



'Dad's my friend and mentor'

Student pays tribute (right) to father who quit \$130,000-a-year job to care for kids after mum died

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THESSE touching words were penned by Secondary 3 student Wu Zhuo Yi.

It was a tribute to his father, Mr Kelvin Goh, 50.

His mother, Mrs Selina Goh, was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease when he was only 2 years old.

She died when he was 8, after six years of battling the disease.

When she was ill, Mr Goh, then an information technology manager at a multinational, had to juggle looking after her, his two children, as well as the housework.

After she died, Mr Goh gave up his more than \$130,000-a-year job to support Zhuo Yi during his important PSLE year.

Today, the 15-year-old is a class monitor in Raffles Institution and is also in the gifted education and integrated programmes (IP). (The IP allows students to skip the O levels and aim for the A levels).

NO PRESSURE FROM DAD

He says it is all thanks to his dad, who never pushed or pressured him. And he said it openly in an essay writing competition recently. (See report on facing page.)

When his mother died, aged 42, her funeral was held just before Zhuo Yi started Primary 2.

But his dad was there to comfort him.

"Every night without fail, my father would ask me how my day was, give me a hug and encourage me to move on," he said.

But the boy could see that his father was troubled himself.

"Sometimes, I would peek from my bedroom and see him being frustrated over his work and little things," said Zhuo Yi. "But he never behaved this way when I was around."

Zhuo Yi said his father always respected his opinion.

For instance, when he was in Primary 3 and was selected to join the gifted education programme, Mr Goh gave his son advice — but left the decision to him.

Said Zhuo Yi: "My father knew it

"Seeing my mother sprawled on the sofa, trembling uncontrollably... shook me.

"During this period of confusion and anxiety, my father had to take care of my mother along with my sister and me.

"With all these troubles and his career to juggle with, my dad nevertheless rose above the challenge and brought himself and his children through this dark period."



was good for me, but never pressed me to do it."

Zhuo Yi joined the programme. But towards the end of Primary 5, when he found the going tough, dad came to the rescue again.

Said Mr Goh: "He was having problems with his school projects, and nearly wanted to quit the programme. I had to make a decision then between my job and my son."

"Many people told me that I shouldn't quit my job.

"But I knew if I didn't help Zhuo Yi when he was young, and made sure he gained the confidence he needed, it would be more difficult later."

So Mr Goh, then 47, quit his job to stay at home to support his son. The family survived on his savings.

He also had the maid leave to cut costs, and did the housework himself. Said a grateful Zhuo Yi: "Dad was supporting me 'full-time'.

"Knowing that I could turn to him anytime at home, made me feel more secure."

Zhuo Yi wrote in his tribute: "My dad is more like a friend or mentor."

Of course, the two have the usual father-teenage son tension.

Zhuo Yi wrote: "As I approach my pubescent years... I still think that he's treating me like a child."

Reader's Digest may publish winning essays of family week contest

SECONDARY school students were invited to write about their relationship with their parents in celebration of the National Family Week (May 29-Jun 6).

Wu Zhuo Yi's essay was one of the entries.

Winners' stories could appear in "My Story", a new section of Reader's Digest English

Asia Edition.

The competition, which was supported by the Ministry of Community Development and Sports, was organised by Reader's Digest and Pilot Pen.

It closed at the end of June.

Winners will be selected at the end of this month.

LEAN ON ME: Mr Goh (on facing page, with son Zhuo Yi in white) and his family survived on his savings after he quit his job.

Picture/
DOMINIC YING



Dad cries over son's appreciation

MR Goh cried when he found out about his son's tribute in the essay.

"My son's the quiet, introspective type, so I don't always know how he's feeling.

"It's a great relief that he appreciates and understands what I've done."

Mr Goh said that during the last two years of her life, his wife also suffered from hallucinations, and sometimes, her strange behaviour would frighten the children.

FRUSTRATED

"I felt very stressed and frustrated as I was still holding on to my expectations of her as a wife," said Mr Goh.

"Only after I had changed my mindset — viewing her as my patient, and myself as her doctor — that I developed more patience to take care of her."

Mr Goh took a diploma in counselling psychology, so that he could understand his children better. **"I have to give my children more to compensate for them not having a mother around."**

Today, he is a volunteer counsellor for prison inmates and juvenile delinquents, and is studying for his master's in psychology. He is also looking for part-time work through helplines.