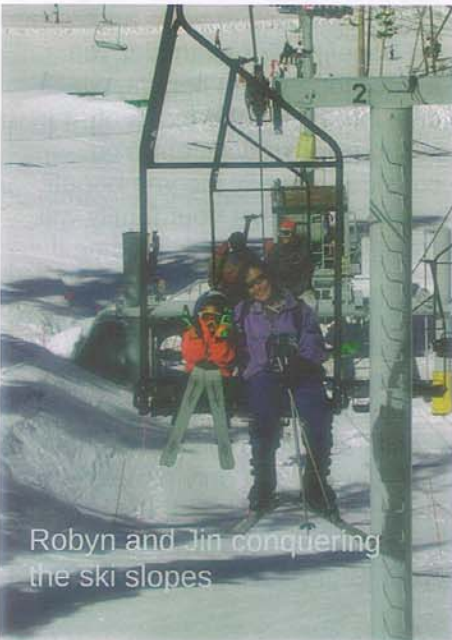


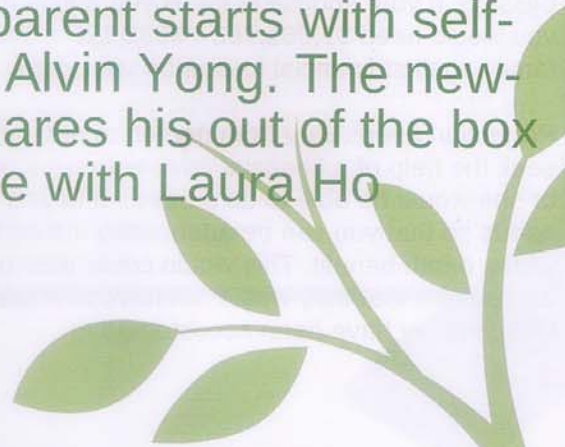


Parenting ROCKS



Robyn and Jin conquering the ski slopes

Becoming a good parent starts with self-knowledge, affirms Alvin Yong. The new-generation father shares his out of the box parenting style with Laura Ho



Alvin Yong wears many hats, as entrepreneur, computer whiz, personal development trainer and of course, father. A rather unconventional one at that. Oozing with positive energy, he describes his parenting style as "experiential". He and his wife Jin believe in immersing their nine-year-old daughter, Robyn, in a multitude of experiences, so that she has her own stories to tell. Robyn was barely two when she traipsed along with her parents on a caravanning trip in Darwin, Australia. One night, as darkness fell, it was time to light a fire and Alvin got Robyn in on the act. The toddler showed no sign of fear as she toddled along helping Daddy gather twigs.

It was a powerful lesson for Alvin on how fear is instilled in children purely through social conditioning. "Robyn had not been grounded in the school of thought that darkness equals evil which equals fear. It was a good reminder to me as a father never to wrongly educate or disempower my child. They should happily just go about exploring and learning."

Life with a child has not stopped the adventurous couple from travelling and indulging in the sporty activities that interest them. They exemplify the new generation of parents who show that parenting need not spell the end of an exciting lifestyle, the theme of a National Family Council campaign, Parenting RAWKS! Little Robyn tagged along when they went skiing and was introduced to the more advanced slopes once she had been schooled in the basics, Alvin exclaiming in joyful amazement, "She did it, she managed to ski down the slope."

Reaching Out

Of the view that life is not about taking but sharing and giving, he takes steps to demonstrate his philosophy to his daughter. One of the ways they reached out was through a programme called "Love It Forward". He and Robyn walked down Orchard Road approaching strangers and greeting them with, "I love you, have a nice day". While there were some pleasant surprises, Robyn got her fair share of negative responses. Alvin turned these into a lesson on being positive, instructing his daughter on "being thankful for the cynical people because they give you the lesson of goodness by showing you that you are not cynical, and you can be proactive by reminding them of what is good."

A birthday party provided another opportunity to devise a lesson on sharing. "One day, after returning from a friend's birthday party, Robyn expressed the desire to have lots of presents for her coming eighth birthday," he relates. "Jin and I knew it was a concern we couldn't leave alone so we decided to host a huge birthday party for Robyn but make it a learning experience as well. Then with our guidance, Robyn decided and concluded for herself that it would be more meaningful to donate some of her presents to a children's home. We went online together and found the Canossaville Children's Home. So the week after her birthday party, she donated 43 out of 50 birthday presents to the children's home and it made her truly happy. We had to string a hammock up to contain all the presents to be donated! It was really meaningful." With another flash of insight, he adds "this is a story she can carry with her, probably for the rest of her life and that she can use to impact on others."

Becoming a parent, says Alvin, has changed his "life script". "I thank Robyn for motivating Jin and I, inspiring us to be better people in order to be better parents," he affirms. For him, good parenting is so crucial because "parents are like a lighthouse to their children and are in the privileged position of nurturing another human being" adding, "children are like sponges and parents must be conscious of that." Knowing that

Words of Wisdom

- Spend time on yourself to develop into a better person
- Be conscious of every interaction with your children as anything negative that transpires may handcuff them for life and limit their growth
- Be positive
- Empower your children with the confidence to explore the unknown
- Engage your children in activities that lead to new experiences

children emulate your every action makes him and his wife conscious of how they speak to each other and how they interact with others.

"We want to positively equip and empower her with confidence so that she can find her own journey and have her own adventure," he says. In order to be effective parents, parents must know themselves. "The more conscious you are of yourself, the more empowered you become as a human being in the choices you make and more importantly, the more empowering as a parent you become. If you do not know your own fears and unconsciously transmit these fears to your children through your interactions, your children will respond to that negativity and emulate it."

Nothing Is Impossible

He wants to bring up his daughter such that the word "impossible" is eliminated from her vocabulary. "I think my life purpose is to be a teacher. I want to teach my daughter, and others that anything is possible and that it all begins with a gem of an idea that can manifest itself in a multitude of ways." This attitude boldly asserts itself as he shares future plans for his life's vision. Speaking about organising trips for children where they can experience the adage of "you reap what you sow" by working in the padi fields of Chiang Rai, he also wishes for children to be able to "look at the stars and talk about life" instead of having their lives swallowed by the rigours of school and academic studies.

"Becoming a better person is the foundation of becoming a better parent. Being a better person comes first because how can you be a good parent when you don't invest time discovering why you are the way you are? Examine your beliefs, examine your habits, your strengths and weaknesses, you have the choice to be a different person. You can recreate who you are and your journey to becoming a better person and a better parent has begun."