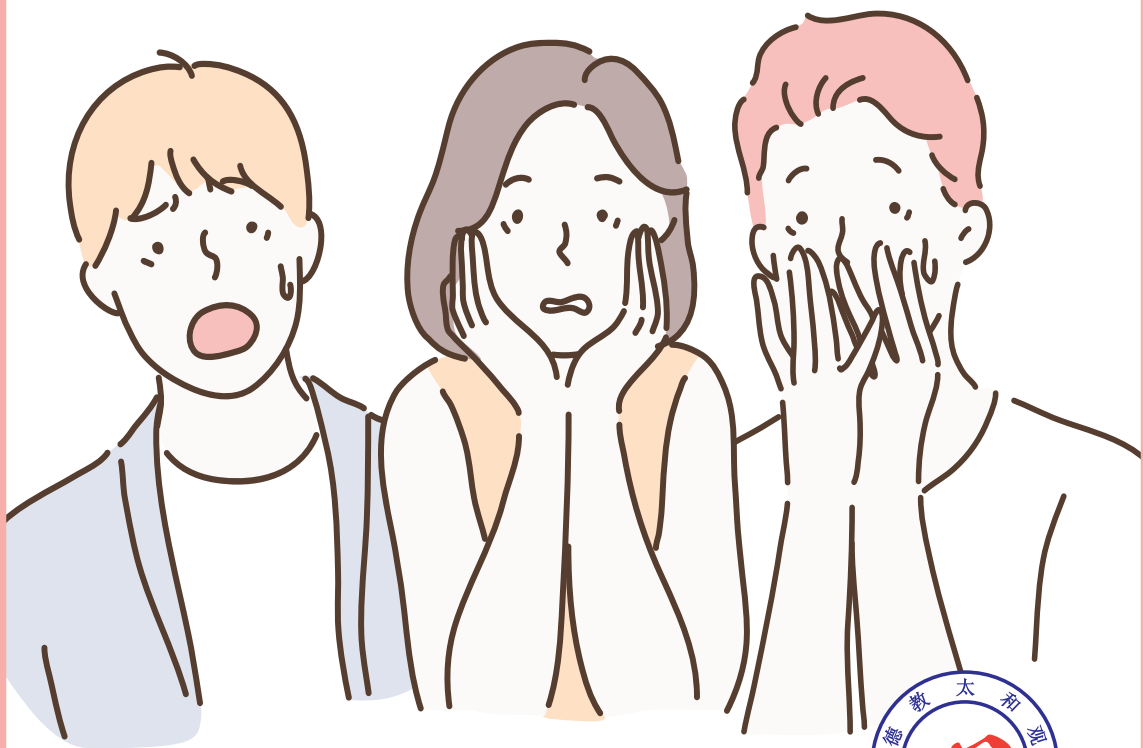


# MANAGING EMOTIONAL HEALTH



Brought to you by

**THK FAMILY SERVICES DIVISION**



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# Managing Emotional Health

COVID-19 has disrupted many aspects of our daily lives.

**THK Family Services Division** has specially prepared short articles and videos by our team of professional psychologists, counsellors, and social workers.

**Stay Calm  
Stay Safe and  
Read On!**

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# Cultivating Happiness

By Stephanie Tan, Head of Psychological Services and Research, **THK Centre for Family Harmony @ Commonwealth**

During this COVID-19 period, it may be a dream for some to work from home. However, staying at home can be stressful. Taking care of one's mental wellness is necessary. 'Cultivating Happiness' helps to build good mental wellness. How does one cultivate happiness? Martin Seligman, the founder of Positive Psychology, introduced 3 elements to happiness – having  
(1) *pleasant life*,  
(2) *engaged life* and  
(3) *meaningful life*.

Past studies have found that practising positive activities increases positivity, while having a better quality of life, more empathy, more satisfying relationships and greater hope. The following Positive Psychology exercises enable everyone to stay happy during stressful times:

## Having a 'Pleasant Life'

- Appreciative exercise: Write a note to your family members, neighbours or friends you appreciate and cherish.

### For example,

"I appreciate your sense of humour and you are so good at making us laugh."

- Gratitude exercise: express gratitude to people around you and how they have positively contributed to your life.

- '3 good things' journal: write a journal every night before your sleep.

### For example,

"I caught up with my old friend, watched a comedy and had lots of laughter today."

- Outlook of hope and optimism exercise: view the situation in a right perspective and see it as the doors of opportunities despite the inconvenience. Yne may also pen down or draw one positive thing or one hope for the future. For example, I know of a single parent who used this time to learn about parenting teenage children, He converted his business into an online business and adapted to working from home instead of having to frequently travel overseas for work. He also valued more quality time spent with his children.



- Happiness in the Present through savouring and mindfulness\* exercises through different senses:

- Listening to the birds chirping in the morning,
- Looking out at the beautiful clouds, trees and flowers from the window,
- Smelling a cup of aromatic coffee or tea,
- Tasting something new daily.

*\*Mindfulness means paying full attention to the present moment in an open and accepting way.*

### **Having an 'Engaged Life'**

- Cultivating your signature strengths exercise for self:
  - Cultivate one's 'creativity, ingenuity and originality' strength, such as writing a story.
  - Practise an 'act of kindness' (e.g. help an elderly neighbour to buy groceries).
- Cultivating your strengths as a family:
  - Family Tree: draw a family tree that includes the strengths of all members of the family.  
**Try out the 'My Family Tree' activity on page 11!**
  - Positive Family Activity: encourage one another to cultivate one's strength and use the strengths to create positive events at home.

For example, Father's strength is humour, Mother's strength is creativity and Child's strength is curiosity - the family can come together to do a painting whereby Father paints with humour, Mother creates an abstract from the painting and both parents instil curiosity in child to explore the different colours of paints. At the end of the day, the family creates an art piece.

- Family Celebration: arrange a date where everyone comes together to celebrate each other's strengths.

### **Having a 'Meaningful Life'**

- Use your signature strengths in the service of others. **Please refer to attachment on page 5.**
  - The strength of 'kindness and generosity' - Following are examples of online volunteering opportunities:  
<https://www.giving.sg/> and <https://www.onlinevolunteering.org/en>
  - The strength of 'spirituality, sense of purpose and faith' – For example one can hope for Singapore, the frontline workers, the foreign workers and the sick to overcome this COVID-19.
- Journal small accomplishments you achieve weekly.

We hope that these Positive Psychology exercises shared above can improve relationships with your family members and have greater hope in the midst of the COVID-19 period.

## Attachments:

### Dr Seligman's 24 Signature Strengths:

- 01) Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence
- 02) Bravery and Valor
- 03) Capacity to Love and Be Loved
- 04) Caution, Prudence, and Discretion
- 05) Citizenship, Teamwork, and Loyalty
- 06) Creativity, Ingenuity, and Originality
- 07) Curiosity and Interest in the World
- 08) Fairness, Equity, and Justice
- 09) Forgiveness and Mercy
- 10) Gratitude
- 11) Honesty, Authenticity, and Genuineness
- 12) Hope, Optimism, and Future-mindedness
- 13) Humour and playfulness
- 14) Industry, Diligence, and Perseverance
- 15) Judgment, Critical Thinking, and Open-Mindedness
- 16) Kindness and Generosity
- 17) Leadership
- 18) Love of Learning
- 19) Modesty and Humility
- 20) Perspective and Wisdom
- 21) Self-Control and Self-Regulation
- 22) Social Intelligence
- 23) Spirituality, Sense of Purpose, and Faith
- 24) Zest, Enthusiasm, and Energy



Source: <https://www.viacharacter.org/character-strengths>

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### References:

Seligman, M.E.P., Rashid, T., & Parks, A. C. (2006). Positive Psychotherapy. *Journal of American Psychologist*, 774-788.

Sheldon, K. M. & Lyubomirsky, S. (2006). How to increase and sustain positive emotion: The effects of expressing gratitude and visualising best possible selves. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 1(2), 73-82.

# Keeping Couple Relationship Strong In The Midst Of Chaos

By Sukvir (Monica) Kaur, Principal Counsellor  
of **THK Centre for Family Harmony @**  
**Commonwealth**

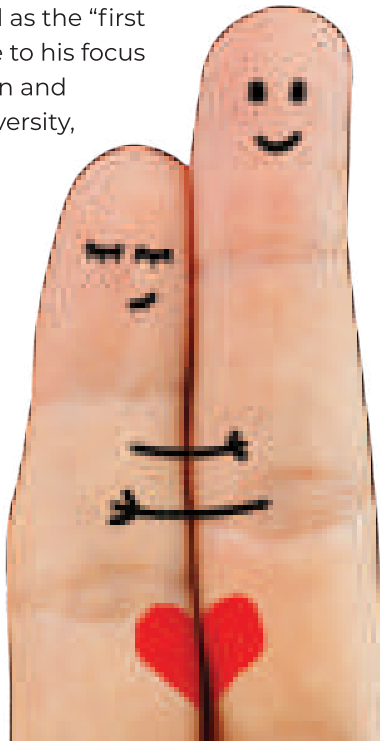
The world, as we know, is going through an unexpected crisis. Everyone at one time or another may have wondered what the future holds, and for others, would they be able to see the future as they battle with COVID-19 in their lives, of their loved ones, and in the external world.

In addition, new kids on the block appear in our lives in the form of Spilt Teams, Circuit Breaker, Work from home (WFH), Home-based Learning (HBL) for Children, new or added responsibilities and loss of income or job. When would normality resume?

Well, let us start our journey with a quote from my favourite psychotherapist, Alfred Adler, who once said, “meanings are not determined by situations. We determine ourselves by the meanings we ascribe to situations.” Adler was an Austrian physician, psychotherapist and the originator of Adlerian Psychology (also called Individual Psychology). He was regarded as the “first community psychologist” due to his focus on “community life, prevention and population health” (Adler University, Chicago, IL).

Adler believed that in order for a person to have a sense of fulfilment, belongingness and social interest (empathy and care for others), one needs to have a balance in their 5 Life Tasks, notably, Occupation, Friends, Love and Marriage, Self and Spirituality, Parenting and Family. When the balance topples, like with the implementation of the circuit breaker, the life tasks need recalibration. For example, couples may face new transitions in their lives when confined at home:

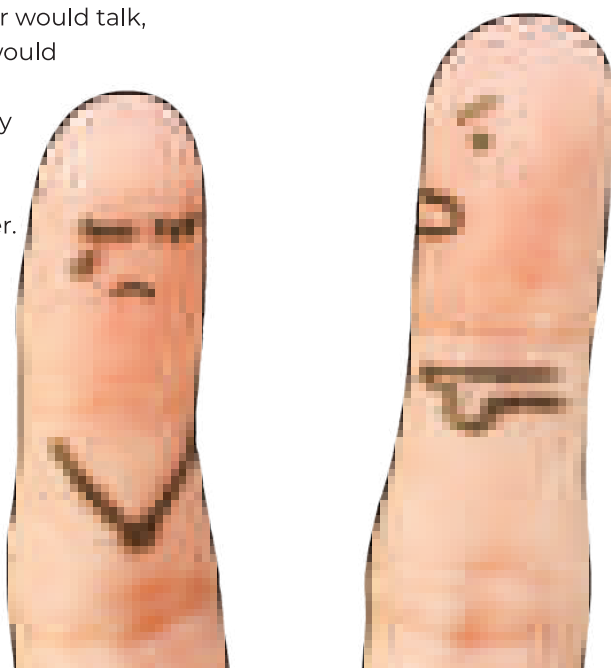
- Working from the office to Working from home full-time
- Roles and Responsibility division - Children are at home full-time and they need supervision and guidance with HBL; allocating one person to do the grocery shopping, attending to the elderly parents’ needs and essentials, attending to your spouse’s needs and your own needs
- Loss of income or job
- Loss of personal time and space



Couple relationships may go through rough terrain during the circuit breaker. Ask yourself, “does the relationship have to suffer, or can it grow during the terrain?” With reference to the above saying by Alfred Adler, it is up to us to either look for opportunities to grow as a couple during the circuit breaker or to resort to destructive ways of disconnecting from each other.

Here are some proven techniques used by thousands of couples around the world to maintain grounding during chaos:

1. Leave the line of communication open no matter how difficult it may be. Always use your words... *kind ones, and not your hands*.
2. Push-or-Pull statements: Push statements to include criticisms, belittling, verbal abuse while Pull statements include validation, gratitude, appreciation. Push-and- Pull statements would either push you apart or pull you together as a couple.
3. Resolve the difference/argument before the day ends. No room for grudges. See each day as a new beginning in your couple relationship.
4. Listen, so your partner would talk, talk so your partner would listen. Be present emotionally, physically and mentally when conversing and listening to each other. Listen with an open heart without preconceived judgements.
5. Mentally, keep track of your own emotions and thoughts: check-in via self-talk. For example, “why am I feeling angry with my partner’s sharing. I need to relax and focus on what he/she is telling me.”
6. Use “I” statements to prevent judging or blaming your partner. For example, “I feel alone when you do not spend with me because then I feel uncared for.”
7. Focus on the problem, not the person.
8. Focus on what needs to be changed or improved about the situation, not the person.
9. “You are, therefore, I am”: this concept looks at the notion of how couples are interacting agents of each other’s strengths and pillars in life. Like how it is imperative for a car to have tires that complement each other in terms of balancing and the driving force for the car, couples too require the same balancing and driving force from each other.



10. Balancing couple time with personal time and self-care. Give yourself permission to love and care for yourself in order to show love and care to your spouse.
11. Prevent burnout when working from home: set to work within your usual office hours and not beyond that. Create work-life balance.
12. Acknowledge efforts no matter how small - validate, show gratitude and compassion. Laugh with each other, not at each other and utmost of all, show lots of LOVE.
- 13 "Couples who laugh together, last together" - Dr John Gottman

Remember, your couple relationship does not have to suffer because of the circuit breaker. Consider it as downtime for you and your spouse to rejuvenate, revive and strengthen the relationship or perhaps an opportunity to test out how strong the foundation of your relationship is. Justine Ocampo, author from THIR.ST. Honest Conversations, said it well, "Don't let the Circuit Breaker, break your relationship."

Let us journey together as a Couple first, to journey as one People, and one Nation in battling the COVID-19.



## Effective Parenting

By Lynette Stephen, Principal Counsellor,  
**THK Centre for Family Harmony @ Circuit**

With the outbreak of COVID-19, many parents have had to adjust their routines and manage various roles. Here are some tips on how parents could support and care for their children.

**SCAN TO WATCH VIDEO**



## Coping with Uncertainty

By Nicodemus Lim, Principal Social Worker,  
**THK Family Service Centre**

In our day to day lives, we face umpteen problems and uncertainties, not knowing what will happen next. Since the outbreak of COVID-19 in Singapore, we have been adjusting our way of life to keep up with the situation.

### SCAN TO WATCH VIDEO



# MY FAMILY TREE

This Family Tree belongs to

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I love my family  
because...

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Draw each family member in the spaces within the family tree.

Get your child to draw his or her family members on this tree and share a favourite memory with that family member. Learn more about one another while doing this fun activity!



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