

## Old folks in our children's lives

We have been involved in our elderly care business for a year now and we cannot help thinking – the young and youths are really well taken care of. The older ones seem to be somewhat neglected. How are we who are observing, feel? How are we educating our young about the old, about honouring parents?

We may be asking, what has this to do with parenting? Well, honouring parents is something we should teach. How we treat our aged parents or elderly ones would be what our children see and perhaps how we will be treated. If there aren't any old folks in our lives, well, then our children would not have a role model – their behaviours and values could then go either way (not teaching also sends messages and becomes teaching of some sort, remember?). If our parents are around, how often do we visit them? Do we visit out of convenience? Interesting thought isn't it? A question we are also asking ourselves. Our children may be the ones pushing our wheel chairs, whether that's a nice idea or not is up to our interpretation!

More related questions arise:

- If we are healthy, would our children want us to take care of their children? What was our example to them? Do we want to help take care for them?
- Would they want to have children at all?
- Would they want to have children early if possible?
- In the midst of this financial crisis, it forces us to also question the general thinking of: settle career first then settle the family, is that right? Will anyone actually be fully settled?
- If we are not as healthy in old age, would our children want to care of us? Would we want that?

OK, it shows our age but those are questions we will think about some day. The thought that, oh, each generation has its own thinking, let it be or 'we should be as independent as possible so as not to trouble them' is not comfortable for us. To us, this is such an independent thinking and spirit that it actually saddens us. Do we really need family or community then? While we should try to be self-dependent

and provide for the next generation, there should still be some form of inter-dependency. If need arises for inter-dependency, would that not be an opportunity to live community living? How do we build or demonstrate this value? A family sharing joys and sorrows – isn't it something worthwhile cultivating?

Therefore, having old folks around is a good thing. They may not be the easiest people to get along with and we may have to take turns (that means if possible should have at least 2 kids) or get closer friends and relatives to help.

Usually, when it comes to taking care of old folks, we face the following:

- work is just too busy
- too many things in the kids life to handle
- insufficient time – the time demand of the old folks is too much or too sudden (like toddlers and babies...)
- they are so inconvenient and troublesome (another reason to start a family younger if possible, then kids and old folks don't demand attention at the same time!)

Yes, many questions remain. Some of the solutions to these questions mean inconveniencing ourselves, our kids and our lives. If we have to adjust, it is definitely not simple. Yet, did our parents not do the same in some ways?

We feel that we need to pause for a while ourselves, take a look at the older ones around us, especially our parents – our children's grandparents and deliberately see if there are opportunities to connect 3 generations, for learning, for interacting. For letting our children see how their parents care for their grandparents. Perhaps also letting our children appreciate the emptiness of busyness -- to realize that the busyness will stop one day, and likely very suddenly. Are we psychologically prepared then?