

epworth moments

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November 2023



Effective Communication

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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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Reflections for 2023

ED'S MESSAGE: WHEN YOUR GIVING CAN BE LIFE-GIVING

We often think that the work of doctors is to save lives. However, we do not think that the work of social workers is to save lives too. Sadly, the life-saving work of a social worker is seldom recognised.

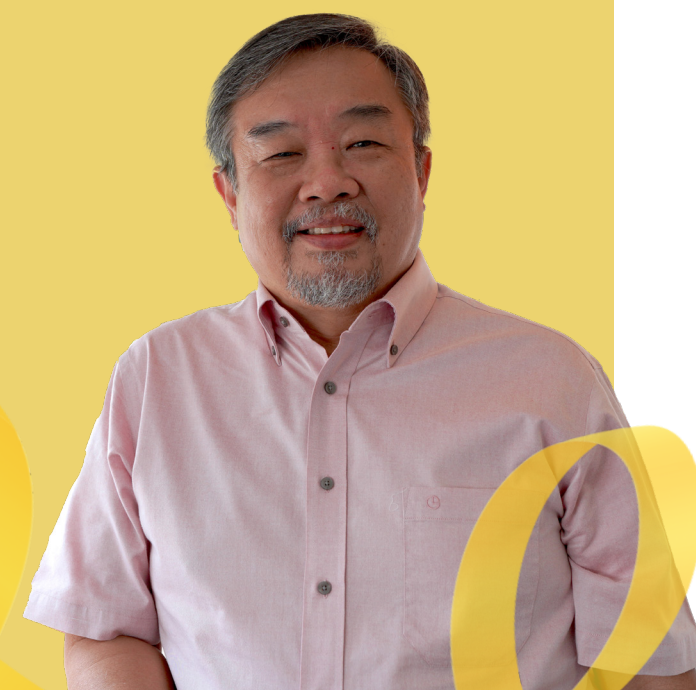
In my message entitled "Safe to Thrive" in the May 2023 Epworth Moments issue, I talked about Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). Studies have shown that a person with multiple experiences of adverse childhood experiences will be beset with many health, psychological and social issues in adulthood. To many, it will seem remotely possible that adverse childhood experiences can culminate in death; and, at an early age. Let me share a real story:

In early October, I attended the funeral wake of a young man, Charles (not his real name) who took his own life at 26 years old. I had a brief encounter with Charles when he was 16 years old, when we tried to help him. Charles had severe trauma having gone through several adverse childhood experiences at a young age. He was physically abused, even when he was a toddler. His parents were divorced, after an acrimonious marriage fraught with frequent quarrels and violence. His mother was not able to cope with looking after him and his siblings. They had to be sent to foster families.

Charles did not have a good experience with his foster families. He was emotionally unstable, with poor attachment to caregivers. Because of his past experiences, he was very disruptive, angry, violent and ran away frequently. He was placed in an institution for his safety. In his teenage years, he joined a secret society and became a gangster. Soon, he started using drugs.

Despite being put in institutions for treatment and care, Charles did not recover from the trauma that had resulted from adverse childhood experiences. After his last stint in prison, Charles wanted to change but found it difficult to do so. Because of his poor education and bad past, he could not get a job. Gang members kept enticing him to go back into crime and illegal activities, which he did not want to. So, in frustration, he decided to end it all. He jumped off a building and killed himself.

In the story of Charles, because of multiple severe adverse childhood experiences, the end outcome was extreme. But many children and youths do not realise that they have adverse childhood experiences. These experiences affect their normal functioning in adulthood.



Let me give you two more common examples:

Matthew (not his real name) came from a broken family. His parents were divorced. He had seen how unhappy they were and how they frequently quarrelled at home. He was often made the object of their quarrels and his mother often told him that he was a burden to her. All these adverse childhood experiences were traumatic. In adulthood, Matthew found it hard to manage relationships. Although he got married to his long-time girlfriend who was long-suffering throughout their relationship, Matthew did not want to have children. He was fearful that his own marriage will eventually fail.

In another example: when Selena (not her real name) was in primary school, she was bubbly, fun-loving and had many friends. However, when she was in Secondary Two, she was bullied by a group of classmates because she was short and chubby. They called her names; ostracised her; and, made fun of her in front of other schoolmates. She was often laughed at in school. These were traumatic adverse childhood experiences that deeply affected Selena. As she grew older, she gave up caring for her appearance. She goes to work looking dowdy. She has difficulties making friends and is reclusive, even on the weekends.

Both Matthew and Selena need not go through adulthood carrying the trauma that they experienced in their childhood. These traumatic experiences can be addressed with the right therapy and support. They can then experience normal functioning in their adulthood, and live a full and meaningful life!

Hence, as Epworth journeys towards becoming a Centre of Excellence for Trauma Care in Singapore, we will be expanding our work to build awareness on the impact of adverse childhood experiences. This involves, developing more programmes and services that prevent adverse childhood experiences and, expanding our work on early intervention to help those with adverse childhood experiences.

In the spirit of giving this Christmas, think about how your giving can be impactful and life-giving. I hope that you will consider supporting Epworth Community Services as more people come forward to seek help for their trauma because of adverse childhood experiences.

Your giving can be life-giving!

**By Tan Khye Suan,
Executive Director**



EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION TIPS FOR FAMILIES

By Feng Yi, Social Worker, Epworth Family Welfare

Effective communication is the cornerstone of healthy and harmonious family relationships. It is hard to overstate the importance of being heard and understood – being heard and understood nurtures trust between family members and increases collective willingness to resolve issues. The opposite is also true – feeling misunderstood and ignored may cause us to refrain from sharing our thoughts, often leaving disagreements unresolved.

Firstly, to convey understanding and demonstrate that we remember relevant information is to practise active listening.



Active listening involves the following:

1. Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing involves using our own words to state what the speaker has shared. This allows us to check if we understood their perspectives accurately and gives them the opportunity to elaborate or correct any misunderstanding.

2. Asking Open-Ended Questions

Open-ended questions are questions that require the speaker to provide more details beyond a simple 'yes' or 'no'. Asking open-ended questions shows genuine curiosity towards what our family members are sharing and provides them with the space to share more comprehensively.

3. Reflecting Feelings

Beyond listening to the content, it is equally important to "listen" to the speaker's underlying feelings and reflect them. For instance, sighing could be a signal that the speaker is feeling down. Reflecting this feeling to them allows them to feel seen and encourages them to share further.

4. Providing Affirmations (Verbal and Non-Verbal)

Offering short, positive expressions of interest such as, "I see," and "Oh, tell me more" indicates our engagement in the conversation and motivates the speaker to elaborate further. Non-verbal affirmations such as nods, eye contact, and facing the speaker as they talk also helps to feel heard.



Secondly, speaking clearly and respectfully creates a safe environment for family members to express their disagreements and love for one another. One way to do so is by using 'I'-statements to help us focus on communicating our feelings regarding the listener's actions. Using 'I'-statements help the listener to better understand what is said and prevents accusatory statements.

An example of an 'I'-statement looks like this:

I feel worried whenever you don't answer my calls when you're outside because I'm afraid you might be in danger. I hope you can respond to my call so I know you're safe.

There are 4 parts to an 'I'-statement:

1. **Statement of emotion**
2. **Event/Behavior that caused the emotion**
3. **Reason for that emotion**
4. **Action needed from the other party**

It is important to bear in mind that communicating effectively with your family members takes time, effort, and consistent practice. Putting these tips into practice might feel foreign or awkward initially, and it is perfectly fine to practice and get used to one tip before moving on to the next one, instead of attempting all of them at once.

TRANSFORMATIVE LESSONS LEARNED FROM TRAUMA- INFORMED PRACTICE.

By Chong Yeong May, Senior Counsellor, Centre for Positive Recovery

People around me often perceive trauma as a phenomenon that can profoundly affect an individual's life. However, trauma comes in various forms and is not limited to traumatic events such as physical, emotional or sexual abuse; or, domestic violence. Trauma can emerge from experiences like loss, separation, bullying, natural disasters, and other enduring stressors with intergenerational implications. This includes factors such as poverty, racism and illness; including the recent challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic.

There are no definitive boundaries to what can be considered a traumatic experience. It can affect individuals regardless of their socio-economic status. Below are five guidelines from a trauma-informed lens that have guided me to respond more effectively to people in distress:



1. Recognising the Widespread Impact of Trauma

In my work with people who have experienced trauma, I realised that trauma can affect anyone, regardless of age, gender, or background. Trauma-informed practice emphasises the importance of recognising the prevalence of trauma. Acknowledging that others may have experienced trauma can encourage us to be more compassionate and understanding. We can also reduce the stigma around mental health issues by creating a more inclusive environment for healing.

2. Empathy and Active Listening

Empathy and active listening are indispensable tools to any trauma-informed practitioners. They create a safe and non-judgmental space for individuals to share their experiences. We can enhance our interpersonal relationships and communication skills by embracing these qualities. Genuine empathy and active listening allow us to connect with others at a deeper level, relate to their perspectives, and offer vital emotional support.

3. Recognising Resilience in Everyone

Trauma-informed practice recognises the inherent resilience of individuals. It emphasises that healing and growth are possible, even after experiencing trauma. Individuals are able to harness their strength and resilience when people around them provide support and tools for them to cope with their trauma. When we believe in the resilience of ourselves and others, we can face life's challenges with determination and a more positive outlook.

4. Power of Validation

Validation is a core principle of trauma-informed practice. When we validate others' experiences, we foster trust and emotional healing. Putting this practice in our interaction with others can profoundly impact our relationships. Validating someone's feelings and experiences is an act of empathy and support that promotes emotional growth and healing.

5. Setting Healthy Boundaries and Prioritising Self-Care

The importance of self-care and boundary-setting for overall well-being can never be emphasised enough. Establishing and maintaining boundaries is essential for maintaining mental and emotional well-being. By incorporating these principles into our lives, we can protect our health, nurture healthier relationships, and achieve greater balance and self-compassion.

Trauma-informed practice is a compassionate and comprehensive approach to support individuals who have experienced trauma. Although it is commonly associated with therapists and mental health professionals, the principles and lessons learnt from this practice are universal and relevant to everybody.

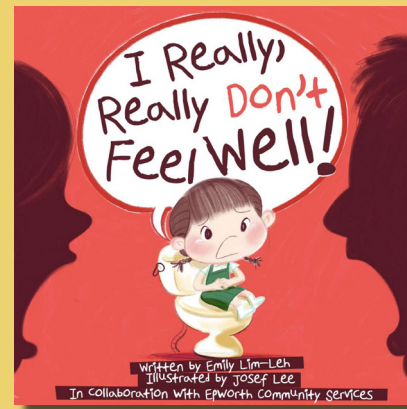


FREE E-BOOK: I REALLY, REALLY DON'T FEEL WELL

During the Children's Day weekend & World Mental Health Month in October, Epworth collaborated with **Author Emily Lim-Leh and Illustrator Josef Lee**, to produce a FREE e-book to raise awareness of children struggling with traumatic stress. We hope that our inspirational children's picture book will raise awareness that early detection and timely intervention can help children to cope better with distressing and traumatic events in their lives.

This e-book resource is produced as our voluntary community initiative in support of Epworth Community Services' work in early intervention and support services in trauma-informed care.

Together, we can look out for such children in our community and provide them the support that they need!



Download the FREE
e-book here:



'GRATITUDE' ART WORKSHOP: FOSTERING CREATIVITY AND BUILDING CONNECTIONS THROUGH CRAFT

By Felicia Lim, Senior Community Relations Executive, Community Relations

During the September holidays, a group of student volunteers from Ngee Ann Polytechnic organised an art workshop centred around the theme of 'Gratitude' for our Project Lightbulb (PLB) students.

The first-year Early Childhood Education student volunteers brought a diverse array of art supplies, allowing the PLB students to showcase their creativity and resourcefulness. The workshop commenced with the volunteers engaging the students in a thoughtful discussion about 'Gratitude'. They were

encouraged to express their understanding of gratitude and identify the people for whom they felt grateful for. Then, the students were introduced to the two crafts they would be working on: Felt Roses and Origami Bookmarks.

Under the guidance of the volunteers, each student meticulously cut along the marked lines of the felt fabric, shaping them into delicate roses. Some of the students also folded colourful construction paper into cone shapes, embellishing them with stickers and ribbons before placing their handmade flowers inside, creating interesting and pretty bouquets.

Following this, the students used origami paper, folding them into bookmarks that could easily be attached to the corners of book pages. They also used markers to add their personal touches to the bookmarks. The end result saw a collection of bookmarks that resembled animals and monsters!

We would like to express our appreciation to our dedicated volunteers who generously gave their time and fostered meaningful connections with our students. Your dedication had created a positive and enriching time for all involved. Thank you for making a positive impact in the lives of our students!

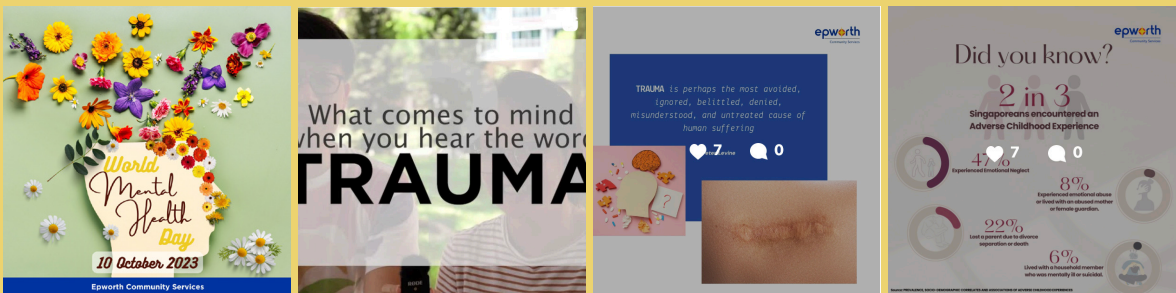


TRAUMA TO TRIUMPH CAMPAIGN

By Jonadab Phua, Community Relations Executive, Community Relations

Between August and October, we focused our fundraising efforts during the Trauma to Triumph campaign in support of Epworth's Centre for Positive Recovery (CPR). The campaign had two primary objectives: firstly, to raise awareness of CPR's community work, and secondly, to establish Epworth as a Centre of Excellence in Trauma Care. To achieve these goals, we tailored our social media content to be both educational and informative, not only about CPR but also about trauma in general. This encompassed sharing excerpts of research articles on trauma in young individuals as well as presenting trauma-related statistics specific to Singapore.

As part of the campaign, we ran a two-week micro-campaign in September, aptly named #mysafespace. It was to promote the regular practice of seeking retreat and solace in physical or mental spaces to enhance mental well-being. We collaborated with Scent by SIX, a local perfumery business, to sponsor prizes for a giveaway. This initiative garnered 40 entries, each sharing their personal interpretations of their safe space.



For the month of October, we launched a month-long organisational campaign named "Epworth #wecare." This campaign was designed to promote safe spaces within each office, providing employees with a place to unwind. Additionally, it featured department-wide activities that encouraged bonding and facilitated mental and/or physical relaxation. These initiatives were prominently featured on our social media platforms as part of the overarching Trauma to Triumph campaign.



Lastly, we produced three videos over the course of the campaign:

1. An interview video where three individuals conversed with our consultant and counsellor, Ms Mercy Teo-Tan, about their challenging childhood experiences.
2. A live-streamed panel discussion with experts, Dr Quah Saw Han and Ms Mercy Teo-Tan, discussing mental well-being in children.
3. A "Day in the Life of..." video, which followed a CPR staff member, documenting a typical workday.

These efforts aimed to increase awareness and educate the public about trauma, emphasising the importance of mental well-being. Our hope is for the ripple effect of this campaign to reach the lives of those involved and the community beyond.

NEVER TOO YOUNG TO START DOING GOOD: TWO STUDENTS' JOURNEY IN FUNDRAISING FOR EPWORTH THROUGH LITTLE HEARTS

By Felicia Lim,
Senior Community Relations Executive,
Community Relations

Recently, we had a successful fundraising event held by Little Hearts for Epworth! In this interview, Josephine and Sasha from Little Hearts shared more about their fundraising journey, shedding light on how individuals of any age can contribute meaningfully to the community. Their dedication and passion for helping underprivileged children is evident and we extend our heartfelt gratitude for their commitment to making a positive impact in the lives of the children under Epworth's care.



Q: Could you tell us more about Little Hearts?

Josephine: Little Hearts is a student-led service-learning initiative at our school. Our mission is to raise awareness and funds to support charitable organisations that aid underprivileged children. We aim to nurture a generation of compassionate leaders who take the initiative to serve the community. Our service group comprises four teams: finance, marketing, creative, and community. We collaborate to plan and host events that raise funds for the beneficiaries and promote the cause.

Sasha: The idea for Little Hearts came about when my mum introduced me to an organisation that runs a foster home in Nepal, assisting underprivileged children with housing and shelter. After making contact with them, I thought it was a good idea to start a school group that could contribute. Initially, it was just a small group of friends making care packages for the foster home in Nepal, but as we collaborated with them, we decided to work with other organisations that share similar causes. This led to the creation of Little Hearts as a Co-Curricular Activity (CCA) in school.

Q: Could you share a bit about yourselves and perhaps highlight some of your favorite hobbies or activities that you enjoy doing?

Josephine: I'm an executive at Little Hearts, currently attending SJI (St. Joseph's International), and I'm in grade 11.

Sasha: I'm Sasha, also an executive at Little Hearts, attending SJI, and we're both in grade 11.

Both: We used to play touch rugby together, which is how we became friends.

Q: Could you share some insights into how your team collaborates?

Josephine: Little Hearts holds weekly meetings where our four teams convene. The finance team discusses our budget goals and fundraising targets; the community team plans events; and the marketing team collaborates with the creative team on marketing and advocacy strategies, including poster designs. The strong team spirit makes our work efficient.

Q: Could you share more about the fundraising event you organised for Epworth?

Sasha: During our Little Hearts week, we organized a full week of fundraising events for Epworth. The first day featured a school carnival with ping pong games and snacks. The highlight was the "sponging" activity, where students could sponge teachers and even the principal! We got teachers to stand at a board with their heads sticking out, and students could attempt to throw wet sponges at their



faces.

Josephine: One funny incident occurred when my friend and I paid to sponge our biology teacher but accidentally poured a bucket of water on ourselves because we misread the options. It was a hilarious moment. We also hosted a charity sports match, and ran a food stall. We were able to raise a substantial amount of funds.

Q: What advice would you give to others who are looking to make a positive impact but are feeling uncertain about where to begin?

Josephine: Starting from scratch can be challenging. Our recommendation, and what we are most proud of, is to allocate specific roles within the group. Effective communication is essential, especially for students beginning their own service project. Seeking guidance from teachers is crucial, as it can provide valuable insights on the next steps.

Sasha: For those wanting to start something, the key is to be brave and not be afraid to take action for a good cause.

Q: What are some compelling reasons for young people like yourselves to start doing community work?

Sasha: I don't think there is an age where you have to do good; it is good to be empathetic and do kind acts. People need to be more aware and thoughtful of the community around them. If we have the resources to make someone's life a little bit better, then we should try to do it!

Josephine: When I started running Little Hearts together with the other executives, we were met with numerous challenges. Each step in the process takes a lot of effort and planning. This made me realise the importance of collaboration. So, I truly believe that by engaging in such activities, students can cultivate essential qualities such as leadership, teamwork, and compassion. Such experiences will truly be eye-opening

Q: Do you have any last words before we end this interview?

We would like to thank Epworth for collaborating with Little Hearts. We hope to be able to visit the beneficiaries of our fundraising program one day!

BONDING THROUGH PLAY - FUN ACTIVITIES WITH YOUR LITTLE ONES FOR THE DECEMBER HOLIDAYS

By Felicia Lim, Senior Community Relations Executive, Community Relations

The bond between parents and their child(ren) is truly special. A simple yet powerful way to strengthen this bond is through playtime. Playtime is not just about having fun, it is a means for parents and kids to connect deeply, build trust, and understand each other better. With the December holidays drawing near, here are some activities both parents and child(ren) can engage in:



1.

Switching Roles & Making a Special Meal:

(Age group: 4 years +)

Pick a day where you and your child switch roles! Have your child choose a recipe that you can cook as a team. This hands-on activity not only imparts valuable insights into the effort behind meal preparation but also fosters an appreciation for the food on their plate. Elevate the experience by embarking on a joint grocery shopping adventure, involving your child in decision-making, transaction processes, and friendly interactions with shopkeepers!

2.

Creating Memory Scrap Boxes:

(Age group: 2 years +)

Embark on an outing to one of your favorite places, whether it is the nearby park, the beach, or even the zoo! Collect unique items specific to that location, such as rocks, shells, or leaves, during your visit. You can also choose to take photos of these items or moments (please refrain from trying to bring the zoo animals home!).

Once you return home, create and decorate a box together with your child to store the items you brought home. These personalised treasure boxes will come in handy on days you choose to stay indoors. Take this time to reconnect with your child, reliving the joy of your favorite outings as you lovingly sift through these memories stored in these boxes.

3.

Turn Your Living Room into a Campsite:

(Age group: 2 years +)

Outdoor camping is undoubtedly enjoyable, but creating a campsite in the confines of your home is not a bad idea too! In Singapore's unpredictable weather, this is a weather-proof activity you do not want to miss. Work together to collect blankets and rearrange furniture around your house, transforming your space into a personalised campsite. You can even enjoy a movie; it's the most convenient campsite experience you will ever have!

4.

If you find yourself short on time, here are some impromptu activity ideas:

1. Turn up the music and have a dance party!
2. Parents wear the most outrageous and colourful clothes, and kids dress like parents too!
3. Gaze at the clouds together and describe the animals you see!

In the midst of our busy lives, the December holidays offer a great opportunity to bond with our children through play. As you celebrate the holiday season, remember that these moments of connection are the true gifts that bring joy and warmth to your home. So, seize the chance to play, laugh, and make memories that will last a lifetime. Happy holidays!

REFLECTIONS FOR 2023

As we approach the end of 2023, it is important to take time to slow down and reflect on the past year...

Describe 2023 in three words.

What were some of your best moments?

What are you most grateful for?

What did you overcome?

In what areas have you grown in?

What are you most proud of?



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.*