was akin to an ugly city, rebuilt with precious gems. Inspired by this story, I wrote a song titled "There'll Be Spring" and shared it with others who were also going through tough times.



## 4 Why did you choose to work with underprivileged children?

The growing years can be tough. For many underprivileged children, difficult circumstances like the loss of a loved one or having painful situations like violent assaults on them have made it even more challenging for them to grow and develop well. I feel that music and stories are vital means to engage our children as they grow.



## 5 Through this programme, what do you hope to achieve with HomeSweetHome?

It can be challenging for children living with trauma to believe that they have positive qualities. Thus, I would like to help them out and change their perspectives. I am grateful that “Diamonds on the Street” can collaborate closely with HomeSweetHome to provide a safe space for the children to discover their strengths. We do this by first asking the children to share about their superheroes’ strengths. As the sessions progressed, the children discovered that like their heroes (who also go through big changes to uncover strengths), they too can uncover their strengths during difficult times.

Through discussions, the staff at HomeSweetHome shared that the children did not have many positive experiences with writing and are afraid to even begin writing. As this programme invites them to create lyrics (about their strengths), they are encouraged to write without a fear of failure.

## 6 What kind of impact do you think you are making in the lives of the children you’ve come across?

Through music and storytelling, I hope to open safe spaces for the children to engage with their difficult emotions and thoughts. These children can get to explore significant relationships and life events that affect them by engaging in guided reflections. It also helps them to discover that they are not alone in their journey.

## There'll Be Spring

During the time of writing “There’ll Be Spring”, I realised how important it was to have hope in tough times. I also discovered how cathartic it was to let out difficult emotions through songwriting and how songwriting allowed me to connect with others who were also struggling. With this conviction, I later founded “Diamonds on the Street” – a music and storytelling collective committed to spreading hope through creative learning experiences. Give it a listen!



# FROM POCKETS TO PURPOSE: TEEKAY MARINE'S PARTNERSHIP WITH OUR LITERACY CENTRE

*By Ruth Tsoi, Community Relations Executive, Community Relations*

During the end-of-year holiday season in 2023, we had the honour of hosting representatives from Teekay Marine (Singapore) at our Literacy Centre in Jurong West, to celebrate the achievements of six students. This marks the third year of our partnership with Teekay Marine as the sponsor for our students' Literacy Intervention Programme fees, ensuring that our children do not fall behind in school.



Their support has been immense, benefitting the children and their families, both financially and academically. At the event, the representatives from Teekay Marine presented a skit to introduce their marine services, sharing their 50 years in marine transport, explaining how their large ships transport energy resources around the world, the ship-to-ship services they provide and their vital role in the maritime industry. As a token of appreciation, our students have created an art piece of the Teekay Marine tanker. This represented our gratitude for Teekay Marine's help to carry our students and their families through their learning journey!





# FROM POCKETS TO PURPOSE: XCL ACADEMIES' HEARTFELT CONTRIBUTION TO THE GIVING TREE INITIATIVE



*By Ruth Tsoi, Community Relations Executive, Community Relations*



We are grateful to XCL World Academy and XCL American Academy for their remarkable support in the Giving Tree initiative for the second year! A heartfelt “Thank You” to the entire XCL community for the generous donation of 215 gifts, fulfilling the wishes of our beneficiaries and illuminating this festive season. It was a privilege to welcome Ms Tammy Murphy, the Head of School, alongside the dedicated students and staff. They not only delivered these gifts to our various departments, but also visited our Literacy Centre in Bukit Batok and personally presented the gifts to the boys at HomeSweetHome. Their acts of kindness brightened this holiday season with warmth and joy, touching the lives of our beneficiaries.

## You can touch someone's life too!

**1 Jan - 31 Mar 2024**  
Join us in supporting children  
with learning challenges

**SOARING**  
WITH THE LEARNING CHAMPS

*\*All donations for this campaign will be  
matched by the Tote Board.*

# WORK HARD, PLAY HARDER: A STAFF COHESION TO REMEMBER!



*By Felicia Lim, Senior Community Relations Executive, Community Relations*

On the evening of 8th December, Epworth staff came together for a dazzling staff cohesion and appreciation event 'Colours Extravaganza'

held at Novotel At Stevens. The night was filled with the spirit of camaraderie. It was a memorable experience for everyone.



The fun kicked off with a delightful cocktail reception, setting the tone for the evening. As the staff made their way into the dinner hall, they were greeted with a lively ambience and door gifts generously sponsored by Kskin.

We played the bingo game – an ice-breaking frenzy where staff roamed the hall in search of fellow colleagues matching the characteristics described on the bingo sheets.

Mr Tan Khye Suan, Executive Director of Epworth Community Services, then warmly welcomed everyone at the event. Following that, former Board Member, Mr Robert Lim, said an opening prayer and gave thanks to God for his blessings through the year. This sets the tone for an evening of gratitude and celebration.

Thereafter, there was a video showing the highlights of Epworth in 2023. The room was filled with pride as we reflected on Epworth's remarkable achievements.

This was followed by a round of Epworth trivia through Kahoot to test our staff's knowledge on Epworth, and the much-anticipated "Epworth's Got Talent" which featured three categories: the longest breath, the fastest face, and the loudest feet clap. The room erupted with laughter and cheer as staff representatives from each table showed off their unique talents.



Board members joined in the fun too.

We screened a video featuring our Heads of Departments expressing words of encouragement for their teams. These were done through skits, songs, and even a rap! The creativity and camaraderie on display left everyone inspired and motivated. There was even a contest which crowned Mary Ng and Stanley Quek as Mr & Ms Epworth 2023, who won the hearts of their colleagues through a series of games and rounds of voting!

The event continued with long service awards, honouring dedicated individuals who have been with Epworth through the years. We recognised Cham Angie, Anson Poh, Nicolette Lien, Ezekiel Jeevan, Lilian Seow, Cassandra Lee, Jovian Wong, and Li Koon for their unwavering commitment.



Our Chairman, Mr Benjamin Tan, shared heartfelt words of encouragement and raised a toast to the collective success of Epworth. The atmosphere was filled with gratitude and appreciation for the efforts of every individual who contributed to the success of our organisation.

The grand finale was a Mass Dance, uniting the entire Epworth family in joyous moves. The hall was filled with laughter and music as everyone got in line and grooved together, marking the perfect end to an extraordinary night.

As 2023 came to a close with this unforgettable evening, it was evident that the staff cohesion and appreciation event had been a resounding success. Fun, camaraderie, and a shared sense of accomplishment were felt, making it a night to be cherished by all.





# 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](mailto:admin@epworth.sg).*



[giving.sg](https://giving.sg)



UEN: T08SS0123D

## 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](http://www.epworth.sg) or contact us at [community.relations@epworth.sg](mailto:community.relations@epworth.sg).*