

Dear Team

A familiar face on the MRT came up to a colleague to say hello. With her was her 5 year old child who greeted us politely upon her mother's instructions. While we could not recognise the 5 year old, mother was not someone we would have forgotten.

5 years ago, she and her husband expressed their disappointment with us in no uncertain terms when their new born child was not allowed to leave the hospital with them. At that time, mother was 33 years old and since 18, she had spent a significant part of her life in and out of various institutions. It was the fourth time she was delivering a child and as all 3 previous children were placed in foster care, she was determined that this child remained with her. Mother believed that her children were placed in foster care because they were born out of wedlock but this time round, she was married. Actually, the children were in foster care because she was diagnosed to have a "borderline intellect conduct disorder." Anyway, eventually we were able to support the family in putting together a care plan that made it safe enough for the child to return to their care.

On the train it was lovely to see mother and child engaged in lively conversation. To listen better to her daughter's queries, mother got down to her daughter's eye level. She then answered the questions thoughtfully. As a child, mother had learning difficulties and was deemed someone with special needs but this has not stopped her from being a very caring parent.

Like any proud parent, she told us that her daughter speaks well and is a curious learner. Sometimes, she learns new things from her daughter when they talked about school. She then showed us the family's annual passes into Sentosa and Legoland. She explained that her husband had to work long hours and so they saved for these passes to encourage themselves to spend quality time as a family whenever time permitted.

While, it was a positive encounter on the train, we are sure that family life cannot be all rosy and this family would have had their fair share of tribulations. Nonetheless, it was really encouraging to see how far they have come. When we were supporting them 5 years ago, it was impossible for us or anyone to guarantee that their child would be fine under their care. We could only say that there is no obvious adverse risk for the child if she is returned to her family. Due diligence on our part was facilitating adequate and appropriate support for the short and medium term. Yet, we offered our best support to help the child return home simply because we are guided by the principle that the family is the fundamental group in society and the natural environment for the growth of its members; particularly children.

In our work, we cannot guarantee that things will turn out right, we can only do what's right.

Enjoy your weekend.

Gerard

*Who controls the past controls the future. Who controls the present controls the past. - George Orwell*

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