

THE UNCLE DOWNSTAIRS

A STORY ABOUT HOMELESSNESS IN SINGAPORE



ACTIVITY GUIDE



A **solveⁿ⁺¹** initiative, co-created with





INTRODUCTION TO ACTIVITY GUIDE

Background & Acknowledgement

Welcome! This activity guide is meant as an accompanying tool for parents and teachers like yourself, to use with your children, alongside "The Uncle Downstairs" book.

While the language within the activities is primarily angled towards teachers, this guide is meant to be a resource for parents as well.

The activities in this guide might be most appropriate for children aged 5 to 6 years old

We hope that this book and guide will be helpful as you engage your children with important lessons about the wider world, sparking their curiosity and growing their intrigue about their community and the social issues that exist within.

We would like to acknowledge the team from PAP Community Foundation (PCF)'s Professional and Education Development Division and PCF Sparkletots @ Taman Jurong Blk 150. They have been key to the prototyping and creation of this guide, making it a meaningful tool for parents and teachers to facilitate conversations with children about the community and its issues. We would also like to acknowledge the Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF)'s support in this activity guide and its provision of relevant resources that can be helpful in learning more about support for rough sleepers.

This guide includes:

- ✦ Pre-reading Activities that can help children connect to what might be most relatable to them - their families and homes, which can pique their interest before reading The Uncle Downstairs book, featuring the story of Amos who befriends Uncle near his home.
- ✦ Post-reading Activities that can help children expand on what they might want to explore in caring for the community matters around them after hearing Amos and Uncle's story.
- ✦ Resources supporting rough sleepers that are listed for information of parents or teachers who come across rough sleepers with their children.



PREFACE

HOW-TO-USE

GUIDE

This guide is designed to be a flexible and dynamic resource for parents and educators, with two primary objectives: to help children get interested in the community and social matters around them, and explore how they want to show care for others.

Therefore, it is not meant to be prescriptive in its use. On page 3, you will find a suggested flow on how you can carry out the activities.

How-to-use Guide

Below is a sample of an activity in the guide.
Every activity includes:

Purpose

The purpose highlights the intended lesson of each activity.

This is so that you know what to focus on. As parents or teachers, you would know your children best, so be free to use, tweak and adapt all the activities in any way that would help your children learn these lessons.

Material/ Location Ideas

These are suggested materials or locations you can use in each activity.

As your children may have different preferences, abilities and/or come from different communities, be free to adapt the materials or locations accordingly

Tuning In

These are introduction and guiding pointers that help you transit into the activities.

PRE-READING ACTIVITY

MY FAMILY

(Recommended Introductory Activity for K1 and K2)

A) Purpose

This activity is designed to help children

+ **CONNECT WITH THE CONCEPT OF "HOME"** by starting with what is closest to their hearts:

THEIR FAMILIES.

D) Activity

Invite children to share their family photos with the class.

Conversation Prompts during the Activity:

- Where are you in this photo?
- What are you doing in the photo?
- Who are the people in the photo with you?
- Do you remember what the occasion was when you took the photo?
- How did you feel when you took this photo?

B) Material Ideas

Photos of children with their family
(provided by parents or guardians)

Concluding Prompt:

OUR FAMILIES ARE ALL DIFFERENT, AND THAT IS WHAT MAKES THEM SPECIAL TO EACH OF US.

Now, we are going to do some other fun activities where you can show us more about your homes!

C) Tuning In

Listening the song "I Love My Family" with children
<https://tinyurl.com/ilovemyfamilysong>

Conversation Prompts before, during, or after the activity

These prompts are designed to facilitate the conversation around each activity.

The activities also contain a **Concluding Prompt** that you can use to verbalise the learning lesson. Be free to facilitate the activities according to however you are adapting or tweaking them, and be free to conclude the activity in your words according to what you hope for the children to learn.

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Suggested Flow

This is based on a 4-lesson design; teachers are welcome to modify or adjust accordingly.

Lesson #1

My Family

Lesson #2

K1: My Home or
K2: This Is My Home/
What Home Means To Me

Lesson #3

Reading of Book

Lesson #4

Neighbourhood Walk and/or
Expressing Kindness Through Art and Ideas

PRE-READING ACTIVITY

MY FAMILY

(Recommended Introductory Activity for K1 and K2)



A) Purpose

This activity is designed to help children

★ **CONNECT WITH THE CONCEPT OF "HOME"**

by starting with what is closest to their hearts:



B) Material Ideas

Photos of children with their family

(provided by parents or guardians)



C) Tuning In



Sing the song "I Love My Family" with children

<https://tinyurl.com/ilovemyfamilysong>

D) Activity

Invite children to share their family photos with the class.

Conversation Prompts during the Activity:

- Where are you in this photo?
- What are you doing in the photo?
- Who are the people in the photo with you?
- Do you remember what the occasion was when you took the photo?
- How did you feel when you took this photo?



Concluding Prompt:

OUR FAMILIES ARE ALL DIFFERENT, AND THAT IS WHAT MAKES THEM SPECIAL TO EACH OF US.

Now, we are going to do some other fun activities where you can show us more about your homes!

PRE-READING ACTIVITY

MY HOME

(Suitable Activity for K1)



A) Purpose

This activity is designed to help children

★ CONNECT WITH THE CONCEPT OF "HOME"

by starting with what is closest to their hearts: **THEIR FAMILIES.**

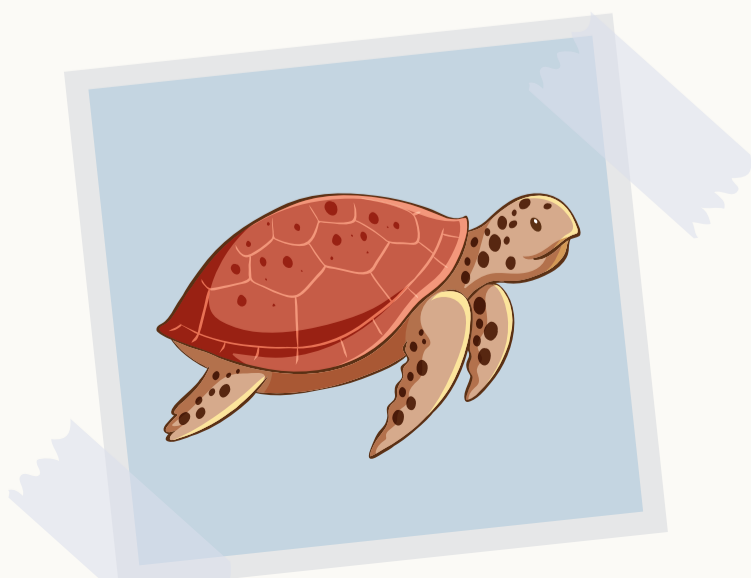
By exploring family photos and images of different houses, we aim to highlight that each child's experience of home is unique and special.

This activity encourages children to:

★ APPRECIATE THE DIVERSITY OF HOMES AND UNDERSTAND THAT, WHILE OUR HOMES MAY LOOK DIFFERENT, THEY ARE ALL IMPORTANT AND MEANINGFUL TO US.

B) Material Ideas

- Photos of different types of animals and its home, such as tortoise in its shell, bird in its nest, spider in its web etc.
- Photos of different types of homes such as nearby HDB flats, condominiums, bungalows, shelters, etc
- Drawing paper
- Drawing materials (e.g. crayons, markers, colour pencils, pencils)



C) Tuning In

Conversation Prompts before the Activity:

- What is home?
- What is your favourite place at home?
- What do you like to do at home and with who?



D) Activity PART 1

- Show photos of different types of animals and their homes.
- Discuss what home means to those animals.

Conversation Prompts during the Activity:

- What will happen if the (name of specific animal) doesn't have its home? How would it feel?
- Home is somewhere we feel safe.
- Why do homes need to be safe?



D) Activity PART 2

- Next, show photos of different homes of humans.

Conversation Prompts during the Activity:

- Now let's look at some pictures of different homes. You might have seen some of these before.
- What do you notice in these photos?
- Can you guess where this home might be?
- Does this home look like yours? How is it the same or different?
- Who do you live together with at home?
- How do you feel being at home?
- What do you like to do at home?

D) Activity PART 3

- Get children to draw their homes and share their drawings with the class

Conversation Prompts during the Activity:

- Can you tell us about your drawing? What did you include in your drawing?
- What do you have in your home? Think about the rooms and things you love.
- What else did you add to your house? Are there special items or favourite toys?
- Do you have a kitchen or your own room in your home? What's special about those places?
- How does it feel to be at home?
- What happens if you don't have a home? How would you feel?

E) Conversation Prompts after all parts of the Activity:

- How do you feel knowing that all families and homes are special in their own way?
- There are different kinds of families, just like there are different kinds of homes. Each family and home has its own special qualities that make it unique and important.



Concluding Prompt:

A HEALTHY, SAFE HOME IS ESSENTIAL FOR US TO GROW, LEARN AND EXPLORE.

PRE-READING ACTIVITY

THIS IS MY HOME /

WHAT HOME MEANS TO ME

(Suitable Activity for K2)

A) Purpose

This activity is designed to help children

- ✦ EXPLORE AND APPRECIATE THE CONCEPT OF "HOME" BASED ON THEIR OWN UNIQUE EXPERIENCES.

Through creative activities and sensory exploration, children will

- ✦ UNDERSTAND THAT HOMES ARE DIVERSE AND SPECIAL TO EACH INDIVIDUAL.

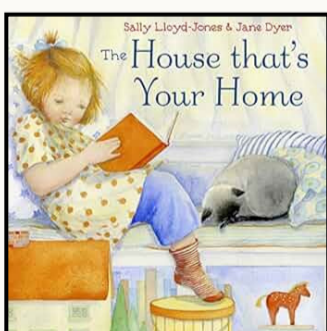
B) Material Ideas

BOOKS:



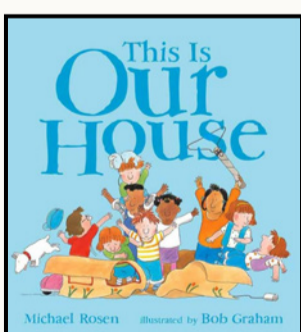
A House Is a House for Me

by Mary Ann Hoberman,
illustrated by Betty Fraser



The House That's Your Home

by Sally Lloyd-Jones,
illustrated by Jane Dyer



This Is Our House

by Michael Rosen,
illustrated by Bob Graham

For Home Modelling Activity:

- Glue
- Scissors
- Paper/Cardboard boxes for folding and crafting of box
- ✦ Tutorial on box folding:



<https://tinyurl.com/boxfoldingtutorial>

- Furniture sorting set
- ✦ Printable cut- out furniture objects:



<https://tinyurl.com/furniturecutout>

- DIY materials
- ✦ Modelling Clay/Dough
- ✦ Drawing materials (crayons, markers, color pencils, pencils)

For Sensory Exploration Activity:




- See (Eye Masks)
- Smell (Food dishes, detergent)
- Hear (Fan sounds, cooking sounds)
- Touch (Soft towel, or any textured items from home)
- Taste (Food items)

NEXT PART...

C) Tuning In


- Read a book about different kinds of homes (choose any from the list before).
- After reading, stimulate children's thoughts about their homes, encouraging them to reflect on what makes their living environment special and meaningful to them.

Conversation Prompts before the Activity:







-  When you think of your home, what is the first thing that comes to your mind?
-  Who lives with you in your home? Can you tell me about them?
-  What are some activities you and your family members enjoy doing at home?

D) Activity 1 Home Modelling

Conversation Prompts before the Activity:



-  We're going to think about what your home is like by creating a model of it.
- Guide children in crafting or modelling their homes using provided materials or DIY options.
- Allow children to share what they have created and discuss their creations.

Conversation Prompts after the Activity:

-  What makes your home special to you? Is there something in your home that you really love?
-  How would you describe your home to someone who has never been there before?
-  Do you have a favourite room or place in your home? Why do you like it?
-  What are some of the colours or decorations in your home that you like?
-  How do you feel when you are home?
-  What does home mean to you?






D) Activity 2 Sensory Exploration

Conversation Prompts before the Activity:

-  Home is not something that we only see. We can feel it through our senses too.
-  We are going to explore what your home is like through our senses.

- Recap the five senses.
- Have children put on eye masks (optional) to simulate sensory exploration.
- Pass around sensory items for children to experience and describe.
- Encourage them to share other sensory experiences they have in their homes.

Conversation Prompts during the Activity:

-  When you walk into your home, what can you smell?
-  What can you hear?
-  What can you taste?
-  What can you touch?
-  What other things do you smell, see, hear, taste, and touch in your home?

E) Closure/Conversation Prompts after either/both Activities

- Share with children how different and special each home is.

Concluding Prompts:

- ★ ASK CHILDREN: "WHAT DOES HOME MEAN TO YOU?"
- ★ WHAT MAKES EACH OF OUR HOMES SO SPECIAL IS HOW DIFFERENT THEY CAN BE, YET EACH ONE IS MEANINGFUL TO US.

READING OF BOOK

(Suitable for ages 3 to 8)

A) Purpose

This book is meant to

- ✦ SPARK CHILDREN'S CURIOSITY and
- ✦ GROW INTRIGUE ABOUT THEIR COMMUNITY AND THE SOCIAL ISSUES THAT EXIST WITHIN

by using an open-ended style of story telling.

C) Conversation Prompts after Reading:

- How do you feel after reading this story?
- Who were the characters in the story, and how did they meet?
- What did Amos ask Uncle?
- Who can remember from the story, what the saga seeds symbolise?
- Why did Uncle sleep downstairs?
- In Singapore, do we see people sleeping in public?
- If you see people sleeping in public, what would you do?
- How did Amos treat Uncle in the story?
- Amos also learnt a new word. What was it?
- What is a shelter?

B) Conversation Prompts before Reading:



What do you remember about the homes we drew, showed, and talked about?

TODAY WE WILL LEARN ABOUT OTHER PEOPLE AND THEIR HOMES WITH AMOS, A BOY AROUND YOUR AGE!



Concluding Questions:

WHAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING WE LEARNT FROM THE STORY?
Do you remember the meaning of the saga seeds?

POST-READING ACTIVITY

NEIGHBOURHOOD WALK:

UNDERSTANDING HOMELESSNESS

(Suitable Activity for K1 & K2)

A) Purpose

This lesson aims to introduce preschoolers to the concept of homelessness in a sensitive and age-appropriate manner.

Through discussions, a video presentation, and an outdoor neighbourhood walk, the objective is

- ★ TO FOSTER UNDERSTANDING TOWARDS ROUGH SLEEPERS IN SINGAPORE.

By exploring their own environments and learning about the challenges faced by individuals without stable homes, children will

- ★ DEVELOP AWARENESS OF SOCIETAL ISSUES AND LEARN HOW SMALL ACTS OF KINDNESS CAN MAKE A POSITIVE DIFFERENCE IN THE LIVES OF OTHERS.

The lesson also encourages children to

- ★ APPRECIATE THE SECURITY AND COMFORT PROVIDED BY THEIR OWN HOMES WHILE PROMOTING RESPECT AND COMPASSION TOWARDS OTHERS.

B) Location Ideas

Familiar neighbourhood locations around the centre that may include parks, streets, or public spaces.

- During the outdoor walk, engage in conversations with children.

C) Tuning In

Conversation Prompts before the Activity:

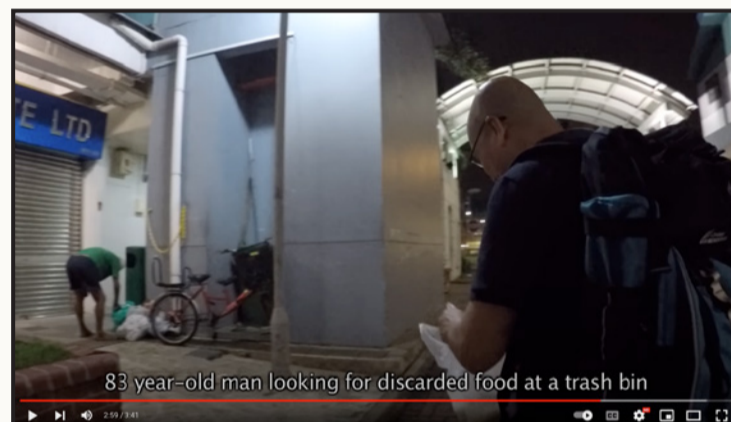


We learnt about homes and families with Amos, Mummy, and Uncle. Today, we're going to take a walk nearby to learn about what's around us and how we can care!



Before that, do you remember at the start of story, where Uncle was sleeping? It was beneath the block, how do you think he felt sleeping there?

- Show a short, age-appropriate video or documentary that profiles the lives of rough sleepers in Singapore.



<https://tinyurl.com/roughsleepersvideo>

- Highlight the challenges and experiences of rough sleepers to help children understand what homelessness might be like
- Using the think-feel-care thinking routine, get children engaged in perspective-taking conversations such as:



Can you imagine what it might be like to not have a safe place to sleep at night?



How would that make you feel?

NEXT PART...

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D) Activity

Conversation Prompts during the Activity:

- Let's look around, where do you think Uncle was sleeping?
- What happens if it rains? How do you think people without homes stay dry?
- What do you see around you? Who uses these things or places?
- Who do you see around you? How can we be kind to everyone we see?
- If we see people sleeping on the ground or outside, what should we do?
- If someone asks for help outside, how can we help them?
- How do you think we can show care to others? One way could be going with your teacher or parent to say hello, ask for their name, or see if they need anything.

E) Tips for Teachers / Take note

- Guide children towards reflecting on what they see in their environment (e.g. people around, things or structures around).
- Because some people may be resting / rough sleeping in public by choice, there is no need to signal to children that they need a "better home".
- Instead, you may want to focus on how children can respond with care in their attitudes, speech or actions towards what they see/those in their environment. (e.g. being kind, not littering)
- If you encounter anyone rough sleeping and/or requesting help while on your walk with the children, you may refer to page 14 where there are relevant resources.

F) Closure / Conversation Prompts after the Activity:

- Recap the walk by discussing what the children observed and learnt.
- Encourage children to share their feelings and thoughts about the experience.

Concluding Prompt:

EMPHASISE THE IMPORTANCE OF EMPATHY AND KINDNESS TOWARDS EVERYONE, INCLUDING THOSE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS.



POST-READING ACTIVITY

EXPRESSING KINDNESS

THROUGH ART AND IDEAS

(Suitable Activity for K1 & K2)

A) Purpose

This lesson aims to

- ✦ CULTIVATE EMPATHY AND ENCOURAGE PROACTIVE KINDNESS AMONG CHILDREN by
- ✦ FOSTERING AWARENESS OF THE EXPERIENCES OF THOSE AROUND THEM.

Through creative activities, children will

- ✦ EXPLORE VARIOUS WAYS TO SHOW CARE AND CONSIDERATION FOR OTHERS, EMPHASISING THAT EVEN SMALL GESTURES CAN MAKE A MEANINGFUL IMPACT.

B) Material Ideas

- Paper
- Drawing/writing instruments such as marker, pen, crayon, colour pencils, or pencils
- Additional craft materials such as paper, glue, scissors, etc.
- Playdough/Blocks for tactile exploration

C) Tuning In

- Discuss the concept of caring and list examples from stories or real-life experiences where characters or people showed care for others.
- Highlight the caring relationship between Amos, Mummy, and Uncle from the earlier story as a model for the children.

NEXT PART...



D) Activity

- Guide children through different options to consider the experiences of those around them and brainstorm solutions through drawings or models:

Reflect on neighbourhood problems.
(e.g., lost clothes)

OR

Imagine challenges Uncle faced
while sleeping downstairs

OR

Identify someone they care about (family, friends,
neighbours) and think of ways to show care based on
what they know about that person's likes or needs.

- Encourage children to illustrate or create their ideas of how to show care for others.

F) Closure / Conversation Prompts after the Activity:

- How did your drawing or creation show care or help for others?
- What inspired you to choose that particular idea?
- How do you think your drawing or creation could make a difference?
- What do you think Uncle or someone experiencing homelessness would feel if they saw your drawing or creation?
- Would you like to share your idea with others? Why or why not?
- How does creating something for someone else make you feel?
- Do you think you could do more to show care for others in your daily life? What could you do?

E) Tips for Teachers / Take note

- Aim to encourage reflection on the children's creations and how their ideas can positively impact others, fostering empathy and reinforcing the lesson on kindness and caring for those around them.



Concluding Prompt:

**WE CAN SHARE
WHAT WE HAVE AND
DO WHAT WE CAN TO
SHOW WE CARE.**

THERE ARE MANY WAYS TO
SHOW KINDNESS TO THOSE
AROUND US, AND EVERY IDEA,
NO MATTER HOW SMALL,
MAKES A DIFFERENCE.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCE:

HOW MIGHT YOU BE ABLE TO HELP ROUGH SLEEPERS?

(For Parents and Teachers)

People may be rough sleeping in public spaces regardless of the housing circumstance they face.

Some of them may own a home or are renting a home, but due to some of the following possible reasons, they are not able or willing to stay in their homes:

- Conflict with family members or rental tenants.
- Pest infestations or overcrowding in their homes.
- Unsupported pregnancies or facing abuse.

Some may have also received help, for example:

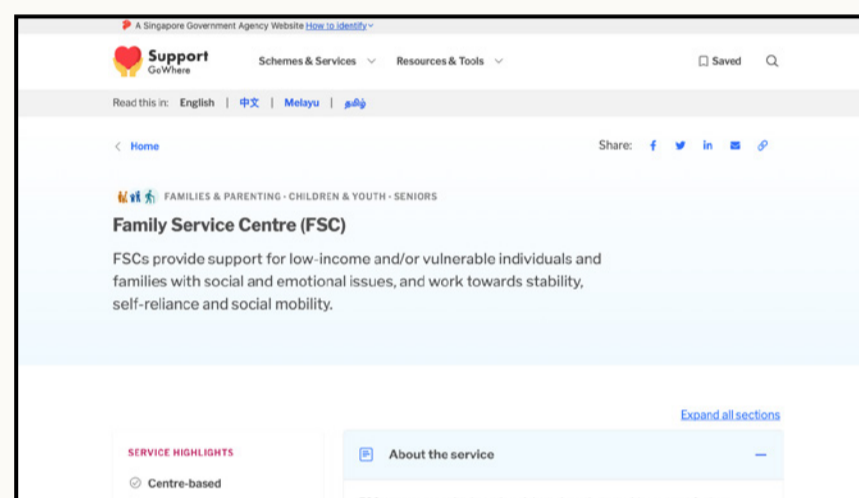
- Already explored staying in rental flats, but due to various reasons, have needed or chosen to go back to rough sleeping on the streets.
- Already receiving help from a Social Service Office for financial assistance, or a Family Services Centre for assistance with family issues.

Each person's experience with homelessness is different.




Therefore, we can seek to understand them better through a simple conversation.

If you meet someone who is rough sleeping and/or does want help, here are some support options:

- Point them to the nearest Family Service Centre:



<https://supportgowhere.life.gov.sg/services/SVC-FSCF/family-service-centre-fsc>

-  Call the ComCare hotline at **1800-222-0000**
-  Email **msf_peersoffice@msf.gov.sg**
-  Submit a request via the Help Neighbour feature on the **OneService app**

If you want to volunteer to support rough sleepers:

- Please email MSF's Partners Engaging and Empowering Rough Sleepers network (PEERS) at **msf_peersoffice@msf.gov.sg**

