

# LET'S TALK ABOUT FEELINGS

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



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

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

## 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. ●

**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](https://go.gov.sg/ecda-practitioner-inquiry-grant) or scan here.

