

Raising children for?

With the many political situations and financial crisis wind still blowing, perhaps it is a good time to ask some questions like:

- What are we raising our children for?
- How can we build resilience in our kids so that should they encounter the storms of life, they can manage in peace?
- How do we inculcate the right values so that they would not personally become victims or worse, the cause?

We grow up with the notion that we establish a career, get married, have kids then retire and enjoy life. (How many actually achieve that, given that humans are always greedy is another question! There is actually a Chinese proverb that says build your family and then your career!) Yet the 'purpose' question of why we are doing what we are doing (whether work or raising kids) eludes us!

Let us suggest that the purpose of raising our children is simply for the **enjoyment of the community!** Not for our own enjoyment, not for our retirement, not even for feeding us in our old age! The world has bombarded us with the idea of "we deserve enjoyment" and "we work hard, so do indulge for ourselves". This idea of raising kids for others' enjoyment will probably come as a surprise! Yet, with this in mind, we will keep in view the respect for others because ultimately, when we interact with people, if our kids are considerate, polite and respectful, then they will be delightful and enjoyable!

Also with that in mind, we would not get caught up in the paper chase or the retirement chase! Whether rich or poor, crisis or not, we would then live a purposeful life of relating well with others. Nor would we go into unnecessary debt by living within or below our means. We would do our utmost and always be hopeful for the best and yet accept what comes along. Processes are treasured more than products or outcomes. We would relate more than we retaliate, respond rather than react.

Puts lots of things in perspective, doesn't it? It is end of 2008, a good time to recall thankful events in 2008. Let us look at our children in different age groups.

Babies and toddlers. They can be energy drainers but as we slow down at the end of the year, let's appreciate how tender and fragile they are. As parents how our hearts

melt when they giggle or clinch their little fingers on ours. Never mind if we had to get up 3 times at night or chase the little rascal all over at the shopping centre or the embarrassment of having to page for a lost 4 year old at the shopping centre!

School age kids. Stress level increases! Regardless of how they did academically, school holiday is a good time to 'make amends' (not materially though). Volunteer together with the Salvation Army, take a 3-hour tree-top walk at MacRitchie, watch a movie on weekdays or at home together (cheaper) then go for ice-cream. Do something that we have not done for a long time. Build family bonding and create a family identity. Something simple yet meaningful! Definitely a time to be thankful that they are growing with us! These activities actually lay the foundation of having your kids still wanting to go out with us when they are in their teens because dad and mom are not all about school work and no play!

Teens. Depending on our relationship, let's bring it to the next level. If it is a tense relationship, let's build a bridge into their lives, they are probably just dying to have someone listen to them without comments (or judgement). Perhaps buy our teens a one-to-one meal, apologizing if necessary for not listening to them and giving them an opportunity to respond while we go mute! Go bowling, the arcade (oops) together or a mid-night movie and then supper together – doing something they do not expect because we have been saying 'No' to! (eh, within limits of course). For our teens, if they are in some ways 'distant', we can be thankful that they want very much to be part of a unique family and thus the apparent 'rebellion'.

If a holiday is within our means, even nearby and for a few nights, just being together without distractions does wonders for relating (we may hear some kicking a fuss in the beginning but when they encounter the fun moments, it will remain in memory!).