



epworth moments

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February 2025

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Autism and Learning Challenges // Pg 04**

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ABOUT US

Epworth Community Services is a Social Service Agency (SSA) that helps at-risk children and youths from needy and disadvantaged families. We want to create a better world for them so that they can develop their potential. Our work focuses on promoting the mental well-being of children and youths by building strong families and imparting skills for resilient living.

VISION

Strong Families, Resilient Living, Beautiful Minds

MISSION

To reach out in Christian love, by providing quality programmes and services to all children, youths, parents and their families, of all language, race and religion, and nurturing each family member in body, mind and spirit.

EPWORTH MOMENTS

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ED'S MESSAGE



February, A Month Associated with Love

We often associate February with love, celebrating Valentine's Day as a time for couples to express their love. More broadly, people also show appreciation for friends and loved ones.

What is the Origin of Valentine's Day?

Valentine's Day, also called Saint Valentine's Day, is celebrated annually on February 14. It originated as a Christian feast day honouring a martyr named Valentine. Over time, it evolved into a cultural and commercial celebration of romance.

One story tells of Saint Valentine of Rome, who ministered to persecuted Christians in the third century. According to tradition, he restored sight to his jailer's blind daughter. Later legends claim he performed secret weddings for Christian soldiers who were forbidden to marry. An 18th century addition states he wrote the jailer's daughter a letter and signed "Your Valentine" before his execution.

The 8th century Gelasian Sacramentary recorded the Feast of Saint Valentine on February 14. By the 14th century, the day became linked to courtly love, inspired by early spring "lovebirds." In 18th century England, it became a tradition to exchange flowers, sweets, and cards (known as "valentines").

Symbols of Valentine's Day include heart shapes, doves, and the figure of the winged Cupid. In the 19th century, handmade cards gave way to mass-produced greetings. In Italy, Saint Valentine's keys are given as a romantic symbol of unlocking one's heart and to children to ward off epilepsy, known as "Saint Valentine's Malady."

The True Meaning of Love

When we celebrate Valentine's Day, we often focus on romantic love — holding hands, gazing into each other's eyes, and cherishing warm feelings. Yet, true love is more than emotions. Relationships can be transient, and many marriages end in divorce.

The love that Saint Valentine expressed was more than just feelings. The love he expressed was not superficial. He demonstrated love through real actions, even sacrificing his life. Love is about "a choice for real actions".

Marriage vows reflect this commitment: "... to have and to hold, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, until parted by death." Hence, love is not just about fuzzy warm feelings; but a journey of constant, deliberate choices.

Saint Valentine's love was one of sacrifice, where he expressed the godly love that he learnt from Jesus the Christ. "This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters." (1 John 3:16)

When Valentine's Day comes each year, let us commit to love — not just in words, but in meaningful actions.



The Parenting Pantry:

CARING FOR CHILDREN WITH ADHD, AUTISM AND LEARNING CHALLENGES



Step 1:

Notice the Signs

"Why is my child struggling to make friends?"
"Why can't my child sit down quietly for a meal?"
"Why am I constantly getting complaints from my child's teachers?"
"Why is it so difficult for my child to read and spell simple words?"

If these questions have ever crossed your mind, they could be indicators that a child has diverse needs.

Children with these differences may experience big emotions like anger or frustration. The first step is to understand them – their challenges are real, and a professional assessment can provide guidance on how best to support them.



Step 2:

Finding Right Parenting Strategies

Parenting a child with diverse needs can feel overwhelming, but it does not have to be. With the right support, it can also be a rewarding journey.

Shifting Perspectives

A child's challenges are not misbehaviour:

- **Difficulty sitting still ≠ Naughty**
(May struggle with self-regulation)
- **Throwing things when upset ≠ Bad-tempered**
(May have trouble expressing emotions)
- **Struggling with schoolwork ≠ Lazy**
(May have a learning difference)
- **Difficulty with friendships ≠ Awkward**
(May find social interactions challenging)

Focusing on Strengths

We can help a child with developmental differences by acknowledging and using their strengths!

- **ASD: May follow rules well**
- **ADHD: May be great at multitasking**
- **SLD: May have great perseverance**

By embracing their strengths, we help them thrive!

By Esther Che

Education Psychologist, Epworth Literacy Centre

Some of the common developmental and learning differences include:



Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD):

- Struggles with focus and impulsivity
- Constantly active or always on the move

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD):

- Difficulties in social interactions and adapting to changes
- Engages in repetitive behaviours and has intense, specific interests
- Heightened or reduced sensitivity to sensory input

Specific Learning Disorders (SLD):

Struggles with academic skills despite putting in effort

Using a child's strengths helps them build confidence, experience success, and develop a positive sense of self.

Creating opportunities for success could include things like:

- Providing expectations and boundaries (instead of assuming that the child knows them)
- Providing accommodations (e.g., giving short movement breaks; breaking up tasks into smaller bits)
- Implementing strategies together (e.g., deep breathing with them; going through to do lists)
- Being consistent in parenting practices and expectations (between caregivers)

Most importantly, praise your child for their efforts!
A little encouragement goes a long way.

Seeking Support

If you are unsure how to best support your child, seek professional guidance. **Early and targeted intervention can make a significant difference in helping children thrive!**

Step 3:

Caregiver Support and Self-Care

While caregivers try to give the best to their children, it is important to get support from others and the community. It takes a village to raise a child — especially when raising a child with developmental differences. Remember, no one should navigate this journey alone!

To provide the best for their children, caregivers must also prioritise their own needs. Taking time for self-care is necessary, helping caregivers feel refreshed and better equipped to support their children.

Resources @ Epworth

Epworth has a comprehensive system of support which includes:

Psychological Assessments

To assess if a child might have developmental and learning differences and provide recommendations for support.

Consultations

To provide individualised observation and consultation sessions (e.g., observing the child in school, working with teachers to set up systems to help child in school).

Intervention Programmes

Literacy & Behavioural Intervention Programme: Early and targeted literacy intervention. Helps child build up literacy skills in reading and spelling. Intervention is conducted in small groups with trained professions.

STAR Behaviour Modification Programme: Individualised behavioural intervention to equip children with skills such as how to manage their emotions and behaviours. Trained therapists will share strategies taught in class. Parents can implement similar strategies to ensure consistency at home.



Final Thoughts

Parenting is not about following a perfect recipe — it is about understanding your child's unique ingredients and creating the best environment for them to flourish. With the right support, strategies, and community, every child can grow into their full potential.



LET'S UNPACK THAT: DEBUNKING FIVE MYTHS ABOUT TRAUMA

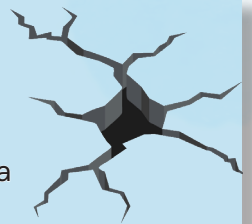
By Anna Low
Psychologist, HomeSweetHome

We have all heard someone say, "That was so traumatic!" after a distressing experience. The term "trauma" is often used casually, diluting its true meaning. Trauma is not just a bad day or momentary distress — it stems from intensely overwhelming events that threaten one's sense of safety, leaving lasting effects on a person's well-being, much like an earthquake reshaping the ground beneath them.

What Exactly is Trauma?

The American Psychological Association (APA) defines trauma as "any disturbing experience that results in significant fear, helplessness, dissociation, confusion, or other disruptive feelings intense enough to have a long-lasting negative effect on a person's attitudes, behaviour, and other aspects of functioning."

Traumatic events include those caused by human behaviour (e.g., rape, war, industrial accidents) as well as by nature (e.g., earthquakes) and often challenge an individual's view of the world as a just, safe, and predictable place."^[1]



What Differentiates Trauma from Difficult Experiences?

Trauma differs from difficult experiences based on three key factors:

Perception – How the event is processed and experienced.

Intensity – The experience exceeds typical stress responses.

Effect – Long-term emotional, psychological, and physiological impact.

Trauma can occur at any age, whether experienced directly or indirectly, and affects individuals differently based on personal history, support systems, and resilience.



Five Myths about Trauma

01

MYTH 1: CHILDREN ARE NATURALLY RESILIENT AND WILL JUST FORGET

While many children possess remarkable resilience, trauma does not miraculously vanish over time. Its effects can manifest in many different forms, such as anxiety, depression, sleep issues, or behavioural changes like aggression or withdrawal.

02

MYTH 2: IF THEY'RE NOT TALKING ABOUT IT, THEY ARE FINE

A child's silence in the face of trauma can be a deceptive shield, masking a storm of turmoil beneath. Children frequently communicate trauma through behaviour, not words—changes in sleep, appetite, focus, or social interactions are signs to watch for.



03

MYTH 3: PUNISHMENT FIXES TRAUMA-RELATED BEHAVIOUR

Harsh discipline or punishment are not a panacea. Trauma survivors may see the world as unsafe and people as untrustworthy. Instead of reinforcing fear, a safe and supportive environment helps them manage emotions and address underlying challenges.

04

MYTH 4: TRAUMA IS JUST A MENTAL HEALTH ISSUE

This is like saying, "A broken leg only affects your leg." Trauma impacts the whole person physically, emotionally, and socially. It may affect relationships, academic performance, and overall well-being. A holistic, trauma-informed approach is key.



05

MYTH 5: TRAUMA MAKES CHILDREN PERMANENTLY DAMAGED

Trauma has lasting effects but is not a life sentence. With proper support — such as professional therapy and caregivers who provide a consistent, nurturing environment — trauma survivors can develop robust coping mechanisms, build resilience, and create healthy relationships with others, transforming their experiences into sources of strength.



What's Next?

Now that we have debunked some common myths about trauma, the next step is to empower individuals and families to challenge these misconceptions, seek support, and foster healing.

Caregivers, and particularly parents, play a crucial role in the child's recuperation process, making it essential to equip them with the necessary skills. This includes, but is not limited to:

Active listening

Provide a chance for the child to be able to articulate their feelings without judgment. It focuses on affirming the child's feelings and experiences rather than problem solving.

Emotion Regulation Skills

Teaching children and caregivers coping skills like deep breathing and mindfulness helps them manage strong emotions without resorting to maladaptive means.

Self-Care

Taking care of oneself through exercise, proper nutrition, rest, and enjoyable activities is essential for being an effective caregiver, not selfish.

Seeking Professional Help

There is no shame in seeking professional help when help is actually needed. Trained therapists offer evidence-based interventions tailored to individual needs. Seeking help is a sign of strength, not weakness.

Resources @ Epworth

Epworth Community Services provides a range of trauma-informed care initiatives, from individual and family therapy to community-based support. Our commitment to a trauma-informed approach, which demands cultural sensitivity, ensures that our services are delivered in an empowering, safe and respectful manner.

While trauma is complex, healing is possible. By challenging myths, educating ourselves, and seeking support from organisations like Epworth, we can create a more understanding environment for children facing early adversities. Healing is a journey, and each step toward awareness and support paves the way for better mental health and a brighter future.

References

[1] "APA Dictionary of Psychology." American Psychological Association. American Psychological Association. Accessed November 26, 2022. <https://dictionary.apa.org/trauma>.

MARCH INTO FUN: 4 FREE ACTIVITIES TO TRY THIS MARCH HOLIDAY!

By Rina Tan, Community Relations Executive

1

Picnic at Lazarus Island

For a sunny escape this March holiday, visit Lazarus Island! Enjoy a fun-filled day with a picnic, relax on sandy beaches, and soak up the golden sun for a refreshing family bonding experience.



2

Head out to a Water Park at the Gardens By The Bay!

Singapore's hot and humid weather calls for a day at the water park. Far East Organisation Children's Garden Water Park offers a chance to cool off, create lasting memories, and enjoy quality time together as a family. Best of all, entry to the Children's Garden is free!



3

Morning stroll at the Mandai Boardwalk!

The 3.3km Mandai Boardwalk offers a scenic escape around Singapore Zoo and River Wonders, with stunning views of Upper Seletar Reservoir — perfect for family photos or a peaceful nature walk.



4

Rock Painting

Turn ordinary stones into art with rock painting. Whether it is detailed designs, quotes, or simple drawings, each painted rock adds charm to your home. Just grab some rocks, acrylic paint, and a brush — let your creativity flow!



22 November 2024

LOCKED IN, STRONGER TOGETHER: EPWORTH'S 2024 STAFF COHESION ADVENTURE

By Isabelle Khang, Human Resources Executive



The 2024 Staff Cohesion event was all about coming together, unwinding, and strengthening bonds beyond work. As a co-lead, I enjoyed balancing creative ideas with practical planning to create an engaging experience for everyone.

On 22nd November, we kicked off the day with a thrilling Escape Quest at the Asian Civilisations Museum (ACM), where teams designed their own flags and solved puzzles to unlock the final mystery cube. After putting our brains to the test, we feasted on a well-deserved buffet at RELC International Hotel.

Chairman Mr Benjamin Tan celebrated the top teams and honored Sambir D/O Nanju, Elijah Chin, Siow Shu Meng, and Cheong Jia Qi for their years of dedication. His heartfelt speech reminded us of the hard work and passion that shape Epworth today.

As the event concluded, unexpected rain created a beautiful moment of camaraderie — colleagues sharing umbrellas, looking out for one another as we made our way to the bus.

A huge shoutout to the planning team — Nicolette Lien, Tan Xin Ying, Staney Cheah, Ken Lim, Joylynn Tan, Joleen Chan, Jamalul Jannah, and Heidi Heng — for their creativity, time, and effort in making this event so special. May the friendships and memories from this day remind us that we are more than colleagues — we are family. Here is to many more moments of joy, growth, and togetherness!



EPWORTH FOSTER CARE CELEBRATES ITS 9TH ANNIVERSARY

By Shiree Koh, Foster Care Worker

On 30 November 2024, Epworth Foster Care celebrated its 9th Anniversary at Golden Village VivoCity. This annual party honours our long-serving foster parents and dedicated volunteers. It also gives our foster families the chance to create happy memories together!

The day began with a delicious lunch buffet, a photo booth, and various activities. Low Zhennan, Secretary of the Epworth Foster Care Committee, kicked off the stage segment with a heartfelt opening speech.

During the event, we celebrated foster parents who have been fostering for five years and appreciated volunteers who have contributed countless hours working with our foster children. The event concluded with a movie screening for families.

The theme of the anniversary party was "Friendship", highlighted by a screening of the movie Wicked. The movie explores the unlikely friendship between the misunderstood, green-skinned Elphaba and the popular Glinda, highlighting the importance of kindness and understanding over outward appearances.

Volunteers from Morgan Stanley and Osttra supported the event by helping to manage our activity booths. With their help, the children made friendship bracelets and keychains, and families had their photos taken during the event.



All in all, 117 foster parents, their family members, volunteers, and guests joined us to celebrate our 9th Anniversary.

As we move into 2025, Epworth Foster Care remains committed to supporting our foster parents and foster children by providing meaningful programmes and quality service for them.

25 December 2024

SPREADING JOY AND GIVING BACK: EPWORTH AT THE WORLD CHRISTMAS MARKET

By Laura Jiang, Community Relations Executive

The World Christmas Market Singapore 2024, held from 5 to 25 December at The Promontory @ Marina Bay, brought together charities, businesses, and the community in the spirit of giving.

Epworth Community Services was honoured to be one of ten charity organisations featured in the 'Hub of Hearts', a space dedicated to social causes under the Brands For Good banner. Through engaging displays and activities, Epworth shared its mission to support vulnerable children, youths, and families, fostering greater awareness and community engagement.

The event was also a heartwarming experience for Epworth's beneficiaries. A joyful group of 15, including their families, spent a fun-filled day at the market — exploring festive stalls, enjoying interactive activities, and soaking in the Christmas magic. It was a chance for them to unwind, celebrate, and feel the warmth of community support.

More than just a holiday event, the World Christmas Market was a celebration of generosity, unity, and hope. As we step into the new year, Epworth remains committed to building strong families, fostering resilient living, and nurturing beautiful minds, ensuring that every child and family we support is empowered to grow in body, mind, and spirit.



18 January 2025

GIVE AND FEAST 5: A PERANAKAN CELEBRATION

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



On 18 January 2025, we had the honour of hosting a Peranakan-themed dinner for donors of our annual Give and Feast fundraising campaign. This year marks the fifth year of this event, making it a special evening dedicated to recognising and celebrating the incredible individuals whose generosity makes our work possible.

Held at Friend's Thai Table at RELC International Hotel, guests enjoyed mouth-watering Peranakan food curated by Epworth's Executive Director, Mr Tan Khye Suan.

The menu featured Do-It-Yourself Kueh Pie Tee, Ngoh Hiang, Otah, Beef Shin Buah Keluak, Ayam Pongteh, Sambal Prawns with Ladies Finger and Tempeh, and Chap Chye. Guests were also entertained by a live-band that performed traditional Malay songs perfectly complementing the theme of the event.





A key highlight of the evening was when Mr Tan 'spilled the beans' by sharing the unique ingredients that make up each dish, and how they were prepared. The 'oohs' and 'mmm' that resonated across the room was a testament to how delicious the food was!

The event concluded with a powerful reminder that the impact of each donation, no matter the size, is deeply felt. Our donors — both new and long-standing — have helped us continue pursuing our mission and make a meaningful difference in the lives of our clients.

Thank you to everyone who joined us, and to all of our donors for their unwavering support. We are truly grateful for each of you, and we look forward to another year of working together to build a brighter future.



TOSSING TO PROSPERITY: EPWORTH'S CNY CELEBRATION

By Laura Jiang, Community Relations Executive



The festive spirit was in full swing at Epworth's Chinese New Year Lunch, where colleagues came together to welcome the new year with joy, laughter, and of course — great food!

The celebration kicked off with a lively Lo Hei, as everyone enthusiastically tossed the ingredients high into the air while sharing wishes for prosperity and good fortune. The energy was infectious, setting the tone for a warm and memorable gathering.

As the lunch unfolded, colleagues from different departments mingled, shared stories, and enjoyed the delicious feast together. Laughter and chatter filled the air as everyone took the opportunity to

bond beyond their daily work interactions. It was a heartening sight to see new connections formed over plates of festive delights.

More than just a meal, this Chinese New Year gathering served as a reminder of the importance of strong camaraderie and sense of family within Epworth. The event embodied the spirit of togetherness — where everyone, regardless of role or department, came together to celebrate a fresh start for the year ahead.



As we usher in another year, may we be inspired and uplifted by the unity and joy of the Epworth Community, continuing to embrace another year of growth, success, and meaningful connections!



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