Lessons from our children

In the midst of our rushing around during this Chinese New Year, we are once again reminded of an experience with Samantha when she was about 4 or 5 years old. We were rushing to meet a friend from out of town for lunch. As usual, dad likes to wait till the last drop of petrol is used up to prove that he is an efficient user of the vehicle (though the consumption never fluctuated beyond a certain range anyway!). Lo and behold, we ran out of gas at 12 noon on the way to the lunch appointment! Thankfully there was a petrol station about 5 minutes walk away and basically dad had to walk over to buy and 'thicken his skin' to ask for a container! He bought enough petrol back to move on. When he was returning to the car, Samantha was clapping her hands, singing "This is the day, this is the day that the Lord has made, we will rejoice and be glad in it!" with the pregnant mother wiping sweat off from both her own forehead and the daughter's. Dad cannot help but smiled (though mum did not seem amused at that time). We made it to the appointment a little late but had a good time. As we recall, we cannot help but ask ourselves: perhaps by being childlike we can be more patient? We can look at things a little less 'seriously'? (For your information, daddy's habit of wanting to use every drop before filling up did not change much – male's occupational hazard!)

Then there was little Josiah at the dinner table sitting on a high-chair pushing his legs against the table. Daddy was right beside him and in a split second, he pushed just a wee bit too hard and daddy's eyes were off him for just a while and down he went! He ended up with a big lump behind his head, wailing loudly of course. The mistakes both children and parents make and suffering the consequences – all part of life. Guess it is good to use them to teach our children about cause and effect. Dad was sort of feeling guilty as Josiah was still young and it was under his care that something happened. In parenting it is this way, while we can be as careful as we want, things may still not go our way, accidents do happen, children do still misbehave and disobey. It is difficult to accept some of the consequences as they are very hard to take but what wonderful lessons to learn from these little events. It is probably better to learn the lessons early and under parents' watchful eyes. Pain is sometimes necessary for learning, to avoid bigger pains. No shortcut there.

Next come Elliot. Daddy was trying to teach Elliot how to cycle and lost his patience more than once. Eventually Elliot gave up learning altogether and for many years we did not cycle as he has out grown the child seat. One day however, when he was in his early teens, he decided to learn himself, refusing to let anyone near him of course. Well, his determination paid off and in an hour or two, he basically picked it up all by himself. The span of time it took to cool off and restart is something that cannot be engineered. The attempt to teach initially probably did some good as a foundation, though the need for patience again enters the picture – of teaching, of waiting for teaching moments.

Now back to dad and mom. We remembered that we had a huge row and daddy went out, slammed the door and did not return till about mid-night. However, we could not remember what we argued about! How petty! Losing patience and love with one another that way. The next day when things cooled, we apologized to our children and asked how they felt – only Samantha was old enough to respond and she was basically worried about her lunch – that nobody would cooked for her! So much for appreciation and parenting!

When Samantha was little, as diligent parents we brought her to a pediatrician when she was sick, thinking that parents should give the best. When Josiah was little, he just went to the GP for cost and distance reason. For Elliot, well, we self-medicate with unexpired left overs. Today, look at Elliot – the tallest and biggest in size of all three! Parents' wisdom then may not be the wisest huh?!

There are many other lessons we are sure, just could not recollect at this point. What are yours? Would be interesting to ask your kids if they are old enough or tell them about these things. Mistakes can be used for family bonding too. We may make similar mistakes but the circumstances we are sure are unique to your family.