

epworth moments

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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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The Parenting Pantry:

Connection before Correction: Supporting Children with Trauma

Understanding what lies beneath a child's difficult behaviour—
and how to build trust first

By Epworth HomeSweetHome

Children who have lived through trauma often see the world and other people as unsafe. Their behaviour may be difficult to understand or challenging, but it often makes sense once we recognise the traumatic experiences that underlie it.

This article encourages caregivers to connect before they correct—to build bridges with a child first, before addressing behaviour.



What is the Impact of Trauma?

Inside every brain, there is a fire alarm. This alarm rings when we sense danger. If we see a tiger, the alarm triggers feelings of fear and tells us to run away as quickly as we can.

For children who experienced abuse or neglect, this system can become oversensitive. **It may ring at the smallest sign of threat.**

For example, being asked to stop playing may feel routine for most children. **For a child with trauma, this simple instruction could trigger fear of punishment or abandonment** and lead to the child displaying aggressive behaviour.

This reaction may look “too big,” but it makes sense when we situate it in the context of past harm the child may have experienced.

Trauma systems therapy refers to this reaction as a “**survival-in-the-moment state.**” The child's fire alarms tell them that there are tigers in the room, even when we know there are none.

Why Caregivers Feel Confused?

Trauma does not look the same for every child. One child may explode when upset. Another may cling tightly to their caregivers. This variety of responses makes it hard for caregivers to understand what is truly happening.

It may feel even harder when carers, such as foster or kinship carers, do not know what traumatic experiences their children have gone through. **Without context, these reactions can feel bewildering and frustrating.**



How do we help traumatised children feel safe?

Bewildering and frustrating as it may be, children cannot calm down on their own. They borrow calm from the adults nearby.

One helpful acronym, from dyadic developmental psychotherapy, is PLACE—Playfulness, Love, Acceptance, Curiosity, and Empathy (Becker-Weidman, 2008). It is a simple way to connect with a child before correcting their behaviour.



Playfulness

A gentle tone or a small dose of humour can reduce tension. When the fire alarm is triggered, safety cues matter more than logic.



Love

Show children that they are cherished and valued, not simply policed or managed. Simple acts of warmth, reassurance, and affirmation can help them feel safe and worthy, even amid difficult behaviour.



Acceptance

Acknowledge the child's feelings, even if their behaviour must change: "I sense you are angry, and that is okay."



Curiosity

Ask "What happened?" instead of "Why did you do that?" to demonstrate openness and signal to children that you are there to help.



Empathy

Naming feelings ("That was scary for you") helps children feel understood and that they are not alone with these feelings.



PLACE is not a quick fix. But when used consistently, and with patience, it teaches children that adults can remain calm, steady, and loving—even when their behaviour is difficult.

Over time, children learn that there are no tigers in the room.

How do we help traumatised children feel safe?

Epworth HomeSweetHome is a therapeutic group home for children aged six to twelve. Our team uses trauma systems therapy, alongside tools like PLACE, to help children rebuild trust and feel safe again.

Our team will be the first to admit it—staying PLACE-ful is not always easy. Caring for traumatised children can be demanding, and at times may feel overwhelming.

No one should journey alone. At Epworth, we walk alongside children and their caregivers, ready to provide necessary support. **With patience, care, and connection, healing and change are always possible.**



Epworth HomeSweetHome staff at a team bonding event

References

Becker-Weidman, A. (2008). Treatment for Children with Reactive Attachment Disorder: Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy. *Child & Adolescent Mental Health*, 13(1).



Let's Unpack That!

What Trauma Looks Like: Signs in Behaviour, Emotions, and Body

By Quek Li Koon
Manager, Epworth Foster Care

Recognising Trauma Responses in Everyday Life

Trauma responses are natural, automatic reactions to distressing or threatening experiences. Also known as survival responses, they are the brain and body's ways of helping us cope with perceived danger or fear. Recognising these responses is key for individuals, caregivers and professionals to support trauma recovery.

These responses vary widely from person to person, shaped by past experiences, environment and coping mechanisms. The four common instinctual trauma responses are:



FIGHT

Responding to threat with aggression.

Signs to look out for:

- Talking over others
- Physical confrontation
- Difficulty regulating emotions



FLIGHT

Escaping from a threatening situation.

Signs to look out for:

- Withdrawing from social situations
- Children may run away or hide
- Distancing themselves from trauma reminders



FREEZE

Shutting down

Signs to look out for:

- Mental or physical paralysis
- Feeling numb or stuck
- Feeling disconnected from their surroundings and themselves



FAWN

Escaping from a threatening situation.

Signs to look out for:

- Struggling with saying no
- Being overly accommodating in interactions with others
- Struggling with setting boundaries



Signs in Behaviour, Emotions, and Body

Trauma responses can affect a person's thoughts, emotions, behaviours, and physical reactions. These responses may be triggered by a wide range of situations. Recognising these signs in ourselves or others is a key step towards managing them, seeking help, or offering support. These are some typical signs across different areas:



EMOTION

- Anxiety or irritability
- Emotional numbness
- Loss of interest in activities
- Hopelessness
- Fearfulness
- Guilt, shame or unworthiness



COGNITION

- Loss of memory
- Inattentiveness
- Having intrusive thoughts/flashbacks
- Negative or self-blaming thoughts
- Trouble concentrating



BEHAVIOUR

- Regression of behaviour for children (e.g. bed-wetting)
- Sleep disturbances
- Change in appetite
- Emotional outbursts or aggressive behaviour (e.g. swearing, hitting)
- Social withdrawal, self-harm, or risky behaviours
- Hypervigilance



PHYSICAL

- Increased heart rate and breathing
- Headaches, dizzy spells
- Fatigue
- Muscle tension/aches
- Stomach problems
- Being easily startled by unexpected noises/movement

By understanding the different types of trauma responses, we can better support others in their struggles and healing journey. For individuals who have experienced trauma, it is important to seek professional help if symptoms begin to affect daily life, relationships, or mental well-being.

Ms Quek Li Koon is the Manager at Epworth Foster Care. If you would like to find out more about fostering and volunteer opportunities, please email us at fostercare@epworth.sg



Epworth Foster Care Launches #myfirst Campaign: A Glimpse into Lives of Foster Families

By Thong Ling Yun
Senior Recruitment Officer

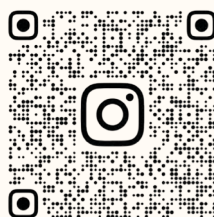
This year, Epworth Foster Care turns 10. As Epworth Foster Care marks their tenth anniversary, the team would like to look back and reflect on the countless memories shared by foster families, children, volunteers, and foster care workers.

The tenth anniversary theme is 'Walking Down Memory Lane', and #myfirst campaign was created to collect the first-time milestones and moments from our foster parents and foster children that left a lasting impact in their hearts.

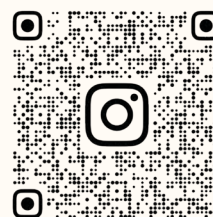
In June, #myfirst campaign was launched on our social media platforms and the campaign will run through June to October. You can discover treasured memories from our fostering community, such as #myfirst steps, #myfirst placement, #myfirst befriending on Epworth Foster Care's Facebook and Instagram pages.

If you are interested to find out more about fostering, contact Epworth Foster Care at fostercare@epworth.sg (email) or **9119 8711** (WhatsApp).

Drop us a follow on Instagram here!



@EPWORTH.SG



@EPWORTHFOSTERCARE



Sneak Peek of our Online Stories Here!

#myfirst night
for my foster child



by foster mother,
Mdm Tia

#myfirst night
for Evan*

Evan's first night at my home was a nerve-wrecking one.

At 3 years old, this was his second foster home and these changes left him confused and anxious.

*not his real name

I noticed that Evan faced some difficulties sleeping from his first few nights and he would lie awake in bed.

To aid in his sleep, I explored many methods with varying effectiveness. The method that worked best for him was playing ambient sounds during bedtime.

Mdm Tia used desk lamps and soft toys to create warmth and a more comfortable environment for Evan*!



I also ensured the video was played a distance away from his bedroom to create a more ambient sound.

Evan remembered that the sound of the rain helped him feel more at home and he eventually started sleeping better.

Turn the audio on to listen to music similar to the ambient sound Mdm Tia used!

I also stuck glow-in-the-dark moon and star stickers below the bunk bed to create a cosy environment for Evan.



He often fell asleep, while watching the glowing stickers light up in his room.

Although the stickers have long lost its glow and Evan no longer sleeps in that bed, he remembers the fond memories of Mdm Tia's efforts to welcome him into her home.



Mdm Tia and Evan, who is now 11 years old.

Join us on this journey by looking back on the many memorable firsts from our fostering community!

Follow us on IG/FB for more!

Hello Epworth Study Buddies!

By Rina Tan
Community Relations Executive

We are excited to share that Project Lightbulb has officially rebranded to Epworth Study Buddies!

While our name has changed, our heart remains the same.

Epworth Study Buddies continues to be a tuition-befriending programme that provides academic supervision and meaningful connections to primary school students who may not have access to formal tuition services.

So, why the rebrand?

As the programme grew, so did our understanding of the needs of students and volunteers.

The rebrand to Epworth Study Buddies marks a step forward in improving how we support and organise the programme.

"Study Buddies" reflects what we aim to do: offer academic support while building meaningful relationships with the children we serve.

Volunteer Shern Kai, who has been with Project Lightbulb through to Epworth Study Buddies, put it best:

What keeps me going is that I'm not only able to help them academically, but also **nudge them to develop friendships and be a listening ear if they face difficulties outside class.**



New Partnerships

We have also partnered with:

- **KiteSense:** A new online platform that tracks progress and makes learning more engaging using AI.
- **Oasis BRMC Mission:** Now hosting our Wednesday sessions in a more conducive space for learning, play, and connection.

Ultimately, Epworth Study Buddies is built on the belief that small acts of care can have big impacts.

Volunteer Sharynn also shared:

"What kept me coming back was seeing the real impact even small efforts could have. Eventually, it felt less like volunteering and more like showing up for someone I cared for."

She also recalled a favourite memory:

Guiding my tutee through a tough question, giving hints, and watching him figure it out, he was so proud of himself!

Those small moments made me appreciate our time together even more.

If you are interested in joining Epworth Study Buddies as a volunteer tutor, do contact us at 9634 7264.



Tan Chin Tuan Foundation Visits Epworth Literacy

By Angeline Nah

Assistant Manager, Community Relations

On 21 July 2025, representatives from the Tan Chin Tuan Foundation visited Epworth Literacy Centre (Bukit Batok).

The team witnessed firsthand the positive impact of their generosity over the years on the children, youths and families Epworth supports. Reflecting Tan Chin Tuan Foundation's own philosophy focused on measurable, sustainable social impact, the visit underscored a shared commitment to the underserved.

During the visit, they met with Epworth's Literacy team, Esther and Cassandra, who shared personal testimonials from the clients about how their donations are driving real impact. They also toured the facilities at our centre, and experienced the sensory room, complete with interactive tactile boards, and an array of fidget toys.

In a Facebook post, the team from Tan Chin Tuan Foundation also commended the staff's "unparalleled patience, love, and care" for the students.

"As we walked through the hallways, we saw each child deeply absorbed in their lessons, joyfully learning content they might normally struggle with due to the fast pace of mainstream schools," they shared.

Epworth is deeply appreciative of Tan Chin Tuan Foundation's meaningful partnership with us over the years. Generous contributions from our partners help fuel essential programmes from literacy support to trauma recovery.

Thank you once again to Tan Chin Tuan Foundation for partnering Epworth in our vision to build strong families and impart skills for resilient living.



Honoured Guests at Epworth HomeSweetHome

By Cyan Khoo

Assistant Manager, Management Services

Visit by Bishop Rev Philip Lim

On 18 July 2025, Bishop Rev Philip Lim visited Epworth HomeSweetHome and offered his encouragement to our team and children.

Epworth HomeSweetHome is the first therapeutic group home in Singapore, providing stay-in treatment for children between 7-12 years old who have experienced severe abuse.

We are grateful for his support as we continue our mission to uplift and support the less privileged and underserved, and work alongside the community to build Strong Families, Resilient Living, and Beautiful Minds.



Visit by Mr Ng Shi Xuan, Member of Parliament for Sembawang GRC (Naval Base)

On 21 July 2025, we were honoured to host Mr Ng Shi Xuan, Member of Parliament for Sembawang GRC (Naval Base), at Epworth HomeSweetHome.

Our Executive Director, Mr Tan Khye Suan, shared how Epworth has supported children, youth, and families over the past 27 years through a trauma-informed approach, especially in the western region.

We also highlighted our growing work in Trauma Systems Therapy, which forms the foundation of our therapeutic group home in the north. As we expand our reach in the northern region, we remain committed to deepening our impact and walking alongside more families in need.



Ready, Set, Respond: Epworth's 2025 Annual Table-Top Exercise

By Deborah Long

Assistant Manager, Management Services

On 6 Aug 2025, Epworth put its crisis response skills to the test in our annual Table-Top Exercise (TTX). This is the fourth TTX since the Business Continuity Management System (BCMS) was implemented in 2021.

The TTX readies us to protect the people that depend on us. At the core of BCMS is ensuring that even in the face of an unexpected event, we are able to continue delivering critical services to our clients. For staff, it ensures that they are confident, and have the clarity and teamwork needed to respond and navigate effectively through emergencies.

This year's TTX involved 32 key staff members and the BCMS Steering Committee, led by Board Members Mr Ang Hock Kheng and Mr Brian Ng.



Crisis-Ready Epworth

Through the simulated emergency, participants were able to exchange real-time feedback and engage in discussions to work through the simulated scenario. This ensured that every department understood not only what to do, but how to work together under such circumstances.

We remain committed to building up Epworth's resilience so that we can continue to safeguard the well-being of our clients and stakeholders in times of crisis.

MUSOKA Club x Epworth: Giving Back in Style this SG60

By Ms Elaine

Founder, MUSOKA Club



MUSOKA Club x Epworth: A Chance to Give Back

We've always aspired to be in a position to give back through what we do—and this month, we are grateful for the chance to support Epworth in their fundraising efforts for children, youth, and families in need.

Every MUSOKA tee sold = \$5 donated
From 25 July 2025 till 31 Aug 2025, \$5 from every tee sold—across all collections—will go directly toward Epworth's cause.

We are incredibly thankful for our community, many of whom have been with us since our earliest collections. It's only through their support that we get to take even a small step toward building a kinder Singapore—and for that, we are deeply grateful.



MUSOKA Club's social media giveaway with Epworth

About MUSOKA Club:

MUSOKA Club is a local fashion label that takes inspiration from our everyday favourites to create comfortable streetwear that stands out in the crowd.

MUSOKA actually started at the end of 2019 during the COVID period—just a fun little side project! We started out just wanting to make cozy, fuss-free outfits that felt cute but easy to throw on, even on your laziest days.

Every tee we design now is kind of like a mini adventure—whether it's a spooky throwback to a 70s horror film or a silly membership to The Chicken Nuggets Club.

Our goal has always been to turn the most random, nostalgic, or feel-good ideas into something wearable—like a little pick-me-up you can wear on a bad day.

EST. 19
MUSOKA
BY MUSOKA CLUB

“Together, we can uplift
lives and create a
community where every
child has the
opportunity to thrive.”



make a PLEDGE

Pledge monthly and
champion resilience with us!

Find Out More:





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.*