

Tan Chin Hock

36, LEARNING TECHNOLOGIST WITH HIS WIFE CHOO GEOK HONG, 36, FINANCE EXECUTIVE AND THEIR DAUGHTERS TAN SI LING, 3, AND EIGHT-MONTH-OLD TAN SI YING

Park Life

Strengthening family ties is important to Chin Hock and wife Geok Hong, and outings to community resources such as parks enable them to bond further with their daughters.



Si Ling enjoying playtime at Punggol Waterway Park

What resources in the community do you use as a family?

Chin Hock: We are regulars at Punggol Park which is a short walk from our home. We also go to the playground near our home as well as the public library in our neighbourhood. When my younger daughter is a little older, we will take the children to some of Singapore's nature reserves.

Geok Hong: We love being outdoors and enjoy having little picnics at the park.

How do these resources benefit your children and in turn, the family?

Chin Hock: These resources give us an opportunity to bond as a family. Si Ling is especially thrilled when we involve her in preparations. She helps to spread the peanut butter on the bread for the picnic and at the park, she plays with us as well as with other children.

Geok Hong: She asks a lot of questions about her surroundings when we go out and we try our best to answer her. Such outings allow quality communication to happen and as parents, we cherish these precious moments very much. Besides, entry to the park is free and it is located nearby so we save on travelling expenses as well as time.

What does your child and you, as a parent, learn from using community resources?

Geok Hong: Trips to the park allow us to meet people from all walks of life as well as interact with nature. We try to impart an appreciation for the environment in our daughter by urging her not to litter and not to pluck leaves or flowers. We also stress values like sharing, and urge her

to wait for her turn when using the slide or see-saw at the playground.

Chin Hock: There are of course other resources that cater to parents and their children besides specific recreational places like parks. I find *Beanstalk* magazine to be a wonderful initiative, for instance. We can read about other parents' experiences and get useful tips, and there are also inputs from pre-school educators and experts in the early childhood education sector which I find very informative.

Any advice to other families in terms of how best to use community resources as part of a child's learning?

Chin Hock: It's important to engage the child at all times when enjoying a particular resource, because only then can he or she get the best out of the experience. Parents play a crucial role in making sense of a child's surroundings, so put work aside and if you can, 'unplug' yourself from other distractions. Leave your handphones at home!

“ We try to impart an appreciation for the environment in our daughter by urging her not to litter and not to pluck leaves or flowers. ”

Geok Hong



On Chin Hock: Shirt: Bermuda Shorts, Cardigan Gap, Pimmsol's H&M On Geok Hong: Dress Banana Republic, Necklace Topshop On Si Ling: Dress Gingersnap, Flats Pazzon On Si Ying: Dress Gingersnap Toys The Better Toy Store Styling Alison Lim & Lirong Hair & Make-up Manisa Tan & Ng Hui Min

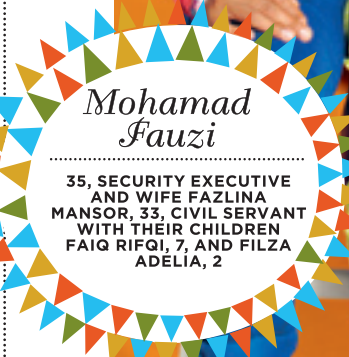
Let's go outside!

For Fauzi and Fazlina, going on family outings and making use of community resources is a way to steer their children away from the television, tablet and mobile phone.

You make it a point to go to the beach, swimming pool, playground or park with your children every week. How do these community resources benefit your children?

Fazlina: These places are great for kids to unleash their boundless energy. They get restless when cooped up at home and will crave for gadgets — like smartphones and tablets — to play with. I can't say I blame them. These days, a two-year-old can fiddle with an iPad before learning how to put on his own pants. Adelia is a perfect example.

Fauzi: When we take them out, the kids get creative to amuse themselves. Being outdoors also makes them appreciate nature more. They get curious about their surroundings and thus learn about plants, animals and insects that they see along the way. Best of



On Fauzi: Sweater and Shirt, Gap; Pants, Banana Republic; On Fazlina: Cardigan, Bracelet, Banana Republic; Dress, BCBG Maxazria; On Faiz: Sweater, Jeans, Gap; On Adelia: Romper, Gap; Hairband, H&M

all, they are thrilled to be able to run around — and as a family, we achieve a healthier lifestyle.

So community resources do play a part in your children's development?

Fazlina: Most definitely. When Faiz was a pre-schooler, the Montessori school he was enrolled in organised field trips to the public library as well as the museum. Fauzi and I thought that he would be too young, but we could not be more wrong.

Fauzi: Faiz clearly enjoyed that excursion. When he got home, he raved about what he saw and learnt about Singapore's history from the trip to the museum. It's quite amazing. Learning becomes more effective when children get

to walk through and experience the lesson. They remember the content more vividly than if they just read it off a book.

Any tips for other parents on how to enhance a child's learning?

Fazlina: A child's learning should not be restricted to within the walls of a classroom. Learning should happen anytime, anywhere and everywhere — be it in the park, in the supermarket, in the car... As a former primary school teacher, I believe all parents should look out for and take advantage of teachable moments. ♥



An evening walk at Gardens by the Bay for the family

“Reward desirable behaviour as much as possible by verbal praise, touch or something tangible such as a token or gift”

Dr Carol Balhetchet



Be clear & consistent

Successful parenting takes time and effort. Here are some tips from psychologist Dr Carol Balhetchet.

YOUR LITTLE ONE may be only two, or three or just four... but increasingly, you find yourself locked in a battle of words and wills with him. You're not alone. Many parents nowadays find it difficult to discipline their children. Successful parenting takes a real investment in time and effort — and it may be weeks or even months before you see the results.

Psychologist Dr Carol Balhetchet says the first thing you should do is to establish safe, clear boundaries for your child. The key to doing so is to be clear and consistent in your approach.

“First, be clear on what behaviour is desirable and what is not desirable. It is not enough to say, ‘Your room is messy’. Be more specific in what you mean. Say instead, ‘You

have messed up your room with all your toys and dirty clothes thrown all over the floor!’” she explains.

Once you have established what behaviour you want, agree (between you and your spouse) on how you will respond to bad behaviour, and explain the consequences clearly to your child. Most importantly, be consistent when it comes to enforcing the rules. “Reward or punish the same behaviour in the same manner as much as possible,” says Dr Balhetchet.

If your child argues, don't get defensive. Instead, calmly restate your position (for example, no clothes on the floor) and the consequences for the undesirable behaviour (no treats until the room is clean). Don't engage your child in a war of words — once you have restated your position, stop responding to your child's attacks.

Changes in behaviour won't happen overnight. Remember that this is a slow and constantly evolving process — don't expect too much and don't forget to praise your child when he does something right. “Reward desirable behaviour as much as possible by verbal praise, touch or something tangible such as a token or gift,” suggests Dr Balhetchet. ♥



SINGAPORE CHILDREN'S SOCIETY

The Singapore Children's Society (SCS) aims to protect and nurture children and youth from all backgrounds. With 10 service centres throughout Singapore, the SCS reached out to 72,000 children, youth and families in need last year.

The SCS offers programmes that address a wide range of needs. These include:

- Delivering care to at-risk children
- Fostering stable and happy family lives
- Promoting childhood education and development
- Preventing delinquency, abuse and neglect
- Raising public awareness of children's issues
- Rehabilitation of children and youth

To find out more, visit

www.childrensociety.org.sg

Images Shutterstock



DR CAROL BALHETCHET is the Senior Director and Clinical Psychologist of the Youth Services Centre, Singapore Children's Society. With more than 22 years of experience in social

work, she is a passionate advocate for youth at risk. She earned her doctorate in Psychology and Behavioural Science from Central Queensland University in 2005.



In it together!

Welcome the 20th International Year of the Family with fun events and special deals.

YOUR FAMILY IS what you cherish most — they are the reason why you get out of bed in the morning and why you hurry home at night. This year, Singapore is set to celebrate the International Year of the Family (IYF) with a slew of engaging activities that will be fun for the whole family.

IYF was first proclaimed in 1994 by the United Nations. In its 20th anniversary this year, the theme for IYF2014 is "Singapore Celebrates Families" to highlight the importance of family within our society, as well as to recognise the importance and value of each family member. The core values underpinning this year's celebrations are love and respect, commitment and big-heartedness — these are what lay the foundation for strong family and community bonds.

Baby Singapore 2014

Apr and May 2014, various locations
www.facebook.com/flc.pa.1

Babies \$10 (PASSion Card Member),
 \$20 (Non PASSion Card Member)
Juniors \$5 (PASSion Card Member),
 \$10 (Non PASSion Card Member)

Show off your darling bundle of joy at the baby shows being staged at Community Clubs around Singapore throughout April and May. Organised by the People's Association Family Life Champion programme, the baby shows comprise categories that include Our Beloved Family Portrait, Our Family's Favourite Cartoon Time and Our Sweet Family Moments.

The Great Egg-Venture

18 April to 11 May 2014
 Sentosa HarbourFront precinct
www.SHBA.org.sg

Free (Parking and Sentosa's island admission charges will apply)

The Great Egg-Venture will have the family racing to and from Mount Faber, across HarbourFront and onto Sentosa Island, in search of 100 giant eggs specially created by 200 local artists.

Learning Amazement

21 Jun 2014 from 2pm to 5pm
 Science Centre Singapore
www.ufamily.org.sg/wps/portal/ufamily/home/events/upcomingevents

Adults \$8 (NTUC Member)
 \$16 (Non NTUC Member)
Children from 3 to 12 years of age
 \$10 (NTUC Member)
 \$20 (Non NTUC Member)

Free admission for children below the age of three.

Event fee includes entry to the Science Centre.

Your children can enjoy an exciting day of wacky science experiments and win prizes in a Gallery Hunt and Family Quiz. Besides enjoying indoor fireworks, they will 'discover' the magical properties of refraction and watch the Mad Scientist mix up weird solutions that glow and then spontaneously burst into flame. To keep them occupied, children will be invited to put on their thinking caps and try to solve the mystery of the disappearing water. They will also have a chance to fire an Air Zooka, as well as try their hand at various projects they can then take home, such as building a mini lava lamp, mini rocket or even a DipperDo stunt plane.

Visit www.iyf2014.sg for more details or join us at www.facebook.com/FamilyMatters.sg ♥



INTERNATIONAL YEAR of the FAMILY 2014

