



(From left) Nor Zilan, Luqman and Adli at the commercial's launch last week — Picture by Ahmad Zamzahari

Love you, son

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A FATHER'S love knows no bounds.

One such story is how former Standard Chartered Foundation executive director Mohd Adli Yahya, 53, sacrificed his high-paying job for his autistic son.

"It was difficult in the beginning. When we saw signs he wasn't normal, I couldn't accept it," admitted Adli.

The father of six didn't understand autism. He treated Muhammad Luqman Shariff, now 18, like a normal child.

"I punished and disciplined him during his childhood instead of learning the right way to reach him.

"That guilt still haunts me," he said.

He has come a long way since learning his 18-month-old second child was different.

Born out of guilt, and in search of redemption, Adli started a project with Orang-orang Kurang Upaya Subang Jaya and operated a small food stall from a house in the neighbourhood.

But there wasn't much impact as there was little foot traffic.

"I then approached IM4U officials. I asked them for two tables at their office lobby to sell nasi lemak.

"They immediately offered their cafe at IM4U Sentral in Puchong to us."

Called Autism Cafe, it is open Monday to Friday from 8.30am to noon and Adli's wife Nor Zilan, 53, sells nasi lemak and mee hoon.

The cafe hires five other youths to wait tables and wash dishes. Four more will join after Hari Raya.

Adli has also reached out to others around the country and those who cannot work at

the cafe, to do so from home.

"From Perlis, we have a family producing T-shirts. A family from Kuantan sends us cookies while we get pineapple tarts from a family in Rawang," he said.

All proceeds are returned to the families.

Luqman attends a special needs class at Sekolah Menengah USJ4, Subang Jaya three times a week and washes dishes at the cafe twice a week.

Since doing so, his social skills have improved.

"We know his limitations and capabilities.

We wanted to be proactive and create something for him rather than wait for someone to hire him," explained Adli.

"We will not be around forever to look after him. We believe if he learns special skills, it will help him build his selfworth, confidence and some people skills."

Adli and Luqman's touching and emotional journey has been captured in a five-minute clip for Astro.

It has garnered 308,000 views on

Facebook and over 32,100 on YouTube. For Adli, the story isn't over.

He continues to learn more about his son.

"You have your moments with your nephew, niece and son, they say 'I love you, sayang abah' everyday. I don't get it."

"We have our own private moments. I'll tell him, 'Abah sayang Luqman, sayang abah tak?'"

It makes Luqman's offerings of nasi lemak all the more important for Adli.

"One day, we were sitting together and he suddenly blurted out in his own way ... because he's unable to articulate 'Luqman sayang abah'."

"I think of those moments, I call them 'Luqman's moments' and try to understand him better."

"When Luqman holds my hand and squeezes it, I know it's really from his heart."

With Father's Day round the corner, Adli could not ask for a better gift than his son's love.

Lukman learns to make cookies. — Picture from Facebook



Did you know?

Autism is three to four times more common in boys (1 out of 42) than girls (1 out of 189). However, girls tend to possess more severe symptoms and lower intelligence.