

SUPPORT SYSTEM

KINDLE GARDEN SHARES ITS STRATEGIES FOR HELPING CHILDREN LEARN BETTER AND INTERACT MEANINGFULLY WITH OTHERS.



Children of all abilities learn and play together at Kindle Garden

The ability to self-regulate enables children to engage positively with others and helps them navigate and participate in everyday life. Children with special and additional needs typically struggle with self-regulation and need more support. It is crucial for children with additional needs to hone their self-regulation skills in order to better develop their learning in physical and cognitive domains, according to Dr Kelvin Lee, Clinical Head (Psychology), and Ms Georgina Knight-Hassell, Clinical Head (Occupational Therapy), both from AWWA's Allied Health Professional Group. They are part of the clinical team who support educators at Kindle Garden Preschool.

"It is important for children of all learning abilities, backgrounds and needs to be able to participate fully in the same environment," explains senior teacher Ms Lee Wei Ling. She adds that teachers also maintain regular communication with parents and caregivers to share useful resources, formulate customised strategies, and ensure that preschool

and home goals are similar and kept consistent to support continuity in children's learning.

TACKLING BEHAVIOURAL CHALLENGES

Ms Lee observes that some children with additional needs face self-regulation challenges such as emotional outbursts, inability to sustain attention during lessons, and inappropriate social behaviours like biting or hitting their peers.

To manage these behavioural challenges, Kindle Garden's clinical team collaborates with teachers to develop strategies to regulate emotions based on the needs and abilities of each child. For example, each classroom has a quiet corner



Caregiver engagement is an important part of Kindle Garden's curriculum

EXPERT TIPS

Dr Lee and Ms Knight-Hassell share some strategies to foster self-regulation.



TO MANAGE EMOTIONAL OUTBURSTS

- Speak to the child with a soft, calm voice and assure with touch, which can be strong or gentle depending on his needs (e.g. through hugs or a familiar object such as a toy).
- Cue or model strategies to calm down, such as deep breathing and counting to 10.

TO IMPROVE ATTENTION SPAN

- Use materials and activities that provide rich sensory experiences for learning.
- Incorporate opportunities for active movement into the child's daily routine.

TO CULTIVATE APPROPRIATE SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

- Turn instances of inappropriate behaviour into teachable moments. If the child bites someone else, prompt him to apologise.
- Make use of resources like storybooks that teach social-emotional skills.

where children can go to regulate their emotions safely. Teachers are equipped with therapeutic strategies that can be embedded into their teaching practices, such as incorporating movement breaks into the lesson plans to engage children who tend to daydream or are fidgety. Role-play activities and social stories are also used to teach appropriate social behaviours.

Clinical heads Dr Lee and Ms Knight-Hassell note that these strategies are applicable to all children, regardless of needs or abilities. "All children have different ability levels to self-regulate, but they all benefit when they can model and learn appropriate strategies in the classroom. Not all children use the same strategies. Each child can model after what works best for him or her." ●

