

Volunteer Reconciles With Her Father After Years of Anger

Written by Tzu Chi Foundation

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Wu Mei-fen, a volunteer at the Dalin Tzu Chi Hospital, was wheeling an elderly lady paralyzed by a stroke. As she looked at the lady, she thought of her own father, already in his seventies; his health was declining. She was overwhelmed by a sense of regret and shame, as she thought of her own ignorance and lack of understanding of her parents. She was unable to stem the flow of tears.

Shielding Her Family with Love

Mei-fen grew up in Penghu, the only daughter in her family; she was never pampered. As the oldest daughter, she felt a duty to help pay back all the debts of her family. In fourth grade, she started to help her father by going out to sea and fishing; she could not even rest on Chinese New Year's Day, when she had to earn a little more money to help her family's finances. Fortunately, her two brothers were top students in the school, which made the family very proud. With financial difficulties, the family of six lived in a small house; they were happy together.

"Eee Oh... Ee Oh..." An ambulance passed by, in a flash. When she was 22, Mei-fen lost her mother in a workplace accident; she fell from broken scaffolding and died of an intra-cranial hemorrhage. The sudden tragedy almost shattered the family; her grandmother cried for days. Seeing the lonely figure of her father, she vowed to herself: "I shall never get married, so that I can dedicate my life to this family."



While she held strongly to this idea of celibacy, her grandmother and father were hoping that she would find a good husband. Her grandmother said: "I will not die in peace unless you are married." This changed her mind. She vowed that she would only marry someone from Penghu, so that she could stay close to her family, and that her husband must help her look after them.

As fate would have it, Mei-fen met Ye Rui-quan, a professional soldier who also grew up in Penghu. They fell in love and got married.

Depression Blocks Concern for her Family

After her husband left the army and found a job, they finally were able to afford a larger house, after years of hard work. But the burden of paying a mortgage and school fees for their children was so heavy that they no longer felt the joy of owning a house. In 2007, Mei-fen sank into a depression when her husband was laid off. Her mind was full of anxieties: "How will we afford the next meal? If we have to sell the house, it will be so shameful."

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As time passed, her perspective toward her family changed drastically. She thought: "Father is finally able to lead an easy life; one of my brothers is a doctor and another brother a teacher. Their wives also love and care for him. My father knows my predicament very well, but why doesn't he ever call to ask after me?" When she thought of all her dedication to her family, she was deeply disappointed by the coldness she received in return. "I only wanted a call to ask 'how are you coping?', someone to show that they cared -- but it did not seem that way. My father never cared." From that time, she started to bear resentment towards him.



This resentment also turned her against her two innocent brothers. "If I had not sacrificed myself to work full time after junior high school, how could they have accomplished all they have today?" she said to herself. Her brother who was a doctor wanted to raise money to help her with her mortgage: and her other brother wanted to help share the burden of her daughter's school fees – but she refused. She was obsessed with how her father never showed that he cared about her. Thinking back to when her mother died, she was worried that her father would be lonely and tried hard to find a companion for him. Anger burnt within her heart; she could not see the kindness of her brothers.

A Generous Heart is Better Than a Large House

"My house is so huge and so beautiful, why can't I be happy?" she said to herself. Just when she was feeling frustrated, she flicked the switch on her television and landed on Tzu Chi's Da Ai channel. Lin Sheng-sheng, the heroine of a Da Ai drama, Life's Waltz, was being interviewed and said: "A generous heart is better than a large house". This remark awakened Mei-fen.

"That's right. I used to live in a smaller apartment," she said to herself. "Even though I wasn't very happy, at least I was at peace every day. Now this house is a lot more spacious, but what happened to my heart?" She started to reflect.

Escaping from an Obsession

In March 2011, Mei-fen and all the Tzu Chi volunteers were actively participating in the Water Repentance Sutra performance and local study groups. She almost never missed a session. She loved the atmosphere of "practicing and learning dharma together". Master Cheng Yen's teachings and the life stories of Tzu Chi volunteers brought peace to her mind.



"Greed and obsession are shackles, liberate yourself from the binds of the senses". When she read this verse in the sutra, her heart was filled with emotions. For more than a decade, her father had been suffering from poor health; his introvert character had limited him from expressing his love for his children. Although he did not speak of it, he made sure that the

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brothers cared for their sister when she was struggling financially. Just because of her own obsession over the lack of attention from her father, she had resented him for years. She finally decided to let go of this resentment and re-build her relationship with her father.

Loving Our Parents Cannot Wait -- Fulfill Your Obligations and Repay Parent's Love

There's a Chinese idiom: "parents do not wait forever for their children's love and care". Master Cheng Yen also said: "charity and loving our parents cannot wait". So Mei-fen donated NT\$10,000 to Tzu Chi in her father's name. Then, in addition to donating in her father's name every month, she made a gift on his behalf on Father's Day and his birthday.

"Dad, you shouldn't have mailed these, because the postage itself is more expensive." After learning that she had become vegetarian, he sent her a huge box of sweet potatoes, pumpkins and winter melons. Although she was telling him off, she was very touched by his gesture. "Home-grown food is safer." This was how a reserved father showed his love.

During her summer break, her daughter came home. "If you could do everything over, would you still choose to be the obedient daughter?" This casual remark by her daughter made Mei-fen think deeply. "Yes, I am still willing to be a daughter dedicated to her family," she said with conviction. She knows that loving and honoring your parents is an obligation.

She credits Tzu Chi and Da Ai television, especially the Master's teachings, with liberating her from her self-imposed chains. At the end of this year, she will be certified as a Tzu Chi commissioner; she will dedicate the life that her father has given her to benefit all mankind, as the most direct way to repay his love.

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