

FEMINA

LISTENER AT HEART

A nutritionist, a garden expert, a parent and life coach, Suja Mathai believes in doing her best. She speaks of multitasking at holistic centres, Soukya and Sahaya, with **Aruna Chandaraju**

Suja Mathai handles quite a bit on her plate. In her multi-dimensional role of executive director of Soukya International Holistic Health Centre in Bangalore, which she manages with her well-known spouse, holistic health consultant, Dr Issac Mathai, whose clients include the rich and famous from around the world, including royalty from Buckingham Palace and the Middle East, she dons different caps—a nutritionist, a healthcare administrator, a landscape designer, a mom to three kids and a life coach to many.

FACING CHALLENGES

Suja says, "Life has taught me many lessons. It made me strong and self-reliant. For example, I learnt early in life not to be possessive. When I was 16, my best friend of five years moved to a different stream in school and became close to another girl. Also, I'm a very sensitive person and I would feel hurt and demoralised when people made insensitive remarks or snubbed me. This used to affect my health too. So at 25, I resolved not to let anything affect me and to toughen up inside." While building Soukya, which offers therapies in naturopathy, homeopathy, ayurveda and alternative treatments like yoga, meditation and acupuncture, she faced many difficulties. "The landscape designer ditched us and the deadline was nearing. We were strapped for



Suja Mathai's faith in god has guided her through difficult phases in her life

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financial resources. I took up the task myself though I was untrained in the area and worked by instinct," Suja says. According to her it is all about the right philosophy in life. "Actually, I have learnt to apply the serenity prayer to my life. And what has sustained me is my unconditional faith in God and my spirituality. The calmness and quiet

strength people attribute to me actually comes from the almighty. I live by the belief, do your best and leave the rest to God."

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

As a nutritionist, Suja says, "It's small and simple things that have a lasting influence. I help tailor menus, create ▶

"I learnt famous people cherish privacy and want to be like regular human beings, in touch with their inner selves."

diets in a balanced way, and help customers to listen to their body. The secret of this holistic centre's satisfied customers is not only Dr Mathai's famed therapies and Soukya's facilities, but also Suja's charming and able style that helps her steer things into perspective. As a life coach, she says modestly, "Actually, I'm a very good listener and try to look at things objectively, non-emotionally, and without judgement. Thus, when people share their experiences with me, I'm able to give them feedback and make them reflect on their own experiences as to what is best for them. I ask them to look at the positives. And to do one's best and leave the rest to God as he knows what is best." Interacting with celebrities from the music or film world, even royalty is part of her everyday life. Suja says, "They are not very different from most of us; they cherish small pleasures like a genuine compliment, a touch of sympathy, or an empathetic listener. And what makes them great, according to her, is the humility, graciousness, gratitude and an innocence of spirit that they embrace, despite all the fame. "I've learnt that famous people cherish their privacy and want to be just like regular human beings and be in touch with their inner selves." Of course, she speaks from experience.

NURTURING PARENTS

A mother of three, Suja has learnt that parenting is not an easy job. "I've often reflected on the fact that in spite of the same upbringing we give our children, each one's response is different because they are different souls." She further adds, "As parents, it's our responsibility to guide our children at all times. Love your children, give them your best but never overindulge them. And before

material assets, think of the values you have to give them." Suja has especially become more relaxed after she stopped comparing myself to other parents and how hands-on they are or how much they give and so on. She believes it's important not to feel guilt or succumb to the rat race of parenting.

A strong, successful woman, Suja has very clear views on feminism. She believes that women's empowerment should begin at home and from childhood. She says, "The foundation of equality in society is laid at home, when parents treat their son and daughter with equal respect and regard them as having equal potential. If we do so, maybe, we won't need discussions and conferences on women's empowerment, because that would have already been accomplished at home!"



Suja feels that the concept of equality begins at home

SUJA'S HEALTH TIPS

DOs

1. Drink lots of water, preferably warm. Water with Krishna tulsi leaves is good.
2. Water boiled with cumin, green teas, buttermilk heated with turmeric and curry leaves are good drinks.
3. Soups low on the butter and salt and salads with low-fat dressings are good.
4. Diet low in fat, salt and chillies with maximum inclusion of boiled, baked and grilled food.
5. An egg a day is a good total protein but avoid yolk if you have cholesterol problems.
6. Among pulses and legumes, green gram is best. Soya and panner have high protein content.
7. Ashgourd juice is a good cleansing drink, if no bloatedness is felt. White pumpkin, raw banana, snake gourd, gooseberry are also good.

8. Pomegranates are highly recommended. Sweet lime, watermelon, tender coconut, papaya, grapefruit, apple and sweet oranges are also good.

9. Lemon juice with honey is good but not for those with acidity.
10. Use a variety of oils—olive oil, corn oil and sunflower oil.

DON'Ts

1. Avoid food with preservatives, artificial sweeteners and salt. Aerated drinks are best avoided but they are better than Diet drinks.
2. Bloating could be caused by kidney beans (rajma), yellow pumpkin and brinjal.
3. Brinjal could cause pain and radish, acidity. Pineapple and grapes could cause throat irritation and acidity.
4. Avoid refined rice and wheat, sugar, butter, cheese. ●