

## LIFE STORIES & FAMILY MATTERS

Mdm Farida stared at the blood sugar levels results. She was shocked that her glucose level had gone up again. She wanted to do something, but felt trapped. Mdm Farida had been hesitant about cooking healthier foods because she was afraid that by her family members would not welcome her new menu. They looked forward to the meals she always prepared for them and did not want to disappoint them. She thought of increasing her physical activity. However, the daily load of household chores tired her out every day and she just could not find the energy and time to exercise.

Family means a lot to Mdm Farida. She wants to be healthy so that she can continue to take care of her family. It is clear to her that in her current state of health, she does not have the stamina to engage in more activities with her children. She certainly does not want her condition to limit her children. Neither does she want to end up with more health complications.

As Mdm Farida pondered over her next steps, she realised that she was not alone. People had cheered her on to achieve her health goals before. She recalled cooking a healthier dish and her children loved it. She remembered watching some cooking program on television about healthier dishes that tasted good as well. She had even discussed the recipe with her doctors and dietitian and they had given her more ideas. Her friends had even asked her for the recipes.

Mdm Farida is a food lover and loves to prepare food for her family. It give her satisfaction to see them happy and satisfied during a meal. Her mother and grandmother had taught her a lot about cooking. Food means tradition, love and interest

to her. Love also meant taking care of her own health and her family. Perhaps she could be a good role model for her children and start cooking healthier meals for her family?

At that moment, Mdm Farida's eldest son walked into the kitchen to see his mum looking despondent. He was aware of Mdm Farida's dilemma and his younger siblings preference for fried food. He said, "Ibu, we are all older now and we have been taught to eat healthy in school as well. It's true that we like fried food and the younger ones may complain, but if we know we are doing it for you, we are willing to try as well". Such comforting words! Mdm Farida was delighted that she was not alone and her family was prepared to journey with her.

Mdm Farida's experience may be familiar to us. Often we feel alone in our journey towards achieving better health. We do not want to burden our family. Unknown to us, our family may be more than willing to help. Furthermore, once we start to lead a healthier life, it will have a ripple effect on our family members, and everyone benefits from eating and staying healthy.

Within each of us is a wealth of experience, what we would call our 'life stories'. These life stories are like hidden treasures. In Mdm Farida's case, there were instances, even though rare, where she was able to engage the younger children to eat healthier food. These experiences helped her to generate further solutions.

From there, she was reminded of other positive experiences and encounters with others, such as her mother, her friends and her doctors who have helped her to clarify what she values most in life and how she can generate solutions from there.

*About the author: Henry Lew works as a psychologist and enjoys coming up with creative ways to engage his patients and readers.*