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MEE TOH SCHOOL

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Dear Parents,

Good day.

We want to partner with our families to maintain a safe, non-violent Mee Toh Family. This is because the safety, well-being, and character development of our children are our top priorities. We want our Family to be a sanctuary where every child feels safe, respected, and valued. To maintain this caring and supportive environment, we stand firmly on a zero-tolerance policy towards physical violence and aggressive behaviour. This is also to allow our children to live our values every day (LOVE).

Before sharing our guidelines, I would like to start with a short story that reflects the choice that we hope our children will always make when they are faced with conflict – **Deciding between the Sword or the Shield**. Once, there were two very good friends, Liam and Jayden. They were playing a game at recess. In the excitement, Jaden accidentally tripped Liam, causing Liam to scrape his knee. Furious and feeling hurt after that fall, Liam felt a sudden urge to push back and punch Jayden. He remembered that his father telling him to "never let anyone put their hands on you without fighting back. This is what a man must do!" Liam's fists clenched like swords, ready to strike at Jayden.

However, when Liam looked up and saw the Discipline Mistress nearby. He thought about the reminders that she gave them during morning assembly, and about what would happen next if he were to hit Jayden — the scolding, the recess detention, the reflection session and of course he would have hurt his friend, Jayden.

Liam decided to use a "shield" instead of a sword. He took a deep breath, stepped back, and said firmly, "I am really angry because you tripped me." Jayden looked shocked, then instantly felt remorseful. "I'm so sorry, Liam! It was an accident; I lost my balance." Because Liam had chosen peace over retaliation, Jayden was able to help Liam up and walk him to the general office for a plaster. By choosing a shield of calm over a sword of anger, Liam protected his safety, maintained friendship, and strengthened his own character.

On a similar note, you may have recently read about an unfortunate incident in the news where a misunderstanding involving a child led to the father resorting to physical force against an elderly person, which is now a police matter. This incident serves as a reminder of how quickly situations can escalate when anger replaces pausing and dialogue. On a similar note, we understand that a parent's natural instinct is to protect their child. However, advising our child to "hit back" or use physical force to defend themselves would often worsen the situation. In a school setting, physical retaliation by hitting back for example, creates confusion and complicates investigations. Unfortunately, our school's rules stipulated that any child who uses physical violence will face

Vision : Touching Souls, Challenging Minds

Mission : To maximise students' potential and develop in them a passion for life-long learning guided by compassion, conscience, purity and righteousness.

Motto : Compassion, Conscience, Purity, Righteousness

愿景 : 净化心灵, 挑战思维

使命 : 以校训慈、良、清、直为指引, 激发终身学习之热忱, 务必人尽其才。

校训 : 慈、良、清、直

disciplinary action, even if he or she was the initial victim. As such, we would recommend that the victim should not retaliate, stay calm and be courageous to involve the school adults to do the needful. This is the right thing to do. We also strongly urge parents to let the school manage and resolve peer conflicts. Our children are still very young, and they have yet to learn to manage their emotions and make a responsible decision instantaneously. Our colleagues will investigate the incidents fairly, counsel the child/children involved, and implement restorative actions. If you feel a matter has not been resolved satisfactorily at the classroom level, please escalate it directly to me or my fellow vice-principals. We are always ready to listen, relook at the case, and ensure that there will be a fair and just outcome. There is no need to take matters into our own hands or bypass school channels to involve external parties like the police. Ultimately, school issues are best resolved through the partnership between the home and the school.

To help us foster a culture of non-violence, here are a few practical strategies you can teach and practice with your child at home to manage anger and avoid violence:

- De-escalate with the "Breathe, Stop and Cool Down" method:

Teach your child that when he or she feels that his or her body getting hot, or the fists are about to clench, he or she must stop talking, take three deep belly breaths, and count to ten before reacting. The thought process could be - am I doing the right thing, did I breach the value that I have learned e.g., respect, responsibility, care and harmony, and can I approach it in a better way by not causing harm or hurt to myself and others.

- Use "I-Statements" to express frustration:

Encourage your child to use calm and kind words instead of physical actions. Practice phrases like, "I feel angry when you take my things without asking, please return it back to me." This respectful conversation is greatly appreciated and celebrated here.

- Use the "Walk Away and Tell" rule:

Remind your child that walking away from a heated argument is a sign of strength and courage, not weakness. He or she should immediately remove himself or herself from a situation that is not helpful and find a teacher or a school adult to seek help. This is being responsible and caring.

- Create a "Cooling Corner" at home: Set up a quiet space where family members can calm down when angry. This models to children that it is okay to feel angry and recognize it, but we must take time out to manage it safely by not using unkind words or forceful actions.

- Differentiate between feelings and actions:

Remind your child that it is completely normal to feel angry, but it is never okay to use that anger to hurt someone else's body or feelings through actions or speech. This is not right. We want to show respect and care for others and be in harmony with one another.

Thank you for your unwavering support, trust, and partnership in keeping our Mee Toh Family safe and harmonious for every child. Let us support one another to help our children recognise anger but are able to manage it and defuse the situation in an amicable and respectful way. By so doing, we are nurturing caring, courageous and responsible children. I wish you and your family a safe and happy September holiday break.

Partnering with you,

Kelvin Tay

Principal

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