

*A Message from the Two of Us*

Struggling at fixing a topic among the several options in mind for my Message to Shatin Tsung Tsiners, I did not notice my 12-year-old preteen son studying me while waiting for the elevator at our car park lobby. I was in deep thought until I heard him say, "Mama, what's bothering you?" I casually explained the mission to him. Unexpectedly, he announced, "Well Mama, let me share my experience with them, from the perspective of a student. Let me do it for you."

I instantly wanted to choke on his innocent but heroic bravery, and kindness. Secretly I thought within, "Son, do you really know what you are offering?" Yet, how could I refuse the loving rescue from my beloved son, who had suddenly evolved from a protected species into a confident and dynamic superhero, saving his first important woman in life? How could I resist this irresistible temptation? Impossible!

Blinking at this almost full-grown promising protector, I managed to maintain my composure. "Are you sure? Mommy is running out of time and has no time and patience if you fool around." The reply came in positive certainty and definite reassurance. "No worries. I'll get it done this afternoon." That afternoon, once he reached home, he glued himself onto the chair in front of the computer working on his maiden message to Shatin Tsung Tsiners, the siblings from his parents' work family.

Dear Shatin Tsung-Tsiners ☺,

To start with, I hope you guys have been having a splendid 2012 so far! I hope you are reinvigorated from the refreshing Christmas holiday to continue the academic year.

I do believe that many of you find secondary school life a lot more back-breaking and onerous than ever. There, constant pressure from parents, teachers, and mostly, from yourselves, isn't there? You also have to attend sports and musical team practices and competitions. And for the higher forms, you even have to face the university applications. Amid all the work you have to do, you still need to focus on your studies and homework. You feel worn out, like a candle whose wax burnt out and tiny flame be extinguished by the smallest breeze. You feel exhausted, weary, and you really want to just swear and demolish everything in your room. Everyone must have experienced that kind of melancholy, hapless feeling. If you haven't, there are only two possibilities: you flunked the whole semester by staring at Facebook, or you are a quizzical genius smarter than Albert Einstein.

As a freshman at secondary school, I feel the same way. Believe me, I have cried quite a few times. We all feel that we have a dagger to our necks, making it difficult to reach fresh air. You feel like you don't know how to cope with the thousands of problems swirling around you like a hurricane.

Although I have only begun my secondary school life for a term, I have found some ways to relieve myself from the intense pressure that I have been facing. The first effective way found is meditation. I am not necessarily telling you to get an incense stick, burn it, and cross your legs and start chanting mantras like monks. My definition of meditation is to sit in your room alone, turn out the lights and start taking deep breaths. Turning on the fan increases the silent but breezy effect intended for meditation. It makes you feel at peace. Do not be embarrassed to cry because it lets your emotions and problems flow out like a river, and it makes you feel much better afterwards. It does not make your dilemmas suddenly disappear; it just clears your mind and gives you enough clarity to think of a solution to your problems.

Do not be afraid to consult your family and friends. I would recommend explaining your worries to your friends if you are a rather independent person. Your true friends would not ignore or smirk at you if you told them your worries. Do not feel discomforted to do so. It is a great way to relieve your stress. Your friends will also feel the same way because most of us have the same feeling. Your family will be more than happy to listen to your woes and you can bet on your life they will give helpful advice.

Lastly, try to finish your schoolwork as soon as possible. When you look at the mountain of homework that you have, you may feel, "I'm too cool to handle this" and start going on Facebook to chat with your friends for two hours. Then you get a zero for your homework at your continuous assessments. The teacher tells you off and your parents start screaming. You get annoyed by the fact that your parents seem to be bossing you around and you shut the door and repay the hard work they had done for you in the past by not studying and failing all the exams. It's a little exaggerated, but the reality is not far from the truth. You will find a great sense of success and accomplishment if you do your homework as soon as possible. It gives you extra energy and confidence and you will find that most obstacles are really simple tasks that you can crush in a second.

"If life gives you a hundred reasons to cry, show life that you have a thousand reasons to smile." Show life who the boss is and take control of it. I bet your secondary school life will be just as fruitful and enjoyable as my recent months at my school. Good luck!

Alvin Cheung ☺

### **Epilogue**

I have established a family tradition on New Year Eve since my three kids were as small as kindergarteners. We would sit down together to count our blessings over the year. First sitting in a quiet corner privately, we would put down whatever blessing we could recollect from our memory on paper. Then we would gather together in a circle reading out our list of blessings one by one, from the youngest to the oldest. Then, we would either take turns to say a prayer of thanks or have one of us lead the family in prayer.

It was quite difficult at first, especially when my son was involved. He could make us all laugh or get told off, even while we were saying our prayer. At first, I had to help him figure out what to count, not one two three. He mouthed his thought-to-be blessings, (e.g. Chelsea winning United Manchester) I wrote them out for him. As my kids mature more, they understand deeper and better about the tradition and carry it out more sincerely and seriously year after year. Sometimes, now, it is the kids who remind me of some forgotten blessing that God has mercifully showered on us. Now, it's my once bumpy troublesome little son who usually volunteers to lead us in a prayer of thanks.

This year, on the last evening of 2011, both my son and I read out this same account: how his first setback in life right at the start of his secondary schooling had turned out to be another beautiful blessing for him after months of my aching worries, pretense of calmness, hidden tears, vocal and silent support and prayers twined in his tearful sobbing, crying despair, angry frustration and painful struggles.

His rough path finished and the fearful hurricane left; most important of all, his blessings were recognized and counted. My Alvin has moved on to a new phase of life and picked up speed in his growth to maturity. I am sure he will, like you and I, each one of us, step onto new rocky paths, encounter more dreadful cyclones and gales, and handle the ups and downs in life. I am also sure, with trust in God, my son, and us, will not only see the silver lining in every cloud, but also weather the storm and find God's rainbow blessing behind each difficult moment. May God bless you all!

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