



THE TRAILMIX



Issue 4:
Success stories of
neurodivergent locals

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Introduction:

A Guide to Success

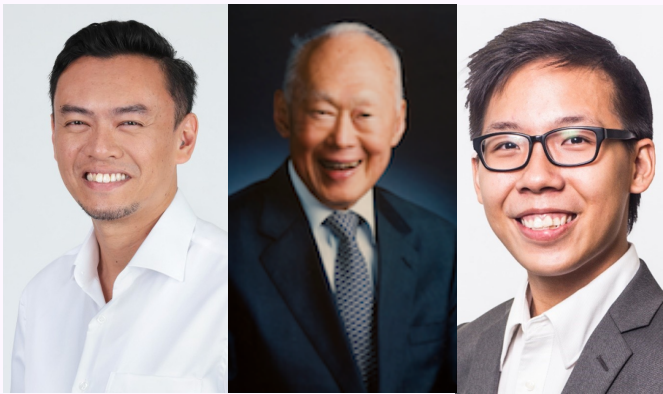
Different backgrounds, different circumstances and different abilities, but a common goal: success. To be successful in life means to fulfil one's aspirations, to earn a stable income, to be happy and satisfied. But the definition of success is not necessarily limited to just these three interpretations. It encompasses more than just the outcome. The process, the journey is just as important.

Everyone wants to be successful, the question is how? Neurodivergent individuals, including their close ones, would often feel uncertain of the future. It may be true that social stigma cannot just be erased in a single night and that it's here to stay, but that certainly does not mean that neurodivergent individuals cannot succeed. Before you start thinking too much into the future, focus on the present, focus on yourself. Self-acceptance and having a growth mindset is fundamental on the road to success. Being able to acknowledge your weaknesses and being willing to put in the extra effort is what makes one stand out. Capitalising on your unique strengths can build confidence and motivate you to be resilient.

Success often begins with personal fulfilment. It's not about meeting others' expectations but feeling content and satisfied with your own life. So, anybody can succeed. Be brave and chase your dreams!

Dyslexia Success Stories in Our Community

BY ISABELLE LIM



People's Action Party (PAP) Member of Parliament (MP) Dr Wan Rizal,¹ Former PM Lee Kuan Yew² and entrepreneur Edward Yee.³

This is adapted from a CNA article. To read more, click on this link:

<https://www.channelnewsasia.com/singapore/dyslexia-school-challenges-career-success-support-strategies-3770196>

Many are first diagnosed with their neurodevelopmental conditions in primary school and their challenges are stuck with them as they grow up.

They may face criticism at their workplace, or even struggle to find employment. Although such obstacles may seem daunting, with the right mindset and adaptability, such obstacles can be overcome.

Dr Wan Rizal

Did you know that People's Action Party (PAP) Member of Parliament (MP) Dr Wan Rizal has Dyslexia? Like others with Dyslexia, he struggles with reading and writing. Younger him would practise spelling for long hours, yet he would never get it right and would receive scoldings from his mother. But look at where he is now. Today, his dyslexia goes unnoticed by most, with people being impressed by his outstanding speaking skills showcased in parliament. He admits that he does indeed struggle a bit with speeches, but he finds ways to adapt. He makes the font bigger and manually cuts up words that are too long.

Such adaptability is cultivated through effort, through practice. Having the ability to adapt is crucial for overcoming hurdles and to thrive at work. It's always

1. Wan Rizal Bin Wan Zakariah - Parliament of Singapore | LinkedIn. [sg.linkedin.com. Accessed December 6, 2023. https://sg.linkedin.com/in/wan-rizal-bin-wan-zakariah-48183686](https://sg.linkedin.com/in/wan-rizal-bin-wan-zakariah-48183686)
2. Singapore PMO. PMO | Mr LEE Kuan Yew. Prime Minister's Office Singapore. Published October 2, 2018. <https://www.pmo.gov.sg/Past-Prime-Ministers/Mr-LEE-Kuan-Yew>
3. Advisory. Conversations with Edward Yee. Advisory. Published January 19, 2019. Accessed December 6, 2023. <https://advisory.sg/2019/01/19/conversations-with-edward-yee/>

better to address your weaknesses up front than to turn a blind eye, hoping to ignore it forever. The earlier one recognises their struggles, the more help they can receive and the more they can improve. With every conscious effort one takes to better themselves, they would be one step closer to their goal, and that progress will be essential in the long run.

More often than not, what one lacks is confidence and not the ability and skills required. It's perfectly normal to be hesitant in taking that first step out of the comfort zone, but it definitely is a pivotal moment, and a necessary step towards success.

"If you hear a voice within you say 'you cannot paint,' then by all means paint, and that voice will be silenced." — Vincent van Gogh.⁴

Lee Kuan Yew

I'm sure many of us know who Lee Kuan Yew is, but some may find it surprising that he suffered from dyslexia. Despite this, he was able to transform Singapore into a prosperous nation. He had to deliver countless speeches to

massive audiences in a way that gained their trust. All of these would not have been possible if he lacked confidence in his own abilities. He learnt how to adapt to his weaknesses and created opportunities with it, achieving success throughout his lifetime. He mastered the four languages, English, Chinese, Malay and Tamil, earned a law degree at Cambridge and headed the honours list. His inspirational story proves as a testimony that with the right mindset and attitudes, anyone can obtain success in life.

"Change is the very essence of life. The moment we cease to change, to be able to adapt, to adjust, to respond effectively to new situations, then we have begun to die." — Lee Kuan Yew⁵

Edward Yee

ADHD, ASD and Dyslexia do not disappear with age, but one can learn to make use of the available technology around them to better cope with their struggles. With the right resources, what might have been a tough challenge can

4. Vincent Van Gogh Quotes. BrainyQuote. https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/vincent_van_gogh_104644

5. Famous Quotes. Leadership Course Singapore. Accessed December 6, 2023. <https://rafflesleadership.com/lee-kuan-yew-quotes/>

be made a trivial task.

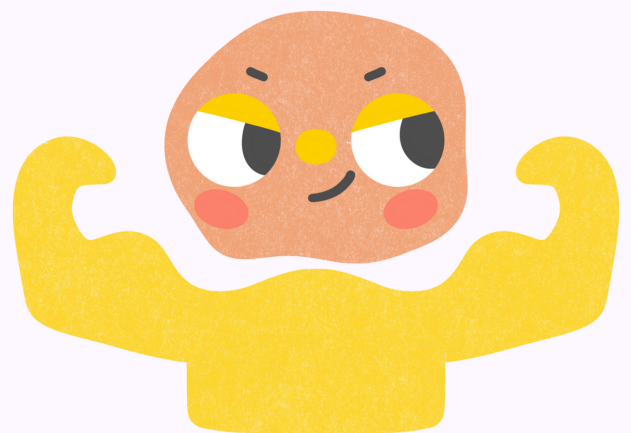
Another inspiring story would be that of Edward Yee, a 28-year-old entrepreneur and the 2019 Singapore Rhodes Scholar. He too has Dyslexia. However, instead of having challenges with reading, he struggled with memory work instead. To tackle these difficulties, he would write notes to capture details from conversations and meetings, and relies on to-do lists and calendar events to recall information. With such simple yet effective strategies, he is able to cope with his work. But such habits do not come naturally. One has to experiment with the different strategies available to figure out what suits them the best, and make fine adjustments, tweaking them to their needs.

For some, it was loved ones or teachers who made all the difference. Edward Yee believes his parents embraced dyslexia before he did. When sharing the news with him, his parents made sure that they were careful with their words such that he did not see having dyslexia as a disability but rather a different way of thinking and seeing the world. His father taught him

specific strategies to use, like colour-coded highlighting of material, which he still does today. Finding the appropriate support strategies for your child will definitely go a long way as habits are easier cultivated when young. The strategies they pick up would not be thrown out the window after they graduate from school, but it would be applied throughout their life as they refine them along the way.

Neurodivergent individuals can overcome hurdles and achieve success. With the ability to adapt, one is not far away from thriving at work.

“ To make life worthwhile, never lose that joie de vivre, that zest for life. To watch the sun go down, and wake up to a new day, rested and refreshed after a good night.” — Lee Kuan Yew⁶



6. Interactive: Lee Kuan Yew - In His Own Words. CNA. Accessed December 6, 2023.
<https://www.channelnewsasia.com/interactives/lee-kuan-yew-quotes-100th-anniversary-his-own-words-3766806>

Featured Artwork:

My Dyslexic Brain



"My Dyslexic Brain" is an artwork by Xia Zi Xin, an 8 year-old student at Catchwise Learning. Zi Xin submitted this artwork for an art competition and won the first prize.

Exclusive interview with Chong Ing Kai

BY WANG YUANXIN

[This article has been edited for clarity.]

Chong Ing Kai is a young entrepreneur who studied engineering with business in Singapore Polytechnic. He founded his start-up, Stick 'Em in 2021 and his first year there, which won him the Gold Award for the National Youth Entrepreneurship Award. He had also been diagnosed with ADHD at the age of nine, since which he has been channelling his interest in and focus on engineering into projects for the good of society.

Our interns at Catchwise Learning had the opportunity to interview Ing Kai, specifically regarding his journey with ADHD. This is his story:

What are some of the challenges you faced running Stick 'Em?

The biggest struggle was my personal habits and weaknesses, my blindspots. I'm very creative, and I have a lot of ideas, but I lack structure. I can create the product and get customers to buy it, but I cannot handle the [logistics] aspects of business - like payments. When I first started Stick 'Em, the first few

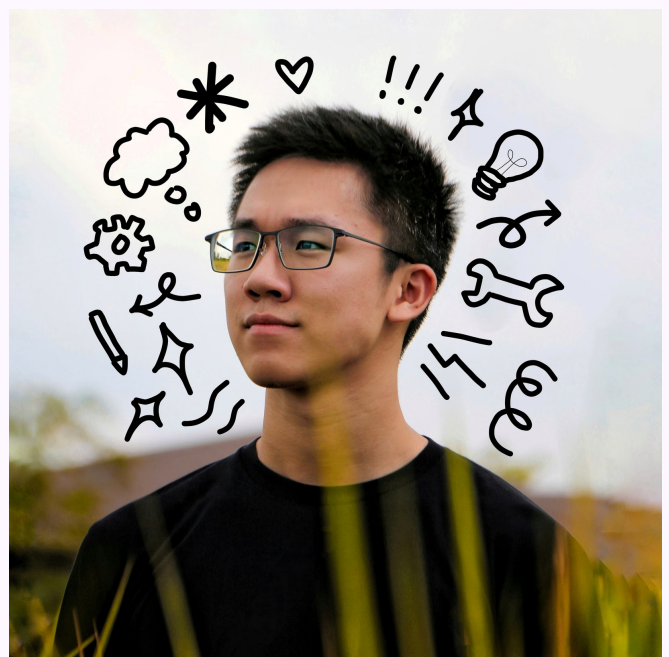


Photo: Chong Ing Kai

months were terrible because we were going very fast but there was no one to keep up with the logistics. [Once] I found my co-founder, Adam, who was good at [organisation], things ran smoother. I also tend to procrastinate on things that I don't find very important. For the things that we do, we categorise them based on whether they are important and urgent. If it's important but not urgent, my brain puts it into the "I'll forget all about it" [category], and as a founder, you'd need to make plans for the long term. [So] every time I put something on the back burner, it always creates problems in the future.

Would you say your ADHD helped you in any way?

On the creative end, because when you first start out [brainstorming] new ideas, your thinking has to be very divergent - You cannot just focus on one thing and just stick to that one idea. You have to think of other ideas. Many ideas that may not seem very practical, have potential.

My ADHD allows me to come up with a lot of options, and then I can ask myself questions like "Hey, why isn't anyone doing this? How can we do this better?" This is divergent thinking, it allows me to diverge instead of sticking to the same boring path, which gave me many opportunities.

I also have a lot of energy so I don't burn out. I can talk to people, and talking to people energises me, so I can run three to four workshops in a day while some of my team members might be dying by the second workshop.

Were you supported by the people around you? How so?

My parents have been super supportive ever since I was young - They always gave me lots of opportunities, asked me lots of questions, made sure that every decision I made, I thought through properly.

Imagine being a student in secondary school, and you tell your parents, "I'm going to drop this subject in O Levels". They'd probably be like, "What the heck

are you talking about?" But my dad, as long as I explained it to him properly, he had no problem with it. Because he knew that I understood the risk and rewards of what I was doing, and I think this kind of parenting style is not very common. When I was a kid, he'd let me explore the internet, and also took me to the Science Centre for robotics events. I never went for any formal expensive robotics lessons as a kid, it was always just those free robotics classes at the Science Centre. But those were very good opportunities for me to realise what I liked to do, which eventually led to me starting Stick 'Em.

The same goes for my mum - She was very supportive as well. For instance, in primary school, I struggled with emotional regulation, rejection sensitivity dysphoria (RSD), being impulsive, and generally doing stupid stuff. Whatever I think about, I'd do. Like whacking someone. My mom helped me think further on what I did, talking things through with me, to help me learn to regulate my emotions.

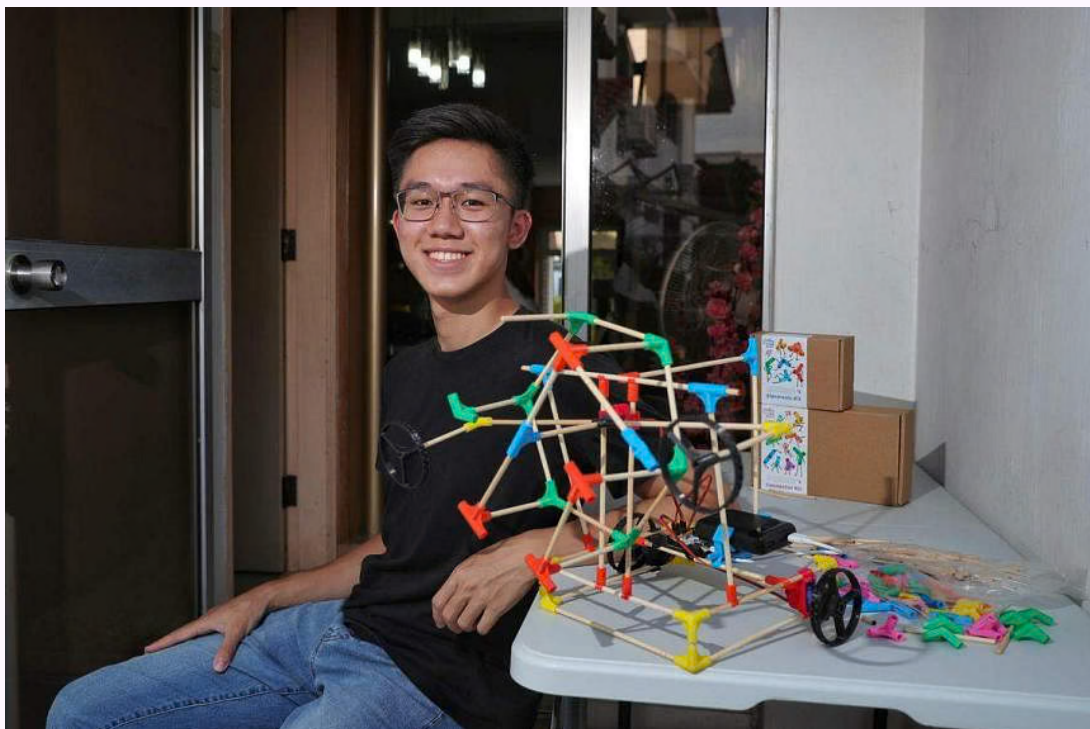
Do you have any advice for children with ADHD?

My advice would be to understand your condition very well. ADHD has a lot of common symptoms, but you need to understand why you are doing [specific] things. For example, why do I get distracted when I have less sleep, or why am I cranky after hanging out with people? The earlier you realise how your ADHD mind works, the better you can adapt your patterns and schedules to it, so you can be more productive.

I often go to subreddits, like r/ADHD, to read up on how people are dealing with it. Reading, seeing and asking "Does this resonate with me?" lets you know how certain things can affect you and how you can change your habits. For example, I read about eating sugary stuff, drinking coke, and I realised that it made me more hyperactive, so I cut that out and now I'm more productive. Additionally, I think most people have less focus when they don't get enough sleep, but it affects people with ADHD more. I also need some form of external accountability to help with time management and [self-discipline]. When I was a kid that [external accountability] was in the form of my mom. Now, if I have any projects or anything, I make sure to tell people about it to keep myself accountable.

As for advice in general - Explore everything, don't just sit at home and play games, especially during the holidays, it's great and useful to explore your interests. Every time I ask a secondary school student what they are interested in, they always say, "Oh I don't know". So go out there and explore. Don't waste your time. If you want to figure out what you're good at and where your place in this world is, take the initiative. Volunteer or do internships. Most of us are privileged enough that we don't immediately need to work for money [once we are out of school], so just go out there and explore . If not, you're going to graduate from secondary school, poly or JC and you're going to find yourself saying, "Oh crap, what do I want to do in life?"

Ultimately, I think that you can have all the advice you want, but if you are not motivated enough to make the changes you want to see in your life, then it's just going to go in one ear and out the other.



Ing Kai with STEM kits from *Stick 'Em*¹

Thank you to Ing Kai for sharing his story!

1. Photo: *The Straits Times* - She pulled her ADHD son out in Primary 3 because 'school meant punishment'. Available at: <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/parenting-education/she-pulled-her-adhd-son-out-in-primary-3-because-school-meant-punishment> (Accessed: December 2023)

TIP!

As recommended by Mr Chong Ing Kai, one way of understanding ourselves better would be to read about it online! Here are some online platforms to read about neurodiversity:


Forum-based Platforms

- example: Reddit, Quora
- online platforms where discussions take place
- can read posts by different users sharing their experiences to understand how they dealt with their challenges

The Quora logo is displayed in a bold, red, serif font against a light yellow background.

Support Groups/Communities

- local example: S4Nd (society for neurodiversity)
- groups for people with neurodiversity
- resource-sharing, advice-giving, and discussions

The S4Nd logo features the text 'S4Nd' in a stylized font where the '4' is a large number. The 'S' is green, the '4' is yellow, the 'N' is purple, and the 'd' is blue. Below it, the text 'Society for Neurodiversity' is written in a smaller, black, sans-serif font.

Hashtags

- example: #neurodiversity, #neurodivergent
- used on social media platforms like Twitter and Instagram to identify content relating to a specific topic
- search up hashtags to find content relating to the topic

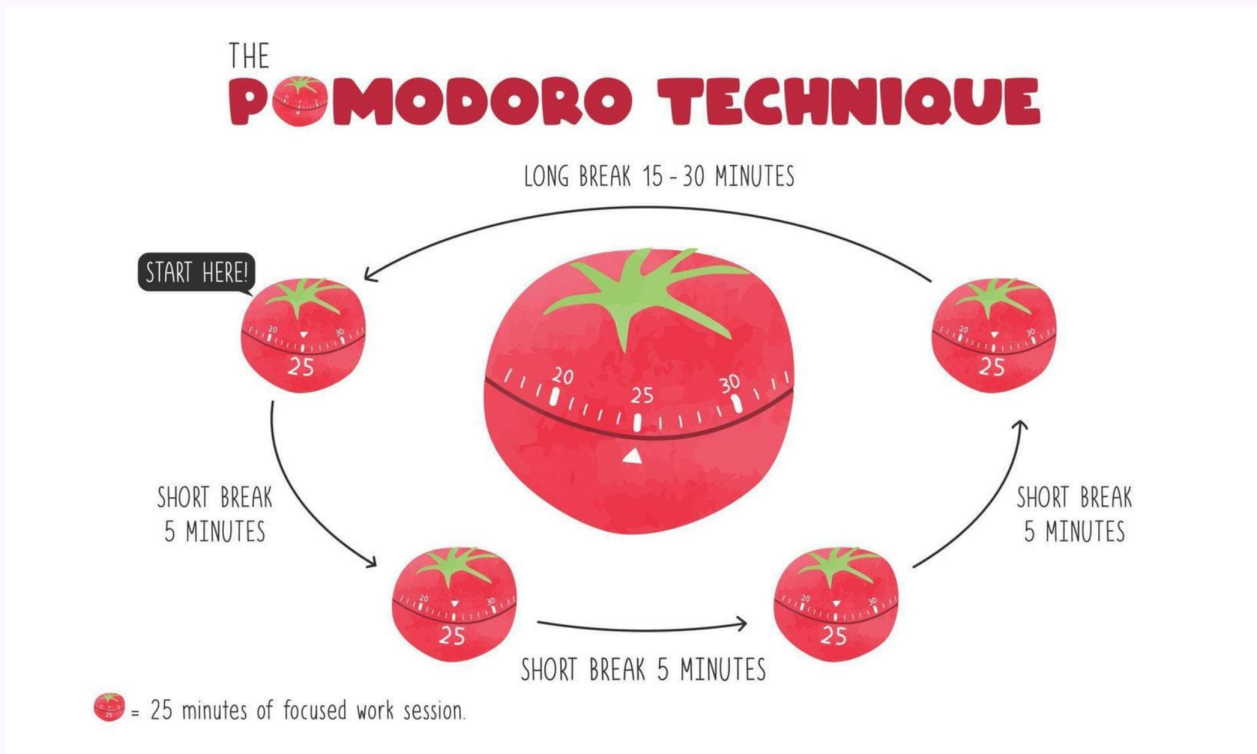


1. Iphoneincanada.ca. Published 2023. Accessed December 6, 2023. <https://cdn.iphoneincanada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/quora.jpg>

2. Calderdalenas.org.uk. Published 2023. Accessed December 6, 2023. <https://calderdalenas.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/s4nd.jpg>

3. Business2community.com. Published 2023. Accessed December 6, 2023. <https://cdn.business2community.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/importance-of-hashtags-in-social-media-marketing-scaled-e1582558266865.jpg>

FUN FACT!



Do you know of the Pomodoro Technique?

The time management method was developed in the late 1980s by then-university student Francesco Cirillo. It has since gained popularity, proving to be an effective method in boosting productivity for those who struggle to stay focused and find themselves getting distracted every few minutes.

Try out the Pomodoro Technique today with just 5 simple steps!

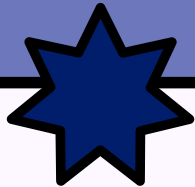
- 1) Pick a task
- 2) Set a 25-minute timer
- 3) Work on a task until the time is up
- 4) Take a 5 minute break
- 5) Every 4 pomodoro, take a longer 15-30 minute break.

The pomodoro technique - why it works & how to do it (no date) Todoist. Available at: <https://todoist.com/productivity-methods/pomodoro-technique> (Accessed: 29 November 2023).

How to manage time using the pomodoro technique (no date) Breeze Blog. Available at: <https://www.breeze.pm/blog/pomodoro-technique> (Accessed: 29 November 2023).

THE END!

We hope you
enjoyed this issue of
The Trailmix!



**Want to give feedback? Want to write an
article or stand a chance to be featured
in our next issue of The Trailmix?**

We want to hear you! If you have any
feedback, suggestions, ideas, articles,
or artworks, contacts us at
contact@catchwiselearning.com!

note: Ts and Cs apply



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