

FOCUS[®] ON THE FAMILY

BY DR BILL MAIER

BEHAVIOURAL 'RED FLAGS'

Kids don't always tell us when something is bothering them. That's why it's important to watch for those little red flags.

Any time a child's behaviour changes, it's a good sign that something different is going on in their life.

It could be a problem at school, like being picked on by a bully. Or they could be having nightmares, or other unsettling events.

One mother noticed that her 12-year-old girl suddenly developed separation anxiety. The behaviour seemed to come out of nowhere, so the mother knew instinctively that something was wrong.

I told her to have a heart-to-heart talk with her daughter, and to try and draw her out.

Children don't always share their problems, so it's important to let them know that it's safe to tell us when something — or someone — is bothering them.

Just talking through a struggle is often the best way to fix it.

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SPEAK GOOD ENGLISH

Get a grip on diction

Letter from Toh Chong Siong

I REFER to "When good English goes further" (Aug 25). If the structure of what should precede or follow the word "but" is the best example the VIA Group can give of bad English in Singapore, they should perhaps realign their focus.

There are more fundamental and serious policy and strategic issues that must be addressed.

To begin, the relevant authorities will have to decide if they really want Singaporeans to speak good English.

While the official pronouncement is that they do, the media appear to be, wittingly or unwittingly, doing otherwise.

A Japanese car-maker utilises an exaggerated form of Singlish in their marketing pitch on radio, reflecting the notion that bad English sells.

"Ah Beng's Singlish" is still touted as a unique lingua franca of Singapore with little realisation that people from other English speaking countries will not understand what is meant by "can you off the fan".

To make matters worse, Singlish is not even English. In a supermarket recently, I overheard a mother tell her

child: "Ah boy, I tol you dat it is very kwee you know. If you make noise some more, I sepak you one time".

The two sentences were composed from English, Malay and Hokkien words. Singlish is widespread, understandable to locals and easy to use as anything goes without care for rules, custom or diction.

Without proper guidance from the relevant authorities, any language requiring a modicum of rigidity will have a hard time to compete.

To be fair, there are many Singaporeans who do speak good English. Many of them are young.

Where they often fail is in diction. How often do we hear of "udders" (others), "wif" (with), "di-yar" (their) and "tree" (three) from those who otherwise speak good English? There appears to be insufficient emphasis on diction in schools today.

Despite the laudable efforts of voluntary groups to improve English among Singaporeans that must be encouraged, there is little hope for success unless all the parties involved, Government, media, schools and, not least, family members work together in a common effort. Government and the media must take the lead.

Recession: Different forms of help needed

Letter from Kwan Jin Yao

"BEWARE the false dawn" (Aug 22 - 23) provides an excellent summary as to why many Singaporeans have yet to feel the full impact of the ongoing recession despite contractions in our Gross Domestic Product and persisting unemployment.

Our supply-side policies of retraining and education has served us well over time; coupled with the Government's initiatives in stabilisation and enhancement of the labour force, we have managed to stave off the worst of the crisis.

However, when considering macroeconomic goals and plans, the man-on-the-ground is often left out, even though he is at the forefront of retrenchments and wage cuts. This, accompanied by the gradual rise in the cost of living, makes it more difficult for some households to make ends meet. Upgrading of skills and retraining is certainly a viable methodology; but simultaneously those affected might require different forms of assistance to help them tide over the worst.

Singapore is not a welfare state, but we should lend a helping hand to individuals and families who are still struggling despite trying their best.

The Resilience Package at the start of the year was a welcome relief, and I believe the Community Development Councils, non-government organisations and grassroots organisations could continue rendering help in every way possible.

Recovery per se is not sufficient; we must make sure that as a nation, all Singaporeans should ride out of this fiscal quagmire equally and cohesively.

Celebrate the romance and magic of cinema with your family and friends in a refreshing open-air setting.



Friday 28 AUG

The Band Wagon

Dir: Vincente Minnelli / 1953 / USA / 109 min / 35mm / PG

The Band Wagon is a movie classic featuring many quintessential MGM numbers such as *Dancing in the Dark* and *That's Entertainment*. Fred Astaire plays Tony Hunter, a fading film star who wants to return to his former glory on the Broadway stage. His friends (Nanette Fabray and Oscar Levant) hook him up with Broadway's hottest director (Jack Buchanan), and later finds himself at odds with his prima ballerina leading lady (Cyd Charisse).

Saturday 29 AUG

An American In Paris

Dir: Vincente Minnelli / 1951 / USA / 107 min / 35mm / PG

An American soldier (Gene Kelly) stays on in Paris after the war to become a painter. He gets caught between the patronage of a rich American woman (Nina Foch), and his love for a French gamine (Leslie Caron) engaged to an older man... But the plot is mostly an excuse for director Vincente Minnelli to pool his extraordinary talent with those of Kelly's and the artists behind the screenplay, art direction, cinematography, and score, to create a rapturous musical not quite like anything else in cinema.

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