



Issue 2 -  
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# Open Minds Open Doors

*A newsletter about the power of open-ended play as a pathway to inclusion*



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AND EXPERT DR  
ESTHER JOOSA  
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## Open Minds Open Doors

### *Updates about the OMOD program*

With this second issue, we dive deeper into Open Minds Open Doors, and take a moment to reflect on all the things we are grateful for in the foundation of OMOD and what it takes to embrace play and sustain the programme.

We are especially grateful for the commitment of families and their children, the people who work tirelessly to make OMOD a success, our venue partners, Kids Space, and Common Ground, and the President's Challenge Grant Funding that made continuation possible in the next year. For next year, we have planned again a series of play sessions.

As we say goodbye to a playful 2025, we wish you health, joy and happiness and look forward to continue our journey with you in 2026.

Charlotte Goh  
Executive Director Playeum

## Kids Space welcomes OMOD

The OMOD team is immensely grateful to Kids Space in Dempsey to host our play programme once a month. The wonderful outdoor space and the comfortable Yurt provide all the ingredients for OMOD. Apart from the OMOD sessions, families who wish to visit and play at Kids Space on other days of the week, can do so as their play is always an adventure and inclusive. The Treehouse invites young explorers to climb high, dream big, and let imagination take flight. With cosy nooks, sneaky lookout spots, and a touch of mystery, it's the perfect hideaway to hatch a plan, swap secrets, and chart children's adventures. Built for curiosity, creativity, and connection, it's where stories unfold and friendships grow.

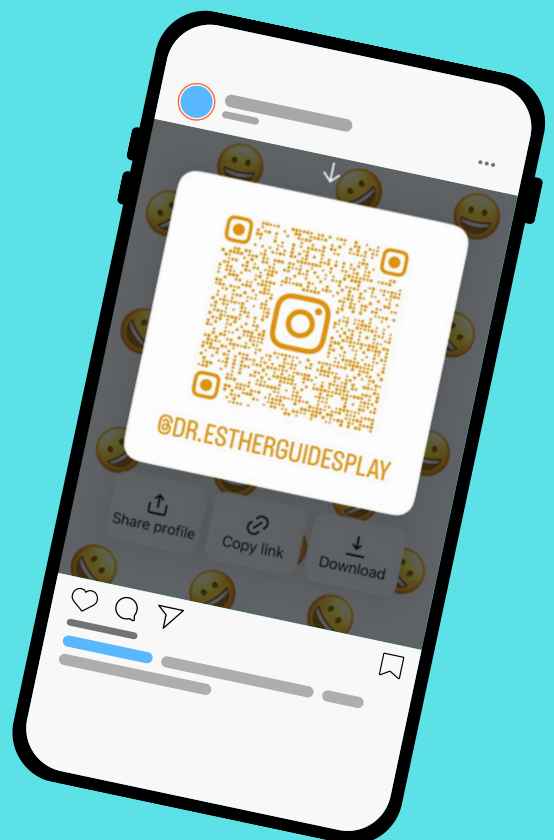
Being inclusion friendly, families can dine at the Pantry & enjoy complimentary Treehouse access with every kids' meal—or join the fun for \$15 per child and enjoy unlimited Treehouse time.



<https://www.kidsspace.sg>

## For parents who want to learn more about play - follow Dr.Estherguidesplay on Instagram

My focus on play is founded on the powerful role it plays in development of communication, social engagement and empowerment of children. Play does not come in a ready made manual, but is part of a process of discovery of its transformative potential. Based on 35 years of personal and professional experiences in developing open-ended play, I provide through regular instagram sharings, ideas and insights of how simple, everyday materials and other resources, can richly support every child's development.





## Meet our playmaker Grant Tan and find out what Open Minds Open Doors and play means to him



While children engage in playful learning, a dedicated team works behind the scenes to make it possible. A key member of this team is Grant Tan, an NTU full-time student who, alongside Playeum staff member, Alisa and Lik Qi, are dedicated to manage programme logistics, volunteer coordination and child interactions. The team also prepares session materials, manage registration details, and oversees photo documentation. Beyond his logistical duties, Grant is frequently praised by parents and children alike for his remarkable, child-centered facilitation skills. When asked what draws him to the programme, Grant explained: Over my (short) year with OMOD, I've come to learn a lot from the programme, not just from Dr. Esther and the incredible team that I've managed to work with, but also through my experiences with every single child and family that has joined us.

Coming from a background of working in other forms of support for special needs, I appreciate the unique philosophy present in OMOD, which is always child-led and child-first. Drawing on this, play is also a process of exploring, and therefore it is imperative that we be gracious to ourselves in the face of the challenges and difficulties that we encounter. As we come into our seventh year of OMOD, I have no doubt that it will continue to be such a space for all of us: one for not just celebrating the successes that we see, but also a safe space to try new things, and appreciate the journey along the way..."



***Grant noted: "In the play that we do, opportunities for both success and learning are always constantly present, not just for the children, but also for ourselves as the adults facilitating the process."***



# The Global Challenge of Inclusive Play and Our Response through OMOD

**By Dr Esther Joosa**

*Open Minds Open Doors started with the core vision: To Create Pathways through Play to an Inclusive World. Now in its seventh year, we are strengthening our outreach through family play education and guidance. Let's briefly explain "Why Play" play leads to growth, inclusion and development.*

One reason for us to advocate play is that children learn the social relationships needed to grow in the community and the future workplace. Unfortunately, most play practices in Singapore, and around the world, remain non-inclusive. A primary barrier is that design philosophies often pay little attention to the essential social and communicative aspects of play or accessible materials. There is usually insufficient attention paid to designing opportunities or to developing the social and communication skills necessary for all children to participate.

Recent data from the Netherlands, a nation celebrated for its commitment to children's play and inclusion, shows that more than one in three children with a disability never visits a local playground. Among those who do, over a quarter frequently play alone. Furthermore, 72% of children without a disability never arrange playdates with a peer who has a disability. These statistics are not just numbers from a specific country; they are a global call to action that fuels Open Minds Open Doors.

During OMOD, we witness firsthand the transformative power of intentionally designed play. We aim to continuously raise families' awareness of the value of OMOD and play. During each session, we:

- Ensure every family and child is a valued participant and is listened to.
- Document the effect of play on regularly participating children, and share ideas with parents to understand progress and 21st-century skills.
- Develop insights that although play is not a magic potion, most children, regardless of ability, can experience engagement and growth in their skills or confidence during most sessions.
- Provide tips and resources to committed family members to develop further insights and understanding of open-ended materials play and ideas to create home play spaces that are intentionally designed and accessible, engaging, and meaningful for children of all abilities.

In short, play develops communicative skills and executive functions to let children navigate the social world. As these skills take time, but in OMOD we are committed to create opportunities for play dates to build friendships, and play skills for children to be included and engage with peers through play and in the community.



## Play Dates November/ December 2025

- 8 November OMOD Common Ground
- 22 November OMOD play Kids Space, Dempsey
- 13 December OMOD Common Ground

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