

From Mummy's Heart ...

(Time for Suan Ai to share from her heart!)

Someone asked me a question 2 years ago at church camp, "How did you get your teenagers to wear exactly the same 'family' T-shirts with the two of you every day?" (Actually it was their idea, not ours) Recently someone else asked "How do you make you children follow you wherever you go even as teenagers?" My answers to both questions are the same, "I don't really know". ☺

However, reflecting on these, my first thought was "maybe it is partly the result of discontinuing my helper when I became a home maker". ☺ Of course that cannot be the only reason. Having thought through again, I realized that many factors in their growing up years shaped our family. So, here goes mummy ...

While the children were young, though we had a helper (one and only one), after some struggles, Jeremy and myself made a decision: she is not a 24-hour helper. So once we were home from work, it was her turn to rest from baby-sitting and we took over all the child-caring: feeding, diaper-changing, night duties - no matter how tired or how early we have to get up in the morning before work. The second major decision was on outing. When we went out, the helper stayed at home - regardless of dinner or beach outing or church services. In other words, we will be the primary caregiver for my children as much as we can even with a helper around.

By the time Elliot arrived, the decision to quit my job was a big one. Financially that would mean at least a 40% cut and also meant no more helper. With that however, mummy was able to rally behind daddy - our children learnt that if mummy had to go out with Daddy, be it church service, cell group, ministry, leadership training, conducting parenting classes or even giving talks, they came along (since there was no helper at home, sometimes not economical to go to-and-fro). And the only thing we brought along would be either story books or colouring books or well, assessment books ☺. No toys, no Nintendo (you can guess how old we are

now) or any hand-held devices. They learnt in their early years for example that the entire family waited upon Daddy if they followed Daddy on trips – especially weekend.

They also learnt to eat food prepared from the thermo pot. If any appointments crossed a meal, mummy will prepare food and put inside the thermo pot and feed them while waiting for Daddy. I remembered bringing Samantha to juvenile court when we were involved in the BPC ministry (Beyond Parental Control) and I was amazed that Samantha sat through the 2-hour session doing her own colouring. I was pretty impressed with her but also was worried that she may be too inactive (you know, we always hear that children need to be creative and lively). However, the concern was of course unfounded. She turned out to be quite a cheeky, talkative and lively lady now.

There were many occasions that we moved as one. When Samantha had her swimming lessons or competitions, the 2 younger brothers came along. During many competitions at the Toa Payoh swimming pool, Josiah will be doing his home work and assessments while Elliot waited patiently for the MILO truck for free milo (oh yes, milo truck came to provide free milo whenever there is national school swimming competition, heard that now they get free yoghurt. Time has changed ☺). It went on for many years until Elliot grew up and then started his share of homework and assessments!

When grandma was hospitalized years ago (before SARS, so there were no restriction on number of visitors), I brought all 3 of them to the hospital with food and homework and spent many "whole" days with grandma. I believed the kids learnt from this experience that the hospital is not a scary place, and also that the elderly needed lots of our attention. We do also bring them for wakes especially relatives and close friends' parents. I remembered one day Samantha came home from a wake and cried. I asked her why and her answer "Next time when you die, where do I find so many people to attend your wake?" ☺

To be continued ...