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Text and photos: Ng Jia Yi

Additional photos: Qin Yunquan, Lily Goh

Mothers are, undoubtedly, a force to be reckoned with. They possess a 24/7 job which they are unable to quit, and yet they embrace their obligations with vigour, shaping the next generation with their tireless hard work.

Although motherhood may be one of the toughest jobs in the world, they are offered no compensation and sometimes, even acknowledgement is scarce.

But what could be a better form of encouragement to a mother, than witnessing the success and accomplishments of their beloved children?

This Mother's Day, we seek to honour all mothers by featuring three strong ladies who have overcome trials and tribulations – thanks to the presence of motherly love – and achieved great things in turn.

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## Qin Yunquan

Qin Yunquan, at the young age of 24, has accomplishments that many of her peers cannot boast of. Not only had she successfully overcome anorexia, she is now an honoree of the Singapore Woman Award 2014 and an instructor at Kapap Academy Singapore, where she equips those in need – mostly young women – with self-defence skills that will help them overcome violent situations.

Kapap is a type of street-smart martial art that utilises the principles of physics, not strength, to get out of tricky situations.

Some of Qin's students have been through traumatic experiences such as molestation and rape. It was after hearing about their stories that she decided to make self-defence education her calling in life.

"A lot of ladies in Singapore are not used to [or] exposed to violence," Qin pointed out, "They break down at the first sign of violence, even if the attacker hasn't really hit them yet."

She hopes to be able to help her students develop the ability to defend themselves in threatening circumstances by preparing them both physically and mentally.

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The Kapap course delves into the psychological effect of fear and how to overcome it, thus preventing the "freeze response" when being surprised by an attack. However, rather than their parrying skills, what's most important is the awareness of one's surroundings. Qin firmly believes that "self-defence is not about engagement, it's actually about the pre-conflict".

"If you're so aware of your surroundings, you might not even have to defend yourself, because danger never comes to you," she reasoned.

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Qin's mission may not be an easy one but she derives immense satisfaction from having made an impact on others' lives.

Qin has witnessed countless students who have walked through her doors and left stronger and more confident. Feminine, petite girls who are often timid, grow empowered enough to volunteer themselves for demonstrations, and watching these girls grow into self-assured young women is one of Qin's greatest motivations.

However, despite the help that learning Kapap might render to these ladies, their family still remains one of their major sources of support. Within the family, mothers may offer their daughters the emotional support that they cannot find elsewhere.

Qin said, "Mothers are ladies themselves, so they can relate a lot to the loss of self-worth from the daughter's perspective. One of the common things that the victims feel is that they are not good enough for people. They feel that they are dirty, and that the family thinks it's shameful for [such a thing] to happen [to them]. Mothers can reassure daughters that it's not like that, and no matter what they've been through, [the mothers] will always love them."

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Photo: Qin Yunquan

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Qin herself had gotten through hard times with her mother's support. When she was 17 and plagued with low self-esteem, she suffered from a bout of anorexia. She had given her family a lot of trouble, she admitted, but her mother had stood by her all the way.

"In her own ways, of course, she chided me, but she never stopped seeking treatment for me," Qin recalled, "She could go from east to west just to take me to different doctors, spent a lot of money, and woke up in the morning to brew herbs for me."

Her mother's unwavering support spoke of her love for Qin, greatly touching the latter. It was with her mother's help that Qin eventually recovered from anorexia and moved on with her life.

Her mother's teachings are also one of the reasons why Qin is doing what she does now. When she was young, her mother frequently reminded her of the importance of helping others, encouraging her to donate to those in need. This imbued in Qin the values of compassion and kindness, which she still holds dear and lives by today.

"She helped me to understand the importance of helping others. Life is not about living for yourself, but living for others."

Although Qin's mother had not been supportive of her martial arts career out of concern for her, her mother now understands her motivations, and Qin knows that she has made her mother proud.

"She's been sharing with her friends what I do and what the academy does, and through her little ways I know that she

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is proud of me," Qin said.

And Qin is no less grateful towards her mother, for all the things that she has done for her since young: "Thank you for being a great part of my life, for shaping my character to give me important values that I hold dear, even to this day. Thank you for being by my side when I needed help."

"I think that as a child, I can only do so much for you, because I will forever be indebted to you," she added, "but what I hope that I can do is to make you proud, and to let you know that your grooming for me has not been in vain, because I will show you the great things that I can achieve in life."

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## Pearlynn Sim

Pearlynn Sim (not in picture), 20, is a prime example of the immense impact Qin's work has on society.

At the age of 14, she entered a lift with an unknown man, under the impression that he was kind since he had held the lift doors open for a woman on a wheelchair earlier.

However, her naïve trust was betrayed when the man assaulted her as the lift went up.

She had been unable to do anything to defend herself. "I wasn't expecting it, so I froze," she recalled. The man only beat a hasty retreat when the lift doors opened and Sim took a sudden step forward, frightening him.

For close to six months, Sim had to battle with a fear of taking the lift. What was worse was that the attack had occurred at her own block, in the same lift that she had to take every day to and from school.

When her friends told her of the Kapap programme, she decided to give it a try. Through the academy's teachings, she realised that her lack of ability to resist her attacker could have led to worse situations such as rape or violence.

Now, thanks to the skills that she has acquired from the Kapap programme, Sim is definitely better equipped to defend herself if such a situation ever arises again.

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Sim is also grateful for her mother's support during the months following the attack. Coming from a traditional Asian family, her mother did not offer overt displays of affection and concern. Nevertheless, she could feel her mother's concern for her through the little things that she did.

"There was more of a silent display of concern about my safety," Sim said, "You can tell from how she instructs my maid to always go downstairs and pick me up when I come back from school."

She might not voice it out often, but there's no doubt that Sim loves her mother deeply. "Because we're all Asians, we're not used to public displays of affection. I think sometimes she may feel unappreciated for doing all [the things] that she does, but we still take it for granted. She just does what she does out of love for us, [and] I feel really touched by [that]."

This Mother's Day, Sim will be taking a step to express her gratitude to her mother by taking over all the household chores. She also wants to gift her mother with a very big thank you: "Even though we (she and her siblings) don't really show how much we appreciate [her], we really do. We just don't know how to express it without making it awkward, but we really appreciate what my mother does for us, and we really love her."

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