

DON'T GIVE UP!

Was your glass half full or was it half empty during 2009? What have you lost? What have you learnt? Is it not ironic that we sometimes need difficult times to discover what is really important, and how resilient we can be?

In a training session some years ago, one of the participants told the story of their family's rough ride when her husband lost his job. Overnight, this lady became the sole breadwinner of the family with three young children - making ends meet on a very small salary. The family had to sell their car, TV, furniture and valuables. No weekends away ... no takeaways ... no movies, magazines or luxury food. Not even electricity!

But, she continued, it turned out to be the best time of their lives, in hindsight. The family would sit around the table at night, say prayers before sharing the little food that they had (and sometimes did not have), and communicate about the things that truly mattered. They enrolled at the local library and became a family of avid readers. Without television, quite often they would play simple games, like domino or noughts and crosses and even they designed their own games. They became masters at creating things out of 'nothing'. They became very smart about the cost of items in the supermarket and saved in every way they could. Each day required ingenuity in some way.

Looking back, she told us, these difficulties turned out to be a blessing. **They became a close-knit family, found their value in the kind of people they were and what they were striving for, instead of measuring their value by comparing themselves to the Joneses.** They became their own persons, and a family with a strong identity. People with inner strength that found their happiness in things that really mattered.

The children developed exceptional general knowledge, took part in school activities and discovered their individual talents. They worked hard to prove themselves in the absence of money and thus built character and tenacity. They became strong individuals that looked out on behalf of each other and became loyal and supportive children. They look back on the events during that time of their lives, as an amazing, formative experience.

What makes this story so heart warming is that **this family did not give up. Instead, they used the situation to grow and progress – they developed their resiliency.** They sought solutions rather than finding excuses, feeling victimised and blaming others. They discovered who they really were without their belongings.

Highly resilient individuals prove their strength during difficult times. They distance themselves from dysfunction – meaning that they know that bad things that happened to them do not make them bad. **They look beyond their own needs, and see opportunities to help others. They enjoy the simple things in life and laugh often. They stay optimistic and find happiness inside. And they keep on growing – reaching further and higher.**

When you decide to look for solutions rather than excuses, life simply looks different. In one short moment, your reality can change – not because things have changed, but because you look at them differently. If there is one single mindset that could make a big difference to how you experience life, it is optimism – believing that things will work out, believing in a bright future. How do you choose to look at things, as we edge closer to 2010?