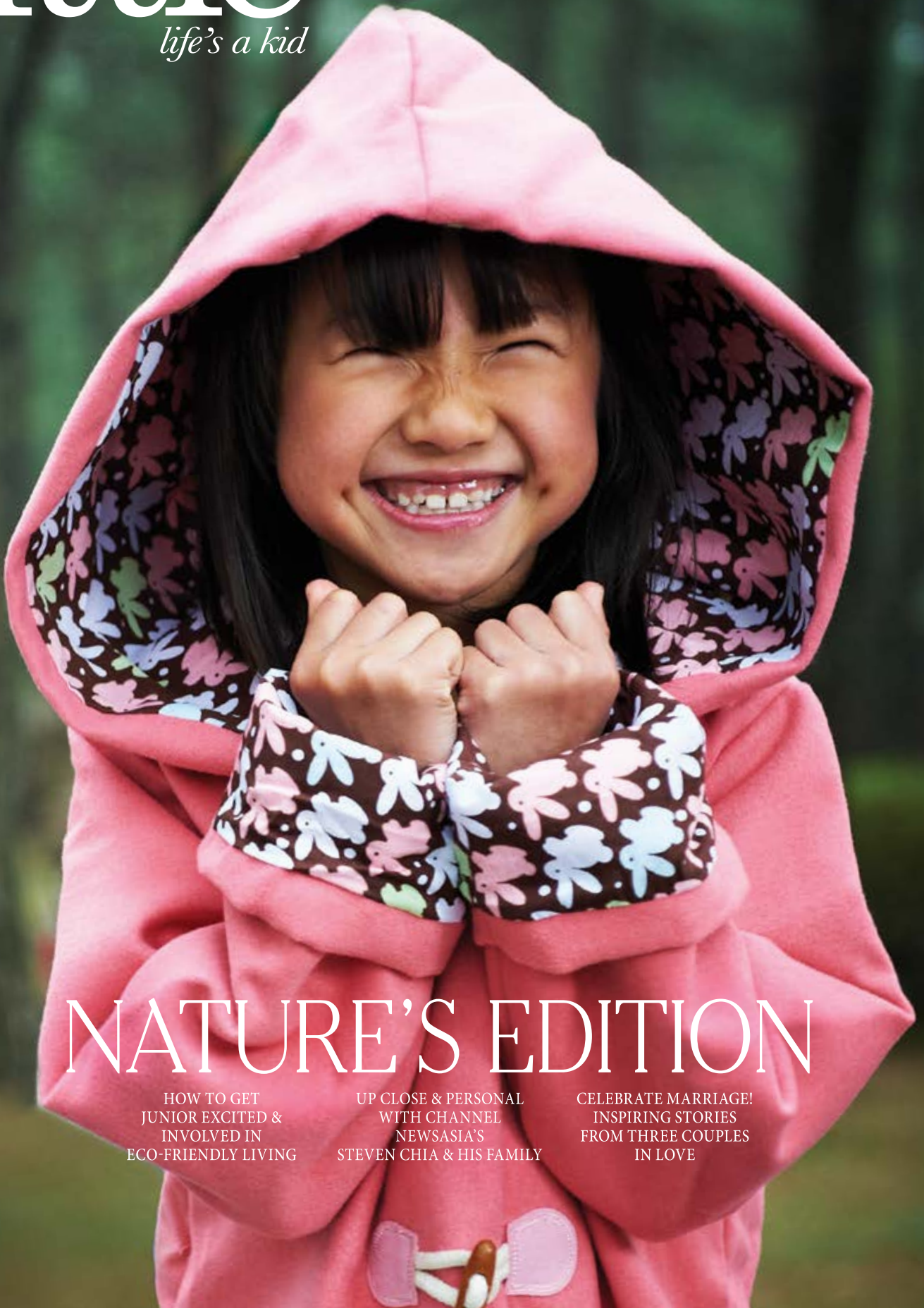


# little

*life's a kid*



## NATURE'S EDITION

HOW TO GET  
JUNIOR EXCITED &  
INVOLVED IN  
ECO-FRIENDLY LIVING

UP CLOSE & PERSONAL  
WITH CHANNEL  
NEWSASIA'S  
STEVEN CHIA & HIS FAMILY

CELEBRATE MARRIAGE!  
INSPIRING STORIES  
FROM THREE COUPLES  
IN LOVE



# Let's ARTiculate!

You usually talk to your children to better understand them. But words aren't their only voice, art is their second tongue.

words agnes goh illustrations jeanette yap



“Mummy, the teacher scolded me in school today...”

“Daddy, I played captain's ball today!”

If these sound familiar to you, most likely it came from your child while you were fetching them from school. Through little conversations with them, you are able to understand their feelings and thoughts by listening to their tone or observing their body language.

However, sometimes they may be too shy or unwilling to share things with you and instead

bottle up their feelings even without you knowing. So if you feel that you have not been hearing much from them lately, it's probably time to pay more attention and seek other alternatives to save your day.

Art is their other voice that speaks to you.

## Expression of Inner Self

Art is often presumed to be an abstract form of leisure that appeals to the artistic, be it

drawings or paintings. But that's not true. More than just an interest, art is an expression of the state of mind.

For children who are less adept in verbalising their thoughts, art can be a safe medium for them to explore and express their own inner world. As Dr Vanessa von Auer, a clinical psychologist from VA Psychology Centre, describes, “Art is a vessel that subconsciously or consciously brings out the surface of their inner state

of being.” Children are likely to turn to drawing or painting when experiencing anxiety or fear of external problems with authoritative figures like parents, teachers or friends. In this way, you might get to know how your child perceives you through his or her art.

## An Artist In Every Child

Recalling my experience as a childcare student volunteer back then, I realised how art had played a significant role in helping some of the children with their expressions. Whenever it was time for art, many of them would rush to grab their stationeries

*“Art is a vessel that subconsciously or consciously brings out the surface of their inner state of being.”*

excitedly.

It didn't matter if they were given only blank pieces of paper or specific pictures to decorate; they never fail to have a good time exploring their own creativity. Through these brief encounters, I noticed how some of their artwork drew certain similarities to their feelings or thoughts.

I remembered how a girl by the name

of Lei Lei would often share the things she did with her mother and draw a happy portrait of her family. Felicia, who's turning 12 this year, also shared with me how her love for art slowly developed after finding it a good way to express her feelings, “I

love drawing. I draw when I am happy or sad.”

## Long Lost Friend

For you as a parent, art might have been a long lost friend but it is not too hard to recall how it had once connected with you in life. Your childhood experiences of art lessons in school,



## DRAWING GUIDE

**Fret not about taking the first step, here are some general patterns to guide you.**

- 1 SHADES**  
Using different shades of colour may be a possible indication of your child's mood. Predominant use of dark colours could be a sign that he is feeling unwell.
- 2 STROKES**  
Type of strokes applied is another good indication of his state of emotions. Harsher and thicker strokes could reveal his experience of inner frustration and conflict.
- 3 PROPORTION**  
Characters drawn in different sizes may reveal his level of self-confidence. Smaller ones could reveal shyness and timidity, where they feel uncertain about their environment and people around them.
- 4 COLOUR CHOICE**  
Preference for certain colour tones could represent your child's personality. Use of brighter colours is likely to reflect his more extroverted nature while calming colours a more introverted nature.



**“Bonding through providing a safe, secure and stress-free environment is important for your child to speak to you.”**



younger days or even now, where you would draw for your loved ones to express certain feelings.

Yi Xuan, a 22-year-old parent, remembered that drawing used to be a major platform to express his thoughts and aspirations. He chuckled when he shared about his once childish dreams of becoming one of the superheroes and would always draw them during his free time.

He strongly believes that art helps children to convey what they see and feel. He found it also to be a good talking point at home as he would share his artwork with his parents.

Likewise for Vincent, who is currently a teacher with three children, agrees that art helps his children to express their sights and experiences. He adds, “I would encourage them to continue and do better by displaying their artwork. It is like a form of recognition for them.” Therefore, an attempt to understand

and appreciate your child’s creative touches could be an important step towards building and maintaining a bond with them. Your little encouragement empowers their budding confidence to share and express themselves.

### A Therapeutic Medium

Other than self-expression, art is used in art therapy to help children project their feelings or thoughts indirectly as to talking about it. From Daniel Koh’s experiences as a psychologist in Insights Mind Centre, art therapy has been used as one of the assessment tools to understand a child better.

This is a relatively softer approach to connect with children who are shy, passive or lack the social skills to communicate effectively and those who have gone through some form of trauma.

Art therapy is also reaffirmed by another

research conducted by National Institute of Education which revealed how drawings play a prominent role in assessing one’s intellectual state and personality, particularly where verbal communication is suppressed.

### More Than Meets The Eye

While you can gain some insights from your child’s art, both psychologists cautioned its drawbacks.

Koh highlighted that art therapy is a complicated process that requires sufficient training in the relevant field while Dr von Auer also clarified that not every artistic creation should be interpreted to something of significance.

Therefore, you might be unable to determine the meaning behind your child’s art accurately even if their drawings appear simple or strike a chord with you. You are still strongly advised to seek professional

guidance if art therapy is one of the mediums you wish to turn to in knowing more about your child.

### Ideal Two-Pronged Approach

Though art is an alternative medium that can be used to understand your child better, it still needs to be complemented by effective verbal communication and bonding. On your side, gaining the trust and belief from your child is crucial to facilitate effective communication.

Koh emphasised that, “Bonding through providing a safe, secure and stress-free environment is important for your child to speak to you.” Very often, they talk increasingly less or choose not to talk because they feel a lack of care or sincere understanding from parents.

So no matter how busy you are, never forget to set aside

some time to show adequate care and concern for your little prince and princess. You love your child so dearly, but they might not feel it unless you show them.

### Freedom In Art

Don’t restrict your impression of art to just creative strokes of the hand or an individualistic interest, let your imagination soar like your child and turn it into an interactive family activity.

If you’re running out of ideas on where and how to spend time with your family, why not take part in some hands-on art

activities with your child? Try keeping a lookout for external art corners or events that your family can join together and have a good time unleashing all your creative talents.

If not, you can also surf the Internet for some Do-It-Yourself painting or drawing ideas that you try out with your child. In that way, you can have lots of fun and bonding as a family even without the hassle of travelling and spending too much. Let’s ARTiculate! **L**



## DIFFERENT FACES

**Art is a diverse range of creative activities, not limited to drawings or paintings.**



### Dance

A type of art that involves rhythmic movement of the body, dance is a form of emotional expression. Let your child put on his dancing shoes and rock the stage.



### Music

Music is another form of art involving mediums of sound and silence, including main elements like pitch and rhythm. Help your child to unleash some hidden musicality.



### Photography

Presence of smart devices makes photography easy for children to pick up. Snap a shot or two with your child to document precious family moments that lasts a lifetime.



### Literature

The art of language-based written work, commonly classified into fiction and non-fiction, uses mainly poetry and prose techniques. You can probably groom your child into an author or poet.