

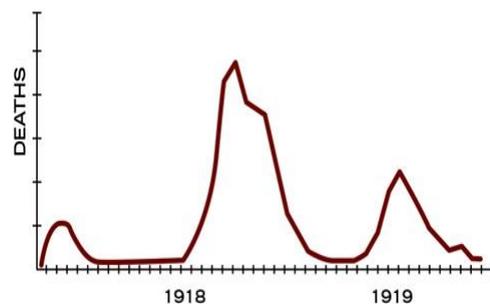
FAMILY CONNECTIONS IN YOUR CONVERSATIONS – Lee Wee Song DFL Advocate.



I have done a few scenario planning exercises during my time with an MNC. Typically, we will interview industrial and political leaders, strategic thinkers and academia to derive plausible global market scenarios (3 to 4), i.e. A catastrophic one, a bad but perhaps manageable one, an expected one and a better than expected one.

Now that we are into Phase 2... things are slowly going back to normal... at least many of us hope.

What if it doesn't? or does not last? History tells us that there might be a second wave or a third even. The last pandemic: Spanish flu saw a much more severe second wave (probably due to World War One) when focus was on killing each other rather than preserving one another. 50 to 100 million were estimated to have died.



Fast forward back to today, there is several resurges now, most notably Beijing. Authorities there is retightening control - how much, really depends on which media news provider you look at – media control is tight as ever. Across the pacific in the US, this Covid-19 pandemic has become so politicised, that the left-wing parties and the right are going for blood - blaming one another and China, even before anyone can settle into some decent measures of control over the spread. Now that it seems the worse is over, we get more protests in Hong Kong or the 'Black Live Matters' upheaval, etc to stir geo-political tensions ... somehow it just feels like World War One all over again.

OK, so much for the backdrop just to make my point... if life goes back to as it was before Covid-19, I guess that is fine, in the sense that it will be one which we are already familiar – good or bad. But what if it doesn't or let's say, we move into a second wave of sorts, are we better ready for the second one? Or are we so sick and tired of 'Working from Home', getting our children ready each day for 'Home Based Learning', buying home deliveries or take-aways, needing to wear Masks everywhere we go – and alone? I think it is really 'just too bad' for us ... technical advances may help, but the kind of control measure would likely remain the same.

HOWEVER, this time, I think it is going to be tougher... much tougher, depending on what you do the first-time round.

From here on, I am going to be retrospective and circumspective.

I believe in this statement by Dr Bill Creasey, UCLA professor of biblical history – **“We are who we are (new generation) because of who we were (previous generation)”**ⁱ. In other words, the decisions (and choices) made by one generation would eventually shape the state, behaviour, decisions and choices of the next.



Applying this to our Circuit Breaker (CB) context: How well we connect and relate to one another at home and socially will depend a lot on how well we connect with them before that. And on the same notion, what we did during the CB and phase 1 will affect the way we connect should a second wave happen.

A few notable conditions happened during the Singapore CB: Family Violence increased, Husbands and Wives conflicts,

Singapore

22% increase in family violence reports since start of circuit breaker period: SPF

SINGAPORE: Police reports related to family violence have increased by 22 per cent since the beginning of the "circuit breaker" period in April, the Singapore Police Force (SPF) said on Thursday (May 14).

From Apr 7 to May 6, 476 police reports were filed for offences associated with family violence, such as hurt, criminal force and assault, criminal intimidation and wrongful confinement.

How to Help Your Marriage Survive the Stress of COVID-19



BY LESLIE BECKER-PHELPS, PHD
Psychologist
APRIL 06, 2020

China's experience with COVID-19 revealed how deadly the virus can be, and now data out of China is showing us how disastrous the virus can be for marriages.

News outlets are reporting that record numbers of couples are filing for divorce in China. And, ominously, domestic violence is on the rise. With the United States and other countries now facing rising rates of COVID-19, we should use this information as a warning. Couples need help in managing the stresses of living together in a lockdown.

Parents having a hard time coping with their children's HBL. Such unfortunate circumstances happened not because of the Circuit Breaker (CB) itself, but because there was already deep tension and/or disconnectedness in the relationship. CB just forced it out what is already inside of people.

Thank GOD, I do not believe many families in Singapore are facing such difficult situation. Not so in China, the coronavirus and long lockdowns had somehow caused in an increased in couples filing for divorce and it is at record highs ... in Singapore, even though, the current numbers are few, we should nevertheless, think through a worst case scenario: - a bad Covid-19 second wave coupled with a global financial melt-down.

Given this scenario, have we prepared ourselves and our families enough to weather through it? I typically will look at life from a more holistic approach. There is the Work-Life Balance, there is Financial planning, and Fitness programs; Faith, Food and Fun; Friendship and Faculty. These are all vital elements of our lives that I believe we need to constantly review and manage well. Like having money in the bank for a rainy day, we need fitness savings in our health bank, food, and so on, to give us the margin necessary to help pull us through challenging periods. We can talk more about those in the future, but for now our focus is Connection.



The glue that **Connects** people (family members) in all these areas, together I think is in the '**Conversation**'.

How have your conversations been during the Circuit breaker? This, to me, has been the most important benefit of these last few months. If they are not good, then chances are we have not been working on them prior to Covid-19. Going forward, we will likely have to face-up with the lack of good relationships within the family and a lack of it will be a potential strain navigating through an uncertain time.

Your Conversation is your Relationship

People Connecting with one another through communications and in a Work-From-Home / Home-Based-Learning environment, it is mostly the conversations we make with one another. How the conversation runs is a reflection of the relationship, in other words, your conversations is your relationship.



Couples, Parent-Child who are busy with their own pre-occupations, can be sitting in the same room for years, working, watching TV and reading, etc and never utter a single word is not relating. It is a meaningless and wasted time spent together.

I have a mentor coach, Dr Joseph Umidi of Regent University, who once said:

“The quality of your conversation is a barometer of the quality of your relationship. Poor, unintentional conversation does not help build good relationship.”

I spent time with my 3 boys during the pandemic having short conversations. They may last just a few minutes, but they carry each other to somewhere. There is a desired destination, sometimes we get there, sometimes we don't. The conversational journey is key – the words of affirmation, encouragement, assurance and acceptance are important in our nurture. Nurturing children is the life-long journey we take. There is some basic but important preparatory work necessary before we even start. We need a right relationship: involvement in their lives, demonstrating trust through consistency on our part – fulfil our promises! and awareness of their world without invading too much into it. All these will establish the trust necessary for them to open up themselves (hearts) so that the true nurturing can begin.

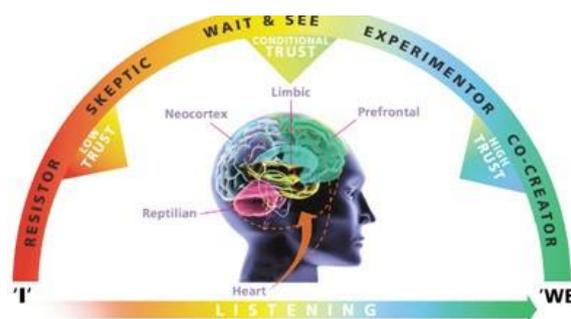
Be present.

In my executive coach training, I am reminded of the importance of being present in the conversation. Children unfortunately are normally at the invisible end of the conversation. They can be sharing the hearts out or their keenest interests to us parent/s, but the parent/s just look into their computers while listening and then give their replies, sometime incoherently.

Judith Glaser, author of ‘**Conversational Intelligence**’ suggested two simple approaches: *Listen with the intention to connect and ask questions that you do not have already the answers in mind.*

As a parent, I really need to do more of that.

‘**Active Listening**’ is an important skill taught to counsellors, coaches, teachers, etc. It is about listening to the person you are talking to and not listening to the person with our own agenda in mind. There is a time and place for that. But to connect with children and wives, and achieve meaningful relationship and breakthrough in their lives, listen to them more, much more than you speak.



Conversational Killers

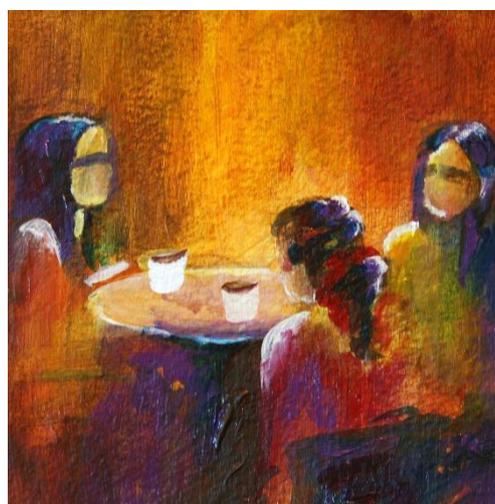
Many of us are conversational killers, we end a conversation even before it gets started. Familiar?!?

We steal the conversation by doing all the talking, change the subject as and when we wanted to. We tell long boring stories about our past, and/or finishing the sentence for the ones we speak to (young ones in particular, with less vocabularies to express themselves well). All these take away the fun for them, of having a conversation with you.

During the Covid-19, I got to practice that a lot with my wife and children. It helped us discover a lot about their thoughts, hope, dreams, even the lack of it... the thing is, at least now we know how to support and help and encourage them on things that matters to them.

A world of Discovery

During the Covid-19 circuit breaker, my wife and I had many good conversations during mealtimes, especially breakfast. There were many such occasions, at least my wife and I make it a point for us to eat together. These precious mealtime conversations opened up what is deeper in everybody's minds and hearts. More recently as we entered phase 1, I have begun to ask more difficult questions, bringing out different facet of the worst-case scenario for discussion, and the foundation laid in the two months helped so much. We do not have the answers yet, but we do know we can talk about it and decide as situation unveils itself.



We are who we are because of who we were.

We are more ready for the more challenging scenarios because of the conversation we chose to make...

Phase 2 and 3? Bring it on.

ⁱ - not quite the same thing as Sigmund Freud.