

## **Part 2**

### **Tips to parenting - Reflections from a father of 6**

#### **Meeting Social Needs**

We also like to share with them the value of community and a sense of interconnectedness. So once or twice a year, we allow them to invite a few of their friends to what we call Friendship Day. Sometimes, cousins, older relatives, god-families, family friends and neighbors are also invited. This is a good community-building and bonding time for the kids as we don't believe in inviting friends over to celebrate birthdays. We strongly feel that birthdays should be spent with family.

So, on Friendship Day, the kids get to invite up to 5 friends of their choice, and we organise indoor and outdoor games (with no television or computer games allowed!) On one occasion a few years back, we had a record 22 kids of various ages and races over at our house! To think that the first Friendship Day started with each child inviting over just one friend.

The ability to impart values is a very essential part of our parenting repertoire. We've learnt to be firm, yet kind and understanding, so that the kids will hopefully grow up disciplined, responsible and resilient. We also believe that family prayer goes a long way in uniting our family amidst life's daily struggles.

My wife and I would not have been able to raise six children without the generous love and support of our extended family. We've been blessed in many ways. My mum-in-law (who stays with us) and my parents have always been on hand to help us out, whenever my wife and I have our own dates. My mum-in-law is the anchor of stability in our home when we are at work, and my parents can always be counted on to drop by and lend a hand when needed. The children have benefited greatly from the love of both sets of grandparents, sharing many happy and precious memories over the years through their grandparents' keen involvement in their lives. Not having any of these family members around would be like missing a piece of a jigsaw – the picture would not be complete without them.

To encourage greater bonding with their grandparents, we have put a system in place where the children are rostered to talk, listen and also give a tender touch to them. This is necessary as our children tend to take their grandparents for granted. They are expected to call my parents and also talk to my mum-in-law, and take turns to ask them about their day too. However, although this system has been put in place for some time already, we still have to occasionally remind them of their roles as 'TLC-givers', i.e. givers of 'tender-loving-care'.

#### **Meeting Financial Needs**

During our children's lower primary school years, they were given meal boxes from home for their recess, and a small allowance on days when they needed to stay back after school for additional lessons. As the children have now been given pocket money since their upper primary years in school, my wife and I make it a point to guide them on their usage of finances.

Much as we did not want to start equipping our children with hand-phones at an early age, we could not avoid it, and we therefore had to establish ground rules for hand-phone usage. For example, when the first kid (at the end of Primary Six) started asking for a hand-phone, we got him a second-hand model. We started off with a top-up card plan. Subsequently, we enrolled him on a regular student-plan as it seemed more economical, given that SMS was the primary mode of communication among the teens. Our children know that if they want a hand-phone, they have to co-pay the bill, as we only subsidize ten dollars and they have to make up the balance by optimizing their allowance. The allowance given to them is based on what is agreed to be their daily needs in school and after school.

### **Conclusion**

Each of my kids is unique and precious. While some people might consider six to be a handful and perhaps an expensive long-term proposition, I would say that each child contributes to the multiplier effect of the family's capacity for love, learning and growth. Indeed, this invaluable outcome far outweighs the expenses incurred. Each child has enriched our lives tremendously and we continue to learn and grow from this parenting journey. My wife and I certainly feel greatly blessed and privileged to be the chosen stewards of these precious ones