

UGNAYAN PODCAST EPISODE TRANSLATIONS IN ENGLISH

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EPISODE 1: WHY PREVENT FAMILY VIOLENCE

In this introductory episode, we chat with Hazel, a social worker with experience in child protection and family violence response, about the adverse impact of family violence, particularly on children, and why we need to be involved in addressing this issue.

Mursha: Today we are joined by Hazel, a social worker, to discuss about the effects of family violence on children and the significant role we all play in promoting families and communities where children are free from violence.

Good day to you, Hazel.

Hazel: Good day, Mursha.

Mursha: Can you tell us how you got into this sector of family violence response?

Hazel: In the Philippines, before we moved here two years ago, I worked for about seven years at Bantay Bata 163 in the Philippines as a social worker. Years later, I also worked at International Adoption.

When I was working as child protection in Bantay Bata 163, during my first years there, we received calls from concerned citizens, the police, or even directly from the child who was experiencing abuse. When they called and dialled 163, they would be able to talk directly to the assigned social workers who would assess the verity if severe cases were reported to us.

Years after being with them, I moved to rescue, where we went directly to visit those cases we received from the hotline. And if the children were not really safe in their place of residence, whether from the family or the relative with whom they were in custody, we would take them and bring them to the Bantay Bata shelter.

Now, before we rescued them, there were processes to go through, such as medico-legal with the NBI, then police statement. Once we get the child, they would undergo counselling and therapies while they were with us.

Later on, I moved to after-care, where our goal was to integrate the child; if there are significant others, relatives or the child's mother or whoever would be the sole custodian of the child, was capable of parenting her or him. We would do parental assessment to ensure that the custodian really understood the rights and would defend the children's rights.

In those years that I was in the job, I saw all kinds of child abuse. Then, when we came here to Australia, there was an opportunity to work in the family violence

sector where frequently, aside from female partners as victims, if they have children, often their children are also really victims. And just the exposure, even if they are not actually harmed, can be considered as abuse because that really cause trauma to children and they are also regarded as victims.

Mursha: From your experience as a child protection worker in the Philippines and now responding to those who experience family violence here in Australia, can you describe to us what a typical day is for a person working in this area?

Hazel: In the Philippines, the typical day was that, receiving many many calls from people reporting child abuse. Typically, prank calls were frequent, and many real calls as well. So, one needed to be keen in assessing what was reliable and not reliable report. In the hotline for hours, at 24/7, really waiting on just to ensure that the true reports were filtered. The media-based platform became a good platform to educate the public, the viewers, using a network to educate them about children's rights.

Now, here in Australia, my typical day is interacting with various individuals who have had actual experience of abuse from their partners. Sometimes we also have clients, adults, who are also being abused by their children.

Domestic violence pertains to the partner, the spouse, or de facto. When it comes to family violence, even aunts, grandmothers, siblings, cousins who abuse within the family, can be regarded as family violence. Even animals, or pets, are considered family members. So, for example, the perpetrator kicks or tortures their pet. Here in Australia, they are included as members of the family and that can be regarded as family violence.

Typical, communicating, interacting with them every day during duty. Aside from their need to undergo counselling, have someone to talk to because of their trauma experience, we also find out what benefits they have that can help them rise or survive from the abuse. For instance, whether the government can help through Centrelink, if there are other organizations that are willing to provide a support group, if there are refuges where they can go to after their stay in a crisis accommodation. We can also help if they have problems with their visa, legal advice, there are family violence expert lawyers who can give them advice if they need it, counselling.

In our interactions with them, we receive a lot of cases from different races or from other countries. It is not just the locals whom we call Australians but those immigrants whose partners have brought them here. They do not speak English, very isolated. They also have no support group, they have no relatives, they have no friends to run to. So usually, their partner has taken them and then the partner or the perpetrator is the only person they are with at home, which also often makes them treated like slaves. Because they are just at home, cooking, doing laundry, they really take care of the perpetrator. But they do not have any access to education, driving, socializing with others who understand their language.

That is our typical day.

Mursha: From those you have encountered at work, what kinds of violence were experienced by the children that went to your care?

Hazel: Often, the victim of family violence, a large percentage of victims are women and the children. Because they are vulnerable, their gender is underestimated, and our society is not as oriented to gender equality. Children are also victims of neglect because their parents or the perpetrator neglect them. Or sometimes, the mother, because she is also a victim, she tends to be depressed so she neglects her children.

There is sexual abuse, we encountered cases where the perpetrator was able to molest, sexually abuse, their female children, even their sons. Even the mere exposure to pornography, to media where they can see obscene images that at their young age they should not be exposed to, can be considered sexual abuse.

Emotional abuse as well when children are told negative things. And there is physical abuse, which is very visible because you can really see the hematomas, bruises, on the bodies of the children.

Mursha: From your observations, what are the effects on children of the violence they have experienced?

Hazel: Physically, the marks of bruises are obvious. The effects can be that it causes scars, severe bruising, and even brain injury. It can also cause death to the child if the child has suffered severe physical abuse.

It is also possible that the child is not willing to be touched even a little, avoidance really. They do not want any physical contact. Even with parents, they are alert, scared. It is also possible that they do not make eye contact because their self-esteem is also affected. Also, with their behaviour, they can hurt other children, or bully because that is what they have seen, having been hurt themselves. They experienced it, so they also hurt other kids. Those are for physical abuse.

On neglect, it is also obvious if the child has malnutrition, he has not been fed properly. It is obvious; they have been with their parents, so you wonder why the child has such malnutrition. It is possible that parents have been neglecting them. There may also be delayed cognitive development. Like speaking, their language does not correspond to their age; they should already be talking but still cannot. Attention and concentration are beyond the capacity of the child. There may be learning disability. The memory, they cannot recall right away. It can also be difficult to build good relationships with other children, always quarrelsome. Those are for neglect.

With sexual abuse, guilt and shame can have a profound effect. Because the child can think that it is their fault why they have been abused. And they feel embarrassed, they feel they are dirty. They may want to always be alone. There may be depression, extreme sadness. Or anger. They are unable to properly express because they are scared to share what has happened to them. Low self-esteem. There is intense fear and anger. Possibly against men, they are angry or scared.

There can also be promiscuity, being too close to men. That is them really looking for love. Because they feel their character has been tainted, for them it is okay if there are no boundaries or no proper relationship when it comes to the opposite sex.

There may be eating disorders, anxiety. PTSD, post-traumatic stress disorder, can also occur. Or they may hurt themselves, have self-injuries. They cut their body or commit suicide because they hate themselves and they view themselves as dirty. Those are for sexual abuse.

Now, for emotional, the effects on children are almost similar. There may be attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, ADHD, where the child finds it hard to concentrate. When you ask them to do something, they cannot finish at that certain point in time. They may be restless. Adults will think, 'This child is too unruly' or 'stubborn.' But they do not know that that child may have gone through something terrible. Due to the painful words they have received, that is the result on their behaviour. They may always want to sleep, want to be alone, eating disorders, or they become aggressive to other people or fellow family members.

Those are the possible profound effects on children who grow up with these kinds of abuses.

Mursha: From your perspective as someone working in this sector, how important is it that we focus on this issue of preventing domestic violence?

Hazel: Family violence can really cause death. They say that in every hour, there is a certain number of people who die because of family violence. Now, if we do not prevent it, many lives will be lost which we can save by helping the victims get through or escape the abuse.

To me, this kind of problem is a problem of the whole society. It is a problem of the community and we need to have awareness and be involved. Once we know of such incidents and cases, we really need to report. Just to help somebody and make sure they do not die because of abuse. Because the survivors can get through, life can be restored, and they can rise.

We should also be mindful of the children because they can be the helpless ones and because their lives are connected that of the adult they trust. And these are their parents, siblings, and elders. So, if we do not fight for their rights, imagine the kind of society we are creating. When they grow up, what kind of society do we create? Potential perpetrators? Potentially hurting others in the future when they have a family? Potential to kill or commit a crime?

That is why we should be involved, and the children are – as they say, the hope of the nation. If we believe in this, then that is exactly what we are creating. Family is a small unit of society. Before they go to school, before they go off to study, the family is where they have their first learning experiences. There they learn their behaviour, character building. Their families hone these. So, I hope that that is the mindset of adults, us adults, to fight for their rights. So that we can leave a society that is well-ordered for future generations.

Mursha: What message do you want to send to our listeners?

Hazel: If we have listeners who are experiencing this kind of violence, I encourage them not to be afraid. I do agree that what they are going through is truly dangerous but continue to be strong and not be afraid. They can call the police. Dial 000 here in Australia and call the police who can help them. If the perpetrator is present, they can try... sometimes they will go to the toilet and then quietly by whispering... or unobtrusively call for help just so they can escape.

According to statistics here in Australia, it takes seven times before a survivor can escape successfully. So, imagine, seven times of repeated attempts, yet sometimes it's not successful. But in the end, there is a way out to escape and there is hope to overcome this abuse. It is not right to stay in a very chaotic and violent environment because the worst-case scenario can be fatal. Self-esteem will be ruined shattered, so is individuality. So, I really encourage them to be strong and ask for help from people who can help.

You can dial 000 or call Safesteps. Safesteps is the 24/7 hotline of the whole of Victoria [Ph1800 015 188]. And if you have experienced abuse and have escaped or you know someone who is a victim of this abuse, there are services that can help to get through the abuse.

We have many organisations, and the government is really advocating and reinforcing to help the victims or survivors of family violence.

Mursha: Very meaningful message from you, Hazel. Thank you for your time and the knowledge you have shared with us on the issue of family violence prevention.

EPISODE 2: ANA'S STORY

In this episode, we are joined by Ana (not her real name), who shares with us a glimpse of her experience and realisations as a survivor of domestic violence.

Mursha: Today we are joined by Ana, a survivor of family violence, who will share with us her experience and her story of rising from that.

Good day to you, Ana.

Ana: Good day too.

Mursha: When did you realize that what you were experiencing was abuse?

Ana: That time when I realised that I should let go... Because you could not realise that you were being abused if you were stuck in your relationship, because you were still hoping you'd be okay. So, you could not see that you were being abused because your focus was to fix the relationship. You feel blinded and could not see there was something wrong in your relationship.

So, when I finally accepted the fact, I then realised I had enough. It could no longer be fixed because I had been abused.

Mursha: What are the forms of abuse you experienced from your partner?

Ana: All kinds of abuse. Physically, because he hurt me and our child, especially when he was angry. Also, emotionally, mentally, and verbally, every day I was being told things that hurt, insulting. So, it was emotionally, mentally draining for me as well. I had lost confidence in myself because he made me feel worthless.

Mursha: What was your reaction when you realised those experiences were abuse?

Ana: I felt sorry for myself. And yet I still felt proud that I made it through. I felt sorry because I let him do those things to me. Proud because although I went through the abuses, I had always remained a good wife. I was still faithful to him, I didn't leave him, I didn't fight. Because I also thought of my son.

Mursha: From your experience, what would you like our listeners to know about family violence?

Ana: The impact on the person is profound. There were times when I could not go to work because I had not been sleeping well. So physically, my health deteriorated. My appearance, it was obvious that I had not been sleeping well and that I had been crying. Since the effect on me physically was obvious, people started asking. But then I couldn't tell them.

The effects are connected, but if you sum them all up, it's too much. Everything... It's like nothing is left of you because you have endured everything.

Whether you have a career, or you are homemaker, if your partner is not treating you well as a normal person, a normal partner, that's also a form of abuse. And we should also be aware that abuse is not just physical. It is also considered abuse when you are always told hurtful words or insults.

Also, when verbally abused, it is of course connected to your emotions. And mentally, thus, you become unaware that you have been tolerant of the abuse. You do not notice that it has an effect mentally on you, too.

Mursha: What has been the effect of the experience on you and in your life?

Ana: A lot, but the worst is that I lost confidence in myself. And I struggle to communicate especially with men. That positive thing is that I have become stronger... that maybe, I can take whatever comes, because what I have gone through has been hard.

I think I have become a better person and my perspective in life has widened because I've been able to get through this hardship. And now, I'm working on the way I communicate because I'm scared to mingle with other people. But I know that's what I must work on and I'm slowly getting there.

- Mursha: What kind of support have you searched for and from whom have you asked for help?
- Ana: Actually, that is the negative side with us because we tend to be more religious and traditional that as much as possible, you need to keep the family whole. So, I hid it. Although I wanted to ask for support, I did not because I didn't want to disappoint my parents, my siblings, especially my relatives.
- And then I didn't want to be seen as bad by my friends or those around me. Well, that's how they see it, that when you are separated, you are the problem, even if they do not know the real situation.
- I then told them after three years when I was ready to file for annulment. But I couldn't fully share because it was too painful.
- It was up to myself to make sure I was okay everyday but there was nowhere to go, to get help.
- Mursha: If you go back to those times, what would you like to be the kind of support that would have been available to you?
- Ana: A support group you can talk to that you can guide you on how to go through the process you are enduring. Since it is not common for us that couples split or annul, people just hide it. If we are all open to that idea, and least you know you can talk to someone who also have gone through that situation.
- But in my case, I just learned that others had the same situation when I opened up, when they saw that I persisted, I went through the annulment and I survived the situation, from trying hard to fix the relationship until I surpassed it. It was then that I knew there were many around me who were suffering the same problem.
- So, I hope there is that. It helps better if the person who will support you has gone through the same situation.
- Mursha: So, from your experience, what for you is a healthy and safe relationship?
- Ana: It is healthy if you hide nothing from each other. When you keep something to yourself, especially when you have resentments and let it pile up, it can be the trigger for you to just suddenly shout in anger or hurt the other. You must be open to each other.
- Also healthy for me is when you don't get that effect where your ego is trampled on if your wife has a career. Supportive of each other. If one has achievements, the other should be supportive. Because sometimes that's where issues can arise when your wife has a career, and it makes you think why you don't have one yourself.
- Mursha: What are the lessons our listeners can learn from you?
- Ana: One lesson is that if you know you have been abused and you are not happy, both of you, don't think about what others will say. Or do not think that just because it is our

culture or tradition, that if you are a Filipino or a Catholic or whatever religion you have, that your family must be intact. It is not because it is what we've been raised to believe that it is right.

If you are the one in the relationship, then you know what is best for you and your partner, and most especially what is best for your children.

It is often what others think that you should think of the children and keep your family in one piece. But even if you are whole but the children could see their parents fighting and hurting each other, it is more harmful for them. It is better if even though you are separated, the children see that their parents are okay. At least let them understand that the separation does not end your role as parents.

If you have done everything you can to fix that relationship and if you have been abused, you should know when to stop. Can it still be fixed?

Mursha: What is making you strong?

Ana: My son. And also, I love myself more now. It is true what they say that you have to love yourself first before you can love others.

That is one thing I will add to the lessons learned, which is to love yourself rather than give everything to your partner.

My son is my inspiration, and my new life. Looking back and I can see that I have overcome the hardship, that very idea makes me strong.

Mursha: What do you want in life now, Ana?

Ana: That I just continue to see through the new life I have started for myself and my son, since I have left the past including my job. I am happy now with my new life. My aspiration is that I persevere so that eventually my son and I will be together again.

Mursha: What advice do you have for those who have experienced abuse?

Ana: It is not the end of the world or your life. Yes, it hurts, it is hard, but you can get through it too. Perhaps, you would just look back and ask why you stayed, or at the things that you did when you were going through that experience. Just know that everything happens for a reason. It might be God's way of letting you know you deserve someone better.

Mursha: Thank you, Anna, for sharing with us your story as someone who has experienced domestic abuse, has risen strong, and now continues to develop your abilities and potential. Thank you again, Ana.

Ana: You are welcome.

EPISODE 3: SUSTAINING AN INTERCULTURAL RELATIONSHIP

In this episode, Raya shares her experience of being in an intercultural relationship and how she and her partner navigate through their differences to sustain a healthy, safe, and respectful relationship.

Mursha: We are now with Raya to chat about her experience of being in a so-called "intercultural relationship" and what important things she has learned to sustain a strong, safe, and respectful relationship in this context. Good day to you, Raya.

Raya: Good day, too and thank you so much for inviting me to share my knowledge and experience for the Ugnayan podcast.

Mursha: Can you describe to us, from your experience, what an intercultural relationship is?

Raya: Yes, so I am a Filipina. Most of my life I lived in the Philippines, but my partner Tom grew up here in Australia. We have been in a relationship for 10 years; five years of that time, we have lived together as married couple. It is difficult to define what an intercultural relationship is because there are many aspects and its aspects are complicated. So, most of what I'll be sharing is based on my experience, it's just my experience really.

For me, the defining features of an intercultural relationship are the profound differences in the language you come from, the national or regional ways of life, the values of the family and society you grow up in, including spirituality. or religion. Because my culture and Tom's culture are very different and that's what shaped our personality separately, so it was really expected that those differences would have a significant effect on our relationship. For example, it becomes a source of misunderstanding, conflict and difficulty coming to an agreement.

But it's not just negative. There is also a positive side to that, not just pure challenges. If both partners, like me and Tom, have accepted earlier on that there will really be differences, but we have committed to the reality of that kind of relationship, our experience is not only challenging but also interesting. You get to develop your skills to be able to keep the relationship healthy and constructive.

Mursha: You've mentioned the challenges in your relationship with Tom. What are these challenges that someone who is in an intercultural relationship like you might experience?

Raya: Quite a lot of challenges. The subject is also broad. I would also like to avoid generalising because other people's experiences and situations may be different. But in my experience with Tom being married to him, mainly the challenges came from a difference in worldview or outlook on life; attitudes also or behaviours about various subjects or topics; how to act or how to approach various situations; social norms and mores, way of the people in your partner's society, language. Those have been the challenges for us.

For example, on language. Usually when intercultural relationships, if you go to YouTube, there are a lot of cute videos right? *Oh, this is my culture, this is his culture.* So, there are differences in terms especially with Australian language. But there is a deeper use of language. For example, the way you address people within a

relationship, the way I call older members of my family is very different from Tom. I always use *tita, tito*. I regard my parents as *mama, papa, ate, kuya*. But because attitudes about relationships and power are different in Australian culture, which is very western. So Tom, he calls his parents by their first names. I really can't. So, it was something that I struggled with and it was very awkward because I could not call them by their first names. But everyone else, Tom and his sister, they just call their parents [W] and [S]. For me, that is disrespectful. But I cannot call them "mum and dad" and then no one else does that. So, the language, I think for me I still have to put something before their names. I had to explain to them - it was a very awkward situation - *I cannot call you by your first names*. I explained what *tito* and *tita* mean, why I would use them, and why it makes me more comfortable.

In the Philippines, English is also our language. We use that a lot especially in formal settings, education, etc. But even though we use it often, I find that it's not the language of our emotions. So, when Tom and I argue, I have a hard time expressing spontaneously what I need to express. Especially early in the relationship I felt that I was disadvantaged because English is not my emotional language and I had to step back, which is for Tom frustrating. If he wants to solve the problem, he wants to fix it right away. I can't because I'm overwhelmed because I can't express myself in English. Those are some examples about language.

We also have customs or norms, like around food. Food is often, not because we always eat, but because food is everywhere. It's a very ubiquitous part of life. For instance, we eat rice three times, sometimes five, right? (laughs)

Mursha: Snacks? (laughs)

Raya: But then Tom has really strict ideas about what kind of food should be eaten for breakfast, for lunch, etc. So, I had to negotiate that, and he had to negotiate his ideas around what is okay to eat and what is not. And then what's considered funny, so type of jokes, what's funny or not. Sometimes I laugh and then he wonders: *Why are you laughing? It's not funny, it's actually offensive*. Things like those. (laughs) It really makes you think.

Money was also a very difficult and very different arena for us. My understanding of Philippine culture is that it's rude to talk about how much you earn or ask someone about money. It looks like we have a bit of a hang-up there, as well as ways of spending it and saving. Tom's attitude about money is very different from mine. He was more open to talking about it than I was. So, it was like a pain-point or source of difficulty in communicating early on in the relationship. We had a lot of conversations around money to ensure that we'll be okay because we really have to organize ourselves financially, and we can't do it when one of us or we both have a hang-up about money.

Solving arguments. As far as I know in Philippine culture, we often want to deflect, or as a saving face we say *I do not want to talk about it anymore*. But for him (Tom), what he wants is *We have to fix this*, we need to confront the issue and solve it. So those are things that I found culture had a lot to do with and you constantly negotiate and modify. Because we want to stay together and be happy. These are the things I took for granted in my past relationships with Filipino men, that never really were issues back then.

Mursha: How did you overcome these?

Raya: Communication, empathy and being honest with yourself. So, on communication - we try as much as possible to always be open and to make sure that we feel safe when we communicate with each other to make our communication honest and non-judgmental. So little by little we both - especially me — I gained confidence. It comes with practice really. You always have to do it to become better at it.

And then empathy, we learn how to really try to see things from the other person's point-of-view. When we argue, I step back and think *I know how they are in his family, this is his upbringing* and he does the same with me. We take all that into account. So, I think that's empathy, when you try to put yourself in the shoes of the other person.

And then, on being honest with yourself, which is something that I constantly did. You reflect, take stock of your own ways. I reflect on how I think, how I speak, act, what I am used to. For instance, I used to be grumpy. I was really grumpy, I was sulking, and Tom brought it up. *Why do you do that?* And then that made me reflect and re-evaluate - is my attitude constructive for the relationship? Then I decided that this is something I should let go. This is not really doing anything good. And just be honest about what I feel instead of withdrawing and being passive-aggressive.

Also included in being honest with yourself is you also still have to know what is important to you and do not sacrifice your values. So, being grumpy is not important, so I try to improve on that. But certain things like I have committed to sending money home, for instance. Aren't we like that in the Philippines? So, I made it clear to Tom that this is something that will continue doing. You have to accept that. It's part of my culture and I've committed to that, my duties to my parents and to my family. And Tom also does that, like there are some things that he values, that he cannot compromise, and I respect [those].

Mursha: So continuous adjustment and negotiation and communication...

Raya: Yes, it never stops.

Mursha: What for you is the secret to having a strong and safe relationship?

Raya: Respect each other and be very explicit or clear about it. Draw clear boundaries, that included in respect. For example, quarrelling or argument is a natural part of a relationship, but you can always say: *Alright, we fight but there is no swearing at each other. No curse words during an argument. No name-calling. No physical contact.* So that's something that you need to establish. That's number one.

Number two, recognize the efforts and sacrifices the other person does that will contribute to a strong relationship. And when you recognise that, always feel and express gratitude for the person. Do each other favours to return that gratitude.

And lastly, constant reaffirming of love and affection for each other. It has to be direct, say *I love you*, or enact it directly. Sure, you may cook, clean the house and

think *You already understand that as the expression of my love*. Which is also true, but you also have to do it more directly and be physically affectionate. Celebrate each other's successes, birthdays, important events, as a reaffirmation of love and affection.

Mursha: What advice would you give to couples or relationships, especially those just starting out?

Raya: First is deep and constant communication. Second (I mentioned earlier), be honest especially to yourself. Third is (I have also mentioned) draw boundaries. I cannot emphasize enough how important that is. So, first is communicate constantly and deeply. That includes talking about your cultural difference and going beyond the cute stuff. Not just the *tomah-to, tomay-to*. Really talk about each other's background, preferences - constantly ask each other how the other person thinks or feels about certain subjects. So, you interview each other. Then yourself, share what you think or feel about various issues or subjects. For me that is important, because it instils awareness about the relationship you have entered.

On being honest with yourself, ask yourself why you want to get into and commit to this relationship. Will you want to commit at all, knowing the differences? How much of your time and your energy, willpower, emotional resources are you willing to commit? What are the things you can wage or sacrifice to make the relationship work? Because it will get challenging, it will not be easy. All relationships are difficult. It is perhaps an added layer with the cultural differences. So, it's good to have a baseline even if it's difficult especially when you're so in-love, you're on the honeymoon stage, so you really have to try to be practical and objective about it.

And lastly, draw boundaries. Set rules. Do this very early on in the relationship. Be clear about it. If you have to write it down, do it.

Mursha: What is the good aspect of intercultural relationship?

Raya: It looks like a cultural exchange experience. What's positive there is that you will learn a lot of interesting things that you otherwise will not be able to if you marry into a very similar culture. So, it is really interesting especially if you're interested in knowing history, society. It [also] makes you a better communicator. It will really challenge your communication skills, listening, your attentiveness to non-verbals, and also empathy. So that's a very positive thing that I got personally, that I experienced, and I learned, being in an intercultural relationship.

I really enjoy teaching Tom Tagalog. Small lessons, it's really funny. It injects a lot of humour into the relationship. And vice versa, including his sharing of different things about Australian culture.

Mursha: Intercultural relationships are indeed a unique and interesting concept. Thank you so much, Raya, for sharing with us your time and experience about this topic.

Raya: You're welcome. Thank you so much and I also enjoyed talking and sharing my experience.

EPISODE 4: THE IMPORTANCE OF RESILIENCE IN FAMILY VIOLENCE PREVENTION

In this episode, Resilience Coach Rev. Eric Maliwat, unpacks for us what resilience means and how it is important in the context of migration and in family violence prevention.

Mursha: We have with Coach Eric Maliwat, a Resilience Coach, to chat about the importance of being strong in the midst of crisis or difficulties, or what is called resilience, in promoting families and communities that are free and safe from violence.

Good day to you, Coach Eric, and many thanks for agreeing to this interview regarding resilience and family violence prevention.

Eric: It is also a pleasure for me to be here in our conversation about resilience. And I wish that all our friends who are listening to us right now may have resilience, which we will gradually unpack in our conversation today.

Mursha: Coach Eric, kindly tell us how you have come to be in this field of resilience advocacy.

Eric: It is quite a long story that we will shorten. I am an ordained minister. I graduated from the seminary for my Bible and Theology Bachelors and then became an ordained minister. So, my official title is Reverend by the Philippine Council of Evangelical Churches through a city church that I have served in the Philippines for 17 years.

But aside from that, I have a background in Electronics and Communications Engineering, which I intended then to be my backdoor entry to Communication Arts, because I really wished to be a broadcaster even then. But having these two backgrounds and desires in my heart to serve the community in terms of enriching people's faith and walking alongside in their journey and do so through traditional media, which then was only television and radio, I saw that when I combined those two skills that I have – being in the area of religion and community services plus communication arts, I will be able to reach a particular audience in the Philippines who are first, always focused either on the television or the radio, and second, who have issues in life that I can address through my content about things I got from the seminary.

So, it was a journey of probably around-- including my volunteer work-- because I started at the age of 15 volunteering for a radio station in the Philippines, which I then pursued even after my studies, ending up as the station's station manager-- maybe more or less 20 years. Then when I decided to settle here in Australia, I continued those volunteer work involving communication arts to what is now multimedia because it includes online platforms whether it's social media or internet, podcasting, vlogging, blogging. So more or less, my journey in communication arts is about 30 + years.

We can see now that that is very broad and I'm not getting any younger. I said [to myself] I talk a lot about so many things, whether it be current affairs, technology, health; whether it be theological issues because I also get invited to speak in churches, congregations and parishes. I said probably it's about time for me to focus,

to narrow down the things that I talk about instead of just talking about anything under the sun like when I was younger. Since I was so passionate to talk about being a communicator, I can talk about anything under the sun. When I came to Australia, I decided to narrow it down to becoming a life coach. Being a life coach is still very general to me because there are so many things in life that as a life coach you can address and talk about. And I still wanted to have focus and niche.

So, I thought about highlighting what is good in the Filipino, which is my background. Coming from an Indo-Malayan background, I saw that one of the characteristics of Filipinos is resilience. And I believe that we cannot give what we do not have. And I believe that resilience comes naturally to Filipinos. Along with those that I have acquired as part of my experience and education, I put these all together. I said I will develop my thoughts and my ideas, I will add my experiences and things I have learned to show others that the contribution of Filipinos on an international or global scale is resilience in life, which is recognised by other nationalities who have seen how the Filipinos work and live. We are a resilient people. We are a race that has resilience.

So, from being a life coach, I zeroed into a more specific area of life. That is resilience. So, if ever people will invite me to talk about any issues within life, if these are not related to enriching one's resilience, I refer them to other coaches. There are many coaches nowadays. A resilience coach is very rare.

I believe that we belong to a race that is very resilient and since we can only give what we have, this is what we can give to the world – resilience. Thus, I peg myself as a resilience coach.

Mursha: Can you explain to us what resilience is and why it is especially important during a pandemic like today?

Eric: That is a very good question, but it is also very challenging because the word resilience is obviously an English word. We also know about the principle that there is a loss in translation when you transfer a word to another language. There are words in our Filipino language that do not have a direct translation into English.

My favourite example here is the word *biyenan*. When we say that in English - *in-law*. But the word *mother-in-law* when you translate into Filipino - *mother by regulation*, literally. So, the word *biyenan*, which we use, has no direct translation in English. There is a loss in translation because you do not call your *biyenan* your *mother by regulation*. For example, would you introduce her, 'Ah, this is my mother by regulation.' You would say, 'That is my *biyenan*.'

There is a certain experience within particular cultures in the world that are verbalized because that is part of their experience, which in other countries, in other cultures, there is no such word. So, the word resilience has equivalents but no direct translation in Tagalog.

With the word resilience we can quickly think about endurance. But it is not just endurance. What I can use to illustrate the word resilience is rubber band. Even the rubber band, we think of its translation *lastiko* or *goma*. Or rubber that bounces like

that of a basketball. When you stretch a rubber band and you release one end-- like a slingshot-- the rubber, when you stretch and release it, it then returns to normal.

That is the property that in physics is called *elasticity* or *elastic*. Some forms of rubber have that same property so your ball bounces. So, resilience is illustrated as such. It's like a rubber band or rubber that when stretched and pulled and you release it, it will return to normal. And the ball, when you throw and falls to the ground, it bounces.

So, resilience is not just endurance in Tagalog. We do not also say the ability to bounce because we may think of something else. Nor do we say the ability to stretch and turn around suddenly. I cannot find an exact Filipino translation of the word resilience. But those examples I have used illustrate it. Maybe the closest is - ability to recover. So, it is a long phrase. In English, one word, resilience. But when you translate into Filipino - ability to rise again. Or turn around. Or bounce. So, it takes a long explanation. So, that's resilience. We Filipinos, despite the various blows in life, are accustomed to rising again and recovering.

So, that is the concept of resilience I try to explain, but there are accompanying ideas. First, for instance, the rubber band, when it is stretched and goes back to normal, it is no longer the same as before. So, resilience is like that. Just because you are able to bounce back or go back does not mean that you are one hundred percent the same as before.

For example, there are instances where a victim of family violence has bounce back. Let's say she grew up in a family with verbal abuses. She was told hurtful words. Or she was always compared to other people and she had been underestimated. She thought those was normal. Then later on there were manifestations in her behaviour. She had insecurity for example, or she had trauma. She had fears. Whenever she heard people swearing, she would tremble and get scared because she remembered being cursed by a loved one. So, let's say that because of those setbacks or problems, he received intervention. She had counselling, a bouncing back experience, a turnaround. But even when those things have been addressed, she will no longer the same as before.

Just like a rubber band. Physically speaking, when you stretch it and it goes back to its earlier form, there is a small change. It is no longer as firm as it is used to be. But it has gone back. The same is true with the concept of resilience in life. We bounce back and recover. But we may not be the same as before, which does not mean we can't be the best of what we can be. We can still be the best of what we can be, in the new normal that we are saying right now.

For example, there is a person who because of his illness has had partial paralysis. He can no longer walk perfectly. Perhaps before he used to walk let's say 100 steps in ten minutes. Maybe now he can walk only 80 steps. He is still resilient. He got up again although not the same as before.

So, that also happens with families that are going healing, processes in which they forgive each other, are trying to go back to their previous bond and are trying to forget the past. But whatever that very ideal situation they started with when they

did not yet have the problems they faced; it would probably never happen again. They have a new normal, which can even be a better normal than before. So, the process they go through can be categorised as a process of being resilient. Bouncing back.

Some people like Sam Cawthorn, he calls that - bouncing forward. Sam Cawthorn is an Australian author and public speaker who wrote a book called Bounce Forward. He also had a big influence on me for becoming a resilience coach.

Mursha: What is the importance of having resilience if we relate it to the issue of preventing family violence?

Eric: Resilience also means having the proper skills to be able to deal with life's expected or unexpected setbacks. For example, with our current experience with pandemic, coronavirus is related to respiratory diseases. The coronavirus is new, respiratory diseases are not new. We already know a number of respiratory diseases depending on the country of reference. Say, here in Australia, we are first world, so there are respiratory diseases here that are unlike respiratory diseases in third world countries. Nevertheless, for example the flu. That is respiratory disease, but there are vaccines. Except this new coronavirus, no vaccine yet.

Resilience can be applied to, for example, respiratory diseases. For example, the flu. We are not talking about coronavirus; we are talking about normal flu. You can say that a person is resilient if even when he has the flu, he heals naturally. You can say that a person is resilient if with the help of medicine and strengthening his immune system while he has the flu, he is cured. You can also say that a person is resilient if he takes care of his health so that he does not get the flu.

That means, in those three examples I've given, that he already has applied skills. To prevent the flu, stay away from people who have the flu. That is a skill. To prevent the flu, take citric juices to boost the immune system. To prevent him from getting the flu, he sleeps at the right time. Avoided stress. Those are learned skills besides the natural coping mechanism of the body.

If you have the flu, you also have skills that the doctor teaches in order for you to heal. Now that there is coronavirus, the government and the health experts tell us to wear face masks so that if you have other diseases you can avoid the virus that can aggravate the situation. So, it's all about skills.

Now with the question about the relationship of resilience to prevent family violence. Resilience, in addition to our natural ability to recover or recover, are groups or sets of skills that must be constantly learned. So, family violence for example, you may not know now that you are experiencing family violence. For example, a family member may be abused, verbally, physically or emotionally abused. Or you have things that should be given to you but are neglected. You probably don't know that. You think that is normal.

So, to have the skill, it is necessary to first, have outside intervention. There are those who continuously teach that skill. *Ah, you should know that when you are told like this, that you must not tolerate it. It is important that you report it or consult a*

counselor. Because you might feel it is too much. But you are not speaking. Then you suddenly break down. You just explode like a volcano. You argue. That may lead to physical abuse that you will later regret the results.

Or, if you have endured that for a long time, you can have emotional scars or other repercussions that can cause you death. Or depression, or suicide. Or you may have passed on that experience to others because you think it is right to do that.

So, you study that too. Internally, apart from the outside intervention. You yourself need to study and continue to learn how to enrich or grow your ability to bounce back in life through various means.

Now, in relation to that, my challenge is this - Life normally has bitter experiences. Although it is also normal that people are just looking for the sweet experiences. But life is a combination of bitter and sweet experiences. Because both are normal, yet we only look for the sweet ones, we tend to avoid the bitter experiences. We invent technologies so the bitter are bypassed and what are left are the sweet, also known as happy, experiences. We do not want to be sad. We do not want to be lonely. We do not want to be grieving. We do not want to be frustrated. We want to always be happy.

But there are repercussions. Because first, being always happy-- apart from the issue of happiness is also a long discussion-- being happy is not always sustainable. For example, you are happy because there has been a party. Let's say you're from a middle eastern background where a party can last for a week. Weddings there take a week of fun. But you cannot have a marriage celebration for a year. It is not sustainable for you to always laugh and drink and dance 365 days and nights a year. You need to rest. You need to have a contrast of experience.

Let's just say you have a party that lasts for three hours. But after which that you have been very happy, you need to rest. You need to sleep. So, it is not sustainable that you are always happy. It is also not sustainable especially when you are always sad, you are always crying, you are always depressed, or feeling frustrated. But what I'm saying is both of these go together in life.

The fault of generations, especially during this time, is that we invent technology or situations to bypass those that are sad. We want pure fun. One such example is communications technology, computer. That includes smart phones. The goal of these technologies is to speed up and make things easier. To bypass the times when we are bored, sad, depressed. But the wiring of our brain is to deal with those two aspects that I mentioned - bitter and sweet. The human brain is not wired just for fun experiences. It is also ready for us to face life's trials or go through bitter experiences.

So now, what happens to people because they invent technology so everything is convenient, is the weakening of their faculty to be resilient or to recover when those natural things that we call bitter experiences come. Because they are only ready for just the sweet ones.

Studies show that our current brain or the ability of our mind, which is also in charge of our mental health and other emotions, its wiring or design is to deal not only with those sweet or happy experiences but also the sad ones or bitter experiences. When we try to bypass all the sad or uncomfortable experiences in life, that faculty of our brain that is ready and should be developed to face life's trials becomes useless. Like muscles. When you do not use it, it atrophies. They say it softens.

That's why those who go to the gym also have coaches, trainers. That is for example, to develop the muscles in the legs, develop the muscles in the arms, or to tone whatever part of their body they want to. And that goes through uncomfortable training. Lifting irons, stretching, sit ups, pushing ups. In life there are push-ups, there are stretching, there are lifting dumb bells and barbells, going through difficult experiences. When we rush through technology, the muscle that have to be developed are not developed.

Now, times do come when such experiences happen in life. Take for example the person you married. You have only met your partner and then stay together after so many months or years. You cannot really know each other personalities one hundred percent. You will discover things that you have not known when you become senior citizens. And that is a fact.

There was a story I read about the Greeks. In one of the provinces in Greece, a guest was invited to a friend's house where they had a fun dinner. When the grandparents were washing the dishes, the guest heard them fighting. They were arguing with each other. So, the guest asked, *'What are they doing, what are they talking about?'* The grandson said, *'Just ignore them. That is how they are. They are making love.'* The visitor thought the friend was just joking about them making love. It turns out that in the culture of that province, that behaviour is indeed part of making love. Which we do not really consider as sexual but rather they have been very accustomed to that culture that arguments are really an expression of their intimacy. Yet they argue.

Another example is the story of a couple who was celebrating their 50th anniversary celebration. The husband gave his wife the end of the bread. The wife suddenly became angry.

'I don't want to, I'm fed up!'

'Why? Why are you angry?'

'During the fifty years we have been together, you have been giving me the end of the bread. You don't know that I don't like that. I've been tolerating it!'

The husband said, *'I didn't know you didn't want that. Why did not you tell me? I, on the other hand, had been enduring too because the end of the bread is my favorite. Yet I do not eat it. It is the best for me, but I always give it to you.'*

So, there is a lesson there. Communication. Because they did not have proper communication skills that are part of resilience, they ended up arguing just because they endured.

We say that in life, things happen. For example, like we said, you and the person you have married do not know each other that well. And then added to that is that you are used to comfort, you are used to things being easy, you are always impatient, you have no self-control. Either you end up in a bad situation-- and a lot of that is happening in our time, especially here in Australia. Or to other various situations where that can lead.

For example, still in the field of family violence. These kids, because they are used to having smart tablets early on and they can easily go online, they no longer grow up doing household chores. So, now they immediately think that it is abuse when they are being taught by their parents to wash dishes or work. The parents will now be reported to the police. But the parent is just trying to be a good parent.

But because the children's brains have been rewired to think that there is convenience in everything with the use of smart phone or smart computer, it is now the parent who appears to be stupid. So, children today call the elderly stupid. Because they think being smart is just like using a smart phone. Because the phone is smart. When you are not functioning in the same way as a smart phone, you are stupid.

We now see a change in perspective, change in behavior of people because there is something that has been bypassed by our environment or by people who do not want to go through certain experiences. And these are the uncomfortable situations. They want everything to be fast. Everything should just be easy.

That started in the early, probably, 70s when we started to have something instant. Instant coffee, instant noodles, instant like this, instant like that. But there have also been many by-products that are not healthy for the body. That experience persists now in the field of communication technology. And as I see it, they corrode and destroy our ability to enrich our resilience in life.

Perhaps one of the useful warnings that our listeners should consider today – Let us not fear uncomfortable situations. Even if we don't intend them to but they will surely come in our lives. So, it is important that we learn the skills to deal with those things. Otherwise we will snap.

Mursha: You have mentioned that resilience entails having certain life skills. What life skills are these? And will you please give us practical tips on how to nurture such life skills that go with developing resilience?

Eric: Many thanks for that question. Perhaps I will just think about three, as there are several life skills. And these 3 items that I initially thought about are by-products of the present generation and what we are trying to accomplish using our modern technology.

Number one is the skill to be patient or the willingness to wait. We now have gadgets that teach us impatience. In the past, if you were downloading something from the internet and it took two minutes, that was okay. Now, if you are downloading and it has taken two minutes already, you become so bored. We can translate that into our

relationships in life. We may not notice it but there are now a lot of people who talk really fast. And very multi-focused. They are not focused on the person they are talking to.

I know that some studies show the female species as more capable at multi-tasking than us males. But I often notice even with the males that I talk to. Because our smart phones can easily be brought along where we go and when these are upgraded and when new models are released, they become progressively faster. That is then translated to how to interact with other people that we become very impatient.

I have learned that patience is a virtue because there are things in life that you cannot and should not rush because it has its natural timing. It has its natural pacing.

There was also this story from the late Filipino senator Juan Flavio Velasco in one of his columns. Barrio Breeze was the name of his column in a newspaper. He said to a young woman, *'If you are looking for someone to marry, look for three things. One, find someone who has thick skin on his hands. Number two, find that who goes home to his hometown. Number three, look for the man who plants trees.'*

The young woman answered, *'But why? What do those characteristics mean?'*

Because the one who has thick skin on his palm is not afraid to work. The skin on his hands are not thin because he is a hard worker. The person who visits his hometown knows how to look back to where he has come from. They know how to value their past in order to live their present and move on to their future.

He who plants a tree is a person who has developed patience. Because a tree, when you plant it now, it does not immediately become a tree tomorrow. It needs nurturing, waiting, growing. And when the time comes when the seed has grown, becomes a tree and bears fruit, it means that the person who planted it knows how to wait. And so he now can enjoy the fruit that he has hoped for.

So, patience is a virtue that is bypassed by the gadgets we have today. That is not learned by kids who always say, *'I want it now!'* And what they say next is often *'Ahh, this is boring.'* Patience is a factor of resilience. There are things in life that we cannot hasten. That if we rush them, they turn out, as we say in Filipino, ripened by force. It has no value. It does not taste good. But you wouldn't know it if you're used to that taste. So, patience versus impatience.

There are so many of us now who are impatient. In the area of family violence, there may be those who are suffering because of impatience. It could also be that you had been patient enough but now you have to make a decision. So it's all up to you how you will apply that but patience will always be a virtue that when bypassed, causing impatience, the person may become impatient even with his or her life. That she may want to end it all because she has become impatient with herself.

Number two – develop self control. At present, due to instant gratification around us and everything can be done online, we are also lacking of self-control. Everything can be bought. We want to have everything. Self-control is a virtue because sometimes you need to go through trial and error. Or you may need to observe the

experiences of others. If they have made a mistake and if you have at least not done it yet because you've had self-control, then learning from their mistake you will be spared of the consequences.

Self-control also helps against getting addiction to things. For instance, I focus on gadgets, gadgets are addictive. The video games stimulate the release of dopamine, the master molecule for addiction. We notice that these days you already want to sleep but having no self-control, you keep on checking your phone. You keep checking Facebook. Because you haven't got self-control, you lose sleep. You become weak. Your immunity drops.

I am a columnist here in Sydney for the Philippine Community Herald newspaper where I said that there were arguments that led to divorce but that could have been prevented had the couple slept on time and for enough hours. Rather than checking on Facebook even if it's late at night. Then wake up the next morning with a bad mood and temper due to lack of sleep. Due to bad mood, they bicker then fight. Then it leads to separation or divorce. Bottomline is sometimes divorce can be avoided if you only sleep. When you have slept well, you wake up feeling good, your mood is good, the separation may not have happened.

So, first, patience. The second virtue along with patience is self-control. The third, of course, is love. Love is I believe the most important of all. And loving is not a feeling or infatuation. It is a skill that we nurture and develop all through our lives. Like what I said earlier about the story of the grandparents who were bickering while washing dishes. They are already old but they still argue. But that argument is part of their love. As long as there is no verbal or physical abuse.

Love is a skill that we also learn. It is the kind of love that is healthy. Of course, it is not healthy if you are abusive. That may not even be love and you have to walk away from that situation. It is the kind of love that is not just romantic. Since at present our notion of love is that of romance.

It is similar to the concept of compatibility. Some people say, *'Yes, we have met. We have chemistry. We're compatible. Maybe we're meant to be. S/he is my soulmate.'* But compatibility is an achievement of love. It is not a prerequisite of love. That means you can only become compatible after several decades where through thick and thin, in the midst of storms and trials, you remain together because you triumphed. Before your last breath or at least during your 40th or 50th anniversary, you can say, *'Ah, we've been 40 years compatible.'* *'Turns out we're 50 years compatible.'*

However, if you search for the one who is compatible with you right now then we expect a lot of single men and women out there. Because it may just be infatuation or mere feeling. It is not really compatibility. Because love is a skill that we learn. It is also a product of time. Looking back, it is only later that you can say whether or not you have been compatible. Because romance will fly away but compatibility is a by-product of that long relationship.

There, three things. Patience, self-control, and love. Skills that we need to learn. We have our own ways to be able to learn them, although there are still others.

Mursha: And love is not just emotion or feeling. It is a life skill that is learned.

Eric: That's right. It is not just emotion. They are life skills. So, that is where life coaches come in, why counsellors are needed, why mentors are needed. Because we learn from each other. We should be thankful that there are people who teach and mentor without pay because all these things bring about added skills in accordance with their teachings.

What I am saying here is that we also need to pay for things that we value in life. What do we pay them with? First, time. You spend time for you to learn. Second, you give payment that is practical. So, there are professional fees because these are also needed by those who give their time to teach you the practical skills. And of course, there is your presence. It is important that you are not only informed. Because you spend time and you pay the fees, you also need to be present for you to learn the skill.

For those who attend church gatherings and fellowships, it is almost free since they already talk among themselves during those meetings. That's probably why they give donations of offerings there. At least it is not a set professional fee.

But by saying all of these things, what I mean is that if something is of value to you—for instance, love is important for you, it is important for you to learn patience – then you have to invest in it. It is like my health is important for me so I buy supplements. You go to the chemist, you pay \$10 or \$20 because you want to boost your immune system. Or you may download an app because you find it important to learn about it.

So, everything that is important to you will have to cost you, which in the long run will bring back benefits to you. That is why if we really value those things we have mentioned, people should also learn the skills and invest on them so that they will grow in them. Self-taught is also possible. However, you still pay yourself if it is self-taught. You pay with your emotion, you learn to do things by yourself, deal with problems on your own with no one to talk to.

So, I challenge people that if you value something, you have to make time to invest on it or pay for it. It will cost you and that is fine. Because they are important in life. It is not just the natural vitamins that we buy from the chemist that we spend on but also even the psychosocial skills that we learn from life coaches, pastors...

Mursha: So, if we value our family, we must also invest.

Eric: Correct. We must also invest on things that we value in the family. That's where the significant role of activities by churches, such as marriage enrichment seminars, come in. Or the parenting seminars of organisations. Or in schools which are the partners of parents in raising their kids. While you are at work and you send your kids to school, then there are school activities that the teachers will invite you to participate in. So you have to make time to be with your children. You have to make time connecting with the educational providers of your children so that you will be able to really nurture that parental role that you have.

Also, for instance, the couple may need to have their own personal space. Just the two of them. Minus the kids or whoever is normally with them. And individually, what we refer to as self-care. Having spouse does not mean you should always be with your partner. There are aspects of self-care needed for you to have a healthy perspective on yourself. In the context of the family, sometimes the wife needs to be on her own. The husband needs to be on his own. They can just go on a long drive alone. The partner does not have to be with them. They'll just enjoy the music or anything they enjoy that the partner may not like.

Or we may have what we call our own madness in life that are still within sanity. Let them express their own madness in his or her own private moment. What for you is madness may be for them are their way to release tension or of issues they have in life that you do not really understand. Those things sometimes cause arguments in the family.

'I don't know, I don't understand him. He keeps on buying things, superheroes, miniature collections. So much money has been spent. He keeps going to EB Games. He keeps going to so and so!'

'How about you? Our bedroom is full of bags. Do I say anything? Why is our bedroom so full of bags?'

If that is part of what they consider self-care, or perhaps they just lack self-control, that is up to you to manage. But what we are saying is that it is part of self-care to have time for those skills.

Let's think about this, those who are listening to us right now. How many hats are you wearing? The hat of a parent, the hat of a father, the hat of a child to your parents, the hat of a sibling. If you want to develop those four relationships – sibling, parent, child, spouse – you need to invest time for all of those. You need to invest resources. You need to invest emotions. So that you can nurture those things. So you can say that you are one happy family.

But if your investments are purely on gadgets and you do not speak to each other, you are always impatient with one another. You do not have self-control. You are together but each one of you are on your headphones. You are in your own worlds even when it is meal time. The food is delicious but the picture of food posted on Instagram is what you are liking instead. While you cannot even say you like the food in front of you. That's virtual reality. For me, that is not developing resilience at all. No matter how you like what you see on Instagram, it will never pass through your taste buds. You then miss out on the real tastiness of the bitter melon or the sour soup that you can actually taste only when you sip on it.

Mursha: Coach Eric, they say, and you have also said this earlier that Filipinos are inherently resilient. What is the significance of this in the context of migration and settlement just like in Australia?

Eric: That is a very good question. Of the those who have recognised our resilience is not a Filipino but an American. When Typhoon Haiyan, locally known as Yolanda hit

Tacloban, Anderson Cooper who was a CNN reporter went there. And while he was reporting on what he saw, he said he could not help but cry. In fact, when he made his Reporter's Notebook on CNN, he was crying, and he said at the ending, *'Mabuhay, Philippines! Thank you for teaching us how to live.'*

Imagine someone living in the first world that we think has all the benefits to really live thanking a third world country where everything that surrounded him had no life but were dead bodies instead because they were inundated by the storm. But he said, *'Thank you. You taught us how to truly live in the midst of storms in life.'*

That shows that it is not just the material benefits that give life. America has those but they do not have life. The Philippines, on the other hand, has been besieged by the storm. Nevertheless, people are smiling. And that is the way to live.

For me that is resilience because as Anderson Cooper said, just give the people assistance and they can rise again. That is our characteristic.

That is further strengthened when you become a migrant because you are always an outsider. That is much needed by Filipinos and we have that. Because we adjust to a new environment. We adjust to a new culture. We adjust to new ways of doing. We adjust to things that we are not used to. These may be benefits or sacrifices.

Because we also adjust to benefits. In the Philippines before, when you enter the supermarket, you need to push the door open. Here, doors are automatic. They open on their own. That is a benefit. Delightful. In the Philippines, you speak to the saleslady when you pay. Here, you speak to a computer when you pay, and the computer talks to you like a pretty lady. These are benefits that we are not used to.

Now there are also downsides of things like those because kids may grow up looking at you as dumb even you are their parent because you are not as adept with computers as them, you are not used to the technology they use here, and your English grammar is wrong and they learn correct grammar in school.

If you are not resilient then you will just give in to situations such as those. Of if you are a new arrival to a country such as Australia and you have not been in a situation where you have been considered an outsider. You are not strong enough to endure and you feel homesick, you may just decide to go back to your home country. And if that is not your life's goal then it is not good since your intention really is to migrate.

So, let me just put it this way. This characteristic of resilience is important because we are foreigners in countries such as this and we have goals that we want to achieve. And we know that it is not easy due to factors that I have already mentioned. Plus, there are factors that we are not familiar with and so we have to learn about. And this characteristic of being resilient in life, for sure we will go through a lot of disappointing situations. We may sometimes feel, even if not real, that we are being treated with racism. We may feel discriminated even if that is not the case. It may be true; it may not be true. We may be stereotyped.

Those things are normal. Let's reverse the situation. A foreigner is in our country. Even if we do not have bad intentions, they may feel that we are racist, that we are

discriminating or we are stereotyping. That is natural for a foreigner. Since we are the foreigners here, we are the ones to adjust. If you are not resilient, if you do not know how to bounce back and rise again after such setbacks, then you cannot achieve your goals to migrate.

That has been proven by a lot of migrants. The most basic example are the Jewish people. Before there was the state of Israel, they had been in various places in the world. They had been persecuted by Hitler. But we know now that those are most successful, most wealthy and the best in many different fields – science, education, philanthropy and many others, countless. Most of them are Jewish people in the diaspora. Because they were also outsiders in their host countries, they were also a resilient people.

Even using ancient texts, what we call today as the Bible. Old Testament, New Testament. We can see that the early Jewish people who were expelled from and gone of Egypt, they were resilient. The early Christians, they were resilient. Even if they were fed to the lions, they were killed, persecuted.

So, resilience is key to success. Not just to survive but to thrive in the new normal. For migrants here in Australia, our new normal is to assimilate in Australia. Assimilation is one of the many challenges of multicultural communities. To assimilate or to stick to one's identity? But the key for that is resilience in order to have success either in assimilation or whatever objectives you have in migrating beyond country.

Mursha: That is all the time we have for today. Thank you very much for listening. We invite you to follow our Facebook page, Ugnayan Melbourne, for more information and podcasts. Until next time!

EPISODE 5: THE ROLE OF RELIGION IN FAMILY VIOLENCE PREVENTION

Following our earlier episode on the importance of resilience, Resilience Coach Rev. Eric Maliwat now highlights the vital role of religion in family violence prevention.

Mursha: We are still with Coach Eric and now, we will talk about the important role of religion in promoting family violence prevention.

Coach Eric, besides being a Resilience Coach, you are also a Christian minister. From the perspective of Christianity, how do we describe a relationship that is strong and safe from violence? What is known as healthy and safe relationship?

Eric: That is a good question that is very relevant to the present times. I always believe that if there someone who has taught about the concept of love, which is very foreign during the ancient times the way we understand love in terms of community and family, there is no one else but Jesus who is known as the foundation of Christianity. The Lord Jesus or Jesus Christ.

Even atheist researchers, those who do not believe in God, referring to the historical Jesus, recognise that idea of -- even in the West, when it comes to love, non-romantic love -- the proponent is Jesus.

Love is in the teachings of the original followers of Jesus. *Love God more than anything else. Love your neighbour as yourself.*

This idea of love, which we can translate as care or affection is the foundation of Christianity. And as we said earlier, there are skills by which love, care, and affection are demonstrated, lived, felt, or passed on to other members of the family. These skills may take a long discussion but at least we are clear that love is a core teaching of Christianity. And along with love is respect to an individual's being.

We can see that this was exemplified or demonstrated by Jesus in the various ways by which he interacted, for which I would use two descriptions. First, inclusive. Second, nonjudgmental.

There is inequality in society, but Jesus has shown us that we need to treat each of those stereotyped by society or excluded by religion as equally important. That is why Jesus -- Primary to the culture of the Jews at that time that men did not interact with women publicly. And there are still cultures or religions with that norm at present. But there were several instances where Jesus spoke with women. Not just briefly but included in his disciples were women. There were a number of women who were named Maria from different places. Maria of Magdala, known as Maria Magdalena, Maria of this, Maria of that. Since Maria was then a common name so there were many Marias among his disciples.

Also, there were prostitutes or women who were not married who in their religion were considered as inappropriate to talk to as they were of bad reputation. Jesus dealt with them to show his love to his *neighbour as yourself*, to those outside his race.

So, like I said, he was inclusive. He was not judgemental. He also talked to the Roman soldiers. There was an instance where he went to the house of a Roman centurion to heal his slave. And we know that in their religion, the Jews would not go with those people. Although they were an occupied territory of Rome that was then the ruling class at that time. They were part of the commonwealth or colony of Rome. But religiously speaking, they would not go to where the Gentiles were because these were unclean people, so to speak.

But Jesus would go and oblige to the request of the Roman centurion for him to heal the slave. It was even the Roman officer who sent the message, *I am not worthy. Perhaps he knew about their cultural differences. Do not come to my house anymore.* Because Jesus was a Jew and he was a Roman. *So just say that he will heal, and he will.* He believed that Jesus was powerful. But Jesus' gesture of going was a gesture of inclusivity and nonjudgement, equality.

He did not discriminate. He also had among his disciples those referred to in their religion as compromising Jews. Tax collectors who were Jews, but they were working for the Roman government. So, they were compromising. But they became disciples

of Jesus. Jesus even said, *Come here and I will have supper with you. I will come to your home.* Which in their religion was a no-no. You should not be in good terms with those kinds of people because they were unclean, so to speak. So, Jesus exemplified what he taught that you should love your neighbour as yourself.

Jesus also knew about self-care, which is part of loving your neighbour emanating from you loving yourself. What were the self-care strategies of Jesus?

The image of Jesus we know is what the West pictured of him, which is too serious. There is this picture with the eyes looking at you wherever you go. And he does not see to know how to smile. My favourite picture of Jesus is one where he laughs and smiles. In fact, there was this film mini-series where he was joking with his disciples. That was in the late '90s in America.

So, self-care of Jesus, he knows how to eat, to dine with others. In fact, he was always criticised by the religious leaders because he loved to eat. He always partied. In his first miracle, he made wine at a wedding with his mother Mary. He would dine in the homes of questionable people. Questionable for the religious leaders.

And part of Jesus' self-care even if he was quite busy, he would separate himself from the group. He would go into personal lockdown. He would self-isolate. He would go to the wilderness. Whatever he did there, to pray, only him knew. Perhaps his prayer was through sleeping soundly or he falls into the ground and cries or laughs or dances like King David in the past. Only he knows that as a person. But the point is he spends personal time with himself, with the Father, with God. For me, those are self-care. Loving yourself.

He also knew how to cry. So, the emotions that Jesus showed were complete. Self-care, loving your neighbour as yourself, loving other people that I mentioned as he loved himself. As a human being.

There are religions now and perhaps I'll just mention them – Judaism, Islam, Christianity – they are all Abrahamic religions. They come from the belief that Abraham is the father of monotheistic religion. And in that culture, in the Middle East and in other Asian countries, the father figure is very strong. What is called patriarchal. There are at present various communities or denominations within these religious groups that are no longer very strictly adhering to the very paternalistic practices of where they've originated.

But the pioneers of that were the followers of Jesus and we call them normally as Christians. Since it had been in the teachings of Jesus that you should love your neighbour as yourself and what he had exemplified that there should be equal treatment even in terms of gender. Thus, he elevated the status of women.

It's just that with Christianity, structures were put in place when he left. Paul became a disciple of the Lord. Although he was not part of the original twelve, it was a personal experience of God appearing to him – there is an account of that in the Bible – gave him the urge to teach Jesus as the Christ. And he started to put structure and order in the local communities which had become the churches.

Many things that Paul said were part of the culture they had at that time. Since they were still torn between Judaism and the Roman practices, there are a lot of restrictions on women to function in the local communities, which were called the churches during the time of Paul. And they needed to put structures that were not too far away from the norms of that time.

But going back to the teachings of Jesus, at least the historical Christ – our references at least are Matthew, Mark and Luke, and later on, after 100 years came John – we will be safe when our reference is Jesus and how he interacted with different kinds of peoples, whether women or men, in order to live what is considered equal treatment of men and women.

There are tasks that we can say physically are more suitable for men, more suitable for women. For instance, women give birth. Although they may already be men that give birth nowadays and I am not aware of. Perhaps it is now being done through science. But normally, even with other animal species, the females give birth. The males cannot. It is the males that give the sperms, not the females. So, those are what we say, by nature are our differences. Those are what we refer to. I believe that whatever our differences are, they should be complementary.

Now, education is a big thing here. Christianity is also a proponent of education so that for couples, the woman and the man, their differences will not lead to the point of unhealthy partnerships or relationships that can be abusive to both of them. Because both of them have power. For the man, let's say it is physical. There are physical abuses, verbal abuses. But women also have the power that can -- the power of women is on the level of denial. They can deny what they know is needed by the men. It could be that the man rapes because the woman does not want to. Those kinds of things. And the wife will just give in for the sake of the relationship.

There are also the cultural values of Asians, such as valuing the reputation of the family. So that the family appears to be whole, as if they do not have problems, because they think about what other people will say. But within the home, the fact is they are broken. That is a very Asian culture.

I can say that the church can do a lot to unpack the reasons, like what I did earlier where I talked about where that started within the church. That is basically because of the teachings of Paul who tried to bring in a structure within the assemblies or the churches, which Jesus himself did not do. So, if we are to make Jesus as our model, it is easier for the religious leaders to teach about gender equality because Jesus himself showed this as an example.

Again, bottom line, Jesus is the best example of how to deal what is inclusive, nonjudgmental and with equality. He did not discriminate even those who were discriminated by society, especially the sick, the ostracised, the discriminated. Jesus welcomed them and even gave a part of himself to them.

Mursha: As Christians, how do we ensure that our family and communities are safe from abuse or violence?

Eric: It may be helpful if that can be taken up during Bible studies or fellowships. We are used to only talk about nonpractical things when we speak of the Bible or anything related to God. Sometimes very ideal. Praying, worship, praises, miracles, or things that can lighten our feelings. But there are many practical aspects of Christianity or religion that are in the scriptures, which are references on how to live our lives.

If your religious leaders do not do that and you have the knowledge about these things, then you may as well share. It might be that they have not looked into that particular aspect. The members may suggest, for instance, *O, there is a group here that is advocating on this area. It might be good if we take a look at how this can be adapted to our life of faith.* So, the key there still is for members to speak up if that role is not being performed by their religious leaders.

What I can add to that specifically is first, we need to know the definition of abuse. So, we really need education. Well, we cannot just assume that they already know all about that. That is where organisations come in to make advocacy, campaign, educational drives in the difference forms that they know of – whether social media, traditional media, print or whatever visuals, forums or fora.

This is a call to the various organisations or even the individuals who want to lead these organisations to educate the public. Because it is possible that families do not know.

Now, to the families that are listening, as I have said earlier, we have investments. It is part of your investment in yourself and in your family that you learn. So, if there are opportunities such as this, the head of the family, regardless of whoever that head is, must take the lead in having their family become educated. Or get himself educated. Whether you are a single parent, or you are in a non-traditional family situation, you have to empower yourself. Starting by educating yourself what it means by abuse.

Because you may already be abusive but are unaware that you are a perpetrator of abuse. Or it is possible that you are a victim of abuse, but you think that is humility and that the Lord is just using the other person. And that the Lord is giving more blessings to you. You may already be abused but you think that it is a pathway to blessing. You may not know which is which if you have not gone through the right learning. So, that is your responsibility to yourself, your investment in yourself and in your family.

So, those are the things that cannot be bought by your superannuation when the time comes. Things that you need to learn so that you can enjoy the good benefits right now and not when you are already retired. You may then have a lot of money, you have many investments, but you are in tears because you have not been happy in the past.

Mursha: That is a good point, Coach. What you said about people may think it is a pathway to blessing when in fact it is already becoming a traumatic experience.

Eric: Correct.

Mursha: So, using your hat as a minister, what advice will you give to our listeners who may be experiencing problems in their relationships or who may be at risk of abuse or family violence?

Eric: All of us, in one way or another, may have experienced this. So, if you are going through this kind of challenge in your life, you are not alone. You may see other people seemingly very happy, smiling. But you just may not know it that they may be going through something more painful than you are. That thing is they've read a poster that says *Whatever you are going through, get up, dress up, show up and never give up*. So, they are smiling because they've read something like that. But behind the smiles or the laughter of people or personalities who we are envious of, they are also going through something.

And because that is normal and you are not alone, you should not deal with your problem by yourself. There is nothing shameful in reaching out and opening up to those who can help you. If it helps you and it lightens your feeling to talk to a friend or a counsellor or someone you know has the ability to listen, then do so. But if what you need is more than just needing someone to listen to you, then don't be ashamed to seek help from professionals.

As we have said, with the technology today, we have access to the internet. We have access to organisations by calling their telephone numbers, to their meetings that are done with confidentiality. So, let us ask for help. It is not weakness. It is not cowardice to seek help because we need one another.

Those who are listening to us today who have the capacity to help, let us also show that we are approachable. Let us show that we are inclusive, non-judgmental. And let us show that we are not discriminating. I remember when I was young, my teacher in Bible study said to me, *Eric, your face naturally looks snobbish and surly. That is why when you talk to people, you always have to add more smile. Otherwise, people will be scared of you because you look unfriendly*. Since that is what you look like in your family, you cannot do anything but to smile, to exert effort. I have learned that.

So, wearing my hat as a minister, it is the same. So that people will not be scared of you and you know that you are truly nonjudgmental, inclusive, non-discriminating, and you really want to help but you look scary, then you have to exert effort to be friendly. Because someone may be in need of your ideas or whatever you can give. But because you are too formal and you are not approachable, then you miss out on the opportunity to be able to just come alongside that person or empower that person.

At the same time, again, going back to those who are in need of help, there are ways by which to seek help. If you want to be confidential and anonymous, there are platforms currently available in order for you to have someone to talk to. Initially to give first aid to your situation. Since that is what is important, first aid. It is like momentarily taking off your mask in order to breathe and have oxygen. And once you are empowered, I believe you are on your way to recovery since there are specific instructions that you will be empowered with.

And again, to those who are in the position to help, to be able to come alongside, there are also available platforms for you to come alongside. Make yourself available for phone calls. Make yourself available for social media engagements. Make yourself available through meetups. Although there is physical distancing due to our new normal. Or you can create Facebook pages or Instagram accounts that seek to encourage or educate people.

These are the advice I can give to the two groups – those at risk and those who are in the position to empower, to help, to come alongside those who are at risk.

Mursha: Many thanks, Coach Eric. Such meaningful advice and insights that you have shared with us today. I and for sure our listeners, too, have learned a lot from our conversation today.

Eric: Many thanks as well for the privilege to share with our friends. It is always a pleasure for me to talk about these things, which also personally matter to me. And I just invite you to visit me on our Facebook page Resilience Works. That's Resilience Works on Facebook. And I also have a YouTube channel. My YouTube channel is The Grape City Media. So, two platforms that you can view from time to time and that may help in your situation.

All the best to what you are doing. And of course, always look after yourselves so that you can look after other people.