

Scaling highest peak of professional education despite physical challenges

*“Lifelong learning is the ingredient to a fulfilling life
lived in awe.”*

– Janice Lee

After obtaining better results for her GCE 'A' level examinations in 1983 on her second attempt, Janice Lee's yearning to see the world spurred her to seek a university education overseas. Although she had to manage a physical disability, it did not stop her from pursuing her university education full-time in Australia. There she had to fend for herself without her family and friends before obtaining her Bachelor of Arts degree in Disability Studies at Deakin University in 1993. After setting her heart on becoming a clinical psychologist, she stayed on in Australia the following year and studied full-time at Swinburne University for her Graduate Diploma in Applied Psychology. Not long after her return to Singapore, Janice wanted to deepen her knowledge of psychology and attended the part-time Master of Arts in Applied Psychology programme at the National Institute of Education at Nanyang Technological University and graduated in 1998. She also studied part-time for the Graduate Diploma in Psychotherapy at the National University of Singapore in 2002-03. It was not long before she set her sight on reaching the pinnacle of higher education and signed up for James Cook University's part-time Doctor of Psychology (Clinical) programme in Singapore. She graduated in 2012.

As a certified psychiatric rehabilitation practitioner of the International Association of Certified Psychiatric Rehabilitation Services based in USA, Janice continues to attend short courses and conferences locally and internationally as part of her professional development.

It was a joyous day for Janice Lee, as she stood in line for her turn to receive her first degree at her convocation in Deakin University, Australia. As she walked up the stage that momentous day in 1993, Janice experienced a strong sense of fulfilment. It was her moment of truth for her determination, endurance and perseverance over the years when she received the scroll for her Bachelor of Arts (BA) in Disability Studies degree. It was also a liberating experience as she realised that she could graduate from an overseas university despite her physical disability. She felt grateful that she had finally accomplished what she had always desired. It seemed like an eternity since she started on her continuing education after resitting and passing her GCE 'A' level examinations as a private candidate, while struggling with cerebral palsy daily. The occasion capped her overseas education while living on her own. It marked her first step taken in her learning journey to become a professional psychologist. This was to culminate in her doctorate 19 years later.

Janice's life was at a turning point in 1984 after she passed her GCE 'A' level examinations with better results on her second attempt as a private candidate in 1983. Many of her friends were doing well in life and she realised there wouldn't be much for her if she did not continue her education. She had shared with a close friend how she wished for an opportunity to pursue higher education. Her friend told her to accept that not everyone could get into university and that she was one of those who might not be good enough to take that pathway. She felt extremely insulted that her friend did not think much of her ability to achieve the good life that she aspired to have. That hurtful remark motivated her to aim for higher educational qualifications.

In the two years prior, she was working full-time while attending night classes to prepare for the 'A' level examinations at the end of 1982. Her results the first time were "not ideal", so she quit her job in mid-1983 to focus on doing better for her 'A' level that year. From that experience, she learnt that there were many paths to a destination and one should not give up on something one really wanted.

One day, a friend asked Janice to accompany her to an education fair organised for a group of Australian universities. There she came across a course on disability studies by chance and thought of going overseas for her university education. The opportunity had presented itself there and then and she decided shortly after to grasp it. Her friend went to Perth to study educational psychology while she opted to pursue disability studies at Deakin University in Melbourne. She saw it as her chance to travel overseas and obtain her first degree, and she therefore did not apply to the local universities. “Disability studies seemed to offer me an opportunity to learn about services and possible advancement in the lives of people with disabilities,” Janice shared. At that time, she already knew that she could go on with getting the necessary qualifications to become a psychologist if she took the right modules and proceed to the fourth year of a mainstream psychology programme. However, she did not see herself becoming an educational psychologist attending to school-going children.

Living and learning on her own in Melbourne

Before her application to the university was accepted, however, Janice had to “sell” her candidacy as a potential student in writing. Once accepted, she flew on her own to Melbourne in 1991 to start her full-time bachelor programme at Deakin University. Initially she stayed in a convent that’s adjacent to the university for several months before moving to a students’ hostel near the campus. Little was she to realise the challenge of staying alone on her own. Although her experience with a stalker did not last long, it left a lasting impression on her sense of vulnerability. She also had to learn how to use the computer and other digital devices with her only good hand, typing with only two fingers, for researching information for her class assignments. Filing paper with one hand was a real challenge for her. As there were no computer courses that she could attend, she had to learn by trial and error since none of her younger peers could explain

how the computer worked to her. What kept her going and staying the course was the thought that it took her a long time to finally get into a university. She recalled: “I just have to finish what I started. It was a lot of money to spend and I worked part-time on weekends, so I must get my degree.”

During her four years in Australia, she was working as a community residential care worker at the Oakleigh Centre for Intellectually Disabled Citizens, where she completed her placement at one of its community residential units in 1991. She was also placed at Waverley Industries’ sheltered workshop for intellectually disabled (1991), Alkira Centre’s adult training centre for intellectually disabled (1992), Christian Guest Home for the Elderly (1992) and Department of Health and Community Services’ Intellectual Disability Services (1993). At the university, she enjoyed learning new things and doing things that she had never done before. With her learning from the degree programme, she found that she was better able to manage her own disability. It also helped her to discover where her potential lay and how she could realise it. She also learnt to be focused, determined and perseverant in achieving her goals, and never to take no for an answer and allow it to be an obstacle. In addition, she learnt that she’s the best judge of her potential, abilities and limitations, and there’s really no need to prove to others what she could or couldn’t do.

Pursuing interest in studying psychology

Although she does not know why, Janice finds human behaviour intriguing. “Maybe it’s because I see a lot of dramas in everyday living,” she ventured. She had planned on studying psychology during her first year of her BA in Disability Studies course. Her innate curiosity and interest in studying human beings spurred her to stay on in Melbourne in 1994 to attend the Graduate Diploma in Applied Psychology course full-time at Swinburne University. She finally had the chance to realise her dream of

pursuing psychology studies! She also had the chance to learn from real-life experience during her placement again at the Department of Health and Community Services' Intellectual Disability Services that year.

However, she was unfamiliar with the new environment and had a particularly difficult time commuting to and from the university. She was also unwell for a long time and could not walk properly due to the pain in the joints during winter that she had never experienced before. Fortunately, she recovered before the end of the second semester. During the year, she met and forged friendship with some Singaporeans who cheered her up. She found the mutual support the group members gave to each other to be helpful in her own transition before returning home to Singapore. She also learnt that connecting with the community where a person lived or was associated with was vital for his or her sense of well-being.

Following her return to Singapore, Janice worked as a social worker at the Spastic Children's Association School. However, after two years she felt that she was in the wrong job and aspired to work as a psychologist one day. She wanted to know more about the current trends and developments in the field of psychology. "When I get restless, I know that it is time to equip myself with knowledge. My job deals mainly with individual humans who are unique and complex, so it is only ethical and responsible that one should be professionally aware and knowledgeable of the latest developments in treatments and interventions," she explained. Thus, the quest for higher education that would earn her better qualifications seemed to be the right step for her to take next. This would be the natural progression in the career of a psychologist.

In 1997, she embarked on her part-time quest to earn her Master of Arts in Applied Psychology at the National Institute of Education at Nanyang Technological University, while she continued to work full-time as a social worker at the Sun-Dac Centre for the Disabled. That year, she

was nominated by the National Council of Social Service to represent the social service sector at the National Day Parade, where she said the National Pledge. She found the affirmation encouraging. Although she had done full-time work with part-time study before, she still found the learning journey challenging in terms of her time and energy. It was quite an unexpected experience when she had to visit a gay bar for a survey on the gay community. This was part of her research for her thesis on emotions and rational thoughts. She also completed her placement at the Tanjong Pagar Family Service Centre and Singapore Association for Mental Health's Insight Centre as part of the course requirement.

Despite the difficulties that she encountered, Janice was motivated by her course mates who encouraged and applauded each other's little successes. They also helped one another to succeed in their common cause, which was to graduate with a master degree in applied psychology. This they did in 1998. She felt blessed to have met many like-minded people from different backgrounds, but all sharing a common purpose of wanting to make a positive impact on people's lives. She learnt the truism that "whatever we do, we do better not because of ourselves but because of others helping and encouraging us to be the best we can be". With her master degree, Janice had taken the next step towards becoming a highly qualified psychologist.

After a few years of "just work", she felt bored and needed to challenge herself mentally yet again. But before aiming for the pinnacle of higher education, as suggested by a doctor of psychology who would later give her a testimonial letter to support her doctoral application, she thought that deeper knowledge of psychotherapy would help prepare her for it. Her colleague who completed the Graduate Diploma in Psychotherapy at the National University of Singapore told her that it was a worthwhile course to take. She also needed to chalk up the hours to become a registered psychologist. She signed up for the part-time programme in 2002.

Again, she had to juggle between her full-time work as a counsellor at the Insight Centre of the Singapore Association for Mental Health (SAMH) and her studies. The fact that she was bonded and had to finish and do well in the course mattered less than her reputation for finishing projects that she had started. All's well that ended well, and she graduated in 2003, the year she was nominated by the Ministry of Community Development & Sports to represent the SAMH as a role model in the social service sector. Although she learnt to work with experts in the field during the course, she thought she did not gain as much compared to the other courses. She also found her high expectations of others to be aversive to her well-being. As she couldn't control or change others, she could lower her expectations in order not to cause distress to herself.

Continuous learning at work as a psychologist

In 2004, when she was working as Head of Clinical Services at SAMH Activity Hub@Pelangi Village, Janice passed a written examination set by the International Association of Psychosocial Rehabilitation Services in USA to be a Certified Psychiatric Rehabilitation Practitioner. She prepared for the test through self-study and peer study group. From the certification experience, she learnt to be a task master and to try to encourage and support others' dreams. That year, she attended the Professional Development Program in Psychiatric Rehabilitation of Boston University's Sargent College of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences and Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation. It comprised two-day courses on rehabilitation counselling, vocational rehabilitation, and assessing and developing readiness.

In 2005, she completed the three-day course "Evidence-based Practices: Shaping Mental Health Services Toward Recovery" and attended a half-day symposium with the theme "Community Re-integration of People with Mental Illness: A Shared Responsibility" that's organised by the Social Service Training Institute (SSTI) of the National Council of

Social Service. She also attended Arbinger Institute's two-day workshop "Leadership and Self-Deception – The Choice at Work" that year, when she worked as a part-time tutor on psychology at the Singapore Institute of Management's (SIM) Open University Centre.

In early 2006, Janice took time off from work to update herself at the three-day Second Asia Pacific Suicide Prevention Conference held in Singapore and co-organised by the Institute of Mental Health. In June that year, she took a trip to USA to learn the latest ideas on psychiatric rehabilitation from a series of nine talks organised by the Training Institute of Arizona. Topics ranged from practice in general to Singapore's experience. Later in the same year, she attended SSTI's two-day course on Delivering Quality Behavioural Health and Rehabilitation Services.

Most arduous part of learning journey

A few more years of practice as a psychologist later, Janice again found herself continuing her professional upgrading once more. It was to prove to be the most arduous part of her learning journey. She saw the Doctor of Psychology programme being offered by James Cook University's (JCU) Singapore campus as another natural progression in her profession, after meeting with a few doctorate holders in her field. However, it was difficult before she could even begin. She submitted her application to JCU not fully convinced that it was something she really wanted to do. During the interview with JCU's professors for admission into its doctoral programme, she was feeling unwell. Fortunately, her self-confidence helped her to cope with the interview and she was accepted for admission in October 2006.

She remembered "feeling good about my learning in the first two years", during which she continued to attend short courses for her professional development. These included SSTI's Cutting Edge Treatment and Advances in Psychiatric Rehabilitation for Persons with Severe Mental

Illness (one day), Effective Supervisory Skills for NPO Managers (two days) and series of five seminars on fund-raising from August to December 2007.

Unexpectedly though, she learnt of her father's terminal illness two years into her doctoral studies. She was devastated and decided to take a slower pace for her studies while working full-time. When he passed on in 2008, she felt a great sense of loss. She recalled: "I had prepared him and myself for almost six months. When it did happen, it broke my heart. No friend could reach me inside although I observed that they tried. I wasn't happy with work or my personal relationships." She was "very upset" by the fact that there was going to be one person less to love her as "I am" and there was no one to replace him. It affected her so badly that she took time off away from school and work to recover and to care for herself. During that difficult period, her course mates helped to keep her sane, as she would reflect and share years later.

It did not take Janice long to realise that if nothing else could sustain her then, the better option for her was to refocus on completing her doctoral studies. Eight months after losing her father, Janice quit her full-time job and started working part-time instead, so that she could spend more time at JCU, where she also taught forensic psychology part-time as a lecturer/tutor. At that time, she was also lecturing on social psychology at Portman Business School. It was not easy for her to regain the momentum and motivation that she had. But she did, and even found the drive and energy to complete NUS Extension's development programme on Navigating Korean I from December 2009 to February 2010 while working and studying part-time.

From her part-time experience in teaching at SIM and JCU, Janice learnt that she did not take to lecturing in a class, as she did not like the idea of speaking to people who did not seem interested in learning in such an environment. She also did not want to assess written answers for language usage and not for their contents.

Janice's emotional state was exacerbated by her physical condition as cerebral palsy affected the left side of her body. For her doctoral research compilation, she had to file documents with string-like threads. It was simply too difficult for her to file with only one hand. Some people thought she was lazy, but she could not see the point of struggling with this menial task for four hours when someone else could do it in half an hour. Fortunately, a friend of hers came to her aid when she needed help with filing.

Harsh last two years of doctoral course

The last two years of her doctoral programme were “harsh”, as Janice recalled. She was working part-time as a psychologist at the Centre for Psychology and Raffles Counselling Centre, where she also completed her practicum in 2010 and 2011 respectively. As part of the course requirement, she had also completed her practicum at JCU Clinic (2008 and 2009) and Gracehaven of the Salvation Army (2011). At this stage, difficulties with the practicum and thesis completion were common in her cohort. Many of her course mates had experienced them earlier. When her practicum was extended by JCU at the last minute, she found herself facing her biggest learning challenge. She was “exasperated” but pushed on knowing that it was the last leg of the tough course. How she coped would determine if she would graduate on time.

Her doctoral dissertation was on happiness, as she wanted to study something that's positive, easy and uplifting for herself and others. The research process involved online survey and she had to learn how to use SPSS software to analyse the data collected. Analysing the research findings was difficult but she was able to complete the task. Her thesis was subsequently repurposed for publication as an article entitled “Strengths of character, orientations to happiness, life satisfaction and purpose in Singapore” in a 2015 issue of the Journal of Tropical Psychology, with

Janice as lead author. Its co-authors included JCU's Dr Foo Koong Hean, who had suggested the topic for her thesis, and Austin Adams, who helped her with statistics and the final draft.

She did whatever she could but at times she needed to be assertive in what she deemed to be right. Being a mature student had helped with her perspective on things and getting them done. "Somehow, most people knew that I was not a person to be trifled with," she shared. "I am who I am because of perseverance and a belief in God's love for me. I live a blessed life because of His will for me. I try to count my blessings and be grateful for the life that I have. Overall, it has turned out to be enriching and interesting." When probed, she revealed that she prayed to God regularly for strength to help her overcome the challenges that came her way in her learning journey.

One of the most important postgraduate learning outcomes for Janice was the time spent with like-minded people with similar goals and interests. "The encouragement and motivation we gave one another to push ahead made that part of life journey more enduring and worthwhile, be it sharing of snacks or having a friend to volunteer to help me with filing," she added. She treasured the friendship made with the people she had met.

As an employee and consultant, the clinical skills that she had acquired over the 18 years of studying psychology have helped her see people and herself in a clearer light. "I need to acknowledge and accept that there are some things I cannot do well and that I must be true to myself, first and foremost."

More continuous learning at work and leisure

The year 2014 saw Janice busy updating her professional knowledge at several learning opportunities while working as a part-time psychologist at three different places. In March, there were talks organised by Singapore

Psychological Society, namely: “Is Positive Psychology Too ‘Positive’ for Asian?”; “International and Local Evidence for Behavioural Vaccines”; and “How Can We Learn from Errors and Mistakes: A Contribution to Applied Psychology”. In April that year, she attended a one-day seminar on “Easing the Pain of Divorce and Separation” by Psychology, Addictions and Counselling Training, and Tan Tock Seng Hospital’s two-day Singapore Trauma 2014 Conference. Came November and she was present at LivingWorks’ two-day Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training and National Neuroscience Institute’s two-day 15th Singapore Stroke Conference. In the following year, Janice updated herself at the Social Service Institute’s one-day Singapore Conference of Narrative Therapy and Community Work.

Sometimes Janice would try to “kill two birds with one stone” (as she put it) in her learning journey. For example, she had signed up for a basic course on schematic therapy in Melbourne in 2016 as part of her mandatory 60 hours of training every two years. She also wanted to visit a friend there. True to her sense of purpose and single-mindedness, she accomplished both on one trip!

Janice also sees overseas travel as a good way to explore the world first-hand and to rediscover herself. She did so again in early 2018, when she went with a group of friends to cross the Arctic Circle near Rovaniemi in Finnish Lapland, at a point exactly 66 degrees, 33 minutes and 07 seconds north of the Equator. For completing her ‘mission’, she was presented with the Arctic Circle Certificate. But that’s not the only learning outcome for her. She learnt how to make a snowman by creating it with her friends, command husky dogs by observing their owner and ‘reign in’ the reindeer by feeding it. The snowman was a successful co-creation with her four friends, with thoughtful direction and suggestion of ideas from all for its completion. Janice had noticed the dog owner repeating instructions to the dogs that were pulling the sledge on the snow. His behaviour impressed upon her the need to be patient and

gentle to get things done. The reindeer reminded her that she should not take negative comments of others as the final truth but to have faith in herself. During the cruise on her Arctic Circle trip, she was amazed by the weather there and wondered how people could survive in such cold for so many generations. Her experience reminded her of the importance of having an open mind to look and marvel at Mother Nature.

In the 1990s, Janice served as a management committee member of the Handicaps Welfare Association (HWA), and was treasurer and vice-president of Singapore Psychological Society (SPS) in the 2000s. From her volunteering experience at HWA, she learnt how people in the real world had differing opinions about how things were and how to get things done despite having the same goals. She also learnt how management decisions could impact how things could change and affect people on the street. At SPS, Janice learnt that as a professional, she was able to commit herself to serve the society to the best of her ability although she was very reluctant to join its committee. Among the challenges faced as a volunteer were learning how networks of people work and how to get them to work as one, meeting expectations and earning trust. She learnt to overcome them through trial and error, trying another method if one method did not work, until the goals were reached. “Sometimes it does not matter if your way does not have the impact. The most important thing is to have the big picture in mind.”

Janice had also pursued sailing as a hobby and learnt to sail in specially designed boats with other people with disabilities under HWA at Changi Sailing Club in 2001. She needed help with getting onto the boat, but overcoming the physical challenges was about “doing sensible things”, according to her. She was able to go out alone in a boat to be with the sea and wind without fear, and to return to shore when she needed to. The experience informed her that everything was possible if she wanted to with the right resources. “The real limitation is the rigid human mind. We just have to think out of the box and take calculated risk,” she added.

Most fulfilling learning milestone

Looking back at her continuing education journey, Janice felt most fulfilled after obtaining her first degree – BA in Disability Studies. It was her first time attending university as a mature student, first time residing in a foreign country, and starting anew with no family and friends for support. “I managed well with God’s grace and kindness,” she recalled. She found that people in Australia were kind and helpful on and off-campus. In return, she offered them her friendship. While living and studying alone overseas, she discovered her gift for making friends with her pleasant disposition and that she could live on her own with resourcefulness, independence and inner strength to fend for herself.

Janice agrees that lifelong learning is about continuing education and training in school and continuous learning at work, leisure and play. She explained: “As long as we are alive, we learn about the world, what makes people tick, and how to get along with others. Academic learning helps us to look at things from various perspectives. Such knowledge could help us to observe and live life more abundantly with new and interesting discoveries of the world, the people in it and ourselves.”

During her learning journey, Janice learnt to cope with the barriers, challenges, difficulties and obstacles through prayer. How did she learn how to overcome them? “By knowing what I wanted and what I needed to do and being determined to live the life I wanted” was her reply. Till today, she has not faced any challenge that’s so overwhelming that she cannot cope. She does not find learning the latest knowledge and skills and the new ways of technology-enabled learning to be disrupting her old learning and old ways of learning at all. On the contrary, she likes new knowledge and will pick up skills that will help in her learning. “I have always been learning throughout the years and this has helped with integration of new and old ways of learning.”

She had wanted to become a psychologist as she was curious and wanted to learn about people, and to deepen her knowledge and skills so that she would be better able to help them. “In some ways, I want to learn because I want to be happy,” she revealed. For her, being a psychologist is just a vocation that has nothing to do with personal happiness. So, what does happiness mean to her personally? “Live a care-free life, observe nature and reflect.”

Janice does not see success in lifelong learning in terms of getting good grades or receiving awards for outstanding achievements, as these do not show how much has been learnt. As she is paid for providing her service as a qualified psychologist, she also does not evaluate success based on how learning is applied to help others. According to her, lifelong learning is what people do if they want or need to gain a sense of achievement or purpose in their lives.

Important values learnt

Besides new knowledge and skills, Janice has also learnt important values from her learning journey, such as patience and humility. “The more I know about something, the more I know I have no knowledge of,” she admitted. She learnt about passion for learning, determination to succeed despite the odds, tenacity in the face of difficulties, persistence and resilience. She also learnt about responsibility and discipline in learning. As a psychologist, it is her professional duty to learn and upgrade regularly.

Importance of family and friends

During her learning journey, Janice learnt the importance of remaining connected with family and friends. “They keep you grounded on reality,” she shared. Anne See, her secondary school classmate, was inspired by her “never-ending thirst for knowledge over the years”. She thinks Janice has the same “never say die” attitude as her, and that Janice’s passion for learning is due to her physical disability and desire for a better quality

of life with higher education. She shared how Janice would postpone their meetings to complete her assignments and project work, and how she would “play hard and study hard”. Anne added: “Janice is an example of someone going for anything that stokes her interest, be it study or hobby. She is one who will persevere, and if there’s a failure, she will find out what/how it went wrong, pick up and do it again.”

Janice’s JCU classmate Eve Tam is impressed and inspired by her passion for learning that “displays her relentless enthusiasm and admirable determination for learning, which are not easy to sustain”. She attributes Janice’s passion to her expectation of high-quality work and openness to new knowledge and skills. For example, she has noticed how Janice would spend time, money and effort in completing relevant courses while coping with her work and family commitments and physical challenges. “More importantly, Janice continues to upgrade herself even though she is already performing well at her work,” Eve added. She considers Janice a good role model who demonstrates positive learning attitude and spirit that people tend to forget or ignore over time.

Another JCU classmate who’s also Janice’s colleague Karin Goh sees her as an inspiration to many with her determination to learn and grow both professionally and personally. She has noted that Janice’s passion for learning is driven by “her need to quench a bottomless thirst for knowledge, which is yet to be satiated.” She shared: “Janice has not seen her physical disability as an impediment or an excuse of any sort but rather a challenge to accept and overcome.” As Janice’s colleague, Karin has seen how she has had to make difficult decisions with grit and self-sacrifice. “Her learning derived not just from academic learning but from having the courage to take on new challenges, be it work or travel.” A former colleague Lisa Phoon was also inspired by Janice’s learning achievements despite her physical condition. She described Janice as a “very determined” person who “will achieve what she wants”. Lisa does not think she could do what Janice did – attending classes after a long tiring day at work and even when she’s unwell.

Sr Marie Clarke, Janice's mentor at the convent where she stayed after arriving in Melbourne for the first time, remembered bonding in friendship with her and typing some of her assignments. Janice did not have a computer then and doing the final work was difficult for her. "I was no great typist, but she was grateful," Sr Marie recalled. "She was industrious and highly intelligent." After Janice moved into the hostel, she and the sisters at the convent missed her "quiet presence". She and Janice still keep in touch by phone and mail. Janice has visited her in Melbourne on two different occasions. Commenting on Janice's achievements, Sr Marie shared: "Nothing seems to stop Janice from striving after her goals both in learning and life, and from coping with difficulties along the way."

Janice's former landlady in Melbourne, Gail James thinks that she has a lively mind and a great curiosity for life. She had observed that Janice's intelligence needed feeding with knowledge in areas that she's interested in, and how she had worked hard during her undergraduate and postgraduate studies. Unlike most people who live in foreign countries, Gail noticed that Janice did not "cocoon herself in a cultural bubble". She added: "Janice on the other hand deliberately sought out situations where she got to know locals, like staying with me. She became part of my family. She met and stayed with my parents and experienced an Anglo-Australian Christmas. She also met my sister and her family and, of course, was very close to my children and our pets!" While this example may not be lifelong learning in the normal sense, Gail thinks it is an education in life. Her son also has cerebral palsy and is engaged in lifelong learning like Janice, so she could appreciate why Janice did not let her disability be an obstacle to achieving any goal in life that she has set for herself. She also thinks that Janice is very passionate about her profession and really enjoys her clinical work, and this makes continuous learning easier.

Indeed, Janice has shown by her extraordinary example that lifelong learning adds to a fulfilling life lived in awe.



Janice Lee finds her first degree – BA in Disability obtained from Deakin University, Australia in 1993 – to be the most fulfilling milestone in her learning journey, which culminated in her Doctor of Psychology from James Cook University of Australia in 2012. Photo: Janice Lee

*Janice with Sr Marie Clarke, her mentor at convent near Deakin University in Australia, at Darling Harbour in Sydney.
Photo: Sr Marie Clarke*



Janice on a cruise during her Arctic Circle trip with friends in March 2018. She's seen enjoying Finnish food while talking animatedly about how amazed she was by the weather there and how she had wondered how people could survive in such cold for many generations. Her experience reminded her of the importance of having an open mind to look and marvel at Mother Nature. Photo: Janice Lee



During her March 2018 Arctic Circle trip with friends, Janice noticed the husky dog owner kept repeating instructions to the dogs pulling the sledge on snow. The observation impressed upon her the need to be patient and gentle to get things done. Photo: Janice Lee



Feeding reindeer during Arctic Circle trip: The reindeer reminded Janice that we should not take the negative comments of others as the final truth. We need to have faith in ourselves. Photo: Janice Lee