

The Taboo in Breastfeeding

She defies tradition according to adamant confinement ladies, grandmothers and mothers who are dead against breastfeeding. She is a mother of four and the founder of Bonda Villa – a confinement home that advocates breastfeeding. Meet Gina Yong.

By Anisha Prasad

PILLARS: You have been a breastfeeding consultant for 10 years now. What had you deciding on a home like Bonda Villa in Shah Alam?

Angry confinement ladies <laughs>. I used to conduct consultations at my clients houses and I used to get so upset whenever the confinement lady or grandmother offered the mother wrong information which leads the new mom to stop breastfeeding. They claim that with breast milk, the baby wakes up and cries for milk after two hours as opposed to babies who are given formula milk and sleep in for up to four hours. Little do they know that these babies sleep long hours due to over feeding. And that's how Bonda Villa came about. This is a place where you start off with the right information, applying the right methods which result in successful breastfeeding habits. That for me is most important.

Growing up, did you always know you were going to open your own business?

I always worked towards being my own boss. My siblings and I are all not employees at present and we have our dad to thank for. He was a businessman and ran a construction business. Although times were tough, he never gave in and worked for people. I guess, that kind of stuck with us. Just like him, I'm not one to sit by a nine to five job, waiting for someone to tell me what to do.

And we hear that you wear many hats, among them being an author. Tell us more about that.

Yes, I am. I published "Got Breast Milk?" in 2010 to raise awareness about breastfeeding in other states mainly because during my talks, I am only able to cover a small amount of people each session. In addition to that, I'm already looking to publish a concise second edition which focuses on baby care, for caring methods differ with breastfed babies. For instance, a breastfed baby doesn't poop every day and parents often get worried. So, this book will keep you informed and ultimately at ease when caring for ones own child.

So, since you fall under the Choleric (bossy, controller, attention seeker) and Sanguine (fun, outgoing) personality categories, does this reflect in your management style at Bonda Villa?

It does. I'm comfortable being a leader and I'm comfortable in my own skin. I respect my nurses at Bonda Villa as I always allow them

to voice out their opinions especially when it comes to daily scheduling, I'm open to new ideas and I give praise where praise is due. They work on an eight hour shift patterns therefore I believe they would know what works for them best. At the same time, if I feel something is not going to work, I will bring it to the table. At times though, they forget I am the boss. I suppose that happens when the Sanguine part of me kicks in <laughs>.

As the boss of Bonda Villa, tell us what has been your toughest challenge thus far and how did you overcome it?

Man power. I went to Mahsa College to look into recruiting nurses and to my surprise, there were plenty unemployed at that point of time. After the screening session, we get them started on work and we train them in the initial stages so that the methods we practice remains consistent and across the board. I currently work with eight nurses

and I'm very happy with them as they are willing to learn.

Does being a mom have any impact or influence on your work or vice versa?

Most definitely. I have something to fight for. Many people associate having four kids as having to fork out more money. But I always looked at it as my driving force - I have four kids, I am going to do all I can to make myself successful. Without my children, I may not have the same drive or urge to improve my life. They are my motivating factor and the most important decision I made.

Any inspirational quotes that keep you motivated?

I live by good karma, meaning to say if you give first, it comes back to you. As how Zig Ziglar says it "You will get all you want in life if you help other people get what they want". And as a Catholic, I'm a firm

believer in honouring and glorifying God in everything I do.

In the midst of juggling work and family, what do you enjoy doing?

I love reading, playing online games and scrapbooking my kids childhood journeys.

Bonda Villa looks like it will sure take off. What do you have planned for it in the near future?

I'm planning to have drop-in centers all around Malaysia. This is for mothers who have difficulty staying in for a month; they can drop-in to get the required guidance they need and head home. At the moment, I'm the only person capable of helping mothers with their concerns. We are also looking into training and tying up with more consultants and hopefully locate these centers in shopping malls for easy accessibility. As for a franchise for Bonda Villa, I am keen in opening one somewhere in Petaling Jaya next.

