

Dear Team

A single father of 4 had his children lined up behind him as he stretched out his hands playing the “mother-hen” protecting “her chicks” from the eagle. Dad was initially a little inhibited but as he got the hang of this age-old children’s game, he was combatively determined that he did not lose any of his “chicks.” When all the squealing and laughter had died down, two of his children aged 8 and 6 years old reflected, ‘My father protects us’ and ‘My father is our Superhero’ respectively. Thus, began a 3 day stay at our Family Learning Centre for this family of 5 with the goal of improving cooperation within the family. Dad was exhausted being both breadwinner and homemaker and the stay was a timely break for the entire family during the school holidays this week.

“What exactly is a super-hero who protects?” This was the thought guiding different activities that helped the children to better appreciate the roles their father played. Often, it does not take much for children to appreciate the struggles of adults and so when we got the family in a circle and asked them to share their wish for their family, the 13 year old daughter said that it was for all the siblings to tackle the household chores cooperatively. Her siblings immediately nodded and that pleased dad immensely.

We are guided by the principle that “social problems are best resolved within the community and are opportunities for community building.” As such, we would like to see the work we do executed in the spirit of people cooperating with one another rather than people serving beneficiaries. Hence, we were very grateful for the manner in which 3 fellow professionals from Life Community Services joined us in accompanying this family. When we found out the family was also known to them, we invited them to join us and knew that it was the right decision when one of them told us ‘that sitting on the beach sharing a happy moment with a troubled family was social work.’

We were also very grateful for the effort of a member who took time off from work to meet this father. She did not know this father but as the father was open to listening to someone who has had serious challenges with her children, she came by to share her story. She offered a mother’s perspective of raising a teenage girl and shared several useful parenting tips. One suggestion that the father will consider was to create a cozy meeting corner outside his flat. This mother gave her daughter permission to entertain friends at the cozy corner as a reward for doing something right. It was an affordable incentive for good behaviour which her daughter appreciated and she got to know her daughter’s friends better.

The 3 days passed quickly for the family and the highlight for the father was a surprise visit from 3 of his sisters who joined the family for dinner. They came by

to meet the children and let their brother know that they thought well of him as a father. When dinner was about to begin, the oldest sister offered a prayer in thanksgiving and asked God to take care of their nieces and nephew. As ice cream was served, the younger children presented their father with a card, which listed his strengths. As they handed over the card, they said 'Thank you Bapak for giving us water and food.'

When we seek to resolve social problems in the community, we will most likely find solutions within the community.

Enjoy your weekend.

Gerard

*When we honestly ask ourselves which person in our lives means the most to us, we often find that it is those who, instead of giving advice, solutions, or cures, have chosen rather to share our pain and touch our wounds with a warm and tender hand. - Henri Nouwen*

Gerard Ee