

Love is all around

Valentine's Day is a time to express feelings to all loved ones, but children in Hong Kong have difficulty doing so. We look at some of the reasons why familial relationships in the city are less open

TODAY is Valentine's Day. Couples all over the world will shower each other with gifts of chocolate and flowers to demonstrate their love for one another. But they are not the only ones who deserve to receive expressions of love on this day. There are some other very significant people in our lives who often get sidelined on such occasions: parents. We should use this romantic holiday as an opportunity to make them feel loved and special as well.

But in traditional Chinese societies such as in Hong Kong, offspring experience difficulties expressing their love towards their parents. This is particularly apparent when compared to child-parent relationships in western cultures. There are a number of underlying reasons for this, including traditional values, family size and long working hours.

Traditional family values

ALTHOUGH Hong Kong is a modern city, people are still **conservative** when it comes to expressing love. This is partly because Hong Kong people's mindsets are still framed by Chinese traditional values, which emphasise the **'implied'** rather than the obvious. Traditions and Confucian teachings render a direct display of love to your parents unusual. Most Hongkongers therefore end up hiding their emotions in front of parents and reveal their love towards them implicitly. This results in a feeling of discomfort when expressing genuine feelings out loud.

Chinese families have a 'top-down' structure, where fathers serve as the absolute authority. Under this household frame, parents often retain a stern image in front of children. In western countries however, children are encouraged to express their feelings, and as a result familial relationships resemble that between friends.

Spread the love

IN China and Hong Kong, it is common for children to live at home with their parents well into adulthood. This 'large family' concept is deeply instilled in Asian people's minds. In such a big family setting, people are less likely to feel comfortable declaring their love to their parents.

In western culture, children leave home at an earlier age than their Chinese counterparts. Families are thus a relatively small unit. This creates a sense of intimacy and an environment which facilitates smooth child-parent communication.

Work it out

WORK hours in Hong Kong are generally criticised for being **ridiculously** long. Hong Kong is a busy metropolis, and so both parents work to support their lifestyle. This eats away at the available time families have to interact, and **hinders** the development of a healthy family relationship.

This problem continues throughout life. Once the children are grown up, their parents retire. But at that point the circle repeats itself, and the children are also busy working and have little time for their parents. Thus the hectic lifestyle people lead in Hong Kong **deprives** these children of time to spend with their parents. **Constrained** by this limitation, these children then find it hard to express their care to them.

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Tips on how to show love to parents

Communication is the key to any interpersonal relationships. Only through quality communication can you effectively deliver messages of emotion. Valentine's Day is a good opportunity to reveal heartfelt emotions to your loved ones, and the following easy tips will help you to do so.

1. Help with household duties

Mothers usually prepare meals and keeps the home clean. So why not spare some time to ease their workload? Simply washing the dishes after a meal helps parents a lot.

2. Study hard

Excelling in academic studies can be the most direct way to demonstrate your love and appreciation to your parents. Even if you do not achieve outstanding results, your hard work is what matters. Your parents will be delighted to know you have made your greatest effort.

3. Take care of yourself

Soon you will be an adult. When that day comes, you must know how to take care of yourself so that your parents do not have to worry about you.

4. Be polite, be responsible

Always be polite to people you meet, because you are constantly representing your parents. Do not give them a reason to be **ashamed** of you. Bear responsibility in mind. Try to do things that make your parents proud of you.

This article enables students to:

1. understand the factors which influence personal development, interpersonal relationships, values and beliefs
2. review their relationships in the family, peer groups and other social groups

Key ideas

Valentine's Day is not just a day for romance, but also a chance for children to show love to their parents. But Hong Kong children and western children express their love quite differently. Hong Kong children are more introverted when doing so, while western children are more obvious and it comes more naturally to them. Traditional Chinese values and long working hours, among other things, constrain Hong Kong people in this area.

Did you know?

Long work hours

Work hours in Hong Kong have always been considered long. There is a debate going on in society whether there should be legislation that standardises working hours. Working overtime is common practice in many Asian countries.

Critical questions

1. What might help Hong Kong children be more courageous and say 'I love you' to their parents?
2. Apart from 'I love you', what else would you like to say to your parents?

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