

# 21ST CENTURY SMARTS

BOOK SMARTS ARE NO LONGER GOOD ENOUGH. HO YUN KUAN FINDS FIVE YOUR CHILD SHOULD HAVE.



## (BODY) SMART

**A HEALTHY CHILD** with functioning limbs can naturally run, jump and throw a ball, right? Wrong. "Contrary to popular belief, these motor skills have to be taught," says Dr Lenny Wan, a director at Sportskids, which runs multi-sports programmes for kids aged two-and-a-half to six.

"Sports teaches kids body and spatial awareness and object control," he explains. But its benefits go beyond the physical. "It engages them on three levels: emotionally, when it arouses curiosity; behaviourally, when they focus their efforts on it; and cognitively, when they analyse their mistakes and learn to do it better. Overcoming physical challenges also drives motivation and gives a sense of satisfaction."

To get your kid away from the computer and into the park, Dr Wan thinks the best way is to do what you preach. A parent who goes jogging, cycling or participates in sports regularly will inspire Junior to do the same. Pick a sport or game that is fun for him and don't stress him while he's trying to master it.

Or sign him up for a structured sports programme, where he gets to play with other kids. He'll also learn social skills and to follow instructions, while honing his motor skills and spatial awareness.

Getting started is probably the most difficult part. But once your child gets active, it's a lifestyle choice that will follow him into adulthood.

## (STREET) SMART

**WHEN ADAM KHOO WAS 14**, he started taking on part-time jobs. He was a DJ, a door-to-door salesman for corporate stationery, an audio technician, a magician and a tuition teacher.

"My dad gave me only the bare essentials, like money for school books and school fees. Those part-time jobs taught me more than school. I learnt to deal with people and to take rejection," says the entrepreneur, who made his first million at age 26.

Now 37, Adam believes that independence and confidence are the most important traits for success in life. The father of two is giving his daughters – Kelly, seven, and Samantha, five – an early schooling in those traits. His first step was to get both girls to feed themselves at the age of two.

"Let your kids do things on their own, because the more you help them, the more they will become dependent and not confident in their abilities," he explains.

"They took two hours to finish the food and made a big mess every time," chuckles Adam. "We have two maids, and my mother-in-law really wanted to help, but my wife and I were very firm about letting the kids do it themselves."

By three years old, his daughters were setting the table every day, and taking plates to the sink after dinner. At four, they were expected to resolve arguments on their own instead of running to their parents with complaints.