

Ms Delia Ng used to be sceptical about love, marriage and family. But she has reconciled with her family members and now encourages young people to build family bonds. She is a happily married mother of a one-year-old girl.
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GenerationGrit

Once rebellious, she now fights for family bonds

After a difficult childhood, which saw her relationship with family members strained, Delia Ng is now working to help youth build strong family bonds. This is her story in the Generation Grit series on inspiring millennials.

Theresa Tan
Senior Social Affairs
Correspondent

Growing up, Delia Ng did not believe in marriage and families, but the 29-year-old is now spending her days helping young people build stronger bonds with their kin. Her childhood was fraught with anger, bitterness and tension.

Ms Ng said she was just a baby when her father left her mother after an extra-marital affair.

For over 10 years, Ms Ng was estranged from him and her relationship with her mother also became strained.

At one point, she did not have any contact with her two older brothers for about four to five years.

But things improved after she

learned to forgive her family members, said Ms Ng, who is married to a 29-year-old civil servant.

"While we have no control over our past, we can control our attitude towards it. I have chosen to forgive, and to release my hurt," said Ms Ng, now the mother of a one-year-old girl.

"So I will encourage young people not to dwell on the negatives but to see the good in their families."

In the beginning, it was not easy for her to let go.

After her engineer father left the family, her mother worked two jobs to raise the three children. She ran a drink stall in a school canteen in the morning and worked as a childcare assistant in the afternoon.

When Ms Ng was five years old, her two brothers ran away to live with their father.

Her brother Aaron Ng, 39, said he ran away because he not only had to study, but also had to do household chores and take care of his sister.

"Mum would beat us over very small things," he said. "At that time, my brother and I just wanted to run away from her."

Ms Ng said she met her father for the first time when she was seven years old.

It was a brief meeting and she recalled being upset to learn that her father had remarried. He took his new wife to the meeting.

"For many years, I couldn't bring myself to call him dad. I felt we had no relationship and no connection," she said.

"I grew up feeling rejected, abandoned and angry with my family. I also felt very lonely as I felt no one would understand what I was going through."

She completed her primary and secondary education at Paya Lebar Methodist Girls' School.

In primary school, she shoplifted and stole money from her mother and others.

"I was always comparing myself to others. I stole because I did not

want to appear to be losing out," she said. "I felt insecure."

She was never caught for shoplifting but her teachers found out about the thefts and tried to give her guidance.

However, she continued to steal until her teenage years when she became a Christian.

At home, she fought with her mother over the smallest matters.

Her relationship with her family members was trying, until she decided to forgive them when she was 15 years old.

She said her faith played a big part in her decision to forgive, sharing a quote by Christian author Lewis B. Smedes: "To forgive is to set a prisoner free and discover that the prisoner was you."

She added: "All this rage and bitterness were weighing me down. So I chose to forgive and rebuild my relationship with my family members."

"This has freed me and given me a new lease of life to enjoy family life today."

After her decision to forgive, she met her father, who apologised for what happened and asked for a chance to be a father to her.

GENERATION GRIT

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She also started having heart-to-heart talks with her mother and that strengthened their bond over time.

Ms Ng said she had to constantly assure her mother – who was afraid of losing her – that she would always love and care for her, even after re-establishing contact with her father.

Ms Ng said she was fortunate to have positive role models in her life to guide her.

They included her auntie, her mother's church friends and her own mentors in church.

For example, as a child, she would have meals at the homes of two of her mother's friends when her mum was at work or attending night classes.

Having gone through a troubled past, Ms Ng wanted to support young people who need a listening ear or a helping hand.

She scored 3 As and 2 Bs for her A levels and enrolled in the Singapore Management University to study psychology on an SMU bursary. It paid tuition fees for her degree.

After graduation, she worked as a child protection officer at the Ministry of Social and Family Development for almost three years.

In that role, she had to oversee care arrangements for abused or neglected children to ensure they are safe and help them reintegrate into their families if possible.

She is currently working at Focus on the Family Singapore, where she is leading its FamChamps programme that helps young people build stronger ties with their families.

FamChamps stands for Family Champions. By sheer coincidence, her brother also joined the same charity and they worked on the same team for about three years.

Mr Aaron Ng, who is married with no children, said he and his sister have grown closer by working together. "It's like catching up on all those lost years," he said.

Mr Ng, who heads the charity's communications team, described his sister as a strong woman who does not allow challenges to overwhelm her.

Like Ms Ng, he has also reconciled with his mother.

Ms Ng describes her mother as her confidante now. She also meets her father every month or so.

Ms Ng, who was once sceptical of marriage because of her parents' divorce, has been happily married for five years.

"If you had asked me when I was 10 years old if I believed in family, I would have said 'no'. But now, I tell young people, 'your family is worth fighting for,'" she said.

"Broken families are prevalent in our society today. It does not have to be a family which has been torn apart by a divorce, it could simply be estranged relationships between family members," she said.

"Young people all know that family is important but they don't see people walking the talk. If you want a strong family unit, you have to keep working at it."

theresat@sph.com.sg

Reconnecting with her family



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