

win!
FUN BOOK RESOURCES
FROM MANDAI
WILDLIFE GROUP

THRIVE



Animal Instinct

How learning to care for animals benefits children in many ways



Vegging Out

Whip up a less spicy but still savoury *sayur lodeh* for little ones



Pretty Petals

Make a colourful hand-dyed bouquet



**WHEEL
FUN**
Take a spin
at resolving
conflicts

Beanstalk

APR-JUN
2023

MAKING GOOD CHOICES

How to develop positive behaviours in
the early years

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5
GOOD HABITS
for a healthy body
and mind



DO THE RIGHT THING



Developing positive behaviours in young children impacts their holistic development. Studies show that when adults adopt positive discipline strategies, such as responding calmly to challenging behaviours, explaining boundaries, and affirming positive behaviours, children benefit socially and emotionally. They learn what acceptable and unacceptable behaviours are, as well as the consequences of their actions on others. They also learn to regulate their emotions and feelings, develop positive interpersonal skills, and engage in pro-social behaviours. By modifying pedagogical practices to engage children at both cognitive and emotional levels, our educators can increase children's engagement, attentiveness and motivation to learn. This *Beanstalk* issue sheds light on how parents and educators can develop positive behaviours in children.

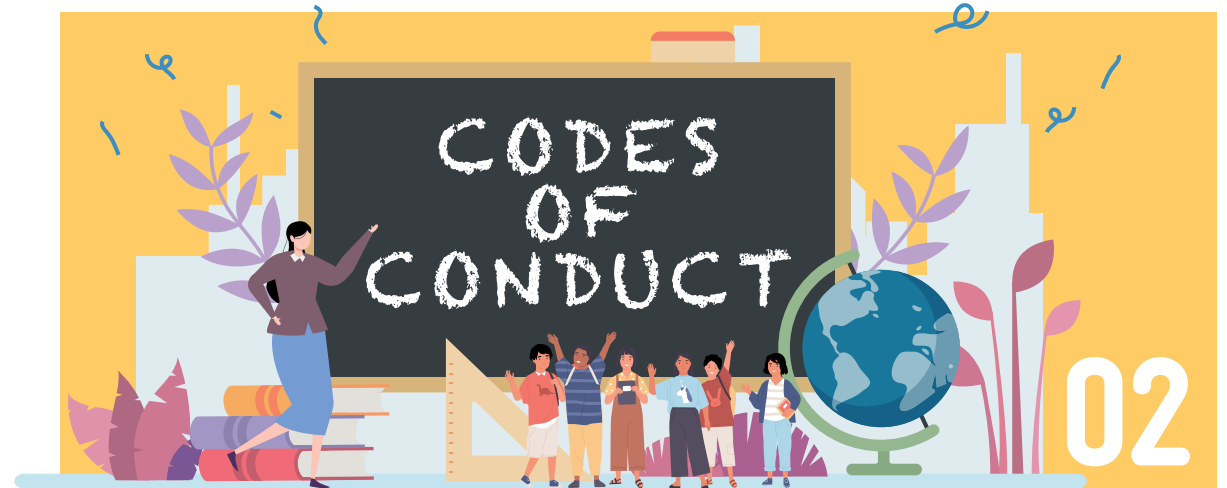
On a related note, families with additional needs can look forward to more help. At this year's Committee of Supply debate, Mr Masagos Zulkifli, Minister for Social and Family Development, announced measures to better support children from lower-

income families and children with developmental needs. First, we will scale up KidSTART nation-wide and expect to enrol 80 per cent of children from eligible families by 2026. We will also work closely with anchor operators to prioritise preschool enrolment for these children. Second, children below seven years old with developmental needs can receive more timely and affordable support. Over the next two years, 1,400 new places will be added in new centres offering the Early Intervention Programme for Infants and Children (EIPIIC) as well as through the Enhanced Pilot for Private Intervention Providers (PIIP). The PIIP scheme will also be made more affordable.

Even as the Government commits to providing every child access to affordable and quality early childhood services and programmes, it is our educators and parents who have the most profound influence on the child's holistic development. As we nurture positive behaviours, we also shape their sense of self, beliefs and confidence. Dr Dan Siegel, author of *The Whole-Brain Child*, reminds us: "Too often we forget that discipline really means to teach, not to punish." Let's work together to adopt positive discipline strategies to raise happy and healthy children.

MR TAN CHEE WEE
Chief Executive Officer
Early Childhood Development Agency (ECDA)

Early Childhood Development Agency (ECDA)



CONTENTS

FOCUS

02 Codes Of Conduct
How healthy behaviour supports children's learning, development and well-being

MY TEACHER, MY SCHOOL

07 Relationship Matters
An early interventionist's approach to tailoring activities to children's needs

08 Personalising Connections
How this award-winning principal creates a supportive preschool environment for all

09 In A Good Space
The impact of learning environments and teaching aids on children's behaviour

EC LANDSCAPE

10 Uplifting Families And Giving Every Child A Good Start
Enhanced support for lower-income families and children with developmental needs

12 Charting The Future
Benefits of peer learning through the Early Childhood Learning Communities

INNOVATION & RESEARCH

14 In RAP-tures
Making learning more relevant, appealing and personal for children

15 Let's Talk About Feelings
Colour psychology can help children express and manage their emotions

ASK THE EXPERTS

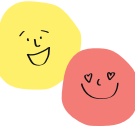
16 Q&A
How to regulate children's behaviours at home and in preschool

THRIVE

18 Let's Get Wild!
Encourage children to respect and care for the animals around them

21 Say Yes To Sayur
Celebrate Hari Raya Puasa with this vegetable curry dish

22 Flower Power
Make paper roses for Mummy and Daddy



WELLNESS

23 5 Healthy Habits To Nurture In Children
Tips for strengthening physical and emotional well-being

MAILBAG

24 We've Got Mail!
Parents share strategies for developing positive behaviours in their children

FUNTIMES

25 Work It Out
Spin for a solution



2022 APEX
Beanstalk clinched the APEX 2022 Award of Excellence in the Print Media (Education & Training) category!



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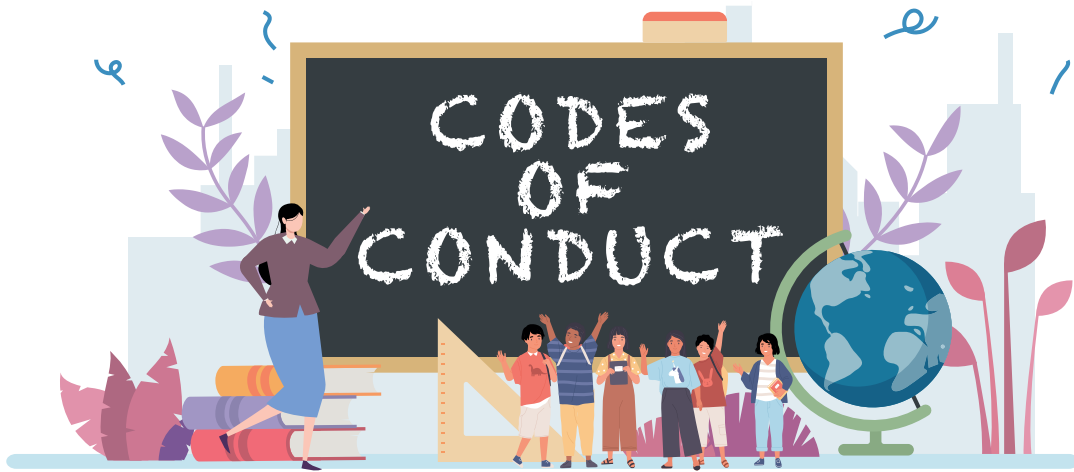


ON THE COVER

From left Fathiyah Azzahra' Muhammad Azaad, Immanuel Wee, Faith Teo, Wilfred Teo, Ammar Basri Amarakzi, Juliana Geetha, Joshua Wee, Naomi Ang

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FRONT COVER On Ammar: Outfit Gingersnaps. Shoes Model's own. On Juliana: Outfit Model's own. On Joshua: Outfit Gingersnaps. Shoes Model's own. On Naomi: Outfit Gingersnaps. **BACK COVER** On Fathiyah: Outfit Gingersnaps. Shoes Model's own. On Immanuel: Outfit Gingersnaps. Shoes Model's own. On Faith: Outfit Gingersnaps. On Wilfred: Outfit Model's own.



HOW HEALTHY BEHAVIOUR SUPPORTS CHILDREN'S LEARNING, DEVELOPMENT AND WELL-BEING.

Refusal to follow instructions, biting and kicking when upset, and clinging to parents are phases children may go through when they are still figuring out how to express themselves and interact with others.

Challenging behaviours such as defiance, aggression and withdrawal should be viewed in the wider context of children's social-emotional development. These behaviours are influenced by multiple, often overlapping, factors such as the child's needs, temperament and socio-cultural environment. While temperament may be innate, parents and teachers play vital roles in guiding and shaping children's behaviours in the early years.

"As educators, we recognise that children need support from adults to interpret their behaviours and guide them to express their needs in ways that are appropriate to the situation and environment," says Ms Lynn Heng, an Associate of the Early Childhood Education Programme at the S R Nathan School of Human Development.

“Positive discipline takes effort as we need to spend time having conversations with children.”

MS JULIANA GEETHA, 49
Principal, Little Seeds Preschool
(TSA – Bukit Panjang)



Singapore University of Social Sciences. "Depending on how behaviours are managed, guided and addressed, the quality of these interactions can either help or hinder children's development and well-being."

Beanstalk speaks to Ms Heng, educators and parents to find out how best to nurture positive behaviours in children.

WHAT IMPACT DOES CHILDREN'S BEHAVIOUR HAVE ON THEIR LEARNING, DEVELOPMENT AND WELL-BEING?

Juliana Geetha: Children who can regulate their feelings and are aware of the feelings of others are more focused during lessons and more empathetic towards others. They are able to express their feelings confidently and navigate disagreements with peers. As a result, they socialise in a healthy manner, and learning becomes more meaningful and joyful. Children who display negative behaviours are unable to regulate their emotions. For instance, when a child gets into a disagreement with the teacher or peers, this can affect the general mood and learning of the group.

Nurhalafiah Binte Norhadi: When children take turns to play, it reflects their ability to be patient, control impulsive behaviours and delay gratification. These traits play a key role when it comes to completing tasks and getting along with others. When children are learning to share, there are times when disruptive behaviours like meltdowns and snatching of toys happen, which can have negative effects on other children.

PARENTS, WHAT ARE SOME POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE BEHAVIOURS YOUR CHILD EXHIBITS? WHY DO YOU THINK THEY BEHAVE IN THESE WAYS?

Wilfred Teo: Faith is respectful and greets her peers and adults by name. She plays with and takes care of children who are younger than her in preschool and in our church's Sunday School. Faith actively contributes to family discussions and apologises when she does something wrong. My wife and I role-model such behaviours as consistently and clearly as we can. As for negative behaviours, Faith struggles with keeping to her word. She also lashes out when she is angry and throws tantrums when she does not get her way. I believe a child's behaviours are windows to her feelings and thoughts. They communicate needs that we should seek to uncover and attend to appropriately.

Farhati Binte Ahmad: Fathiyah says "thank you" and apologises when she does something wrong. However, when it comes to play, she is unable to wait her turn and gets impatient. Sometimes, children resort to negative behaviour for attention. When this happens, my husband and I will gather the children to do something together, such as reading aloud from a book, to redirect their attention.

EDUCATORS, HOW DO YOU RESPOND TO POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE BEHAVIOURS?

Juliana: I focus on the behaviour instead of the child and praise positive behaviour. For instance, I might say, "Good job! I like the way you share your toys with your friend." This reinforces the behaviour and encourages others to follow suit.

“When a child displays negative behaviours, I speak to him or her away from the rest of the children and try to understand his or her perspective.”

MS NURHALAFIAH BINTE NORHADI, 44
Teacher, Putra-Putri Kindergarten



VIDEO RESOURCES

Casa Raudha has launched two educational videos titled *Safe Haven: Early Detection of Child Abuse for Preschools* as part of the Child Abuse campaign in partnership with ECDA and the Ministry of Social and Family Development. The videos aim to empower preschool teachers to detect signs of child abuse, intervene appropriately, and report any suspected cases in their centres. Educators can register their interest for the videos at bit.ly/preschoolnarrative and bit.ly/preschoolinformative.

I also articulate how the behaviour has a positive impact on others, such as: "Look how helpful so-and-so has been; it has made our jobs so much easier." At this age, children are building their understanding of empathy. By patiently explaining how the child's behaviour has caused grief or hurt someone, it helps them understand how their actions have an impact on others. I also set clear boundaries on what is allowed and not allowed in the classroom.

Nurhalafiah: When a child displays negative behaviours, I speak to him or her away from the rest of the children and try to understand his or her perspective. We should not assume that children know how to cope with their emotions. It is important to stay calm and not be judgmental. It is also important to acknowledge positive behaviours. For instance, when children help clean the board, I thank them and ask the rest of the class to clap for them. The children feel validated and good about themselves.

WHAT FACTORS SHOULD BE CONSIDERED WHEN ADDRESSING BEHAVIOURAL CONCERNS?

Juliana: Focus on understanding why children behave the way they do. What needs are not met and why? Is it because of the child's developmental stage and temperament, or a change in circumstances such as a new addition to the family? With a clearer understanding of the motivations driving the behaviour, we can set reasonable expectations for the child.

Nurhalafiah: We had an N2 child who was cheerful and loved to read. However, when she moved up to the kindergarten class, she became withdrawn and defiant, refusing to read or mingle with her peers. We shared our concerns with her parents. It turned out that she felt sidelined because her parents' attention was diverted to her sibling with special needs. While we worked on building her confidence in class by encouraging her to take the lead in some activities and express herself more, we also worked with her



THIS SPREAD On Juliana: Outfit Model's own On Nurhalafiah: Outfit Model's own

parents to support her at home. They began spending one-on-one time with her and delegated 'big sister' duties to her, so she felt more involved with her sibling. Over time, with support, she became more cheerful and started reading again. It is important for educators to work closely with families to identify and apply effective strategies to help children develop positive behaviours.

Lynn Heng: Children's behaviours, including challenging ones, are often an indication of unmet needs or interests. When we understand the causes underpinning a child's behaviour, we can employ appropriate strategies to decrease the negative behaviours and encourage more positive ones. In doing so, we are able to guide children to regulate their emotions and behaviours, as they learn and interact with others.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF USING POSITIVE DISCIPLINE STRATEGIES SUCH AS REINFORCEMENT AND REDIRECTION?

Juliana: Positive discipline is about encouraging and teaching children to relate to others and situations positively. It takes effort as we need to spend time having conversations with children to understand their behaviours and motivations. But this is worthwhile in the longer term. We once had a three-year-old boy with language delay and a short attention span. He often threw tantrums and cried during storytime. The teacher redirected his energy to positive activities instead, by providing him with the choice of playing with trucks.

Nurhalafiah: Positive discipline is also about acknowledging children's

“ I respond to positive behaviour with praise, hugs and small treats to encourage appropriate behaviour.

MS FARHATI BINTE AHMAD, 32
Nurse, mother of Fathiyah
Azzahra' Binte
Muhammad Azaad, 2



GAME PLAN

Playing games with rules is a good positive discipline strategy, Ms Heng notes. For example, 'Snakes & Ladders' and outdoor relay games require children to take turns, cooperate and follow certain procedures. It helps them recognise that breaking rules carries specific penalties.

emotions and feelings, such as anger or frustration, and setting limits. We need to communicate clearly on what appropriate and inappropriate behaviours are, as well as their consequences. A child once threw a tantrum because he was upset that playtime was over. I first acknowledged his feelings, then calmed him down before gently setting limits: "I will give you another five minutes to play and then you will have to put away the toys." The child agreed.

Lynn: Undergirding positive discipline strategies is respectful communication and interaction with children. Gently but firmly encourage children to reflect on their behaviours and think about the impact on themselves and others around them. Educators who take a positive discipline approach recognise and respect the child's feelings, while reiterating that rules must be followed. Imagine dealing with a child who does not want to pack away his toys after play. You might say, "I understand how you are eager to have lunch, but leaving toys on the floor is not what we do." Encourage the child to pick up the toys and suggest doing it together.

WHAT ARE SOME CONSEQUENCES OF USING PUNITIVE MEASURES SUCH AS CANING AND THREATS?

Juliana: Punishment may be a quick fix to stop negative behaviour, but it has a negative impact. It creates unnecessary fear in children and makes them feel stressed, hurt, rejected and angry. These feelings hinder the development of emotional and social skills. Scolding may stop a child's tantrums immediately, but it is a temporary solution. It can make things worse as the child would not want to reach out to the teacher again.

Nurhalafiah: I discourage parents from using physical punishment as it can scar children emotionally and lower their self-esteem and confidence.

Lynn: Research has shown that physical punishment is associated with increased aggression and anti-social behaviour. It affects children's emotional and mental health and can negatively impact the quality of family relationships.

PARENTS, HOW DO YOU REACT TO POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE BEHAVIOURS IN YOUR CHILDREN?

Wilfred: When Faith behaves in a positive manner, I praise and affirm the behaviour verbally, show joy by smiling or hugging her, and sometimes give a reward. If the behaviour is new to me, we will discuss that behaviour together. When Faith displays negative behaviour, I give her space to respond and express herself; tell her how I feel, especially if I am hurt; practise self-calming techniques if I am triggered; and role-model how to apologise and reconcile.

Farhati: I respond to positive behaviour with praise, hugs and small treats to encourage Fathiyah to behave appropriately. To counter negative behaviour, I am firm and explain why the behaviour is inappropriate. As parents, we should try to understand our children's needs. Solicit tips for responding to positive and negative behaviours, as well as feedback from teachers on the strategies we have used. More importantly, have lots of patience as developing positive behaviours takes time.

EDUCATORS, HOW CAN PRESCHOOLS AND PARENTS WORK TOGETHER TO ADOPT A CONSISTENT APPROACH TO DEVELOP POSITIVE BEHAVIOURS IN YOUNG CHILDREN?

Juliana: Have open and constructive conversations. Educators and parents can share with each other what is happening in preschool and at home. They can discuss the strategies that have worked for them and develop a set of common strategies which can be used in both settings.

Nurhalafiah: If there are concerns about a child's behaviour, educators need to observe and analyse his or her behaviours and interactions in different contexts (e.g., lessons, playtime, meals) over a period of time. Be mindful not to judge and jump to conclusions. Discuss your observations with peers and your centre leader. Be sensitive and considerate when you share your observations with parents and discuss strategies that can be mutually used to help the child. Also, encourage parents to practise routines similar to those of the preschool. This will give children a sense of stability as they know that their parents and teachers are working together. ●



DEEP IMPACT

Ms Suhana Binte Salleh, ECDA Fellow and Principal & Senior Specialist (Quality & Professional Development) at Iyad Perdaus Ltd, highlights how these common ways of verbally addressing children's behaviours can backfire.

- **"IF YOU CONTINUE TO CRY, I WILL NOT PICK YOU UP FROM PRESCHOOL."**
Avoid using fear-based parenting. Children who are raised in a fear-based environment will have difficulties forming trusting relationships. It can also cause them to feel anxious. Children take time to adapt to new teachers, friends and environments. Set expectations and rules by informing children what time they will be picked up. Encourage them to look forward to the activities in preschool.
- **"I SAY STOP IT!"**
Parents feel that children will pay attention if they raise their voices. This will not work in the long run, and children will start to think that shouting is normal adult behaviour. When children misbehave, parents need to be calm, talk to the child at their eye level, and be very specific about why their behaviour is not acceptable. Screaming at the child will not instil discipline. It can cause emotional distress and exacerbate behavioural problems.
- **"IF YOU DON'T EAT YOUR VEGETABLES, YOU WILL NOT BE CLEVER."**
Most parents struggle to get their children to eat vegetables. At this age, children start to exhibit independence in their food choices and tastes, and may even spit out their food or turn away when being fed. Parents must be patient and go slow. Introduce different types of vegetables. Do not give up if your child rejects a newly introduced vegetable.



“ A child's behaviours are windows to her feelings and thoughts. They communicate needs that we should seek to uncover and attend to appropriately.

MR WILFRED TEO, 33
Youth Pastor, father of Faith Teo, 4

THIS SPREAD On Farhati: Outfit Model's own. On Fathiyah: Outfit Gingersnaps, Shoes Model's own. On Wilfred: Outfit Model's own.

UNDERSTANDING TEMPERAMENTS

DR REBECCA ANDREWS HELPS EDUCATORS NAVIGATE THE MANY FACETS OF CHILDREN'S REACTIONS AND RESPONSES.

'Temperament' refers to a child's typical arousal level and characteristic way of responding to people, stimuli, events and the environment. Temperament characteristics are present from an early age.

Researchers Alexander Thomas and Stella Chess studied how temperament qualities influenced adjustment throughout life. They developed a widely recognised framework for understanding temperament in children. This framework identifies three broad categories of temperament:

1 EASY. Refers to children who are happy, adaptable and regular in their routines.

2 SLOW-TO-WARM-UP. Refers to children who are shy, withdrawn or cautious, and take longer to adjust to new situations.

3 DIFFICULT. Refers to children who are characterised by irritability, irregular habits and intense reactions. They are also frequently impulsive.

Thomas and Chess determined that the above categories hold relatively stable over time and can be used to predict a range of outcomes, including children's social and later academic success.

SIGNIFICANCE AND STRATEGIES

While their research suggests that temperament is mostly influenced

by genetic factors and therefore relatively stable, other factors such as parenting, cultural background and educational opportunities also play a role in how temperament evolves across childhood.

Educators should be conscious that regardless of temperament, their role is to scaffold each child to his or her full potential. The following tips can be applied when working with children.

▶ Create a supportive environment. When working with children with a "slow-to-warm-up" temperament, provide a safe environment that makes them feel comfortable and secure. Respect the child's preferred pace and do not push the child into situations he or she is not prepared for.

▶ Be nurturing. Encourage exploration by gradually introducing new experiences and people to children in a supportive and nurturing way. When a "slow-to-warm-up" child eventually approaches a new experience or person, provide positive reinforcement in response to the child's positive behaviour.

▶ Set clear expectations and be consistent. When working with children who exhibit a "difficult" temperament, set clear

expectations. Children with this temperament type often have high energy levels, so opportunities for physical activity and play are vital. Provide support for self-regulation by enabling consistent routines, offering limited choices, or asking the children to use words to express their feelings.

LANGUAGE AND LABELS

It is important for educators to be mindful of the language they use when communicating with or about children, as labels can be detrimental. For example, if a child is labelled "aggressive", other educators may view the child as being more likely to be the perpetrator of aggression in the future.

Labelling can also limit expectations for children. For instance, if a child is labelled "shy", educators may assume the child is not interested in socialising. Yet if supported, the child may happily engage with a new peer or in a small group.



DR REBECCA ANDREWS

Senior Lecturer in Early Childhood and Director of Initial Teacher Education, Macquarie School of Education, Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia

Dr Andrews' research investigates social interactions, emotion knowledge and memory in early childhood. She also has expertise in devising and implementing successful mentoring programmes for pre-service, early-career and experienced early childhood teachers.

RELATIONSHIP MATTERS

BUILDING A CONNECTION AND UNDERSTANDING EACH CHILD'S UNIQUE NEEDS NURTURES POSITIVE BEHAVIOURS, SAYS EARLY INTERVENTIONIST REUBEN CHENG.



Mr Cheng uses snack time to practise communication skills, as he guides a child in articulating "I want biscuits"

When it comes to nurturing positive behaviours in young children, establishing a relationship where children feel secure is one of the first things Mr Reuben Cheng does.

"I build a strong rapport and trust with children by engaging in their play or activities so that they get comfortable around me. I also give praise to reinforce positive behaviours," says the EIPIC (Early Intervention Programme for Infants and Children) teacher at Fei Yue Wellington Circle. Mr Cheng won the Outstanding Early Intervention Professional Award at the 2022 ECDA Awards for Excellence in Early Childhood Development.

Mdm Liew Kok Ing recounts how Mr Cheng spent months patiently building a relationship with her daughter Eva Tham, 5, who has developmental needs. "For the first four months, Eva refused to speak and mostly gestured for her needs. Teacher Reuben didn't rush her and over

time she preferred to do the activities together with him and even started verbalising more."

TAILORING TO NEEDS

Mr Cheng and his team — comprising an occupational therapist, a speech therapist, a psychologist and a social worker — work closely with parents to formulate the learning and developmental goals for the child.

Each child has an individual education plan (IEP) that is customised to his or her personality, likes and dislikes, routines and preferred way of learning. The IEP also accounts for the child's current abilities, needs and challenges, as well as the functional skills to be acquired. Mr Cheng monitors the child's progress, adjusts the activities accordingly and appraises parents of the child's development regularly.

PARTNERING PARENTS

Parents also receive videos of their child's activities in class. During home visits, Mr Cheng shows them how to apply the strategies, using items found at home. Mdm Liew shares, "Teacher Reuben took videos of how he used Playdoh to strengthen Eva's fine motor skills and encouraged me to do likewise at home. Her pencil grasp is improving, and now I can help her in writing the letters of the alphabet."



Discussing lesson plans, tasks and challenges with a co-teacher



IEP IN PRACTICE

Tips for developing an individual education plan.

- **Identify the skill and set specific goals.** For instance, the goal may be to encourage the child to initiate communication with peers. For a start, it could be a two- or three-word utterance such as "want to play".
- **Create opportunities to practise the skill.** Pair the child with peers. Facilitate conversations to familiarise the child with them. Join in and use descriptive words such as "Do you want to play with the blue car?".
- **Offer positive reinforcement and support.** Praise the child for the things he/she did well. Help him/her practise acquired skills and develop a plan to acquire new ones.

"Witnessing children's progress and seeing them graduate to the next level, as well as the look of joy on their parents' faces, is heart-warming. It makes me cherish the work I do at Fei Yue," says Mr Cheng. ●

Get more insights from Mr Cheng at go.gov.sg/2022ecdaawards-outstandingearlyintervention-reuben or scan here.



PERSONALISING CONNECTIONS

PRINCIPAL AINUL FARHANA BUILDS NURTURING RELATIONSHIPS TO CREATE A SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT FOR CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND TEACHERS.

Managing a centre with more than 1,000 children and overseeing a team of almost 200 teachers can be overwhelming. But Ms Ainul Farhana Binti Mohamed Bathurudin, the former Executive Principal of My First Skool at 2 Punggol Drive, takes it in her stride and does it by focusing on communication and relationships.

"As an early childhood centre leader, one of my key priorities is to connect and build relationships with the people I meet, and understand their intentions, perspectives and feelings," says Ms Ainul, who received the ECDA Outstanding Early Childhood Leader Award in 2022.

GETTING TO KNOW YOU

"To have happy outcomes, we need to have happy people first," she emphasises. "Showing genuine care and respect for the people around me helps me establish trusting relationships with them. I believe it is important for a leader to create a trusting space for the children, parents and teachers for a joyful, happy learning environment."

Mrs Shazana Latiff, whose two daughters, Lana Saabira and Laiqa Kirana Bte Mohamed Yuzaimi, have



Being present in classes helps Ms Ainul get to know each child

since graduated from the centre, says, "Ms Ainul's commitment towards the children and teachers is exemplified by her being present with her teachers in classes. She takes the time to participate in storytelling and drama sessions and greets children by their names — that is a true reflection of how genuinely personal she is."

CREATE A SUPPORTIVE SYSTEM

Managing a large centre makes it tough to connect with every individual on her team. That is why Ms Ainul provides a range of platforms where they can share and learn from one another, such as peer observations, book clubs and role-play.

She steps in when her teachers need help. When a few teachers struggled to manage children with learning and behavioural needs,

HOW TO BE A GOOD LEADER

Ms Ainul's three tips for leaders.

1 Be an agile learner. Be aware of what you know and what you don't. Attend courses, read extensively, and engage in professional discourse with fellow leaders and educators. Be open to learning from children's families and the community.

2 Take care of yourself. Acknowledge your limitations and set personal boundaries. For example, set aside 30 minutes for an uninterrupted lunch or a weekly 'do-not-disturb' time for reflection and planning.

3 Own the processes and outcomes. Create a shared sense of ownership with the team and establish a trusting environment where members can be both candid and vulnerable. Share what worked and what did not, while validating members' positive contributions. Welcome feedback as it offers valuable perspectives and ideas.

she initiated meetings with the parents and worked with her core team to devise strategies to help the teachers. She continued to guide them through regular check-in and observation sessions. Over the span of six months, the children began to show improvements. "It's teamwork, and we need to support each other," adds Ms Ainul.

Ms Ainul, who has since moved to My First Skool at Blk 322D Sumang Walk as the Executive Principal, hopes to establish more partnerships and parent education sessions. "Both educators and parents need to have a shared understanding of the support children must be given to thrive in their growing years," she says. ●

Get more leadership inspiration from Ms Ainul Farhana at go.gov.sg/2022ecdaawards-outstandingecleader-ainul or scan here.



Ms Ainul (far left) holds regular discussions with her team of teachers

IN A GOOD SPACE

LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS AND TEACHING MATERIALS PLAY A PIVOTAL ROLE IN SHAPING CHILDREN'S SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT.



Teacher Donita uses props to reinforce children's understanding of good and bad behaviours

Lukas Lau, six, can distinguish between good and bad behaviours. "Being nice to friends" and "taking turns while playing" are ideal, while "not sharing" is frowned upon, he shares.

He attends Small Wonder @ Nordcom II, where these behaviours — indicative of positive social and emotional development (SED) — are nurtured within carefully curated environments and using age-appropriate teaching aids.

FOSTERING INDEPENDENCE

Each kindergarten class at the centre features a 'Calm-Down Corner' kitted out with stress balls and strategy



Children dealing with challenging behaviours can retreat to the centre's Calm-Down Corner

cards to help children unwind. A visual schedule charting the day's activities in chronological order is also prominently displayed for the children's benefit.

"Preparing children ahead of time helps them anticipate what's next, without causing anxiety. Predictability gives a sense of security and is empowering for children. They can go about confidently preparing for the next activity, which also allows for smoother transitions between activities," says kindergarten teacher Ms Punitha Rada Krishnan.

Teachers customise teaching aids, such as individual reward charts, to further support children's SED. Children are responsible for plotting their progress on the charts by affixing pictures to the Velcro tabs upon certain task completion, such as finishing meals on their own. "These opportunities help increase their motivation and build confidence and

independence," Ms Punitha notes. "We can strengthen such behaviours by encouraging children through positive reinforcement and validation, to assure them that we are there to support them."

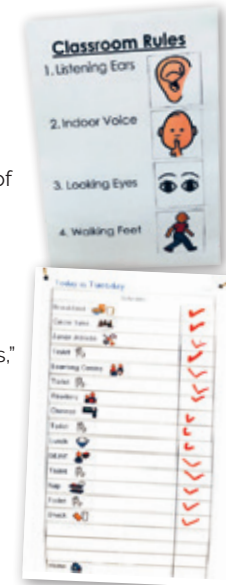
A SOLID START

At the playgroup/toddler level, charts containing simple visuals and rules (e.g., "listening ears", "indoor voice") set clear behavioural expectations for the children. "We have observed that over time, the children start internalising the rules and will take it upon themselves to remind their peers to follow the rules," says toddler teacher Ms Donita Jen Menore.

She regularly reads storybooks like *Feet Are Not for Kicking* and

Hands Are Not for Hitting to the children to strengthen their awareness of positive behaviours. To create a more immersive experience, story dramatisation and role-play using props, such as finger puppets, are incorporated into lessons.

"Dramatisation allows toddlers to explore and act out their feelings. It sets the context for them to take turns using the materials provided and negotiate with their peers," Ms Menore explains. "By relating to the characters in the story, children learn to make sense of their emotions, recognise their feelings, and verbalise them in a safe environment." ●



MORE ON SPARK Small Wonder @ Nordcom II is a SPARK-certified centre, which means it has been recognised for its continued efforts in providing quality preschool education. See www.ecda.gov.sg/SPARKinfo for more information on the SPARK framework.

UPLIFTING FAMILIES AND GIVING EVERY CHILD A GOOD START

ENHANCED MEASURES TO SUPPORT LOWER-INCOME FAMILIES AND CHILDREN WITH DEVELOPMENTAL NEEDS.



KidSTART EXPANDS REACH

SUPPORTING MORE FAMILIES AND CHILDREN.

PILOT: 1,000 CHILDREN

ECDA pilots the KidSTART programme to provide support to children aged 0 to 6 from lower-income families living in 5 SSO* regions (Kreta Ayer, Bukit Merah, Taman Jurong, Boon Lay and Geylang).
* Social Service Office

GROWING TOGETHER

ECDA launches the 'Growing Together with KidSTART' initiative to galvanise community support for KidSTART families among corporations and individuals. KidSTART begins scale-up to 13 SSO regions.

PRIORITY ENROLMENT AT ANCHOR OPERATOR PRESCHOOLS

WHO TAKES PRIORITY?

Children from families with a gross monthly household income of \$3,000 and below, including those supported by KidSTART and the Preschool Outreach Programme, will be accorded higher priority for enrolment into Anchor Operator childcare programmes.

Following this group, children from families with a gross monthly household income between \$3,001 and \$6,000 will also be given priority in enrolment.

2016

2019

6,200 CHILDREN

KidSTART, now operating in 13 SSO regions, to extend support to eligible families in 5 more SSO regions (Jalan Besar, Toa Payoh, Sengkang, Hougang and Serangoon).

NATION-WIDE

KidSTART to be offered to eligible families in all 24 SSO regions. Target to onboard 80% of children from eligible families.

2023

2026



MORE PLACES AND AFFORDABLE EARLY INTERVENTION (EI) SUPPORT

More centres will be set up to offer the **EARLY INTERVENTION PROGRAMME FOR INFANTS AND CHILDREN (EIPIIC)**.

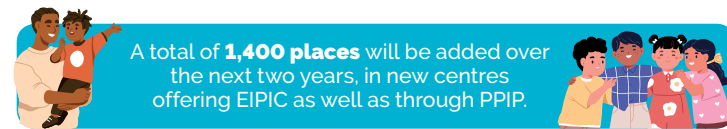
WHERE ARE THESE NEW CENTRES?

- Two EI centres will start operations in Fernvale Woods and Bukit Batok by end-2023.
- This brings the total number of EI centres providing EIPIIC to 23.
- Plans to build more centres are underway.

More places will be offered under the **ENHANCED PILOT FOR PRIVATE INTERVENTION PROVIDERS (PPIP)**. This gives more choices for children who require medium to high levels of EI support.

HOW MANY PLACES WILL BE ADDED?

- The number of PPIP places will be tripled, from 400 currently to 1,200.



To ensure that the PPIP programme is affordable for families, a **CAP ON OUT-OF-POCKET (OOP) EXPENSES** (i.e., amount paid after subsidies) will be implemented from 1 July 2023.

OOP expenses differ according to the families' monthly household income, intervention hours and the PPIP centre that the child is enrolled in.

This table (right) shows OOP expenses for a family with a child attending a PPIP centre with a median fee[^] of \$1,620 (including 8% GST).

Monthly Household Per Capita Income	Current Median OOP Expenses After Subsidies*	Maximum OOP Expenses from 1 July 2023*
\$0 – \$1,000	\$280	\$11
\$1,001 – \$1,400	\$336	\$76
\$1,401 – \$1,800	\$392	\$119
\$1,801 – \$2,300	\$448	\$194
\$2,301 – \$2,800	\$560	\$324
\$2,801 – \$3,500	\$728	\$410
\$3,501 – \$4,600	\$896	\$508
More than \$4,600	\$1,120	\$659

[^] PPIP fees currently range from \$900 to \$2,100 (before subsidies). The amounts reflected are for intervention hours of 8 to 11 hours a week.

* Includes 8% GST, rounded to nearest dollar (2023).

Currently being piloted in seven preschools, ECDA plans to expand the **INCLUSIVE SUPPORT PROGRAMME (InSP)** to more preschools from 2026.

WHO IS IT FOR?

- InSP caters to children aged 3 to 6 who require medium levels of EI support.
- By integrating both early childhood education and EI in a preschool setting, InSP seeks to provide a more inclusive learning experience for both typically developing children and children with developmental needs.

WHAT ARE THE SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN EIPIIC AND PPIP?

- Both are Government-funded programmes offering similar services for children requiring medium to high levels of EI support.
- EIPIIC is provided by social service agencies, while PPIP is provided by private operators.
- Both are delivered by a team of professionals, which includes EI educators, therapists, psychologists and social workers.
- Under both services, children typically receive 5 to 12 hours of intervention, conducted over 2 to 3 sessions every week.

CHARTING THE FUTURE

THROUGH PEER LEARNING, THE EARLY CHILDHOOD LEARNING COMMUNITIES SHARPEN EDUCATORS' PEDAGOGICAL TOOLKIT.

Learning from each other and reflecting on one's pedagogical practices are key to improving teaching skills and enhancing the quality of learning experiences for young children. It is this belief that undergirds the Early Childhood Learning Communities (ECLC). This is a platform for senior/lead preschool educators — known as Pedagogists And Specialists in Teaching and Learning (PASTELs) — to advance their pedagogical knowledge and practices in four key domain areas: 'Early Years Competencies', 'Outdoor Learning', 'Social & Emotional Development' and 'Language & Literacy', through peer sharing and learning at sector level.

Launched in April 2022, the opportunities provided by the ECLC are starting to bear fruit as PASTELs expand their professional repertoire



Ms Murni puts SED learning into practice: building a relationship with an infant through one-to-one reading



Ms Murni (back row, first from left) with her fellow educators from the SED Learning Community

through helping Communities of Practices (CoPs) with other educators, to lead and facilitate peer sharing in the sector.

LEVELLING UP

The importance of self-care when educators attend to their children's Social and Emotional Development (SED) is one of the many insights Ms Murni Hattin Mubarak, vice principal of Iyad Perdaus (Hougang), has gained as a PASTEL of the SED Learning Community. Given how much a child's SED hinges on a strong attachment with a nurturing adult — a parent or an educator — it stands to reason that the educator's own social and emotional bearing has a profound impact on the children.

"As EC educators, we do experience feelings of frustration or anxiety. It is important for us to prioritise our emotional well-being by setting aside 'me time' to de-stress. This is key to maintaining a positive relationship with children. As role models, children emulate us. They are constantly observing and learning, which is why we need to be mindful of how we express and manage our emotions — our tone of voice, facial expressions, gestures and language," says Ms Murni.

In fact, the deeper she delves into the different aspects of SED with her fellow PASTELs, the more insights she gains. For example, it matters profoundly to children when educators are purposeful and mindful of their actions and words.



"Children need educators who are positive and provide consistent guidance. Having a positive adult-child relationship helps children to be emotionally aware, self-regulate and build connections with others," she reflects.

For Ms Krishnapriya d/o Shamnugunathan, a senior preschool educator and curriculum coordinator at EtonHouse Vanda, joining the ECLC's Language and Literacy (L&L) Learning Community has been eye-opening. "It was interesting to learn how educators from different centres incorporate technology into their L&L curricula," she shares.

Ms Priya adds, "I have begun to explore how smart devices like tablets and mobile phones can be used as tools to enrich children's L&L learning experiences, especially now that I have been introduced to the satellite imaging program Google Earth, as well as apps such as Procreate for digital painting and ChatterPix for animating pictures."



Adopting good L&L teaching practices: Ms Priya encourages creative writing such as journaling

PAY IT FORWARD

Come May, Ms Priya will lead a CoP with a fellow PASTEL from the L&L Learning Community, which will focus on techniques to encourage creative writing in children. "Creative writing improves children's ability to come up with alternatives, broadens their thought processes, and fuels their enthusiasm for reading," she explains. She believes CoP initiatives will have a positive impact on classroom practice, by facilitating professional dialogues where educators can share teaching strategies based on their interests and expertise.

Already, the knock-on effects of the ECLC are evident. Ms Murni now advocates the importance of developing children's social and emotional skills during monthly curriculum discussions with her team of educators. She also recently organised an SED workshop for parents, with emphasis on the importance of strong adult-child bonds that are critical for the development of resilience and self-regulation skills in children.

The ECLC bears testament to the benefits of collaborating with others, which Ms Priya appreciates. "My biggest takeaway from the ECLC

PURPOSEFUL AND MINDFUL ACTIONS

How educators can promote children's social and emotional development.

- > **Put yourself in the child's shoes.** Ask yourself, "How would I feel if I were in this situation?"
- > **Take a step back.** Consider different options before addressing a difficult situation.
- > **Avoid using harsh words.** These are hurtful to children and can damage their self-esteem.
- > **Practise daily self-reflection.** Consider thoughts, emotions and actions from different perspectives.
- > **Expand your repertoire.** Read different genres of books and explore various ways to help children gain better awareness of their emotions and feelings.

is how we can learn more about good pedagogical and innovative practices from one another, reflect on teaching strategies from different perspectives, and try new ideas in the classroom to benefit children's learning," she concludes.



Ms Priya preparing for a CoP that she is helming

Find out more about the Early Childhood Learning Communities and how to participate in a PASTEL-led CoP today at go.gov.sg/ecda-eclc or scan here.





Homemade storytelling aids with mechanisms that incorporate science principles spark children's interest in STEAM areas

IN RAP-TURES

CHILDREN LEARN BETTER WHEN THEY ARE EMOTIONALLY CONNECTED TO THE CONTENT.

Fix the lesson, not the child" is the dictum that Dr Muhammad Nazir Bin Amir would like educators to embrace. This belief was born out of the 13 years that he spent teaching secondary school students, many of whom were not academically motivated.

During this time, Dr Nazir carried out classroom research that led to the development of a pedagogical guideline to make learning more "Relevant, Appealing and Personal" to students, or "RAP" for short.

"The RAP pedagogical guideline can be used for any topic and by educators across all levels, including preschool," notes Dr Nazir, a Master Teacher with the Ministry of Education, and a Fulbright Scholar. Unconducive home environments and disruptive behaviours may not necessarily be the reasons why children are academically unmotivated and disengaged in the classroom. "It could simply be that the lessons are not interesting. More specifically, the way content is taught," says Dr Nazir.

EXCITED TO LEARN

When educators adopt the RAP guideline, they start to embrace a mindset that places children's joyful learning experiences at the heart of what they do. It can help educators

think of ways to draw children to the learning material.

Dr Nazir highlights that one way to evoke a positive emotional response among children is to create a joyful emotional connection to the content. For this to happen, educators need to consider contexts that appeal to children.

For example, in exploring the use of media to teach content, educators can identify videos that excite children, and think of ways to weave in content through such appealing videos. Educators can capitalise on popular animated movies such as *Frozen* to present ideas related to 'melting', and *The Jungle Book* to highlight 'man's impact on the environment'.

Educators can also make toys as storytelling aids. Using materials such as a kitchen towel, bamboo sticks, magnets and string, they can construct a mechanism that brings Rapunzel's hair down



Dr Nazir uses RAP to get children to connect positively to the content

a tower and helps the prince climb up. This in turn can spark children's interest in STEAM (science, technology, engineering, the arts, mathematics) areas.

MOTIVATION FROM WITHIN

Instead of using incentives such as stickers, RAP-infused lessons nurture an intrinsic motivation to learn and stimulate children's natural curiosity and knowledge retention.

For instance, educators utilised scenes from the movie *Raya and the Last Dragon* to highlight concepts related to Asian cultures such as *wayang kulit*, as well as science concepts related to 'float and sink'. Children actively participated in the lesson when these video clips were used.

Dr Nazir observes that teachers too are motivated to carry out RAP-infused lessons. "This could be related to the creative leaps that teachers go through in designing such enjoyable lessons," he adds. "They feel a deep sense of satisfaction when they see the spark in children's eyes as a result of their creative teaching ideas." ●

RAP IN 3 STEPS

How educators can incorporate the RAP pedagogical guideline into their teaching practices.

1 Explore and identify children's interests, prioritising their enjoyment. What activities and environments appeal to children? Are they novel and age-appropriate? Do they offer multi-sensory stimuli?

2 Develop a teaching idea that emotionally connects children to the content. What would make children want to learn instead of have to learn? What other support is needed?

3 Reflect on the teaching idea. Are children enthusiastic? Observe their facial and verbal expressions as well as behavioural reactions to affirm and enhance teaching practices.



LET'S TALK ABOUT FEELINGS

HOW ONE CENTRE'S STORY-BASED APPROACH HAS HELPED CHILDREN EXPRESS AND REGULATE THEIR EMOTIONS BETTER.

Last year, teachers at Learning Vision @ Changi Airport noticed that preschool drop-offs

were particularly challenging at the Nursery and K1 levels. Some children had separation anxiety, while others had unresolved emotions from being scolded by their parents amid the morning rush. They would cry and scream, which spilled over to other interactions and affected their focus for a good part of the day.

The teachers decided to explore colour psychology — the study of how colour influences mood and behaviour. Ms Li Si, the centre's programme specialist, explains, "Describing feelings can be abstract for young children. Combining colour psychology with interesting cartoon characters and stories can make it easier for children to understand and express their emotions in acceptable ways."

MOOD OF THE DAY

Taking a cue from the story *The Colour Monster*, which is about a monster who learns to identify his feelings through colour, teachers set up an 'Emotion Corner' at the centre for children to go to during the day or whenever they felt upset.



Filling mood jars with coloured balls that represent different emotions



Children use coloured soft toys to express their feelings

The corner was stocked with a variety of coloured items that corresponded with the different emotions featured in the book — red for angry, blue for sad, yellow for happy, etc. Among the materials were hand puppets, soft toys, Pop-It fidget toys, stress balls, storybooks, puzzles and art supplies.

"We made it a daily practice to ask children to share how they were feeling. Together, we discussed activities that they could engage in at the corner to help regulate their emotions," says Ms Li. "Children who felt sad could hug the blue monster doll or mood pillow. Those who were feeling frustrated could choose to play with the Pop-It fidget toys or read their favourite books to calm down."

Storytelling aids, like mood bottles which children could put in coloured balls or paper messages, helped capture their emotions as well. Artworks made with finger paints and playdough were also useful for emotional regulation.

"I found that the 'Emotion Corner' helped Charlotte understand her emotions, and that it is okay to feel upset sometimes.

MDM ONG SIYI, mother of Charlotte Tan, 6

GET A GRANT Learning Vision @ Changi Airport tapped on the ECDA Practitioner Inquiry (PI) Grant for this project. For more details, visit go.gov.sg/ecda-practitioner-inquiry-grant or scan here.



Teacher Li Si draws a mind map of emotional triggers for a child

KEEPING RECORDS

"The children enjoyed these activities, and teachers observed that they got better at regulating their emotions," says Ms Li. In fact, it was such a success that the concept will be extended to the rest of the preschool, with mini Emotion Corners in each classroom.

Mdm Ong Siyi, whose daughter Charlotte Tan, 6, participated in last year's project, is a fan of this space. It helped ease Charlotte's separation anxiety, which was exacerbated by the arrival of her baby brother. "She now copes better when I have to attend to her brother during bedtime," says Mdm Ong. "I also appreciated the parenting workshop conducted by the centre as I applied what I learned to help Charlotte regulate her emotions. For instance, I would ask her to name the 'monster' in question when she has a meltdown, so she recognises the emotion she is experiencing and how to manage it."

The teachers used various methods to record children's emotions. For example, they created daily charts for children to stick coloured monster tags that represented their feelings and then had a chat about it. The teachers would review the charts at intervals to monitor changes in the children's emotional regulation, discuss the progress with each child and validate their efforts. ●

Q&A HOW TO REGULATE CHILDREN'S BEHAVIOURS AT HOME AND IN PRESCHOOL.

FOR PARENTS



Q Can I teach my six-month-old baby boundaries and appropriate behaviours?

At six months, babies can benefit from age-appropriate limits set within a warm and responsive relationship. They are not yet able to understand consequences and follow rules, but parents can teach them to behave appropriately.

- 1. Catch them doing right.** Provide positive attention and praise when your baby displays desirable behaviour. For example, make eye contact with a smile, and say "good waiting" or "nice playing on your own". This encourages him to repeat that behaviour.
- 2. Say "no" calmly.** When your baby displays undesirable behaviour, keep calm and say "no" in a neutral voice, while naming the behaviour (e.g., "no pulling hair" or "no throwing toys"). In a gentle manner, physically guide him to stop the action. Withdraw attention from the behaviour by turning away for a few seconds, only if it is safe to do so.
- 3. Physically guide your baby** to engage in a specific desirable behaviour while naming it (e.g., "pat Mama gently"). When the appropriate behaviour is displayed, reward your baby with positive attention and praise. By doing this repeatedly, he can eventually learn to display the behaviour without physical help.

Q What are some ways to reduce disruptions and distractions while teaching?

Behaviours such as talking out of turn, being out of seat or non-attentiveness take time away from learning, as that time is used instead to get children to refocus.

Disruptive behaviour may be due to unclear expectations or a lack of social skills. To address these, first build a warm and responsive relationship with the child. A child who feels secure and has a sense of belonging is more likely to trust the educator and follow his or her guidance. Refrain from assuming children know how to behave appropriately.

Use these classroom management techniques.

- > **Make classroom rules explicit.** Use verbal or visual prompts, gestures, role-modelling and physical assistance. Get children involved in setting the rules. This helps them develop a sense of shared responsibility or ownership, which leads to greater cooperation and self-control.
- > **Catch children when they are good.** Verbally validate or acknowledge their efforts. For example, praise a child for raising his hand before speaking. Share the child's progress with his parents for further positive reinforcement.
- > **Reflect on the physical environment and resources.** Assess the space set-up and the children's interactions within this space regularly. Is there a distracting light source or unusual object? Are the children seated facing an open doorway or window? Is there overcrowding or are the resources adequate? Discuss with fellow teachers to find solutions.

FOR EDUCATORS



DR KOH HWAN CUI is the Principal Psychologist at the Department of Child Development, KK Women's and Children's Hospital. She has more than 13 years of experience working with preschoolers with developmental needs and their parents/caregivers.



DR YVONNE CHAN is a Senior Lecturer at the National Institute of Early Childhood Development (City Campus). She specialises in teaching social-emotional learning at the Advanced Certificate and Diploma levels, as well as at customised workshops.

THRIVE

TIPS AND IDEAS FOR THE PHYSICAL, LANGUAGE, COGNITIVE AND SOCIO-EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF YOUR CHILD



Did you know baby bunnies are called 'kittens'? But like deer, female rabbits are called 'does' and male rabbits are called 'bucks'.

learn



18 Empower children to protect animals and their natural habitats

grow



21 Let's stew this – a yummy way to eat your veggies

play



22 Make mummy and daddy feel special by giving them paper roses



Animal interactions are opportunities for children to practise being empathetic and respectful to other living things



LET'S GET WILD!

Regular, respectful interactions with animals help children develop healthy attitudes and behaviours.



Encounters with nature and wildlife give children a greater appreciation of the wider world around them. Through this, adults can nurture their respect for diversity, and foster kind, empathetic and compassionate behaviours.

"Nature is the epitome of diversity," says Ms May Lok, Vice President of Education at Mandai Wildlife Group (MWG). "Exploring nature at a young age allows children to appreciate and respect diversity. It also develops their empathy as they understand that different life forms require different environments to survive.

We can help our children appreciate the web of life and the interdependence of all living things, including our relationship as humans with other living things."

RESPECT AND CARE FOR ANIMALS

Developing children's interest in living things besides themselves is a step towards nurturing children's ability to care for others. "If young children can find space in their hearts for plants and animals, they will protect them when they grow up. I believe we cannot protect something that we do not know or love," observes Ms Lok.

Care for wildlife can also take the form of stewardship. Preschools like Ace @



Teacher training workshops run by MWG offer positive experiences with wildlife, which educators can then pass on to children

Work Childcare at Choa Chu Kang Blk 757 initiated a 'Start Small Dream Big' (SSDB) project to spread awareness about wildlife conservation (see box story). MWG offers a programme called *Adopt-An-Animal School Edition*, where children work together to raise funds to adopt an animal. Through this experience, they discover the importance of teamwork, perseverance and being proactive while learning about wildlife.

GETTING CLOSE TO NATURE



Ms May Lok offers some tips to introduce little ones to nature.

- Go on a nature walk or visit an all-weather park such as River Wonders, which is sheltered and stroller-friendly.
- Observe which animals pique the children's interest and talk about them.
- Describe what children are observing to enhance their vocabulary and thinking skills. Example: "What is the otter doing?" or "Why do you think it is diving into the water?"
- Support children's sense of wonder by exploring their questions about the animals. Example: "How does it move?" or "What does it eat?"
- Borrow books about their favourite animals from the library.



Preschoolers find a connection with aquatic animals through River Wonders' Story Walk programme

MINDFUL INTERACTIONS

Mindful interactions with animals can support children's holistic development by helping them understand respect, healthy boundaries, and the impact of their actions.

Besides venturing out to nature spaces like neighbourhood parks and beaches, parents and educators can bring children to wildlife parks where interactions with animals are carried out under the close supervision of professional animal care staff.

Ms Lok advises, "Adults need to be mindful of children's feelings and comfort level when they come face-to-face with animals during such interactions. Children might feel excited, overwhelmed or even scared. Excitement can lead to sudden actions that might startle an animal."

FRIENDS OF ANIMALS

These two preschools' SSDB 2022 projects revolve around animals.



ADOPT A SEA LION

After learning about the dangers wild animals face due to pollution and climate change, the children of Ace @ Work Childcare at Choa Chu Kang Blk 757 set out to raise funds to adopt Pedro, a sea lion at the Singapore Zoo.

They wrote and illustrated storybooks on the impact of human activities on our wildlife. Each child pledged to help with chores and show positive behaviour at home in exchange for more donations. The children also created posters and banners to spread awareness about the importance of animal conservation in the neighbourhood.

"Our project helped children learn about respecting our wildlife and the environment, and how small and simple steps can make a difference to animals," says senior teacher Mrs Louie Anne Rodenas-Ricarro.

Our class donations will help the zookeeper buy food and medicine for Pedro!

HANNAH KWA, K2

BE A RESPONSIBLE STEWARD



"In an urban ecosystem like ours, we have a social responsibility towards the animals and plants that inhabit our City in Nature," says Dr Chang Siow Foong, Group Director of Community Animal Management and Professional & Scientific Services at the National Parks Board (NParks).

Dr Chang shares three tips to instil social responsibility in young children:

- ➔ **Be respectful.** Seek a pet owner's permission before approaching or touching their pet. Be gentle when interacting with their pet.
- ➔ **Pets are for life.** A pet is a lifetime commitment and needs lots of care and attention. Get more information and read up before getting a pet, and understand the challenges involved. Find out more about the pet's needs (e.g., health and dietary requirements, grooming, training) and more importantly, whether you have the resources to take care of them.
- ➔ **Encountering wildlife.** You may encounter monkeys, otters and monitor lizards during walks at beaches, parks and nature reserves, or even around your neighbourhood. Do not make abrupt movements or try to approach or interact with them. Remember to throw litter in bins, dispose of pet droppings properly, and do not leave food scraps lying around.

For more resources, visit www.nparks.gov.sg/learning/teaching-and-learning-resources.

Animals feel sad if we do not protect them. We can look out for injured animals and bring them to the vet.

BRING YOUR PET TO SCHOOL

Bright Kids @ Pasir Ris collaborated with NParks to reinforce responsible pet ownership. The children visited The Animal Classroom in the Jacob Ballas Children's Garden, where they met rescued pets and learned about their care.

Back in preschool, the children were invited to bring their pets for a special "Show and Tell" session, where they discussed how they cared for their pets at home. In another activity, children role-played as animal vets and pet owners. A boy who performed "surgery" on an injured monkey was gentle and reassured his furry patient.

Principal Ms Grizel Koo says, "The children could better appreciate why we must be responsible pet owners, build trust with our pets and show empathy when taking care of animals."

MUHAMMAD ARYAN MIKHAIL BIN MUHAMMAD HAFIZ, K1



Read about other SSDB 2022 projects at cdn-littlestories-1.littlelives.com/static/publications/SSDB22_E-book.pdf.

→ Three lucky readers will each receive an activity book, *Growing Up With Le Le*, and a set of bilingual storybooks on native wildlife.



Simply answer this question:
Give an example of the right way to behave when you encounter animals in nature or at a wildlife park.

Submit your answer online at go.gov.sg/beanstalk-thrive-contest or scan this QR code.

Closing date: **26 May 2023**

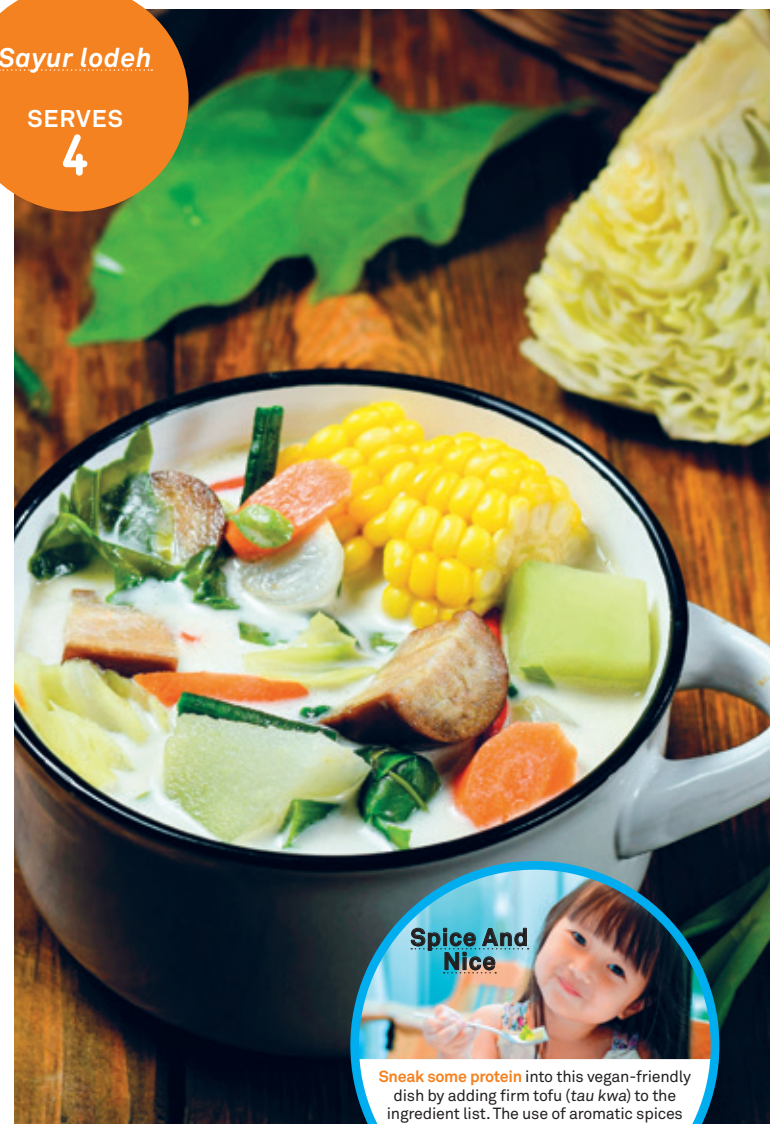


SAY YES TO SAYUR

A rich but mild vegetable curry to tickle the taste buds of little ones.

Sayur lodeh

SERVES
4



Follow these steps

1. Peel and slice chayote. Cut all vegetables into bite-sized pieces. Set aside.



2. Peel spices and chop finely. Grind into a smooth paste with a mortar and pestle, or use a blender with a little water added.



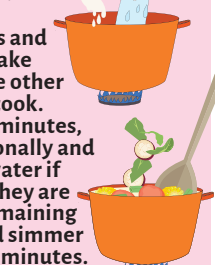
3. Heat oil in a pot over medium heat. Add spice paste and stir-fry for about 5 minutes until fragrant.



4. Pour in coconut milk and water. Add salam leaves. Stir to combine.



5. Add long beans and carrot, which take longer than the other vegetables to cook. Simmer for 10 minutes, stirring occasionally and adding more water if needed, until they are tender. Add remaining vegetables and simmer for a few more minutes.



TIP! Do not let the stew come to a rolling boil or the coconut milk will curdle.

6. Remove *salam* leaves from the pot and turn off heat. Serve with white or brown rice.



Spice And Nice



Sneak some protein into this vegan-friendly dish by adding firm tofu (tau kwa) to the ingredient list. The use of aromatic spices in the dish, instead of salt or sugar, also infuses it with rich flavour and is a great way to expand children's palates.

→ WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- 1 chayote (about 250g)
- 4 stalks long beans (about 150g)
- 1 carrot
- ¼ head cabbage
- 1 cob corn
- 1 eggplant
- 1 tbsp oil*
- 150ml reduced-fat coconut milk
- 1l water
- 2 or 3 *salam* leaves (or bay leaves)



Cabbage



Long beans



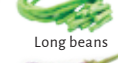
Corn



Carrot



Salam leaves



Eggplant



Chayote



Coconut milk



Water



Oil

FOR SPICE PASTE:

- 8 shallots
- 4 cloves garlic
- 2 stalks lemongrass
- 2.5cm galangal
- 1.5 tsp coriander seeds
- 4 candlenuts



Shallots



Garlic



Lemongrass



Galangal



Coriander seeds



Candlenuts

Eat Your Greens

➤ Besides being nutrient-rich, vegetables support healthy digestion and are low in calories. Cut them into creative shapes and designs to make eating veggies appealing and fun for children. Always fill half of your child's plate with fruits and vegetables.

Find out more at www.healthhub.sg/live-healthy/514/Benefits%20of%20Fruit%20and%20Vegetables.

*Choose oil with the Healthier Choice Symbol.

More Than Good Manners

Shining the spotlight on negative and positive behaviours.



> The Only Way Is Badger

By Stella J. Jones
OverDrive link: nlb.overdrive.com/media/5740076

Badger thinks he is the best animal in the forest. Badger thinks he is always right and forces his friends to be just like him. When some of his friends fail to do things like him, he sends them to another side of a wall in the forest. Soon, he finds himself all alone. How will Badger resolve this conflict? Will his friends forgive him? This light-hearted book teaches children the importance of acceptance and forgiveness.

Contributed by Nandhini Bala Krishnan, Associate Librarian, National Library Board



> The Parent-Child Dance

By Ronald Kotkin and Aubrey Fine
OverDrive link: nlb.overdrive.com/media/2233969

Using dance as a metaphor, *The Parent-Child Dance* explores parenting techniques and strategies to create positive changes in a child's life. It is not only about leading the child but also about creating beautiful interactions with the child throughout the journey. With relatable scenarios from both the parent's and child's perspectives, this is a fun and easy-to-digest manual for all parents.

Contributed by Siti Nurulhuda, Associate Librarian, National Library Board



FAMILY FIRST

The stronger the relationship between parent and child, the better the parent can reinforce the child's positive behaviours and address behavioural problems. And there's no better way to forge a close, loving relationship than by spending quality time together as a family!

An exciting line-up of family bonding activities is just around the corner with **National Family Week** from 3 to 11 June 2023. Organised by Families for Life (FFL), the island-wide celebrations will include an array of fun and engaging activities, family bundles and deals, as well as 'Meet & Greet' opportunities with FFL's mascot, 'Becky Bunny'.

Visit the FFL website at familiesforlife.sg, or follow FFL on Facebook or Instagram, to get the latest updates.



FOR YOUR DAILY DOSE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD INSPIRATION...

Grow@Beanstalk is your one-stop early childhood (EC) resource portal for inspiring stories, useful tips and activity ideas, as well as the latest happenings from the EC sector.



Visit www.ecda.gov.sg/growatbeanstalk, or scan the QR code



Follow our Facebook page to stay updated and informed on the EC sector. You can also engage in healthy discussions with fellow educators and parents.



Connect with us at www.facebook.com/BeanstalkSingapore, or scan the QR code



It's not just work when you work with children. If you aspire to make a lifelong impact, join us as an Early Childhood Professional to shape the next generation.



Start a career in EC at www.ecda.gov.sg/ShapeOurTomorrow, or scan the QR code



Check out our Instagram page for exciting developments in the EC sector. Be inspired by what educators say about giving a good start to every child.



Follow us at [@beanstalksingapore](https://www.instagram.com/beanstalksingapore), or scan the QR code



play



→ WHAT YOU'LL NEED



Flower Power

Make a big bunch of paper roses for Mother's or Father's Day.



Process, Not Product

HEY PARENTS! Mixing paint colours and dyeing paper towels is a process art experience. It allows children to engage their **senses**, expand their **vocabulary**, and learn about **science concepts** such as colour blending and absorption. Rolling and pinching paper towels also strengthens **eye-hand coordination** and **fine motor skills**.

Follow these steps

1. Pour paint colours into separate containers. Add water to dilute the colour and thin out the paint so that it spreads easily.
2. Drip or brush the paint over a sheet of paper towel until the surface is completely covered. Let it dry thoroughly. To speed up drying, use a fan or hair dryer.
3. Cut paper towel into four long strips. Crumple the strips to create texture and volume, then smooth them out. Two strips will make one rose.

4. Lay a stick at an angle on one end of the first strip. Holding the bottom edge of the paper towel on the stick, start wrapping it around the stick.
5. Adjust and pinch the paper towel as you go, so that the top part is somewhat even. Do the same with the second strip.
6. Secure the base of the paper rose with tape. Cover the tape by wrapping with yarn.
7. Gently pull and fluff out the paper petals. Make more roses to form a bouquet!



Snap & Show

Your child's masterpiece could be featured in the next issue of *Beanstalk*! Submit a picture of your child's paper towel flowers online at go.gov.sg/beanstalk-craft-submission or scan this QR code.



5 HEALTHY HABITS TO NURTURE IN CHILDREN

ENCOURAGING CHILDREN TO EMBRACE HEALTHY LIFESTYLE PRACTICES STRENGTHENS THEIR PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING.

Parents are children's first and biggest influencers. Model the behaviours you want them to adopt, such as eating a balanced diet, staying active and managing stress in appropriate ways.



3 LIMIT SCREEN TIME

Excessive screen time for young children can lead to negative effects in the long term, such as increased risk of obesity and poor social skills. Set limits according to the child's age and avoid devices 30 minutes before bedtime, as the blue light emitted can disrupt sleep cycles. Dedicate most of your child's day to screen-free activities such as play and social interactions.

1 GET OUT AND PLAY

Children need regular physical activity to develop healthy bodies and minds. The "Singapore Physical Activity Guidelines" recommends that children aged three to six spend at least 180 minutes throughout the day doing a variety of physical activities, of which at least 60 minutes should be moderate-to-vigorous-intensity activity. Bring them outdoors to the playground, take a walk in the park, and participate in a sport or other active hobbies they enjoy.



AGE GROUP	RECOMMENDED SLEEP DURATION
0-3 months	14 to 17 hours
4-11 months	12 to 15 hours
1-2 years	11 to 14 hours
3-4 years	10 to 13 hours
5-6 years	9 to 13 hours

Source: www.healthhub.sg/live-healthy/510/sleep

4 STICK TO A SLEEP SCHEDULE

Quality sleep is important for physical and emotional well-being. Establish a bedtime routine and ensure your child gets enough sleep each night. Do a relaxing wind-down activity like reading a story before bed, instead of video games or vigorous activities which may over-stimulate them.

2 SHAPE THEIR PALATE

Set children on the path to eating a balanced diet using "My Healthy Plate" as a guide. It helps little ones visualise how much they should eat of each food group. Take them grocery shopping and make it fun. Talk about the fresh produce and ingredients that go into their meals. Explain why you choose some products over others, such as those with the Healthier Choice Symbol.



5 ENCOURAGE GOOD HYGIENE

Good hygiene habits lower the risk of catching nasty bugs. Model for children the eight-step technique for thorough handwashing. Watch the "Washy Washy Clean" video on YouTube, which puts these steps into a catchy tune. Demonstrate the correct tooth-brushing technique on a favourite stuffed toy. Motivate Junior by brushing together, since children like to mimic their parents.




This article is contributed by the Health Promotion Board (HPB). www.healthhub.sg and www.healthhub.sg/programmes/183/parent-hub

WE'VE GOT MAIL!

Parents share their strategies for developing positive behaviours in their children.




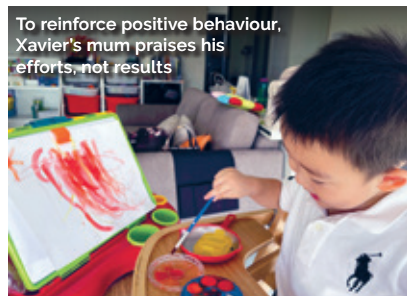
 Our daughter Angelyn used to struggle to follow instructions and focus on a task. When her preschool teachers shared with us Angelyn's interest in art, we signed her up for art classes. At home, we drew outlines of the pictures she chose for her to colour. It has helped develop her attention skills, and she is now more focused and less distracted, not just in art class but during other lessons too. She made us so proud when she won an art competition.



Art helped Angelyn focus better, and she has even won a prize for this piece

AUGUSTINE YONG, father of a girl, aged 4


 To develop positive behaviours in children, parents should have a positive and supportive attitude themselves. The choice of words used is important. For instance, my son Xavier likes to draw. I avoid critiquing his artwork. Instead of focusing on the finished piece, I praise his efforts and hard work. If he gets frustrated, I encourage him to keep trying and not give up.



To reinforce positive behaviour, Xavier's mum praises his efforts, not results

This will help him develop resilience, perseverance and a growth mindset. I also use positive reinforcement if Xavier displays positive behaviours. For example, I praise him for his generosity and kindness if he gives his drawing to a sibling or friend.

AMARYLLIS CHEN, mother of a boy, aged 3

 To cultivate polite and respectful behaviours in our son Iskandar, my wife and I always remind ourselves that we are role models for him and approach situations with care and patience. We try to refrain from raising our voices around him and set good examples of kind and empathetic behaviour in our daily lives, such as greeting the estate cleaner every morning. We are big believers that children are reflections of their environment, so by surrounding Iskandar with love and kindness, these values will shape his behaviours, which will become a part of his life.



Amin sees himself as a role model to his son, Iskandar

AMIN SUWARI, father of a boy, aged 5

SUPPORTING CHILDREN'S HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT

Parents, tell us how you ensure your child is developing as an all-rounded person — be it in terms of physical, social, emotional, cognitive, moral, creative or aesthetic aspects. Share your tips and practices that have worked for you to support their development in these areas. Attach a photo with your anecdote and your submission may appear in the next issue of *Beanstalk!*

Submit your story by 26 May 2023 at go.gov.sg/beanstalk-mailbag or scan this QR code.



We have three **Grab vouchers** to give away to the best letters!

WHEN DUTY CALLS

We showed you how to make stick puppets of our nation's uniformed forces in the Jan-Mar 2023 issue. Here are some of your DIY puppets!



TAN YING FEI, 3



GREY ANDREW SHAW, KIM JOO AHN and LEYTON SINGH, 5



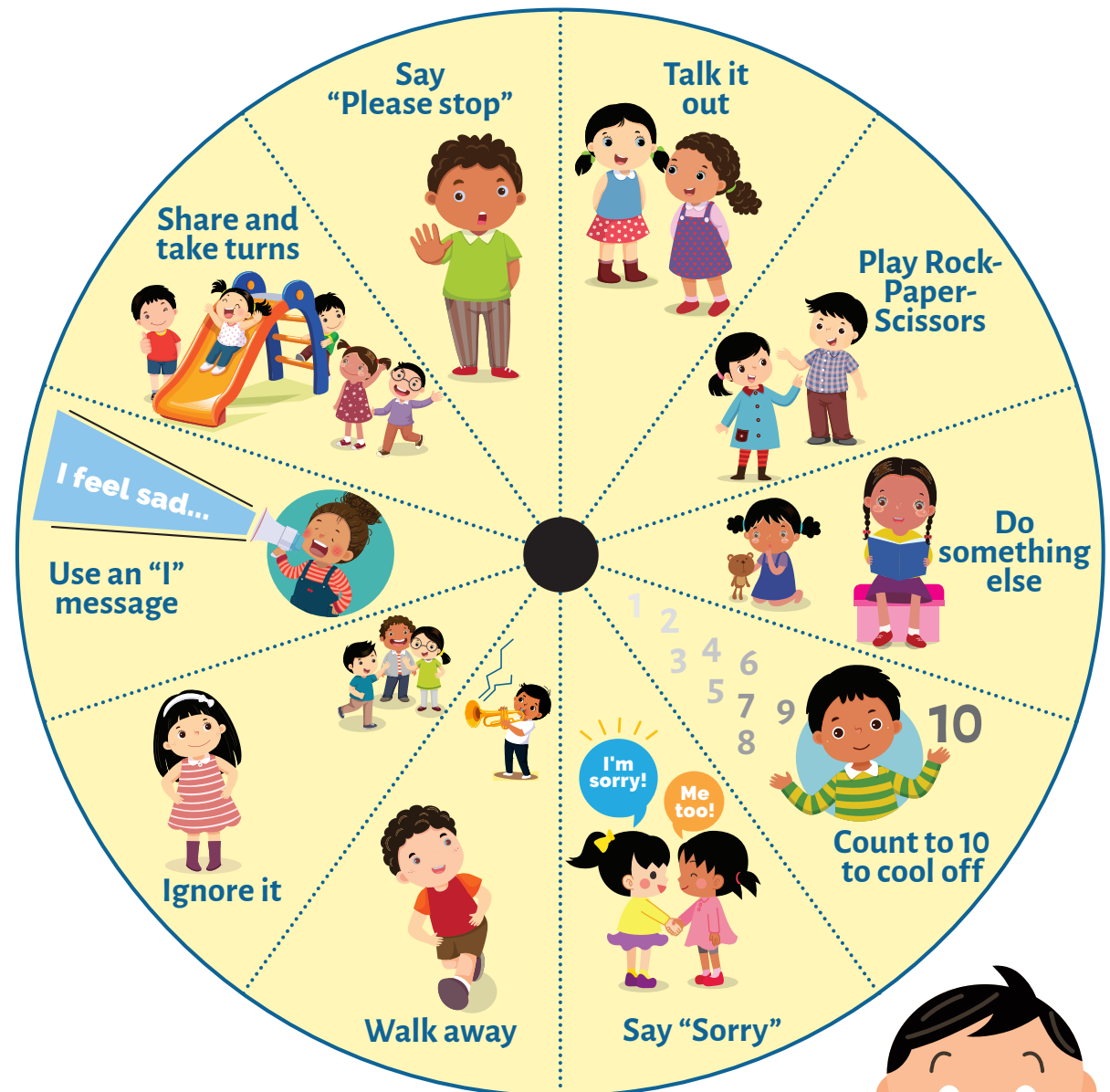
AVIDAN SENTHILNATH, 5

fun times



WORK IT OUT

What do you do when you disagree with someone? Take a spin on this wheel and see what solution comes up. Try it out!



Hey Parents!

Learning how to resolve conflicts is an important skill in the classroom and in everyday life. While arguments with siblings and friends are inevitable, this activity teaches children that there are appropriate ways to address conflicts and disagreements effectively. By adopting the various strategies in the wheel, they learn to manage and regulate their behaviours and emotions to resolve issues in a cordial and peaceful manner.

HOW TO MAKE A SPINNER:

All you need is a paperclip and pencil. Position the paperclip so that the curved part aligns with the black dot in the centre of the wheel. Place the pencil on the dot, through the paperclip. Now you can flick or spin the paperclip and see which strategy it lands on.

