



Learning how to recognise emotions helps children make sense of their experiences

## SELF-REGULATION

ENFANT EDUCARE SHARES THE STRATEGIES AND TOOLS THAT HELP PRESCHOOLERS REGULATE THEIR BEHAVIOURS AND EMOTIONS.

**W**hen children at Enfant Educare experience negative emotions like anger, they go to a specially designed nook in the classroom to simmer down. Filled with soft materials such as cushions, manipulative toys like Rubik's Cubes and sensory bottles, charts and visual cues, this Calming Station provides a quiet and safe space for children to let off steam. Enfant Educare was one of the centres which clinched the 2019 Early Childhood Innovation (Distinction) award.

### DEALING WITH FEELINGS

Calming Stations were one of the effective tools that emerged from the centre's Practitioner Inquiry (PI) Project.

The teachers initiated the project when they observed a growing number of children having difficulties in verbally expressing and handling emotions, which led to tantrums and conflicts with their peers, as well as disruption in their learning.

"Helping children recognise the different emotions allows them to make sense of their experiences and understand what makes them react in certain ways. This is the first step to self-regulation," says PI Project Leader and Senior Teacher Ms Suzannah Chua.

### LEARNING COPING STRATEGIES

Developing emotional competence is a process, and teachers need to be patient and spend time to explicitly teach the skills, adds Ms Chua.

In the project, children first learnt to identify a range of nine "not-so-happy" emotions through pictures, stories and videos. They were taught strategies such as counting to 10 and taking three deep breaths, learning how to handle these emotions through role-play using puppets. Guided by teachers, each child also kept a Feeling Journal, in which they wrote or drew their feelings and reactions in various emotional scenarios. The journaling gave teachers insights into how the children were growing emotionally. The teachers would then use this information in their curriculum planning to develop additional activities to reinforce and strengthen the children's emotional competencies.

### BETTER HANDLE OVER EMOTIONS

From the training during the PI project, the teachers become more adept at using strategies to support and guide children in understanding different emotions and verbalising their

"I've learnt it's okay to feel angry. If I get angry at home, I will talk to Mummy and Daddy, and I will go to my room and play with my toys until I calm down."

MATTHEW YEO, 6



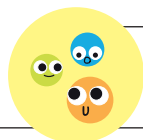
### HOW TO DEAL WITH MELTDOWNS

- 1. Stay Calm.** Before you intervene, breathe in and out gently and speak in a calm voice. Children are observing you. Your manner and reactions will affect their response.
- 2. Be Supportive.** Managing emotions is not easy for children. They need patience and positive guidance to develop healthy emotional habits.
- 3. Collaborate.** Work closely with your child's preschool teacher to reinforce strategies to strengthen your child's emotional competencies.



feelings. The teachers observed fewer disruptions in class when the children learnt how to use the strategies.

Parents were also given a kit to reinforce the project's learning points at home. They shared that their children were now more willing to talk about their emotions when they were upset. Taking a cue from the centre, some parents have even set up Calming Stations at home. ●



### Thinking about PI?

Visit [www.ecda.gov.sg/Educators/Pages/PI-Grant.aspx](http://www.ecda.gov.sg/Educators/Pages/PI-Grant.aspx) to find out more about the PI Grant.

# SIGNED, SEALED AND DELIVERED

CHILDREN DISCOVER A SENSE OF BELONGING THROUGH LETTER WRITING.



Writing letters helps children practise their communication skills

**A**s social media and messaging apps become the prevalent modes of communication today, writing and mailing letters has become an unfamiliar concept for children.

To nurture a love for writing and to introduce preschoolers to letter writing, PCF Sparkletots Preschool @ Toa Payoh East-Novena Blk 247 initiated a project called "Frames of the World" with the ECDA Innovation Grant. The centre was one of the winners for the 2019 Early Childhood Innovation (Distinction) awards.

### EXPANDING HORIZONS

"Children today spend more time on their digital devices than with their family and peers," says educator Ms Rebecca Chang, who spearheaded the project.

The project on stamps gave children the opportunity to discover and learn more about the world and Singapore. "Frames of the World" gave our children an opportunity to build human connections which are important for their sense of history, culture and belonging. They can also work on their communication

"I wrote a letter to mummy and daddy to thank them for everything they have given me and for being great parents. These days, I write birthday letters to my family."

SHOFI YUSHUA BIN MOHD SOFIYAN, 7

and social skills, which are important for their mental well-being. When children feel a strong sense of belonging, they develop positive self-esteem and better appreciate what they have. Learning becomes relevant and meaningful."

### IMAGINATIVE PLAY AND LITERACY SKILLS

Together with teachers, the children used iPads to research and source for information. The classroom was also transformed into a mini post office, a set-up that allowed them to participate in dramatising and role play, such as buying stamps and

'driving' the 'postal van' to deliver mail. "The children enjoyed it so much that some of them wrote letters at home before 'delivering' it into their friend's letter box," says Ms Chang.

The children visited the Singapore Philatelic Museum to learn more about the postal system, stamps, the history behind and how people communicated. As they read the letters they received, it spurred them to write letters. They were also encouraged to keep a journal to jot down what they had learnt. This allowed them to further practise their handwriting while having fun. In line with Singapore Bicentennial, the children also designed stamps to represent their future vision of Singapore.

### POSITIVE CHANGES

The project increased peer interaction and bonding. Educators observed that children started displaying more initiative and were more appreciative of little acts of kindness. They offered assistance to friends, expressed gratitude, and encouraged each other to finish their food and to keep the classroom clean.

Having the opportunity to learn about how modes of communication have evolved from past to present was an eye-opener for many children. Shares Ms Chang, "They were in awe of how communication has transformed over the years and how much easier it is to communicate with each other now." ●



Mailing out the letters they had handwritten

Meet the 2019 EC Innovation Awards winners at [youtu.be/A3vYmULGB7U](https://youtu.be/A3vYmULGB7U).



If your centre has an interesting idea that can enhance the learning experience for children, turn it into reality with an ECDA Innovation Projects Grant. For details, visit [www.ecda.gov.sg/Educators/Pages/ECDA-Innovation-Projects-Grant.aspx](http://www.ecda.gov.sg/Educators/Pages/ECDA-Innovation-Projects-Grant.aspx).