



Supporting Parents against Stress

‘Limited knowledge and skills in handling their child’s needs, ignorance of community resources, and resistance to external help in fear of losing face are the primary sources of stress affecting parents of autistic children. Yet, over 80% of surveyed parents expressed that they are more relaxed after securing a place at a special child care centre, knowing that the child will receive specialised training and care. This shows how professional support to parents can help ease their stress of raising children with special needs.’

— Mr Peter Au Yeung
Assistant Director of Heep Hong Society

Mrs Sin’s youngest son, Yan Yan, was diagnosed with autism at the age of two and was put in the waiting line of special education services. With the waiting time unknown, Mrs Sin decided to have Yan Yan attend intensive training courses to assure the best age for intervention (0-6 years) would not be missed. The mother not only spent thousands of dollars each month, but also had to travel around the city with her son each day in exchange for the latter’s improvement.

‘After one year of training at private practices, my son has not made any progress. He had a lot of behavioural and emotional problems, and still wouldn’t speak or make eye contact, nor would he listen to commands at the age of three. I could only hide my son away from relatives and friends. I felt very down and had to be on medication in order to get some sleep,’ Mrs Sin recalled.

In 2009, Yan Yan got admitted into Heep Hong’s special child care centre. At the beginning, his mother did not have any expectation and was on the verge of giving up. After 6 months



▲ Children's improvements after training ease stress in parents

▼ Families having good time making Chinese dumplings together



▼ Engaging parents in gratitude activities to enhance their happiness



of training, a miracle occurred. Yan Yan suddenly gave his mom a big hug and called out 'Mom!', a moment that Mrs Sin would never forget. With her eyes filled with tears, she continued, 'I was so touched! He finally knows I'm his mother!' Yan Yan's improvements serve as the best medicine for Mrs Sin and she is no longer in need of sleeping pills.

An Agonising Wait for Assessment & Training

Mr Mak's eldest son, Wang Wang, is an autistic child and has been waiting in line for a pre-school place for more than a year. Without knowing when the wait will be over, Mr Mak said, "This endless waiting for assessment and service has really stressed me out. I was actually relieved after my son got assessed and diagnosed to be autistic, at least I no longer have to be kept in the dark."

While it is not easy to accept the diagnosis of their son, Mr and Mrs Mak experienced some depressing times, and what troubled them most was Wang Wang's jealousy towards his own younger sister. Whenever Mrs Mak held her daughter in her arms, there was a violent reaction from Wang Wang, who threatened to push her out from the window. The unpredictable temper tantrums and rigidity of Wang Wang have added pressure to Mr Mak.

While waiting for pre-school subvented services, Mr Mak and Wang Wang joined the 'Support Programme for Autistic Children' organised by Heep Hong Society. 'Wang Wang used to exhibit parrot-like repetition of words. I attributed this to his naughtiness and scolded him, making our relationship worse. After joining the programme, I got to understand more about Wang Wang's speech problem, and have learned how to communicate with him in a proper way. This has helped me in improving our relationship and the stress built up within myself eventually got released.'

Stressed Parents at Risk of Depression

In 2011, an interview of 600 parents of children with special needs newly admitted to our centres showed that 70% of the interviewees had suffered from various kinds of mental disturbances, such as anxiety, bad temper, insomnia, depression, marital difficulties and declining work performances, some even thought of abandoning their children or committing suicide. Over half of the interviewees expressed that their stress was mainly due to a long waiting time for the special education services.

In April 2012, Heep Hong Society and The Jockey Club School of Public Health and Primary Care of the Chinese University Hong Kong jointly released a report on stress facing parents with autistic children. The results revealed that the average stress level of the 260 participating parents was 111, which fell way out of the normal range (55-82), and was higher than parents with autistic children in North America.

Ms Eva Mak, Educational Psychologist of Heep Hong Society explained, 'Stress and depression are closely related. The higher the level of stress parents face, the higher the chance they would become depressed. When their children fall short of their expectations, their anxiety and negative emotions will be transferred to the children, making the children lose self-confidence and in turn causing more anxiety in parents. Parents should open up to others in the same situation and get support from professionals. Above all, parents should keep a positive attitude and help themselves first before attempting to help their children.'

Positive Thinking to Overcome Adversity

In view of the stress of raising their children with special needs, in addition to equipping parents with parenting skills, Heep Hong Society is also dedicated to helping parents build a positive attitude in the hope that they could rise to the challenges of life. Last year, over 400 parents took part in seminars, workshops, sharing and family activities under the project of 'Building Positive Attitudes in Families' organised by our centres. Participants were able to learn to appreciate and accept others, thereby improving their family relationships, and to look on the bright side. For example, while training children could be a test of patience, it could also be a learning opportunity for parents.

In August 2012, Heep Hong Society will publish a set of activity guidelines for parents and caregivers to promote the importance of a positive family. 🌟



▲ Building positive attitudes in families



▼ Mr Hon has set aside his career to take care of his son



▼ Mr Hon participates in the professional training with his son



A Smart Father

In traditional Chinese families, fathers are normally responsible for bringing home the bacon, while mothers are in charge of domestic chores. Nevertheless, there is an exception in the Hon family, in which the father gave up his promising career to take care of his family.

Two years ago, Mr Hon observed that his 1.5-year-old son, Chun Yin, in contrast to his elder daughter, did not have any eye contact with others or utter any single words. He recalled, 'The children of some of my friends were diagnosed with developmental disorders. From their experience, I realised that early intervention is very important and no one can take care of your own child in your place.'

Mr Hon has a Bachelor's degree and two master's degrees. By the time he gave up his job to take care of his son, he had been teaching in a primary school for 15 years and promoted to a panel head.

Currently, Chun Yin receives professional training at Leung King Centre of Heep Hong Society twice per week. He is studying at a kindergarten and goes to a private training centre three times a week. Every day, Mr Hon commutes between Hong Kong Island and the New Territories with his son to grasp every training opportunity. Such hectic routine has taken a lot out of him, but he never complained, 'My son has plenty years of life ahead. As a father, it's reasonable for me to spare a few years to help him.'

Mr Hon has crafted some teaching materials to facilitate oral motor training and TEACCH training at home. He recalled, 'One day, it came as a surprise when a teacher at the Centre told me that my son can identify Chinese characters, like "water", "fire", "sun", "moon" and "star". After I had returned home, I immediately downloaded pictures and Chinese

characters from the Internet and made a picture book to help Chun Yin learn more Chinese words.' When his son is able to utter single words, Mr Hon further manoeuvred him into speaking complete sentences.

In addition to enhancing Chun Yin's cognitive and speech capabilities, Mr Hon also takes his son out for skiing, swimming, cycling and fellowships to improve Chun Yin's physical fitness and social skills. He said, 'Every time we go to the park, I bring soapy water to strengthen Chun Yin's oral motor. Other children who have seen the soap bubbles will come and play with Chun Yin, thereby expanding his social circle.'

Over the past two years, Chun Yin has improved a lot in his communication and social skills. Mr Hon's efforts have been rewarded. 'Witnessing the progress my son has made, I firmly believe that he will be able to stand on his own feet in the future,' Mr Hon said hopefully.



▲ Mr Hon makes learning materials for Chun Yin



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◀ Through interactions between parents and their children, DIR/ Floortime helps children explore their emotional world to further develop other aspects in growth



▲ In addition to autism, DIR/Floortime can help children with other developmental disorders

Enjoying Learning at Floortime

Johnson is an autistic child. Before the age of six, he refused to interact with others. Even his parents were no exceptions. The turning point came when his parents heard about DIR/ Floortime and joined hands with therapists and teachers to apply the model on Johnson, who gradually opened himself up and became more willing to communicate with family members and others.

DIR stands for the Developmental, Individual differences, Relationship-based approach. It focuses on the emotional development of a child, including his feelings, relationship with others, developmental level and individual differences in the ability of information processing. Caregivers need to understand and cope with a child's individual differences. High level capabilities, such as language, cognitive and social skills, can be developed by improving the child's communication and thinking abilities.

The Learning Tree

Dr Stanley Greenspan (one of the founders of DIR) uses the metaphor of a tree to explain a child's learning process. The 'soil' represents a warm, healthy and loving relationship which nurtures a child's development. The 'roots' represent how a child takes in what he hears, sees, smells and touches. The 'trunk' represents thinking skills through which a child grows both academically and emotionally. From these, the 'branches' – a child's reading, writing, doing math and organising abilities – develop.

A good foundation does facilitate a child's development. It is like the growth of a tree, branches can only develop well when the roots and trunk are healthy. A child's physiological system and other abilities can be significantly improved when he is able to establish effective interactions with the caregiver and family members.


Emotional Interaction Facilitates Learning

A child's brain can develop rapidly through experiencing emotional exchange and interaction with parents and caregivers. A learning foundation for language, cognitive, emotional and social skills and high level knowledge is also laid.

Parents' Participation Emphasised

DIR is not a therapeutic model exclusively used by professionals. It emphasises the important role of parents in a child's development. Parents do Floortime with their child, creating the kinds of interactive experiences that help the child master the developmental milestones. They tailor their interaction with their child in a way that optimally supports his emotional and intellectual growth. In order to achieve the best therapeutic results, parents can also work with teachers and therapists to take part in the DIR treatment and review the child's progress regularly.

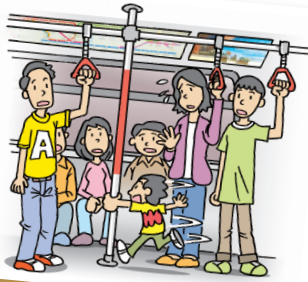
Some recent researches proved the effectiveness of the DIR model. For instance, according to a study published by Greenspan & Wieder (1997), among 200 children treated with the DIR/Floortime approach, over 50% of them attained 'good to outstanding' levels in initiating two-way communication, enjoying integration with others, understanding social signals and participating in imaginative games, etc. Apart from autism, the approach can also be applied to children with other developmental disorders.

To learn more about the DIR/Floortime model, please refer to our publication titled *Enjoying Floortime: Social Interaction Training Package*. A trial version is available at www.heephong.org. 



▲ The training manual includes more than 60 activities for classroom and home training

▼ What can I do when a child throws his temper?



◀ My child starts revolving around the hand pole once he steps into the train carriage, what can be done?

▼ Posting up teeth brushing cue cards at the bathroom can help ease the child's negative emotions



Decoding Children's Behaviours

Behavioural problems like being picky about food, thumb sucking, refusal to brush the teeth, throwing objects and attacking others are not easy to be handled by caregivers. In this issue, we would provide some practical advice to parents in handling behavioural problems of children.

Q: My daughter is a picky eater. What can I do?

A: Parents can give the child more time to get used to new foods by firstly, putting new food into her dish for 2-3 weeks, without forcing her to consume it, and secondly, asking her siblings to consume the new food as a demonstration. When she starts eating it, record it on video or photo and share with her in order to describe her behaviour and give her credits in trying.

Q: How can I stop my son from sucking his fingers?

A: If this problem arises from anxiety or other emotions, we should help him deal with his emotions first. If the sucking happens because of a need in oral stimulation, then let him chew things that require a longer chewing time. An alternative is to engage both his hands in games and activities so that he would not have time for the thumb sucking.

Q: My son doesn't want to brush his teeth. He ran away every time I took the toothbrush out.

A: Children with hyper-sensitivity in the oral cavity are likely to reject external stimulation to the mouth. Forcing him to brush would only add to his emotional disturbance. It is suggested to desensitise the child by spraying water into the oral cavity. Parents can also post up brushing procedures to reduce annoyance to the child.

Q: My daughter has been trained in toileting for half a month, but she still wets her pants several times a day.

A: Parents can encourage the child to stay on the toilet seat at designated times by chatting with her. Let her keep the nappy on at the beginning and extend the sitting time from 1 minute to 10 minutes gradually. When the child has

successfully urinated at the toilet bowl, parents might give the child a small gift as reward.

Q: My daughter wouldn't sleep until 11pm at night. What should I do?

A: Parents should avoid rigorous activity before bed time, and create a peaceful and quiet sleeping environment, such as placing the bed at a quiet corner of the room to avoid unnecessary distractions.

Q: My son sometimes misbehaves in the public. This makes me very embarrassed!

A: A child's emotion is easily affected by his physical conditions or environmental stimulation. Therefore, it is necessary to first find out the reasons for his actions in order to tackle his emotional problems. Once the child shows hints of unstable emotions, parents should attend to him as soon as possible to avoid more rigorous reactions.

Q: Whenever my son steps into the train carriage, he would be holding the handle and starts to revolve around it, no one can stop him!

A: Parents can more often arrange proprioceptive or vestibular stimulation activities e.g. climbing monkey bars at the park, going on the swing or cycling etc. to satisfy his proprioceptive sensation needs. Parents can also teach the child the rules for taking public transportation and prepare some interesting but passive activities to be done during the journey. 🚶

Decoding Children's Behaviours, published by Sing Tao Publishing Ltd, is written by the professional training team of Heep Hong Society. The book throws light on characteristics and common behavioural problems of children with autism, and provides parents and teachers with coping strategies through 30 cases took place in schools, public areas and at home. The coping strategies recommended are also applicable to children in general and serve to strengthen parent-child and teacher-student relationships.



Sponsorship & Fundraising Events

► The 21st Great Chefs of Hong Kong was successfully held



▲ Soroptimist International of Hong Kong sponsored training room & mural painting at Pak Tin Centre



▲ 45 corporate partners conferred Caring Company Logo



45 Corporate Partners Awarded 'Caring Company' Logo

Nominated by Heep Hong Society, the following 45 corporations and organisations were conferred the 'Caring Company' Logo for the year 2010-2011 by the Hong Kong Council of Social Service in recognition of their contribution towards helping children with special needs. Congratulations to them all!

- 5R
- China Star Products (Trading) Ltd
- Chinese Estates Holdings Limited
- Citrus Growers International
- Coutts & Co Ltd
- Credit Suisse (Hong Kong) Limited
- Dah Chong Hong Holdings Limited
- The Dairy Farm Company Limited – Wellcome
- Delicious Chef King Catering Limited
- Diamond Design Limited
- EDICO Financial Press Services
- Genting Hong Kong Limited
- Goldman Sachs (Asia) L.L.C.
- Good Hope Singers Limited
- Grand Hyatt Hong Kong
- Hang Seng Bank
- Harbour Plaza Metropolis
- Hin Sang Hong Company Limited
- Integrated Display Technology Ltd.
- Island Shangri-La, Hong Kong
- Johnson Controls Hong Kong Limited
- Kai Shing Management Service Limited – Metropolis Plaza
- Kiehl's
- The Kowloon Hotel
- Maersk Hong Kong Limited
- Manulife (International) Limited
- MSIG Insurance (Hong Kong) Limited
- The One & Associates Valuers Limited
- Oregon Scientific Hong Kong Limited
- PCCW Limited
- Pfizer Nutrition
- Prince Jewellery & Watch Company
- Redford Charitable Foundation Limited
- Rotary Club of City Northwest Hong Kong
- Rotary Club of Hong Kong
- Rotary Club of The Peak
- Shanghai Commercial Bank Limited
- Shanghai Fraternity Association Hong Kong Limited
- Standard Chartered Bank (Hong Kong) Limited
- Starbucks Coffee Hong Kong
- Sun Hung Kai Properties Limited
- Swire Travel Limited
- Weber Shandwick
- Welcome Construction Company Limited
- Witgent International Enterprise Company Limited

▼ Good Hope Singers raised funds for Heep Hong through Annual Charity Concert



The 21st Great Chefs of Hong Kong & Grand Raffle 2012

The 21st Great Chefs of Hong Kong was successfully held on 21 May 2012 at the Grand Hyatt Hong Kong. The Guest of Honour, Mrs Carrie Lam, GBS, JP, the then Secretary for Development, joined the extraordinary culinary event with over 1,000 guests and more than 40 food and beverage sponsors. Our heartiest thanks go to Mrs Lucina Ho, Prince Jewellery & Watch Company and the Grand Hyatt Hong Kong for their long-term support. Thanks should also be extended to Heep Hong Ambassador Ms Cecilia Yip, participating hotels, restaurants and beverage suppliers, patrons who bought tickets to support Heep Hong, and volunteers who helped selling raffle tickets. The funds raised will go to our Parents Resource Centres to provide training and support services for children with special needs and their families.

Music Therapy Sponsored by Good Hope Singers

For the second year, Good Hope Singers raised funds for Heep Hong through their Annual Charity Concert where parts of the proceeds go towards sponsoring the music therapy programme at Heep Hong Centres. The Concert was held successfully at the Hong Kong Cultural Centre with a performance by a group of students from the Heep Hong Society Healthy Kids Kindergarten. We would like to express our gratitude to the Good Hope Singers for their continuing support!

New Training Facilities to Enhance Service Quality

In early 2012, Leung King Centre and Pak Tin Centre installed a Sensory Integration Room under the sponsorship of the Sunnyside Club and the Providence Foundation respectively. A new training room was also constructed at the Pak Tin Centre sponsored by The Soroptimist International. Funded by individual donors, the Gross Motor Room at Chan Chung Hon Centre has been converted into a Social Wonderland.

Donation of Therapeutic Equipment

Variety Hong Kong donated therapeutic listening devices to 22 Heep Hong Centres benefiting more than 300 children with special needs a year. Phoelia (Far East) Co. Ltd. donated a unit of LPG Cellu M6 Keymodule-I to Heep Hong Yu Ming Centre. 🇬🇧



► **natures purest**
mini-Christmas
trees charity sale



▲ **natures purest co-organised**
with HealthBaby the charity event
'520 Rolling in the Heart'

▼ **Cookies charity sale to**
help Heep Hong children



Pure Motives to Help the Needy – natures purest

Being a five-year partner of Heep Hong Society, natures purest initiates charity sales every year, donating all proceeds from the initiatives to Heep Hong, making possible many meaningful projects for children with special needs and their families.

'I have once been a volunteer for Heep Hong Society but what I could give is not worth mentioning. It is the improvement of the children and the passion, patience and love given by Heep Hong's professional staff that makes me more resolved to help wherever we are able,' Ms Rainbow Yuen, Marketing Director of natures purest, shared at a centre's graduation ceremony.

Calling for Care for Children with Special Needs via Charity Sale

natures purest engaged with Heep Hong children and parents in the charity sales every year by inviting them to provide artworks to go with the charity sale products, appealing for care for children with special needs. In 2008, staff of natures purest shared knitting skills with the parents of the Jockey Club Parents Resource Centre while they were knitting scarfs for 'hug me bears'. Drawings of our children went with the Christmas cookies and mini-Christmas trees in the following two years. Last Christmas, the tote bags were decorated with handwritten messages from our children.

▼ **Centre parents**
knitting scarfs
for charity sale
products



Every Dollar Goes to Supporting our Service Projects

natures purest did not deduct any cost from the charity sales so that every dollar raised went to Heep Hong Society. What's more, they have been very supportive in our application for matching grant from Partnership Fund for the Disadvantaged, thus enabling us to double the impact of their gifts, making many meaningful service projects possible. These include performing & visual arts training, talent show & art exhibition for special needs children; extension of direct physiotherapy service to children with myofascial tightness (MFT); and supportive program for South Asian families of children with special needs.

Taking a Step forward in Helping the Needy

This May, natures purest co-organised with HealthBaby the charity event '520 Rolling in the Heart', which encompassed a drawing competition, a charity auction and a charity sale, to raise funds for Heep Hong Society. We are grateful that natures purest shares our mission in serving children with special needs and promoting an inclusive society, and we look forward to continuing our close collaboration to benefit more children in need. 🍪

Special thanks go to the following donors*

Mr Chan Chung Bun, Bunny
Mr Chan Mo Po, Paul
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Sunnyside Club Limited
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Mr Wong Kam Hong
Mr Wong Kar Hong
Mr Wong Tin Yu, Peter

* which made donations of HK\$10,000 or above to Heep Hong between February and May 2012

For online donation, please go to www.heephong.org/donation.

▼ Manulife Children's Resources Centre Opening Ceremony



▲ The new Centre aims to provide professional training services to children in the East Kowloon region



▲ New book published by Sing Tao Publishing Ltd was written by Heep Hong speech therapists to improve children's oral function

Manulife Children's Resources Centre in Operation

In view of a serious lack of pre-school special child care service in the East Kowloon region, Heep Hong Society established the Manulife Children's Resources Centre to provide one-stop training services to children with special needs. The new Centre is equipped with speech therapy training room, toys and resources library, game therapy room, etc. in which seminars and workshops will be held to ease the parents' pressure when taking care of their children. Mr Michael Huddart, Vice President & Chief Executive Officer of Manulife (International) Limited attended the opening ceremony of the Centre on the 30 May 2012.

Special Education Scholarship for Teachers and Parents

The two special education courses 'Bachelor of Education in Early Childhood Education (Special Educational needs)' and 'Higher Diploma in Early Childhood Education (Special Educational needs)' co-organised by Heep Hong Society and The Open University of Hong Kong are now recognised by the Education Bureau and the Social Welfare Department. Our professional team developed 2 modules on 'Early Intervention and Assessment' and 'Supporting Young Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders' in last semester. The remaining 2 compulsory modules 'Teaching Pre-school Children at Risk of Dyslexia' and 'Language Delay and Training' will be delivered in the coming October. Teachers and parents are welcome to apply for the scholarships sponsored by the Joseph Lau Luen-hung Charitable Trust. The deadline for application is 20 August 2012. Please visit <http://www.heephong.org/webprod/eng/collaboration-with-open-university> for more information.

SMART Fathers' Club

The Heep Hong 'Fathers' Club' has been established for more than 10 years and this year, we have extended the programme to all of our Parents Resource Centres with the new name 'SMART Fathers' Club'. The Club aims to provide support to fathers through a variety of activities and support groups,



▲ SMART Fathers' Club organizes activities to support fathers, helping them release stress

encouraging them to release stress by exchanging child-rearing information and sharing their own experiences and feelings with other fathers. For more information, please visit: <http://www.heephong.org/webprod/eng/support-for-parent/fathers-club/intro>

New Publications

Two new books written by therapists and psychologists of Heep Hong Society were published by Sing Tao Publishing Ltd earlier this year. *Decoding Children's Behaviours* introduces the characteristics and common emotional behaviours of Autistic children along with effective solutions to the problems. *Oral-Motor Training Activity Book for Young Children* aims to improve the oral functions of children from pre-school to school age through more than 40 home activities. The two publications are now available at bookstores. Heep Hong members can purchase the books at our Centres at discounted price.

Support of Autistic Children in Mainstream Schools

Sponsored by the Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust, the 'Star Programme' was established to support autistic children in mainstream schools. The project started in 2011 in the East New Territories, providing support to individuals, parents, teachers and the community as well as group training services to 12 primary and secondary schools. The project will be extended to more schools with the collaboration with the district's Parents Resources Centres to provide extensive support to students and parents. For more information, please call 3618-6328.

Training in Greater China

Our professional team will continue to deliver training courses in Taiwan, Macau and the Mainland in 2012 to promote the development of children rehabilitation services. Training topics include Developmental Assessment for Autistic Children, Motor development Assessment for Pre-school Children, Training for Language Delay, Education of Social Adaptation, Learning Difficulties and DIR Floortime etc. For more information please visit <http://www.heephong.org/webprod/eng/training-in-greater-china-region-2012>.

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