



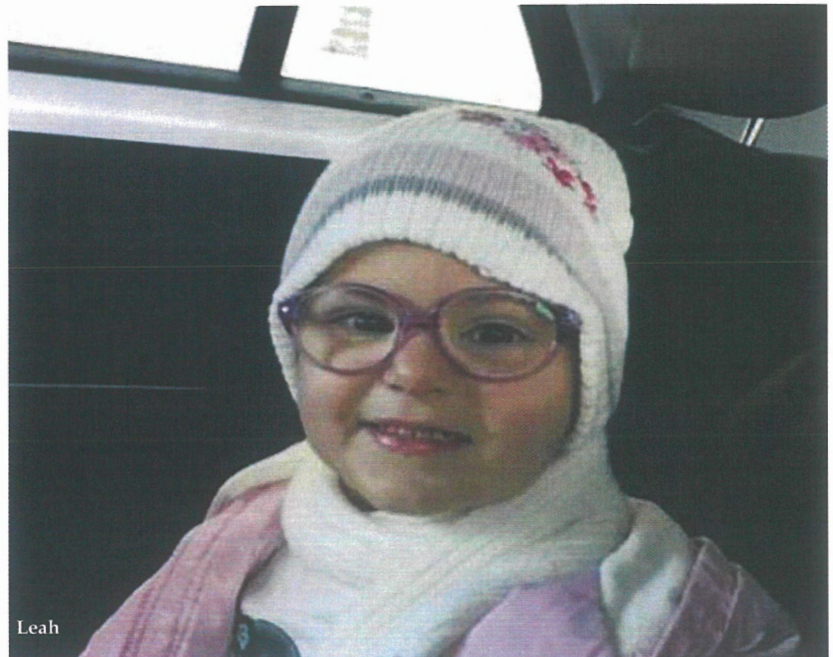
# ANDREW ON WEDNESDAY

## My own personal epiphany

This time of year is pretty much a moment for reflection. Knowing that the calendar year is about to see its end and the fact that it is the holiday season makes it a good moment to think back on the past twelve months.

Like every other person, I would balance out a number of achievements I feel I have attained and am proud of with some disappointments that occurred on the way. Unfortunately, with the plusses we always get some minuses and the worst of all is when you let people close to you down. But I have always believed that life is all about resilience and about recuperating from the mishaps you are faced with or find yourself in. I am of the belief that the greatest skill a person can have is that of standing up again after a let-down, a disillusionment or a disenchantment. Now this is not always an easy thing to do, rather quite the opposite. It is such a difficult and complicated chore at times to sit up straight after you have endured or caused pain. But I suppose that is life because living is about 'new starts' and 'new beginnings'. Every time we fall, we need to jump start, and every time we rise it's guaranteed that we grow and once we develop, we realise the mistakes done. The same process of realisation that you have erred is a life lesson and a learning curve.

Together with personal reflections we learn best when we care to listen to the narratives of those around us, the stories that encompass us. Narratives are such an opportunity to learn. For example, last March we witnessed the passing on of a lovely little angel called Leah. This beautiful being, with her expressive smile, shining eyes and who's gestures were comforting to the soul moved on, too early on in life for sure but she has most definitely accomplished her mission to love with so much intensity. Like most of the citizens in Malta and in many other places, I followed Leah's story closely. Being a member on the board of the Malta Community Chest Fund I also saw at close proximity the immense commitment and work accomplished by the government, her family, supporters and the MCCF to ensure she gets all the treatment she required and was available. For once I could see that the State's 'heart' came before the bureaucracy. The Minister of Health, the Prime Minister were in complete sync with the impeccable work of President Emeritus George Abela at the time. As I read the emotionally-laden book' co-authored by Zayna, Leah's mum and Maria Mifsud, a close family friend' it transpired that so many people in their own different ways supported this beautiful girl and her family. Leah was in fact soon to be adopted by all. I encourage you to buy this book (proceeds



Leah

will go to a good cause [Kite Publishers]) and read this immensely thorny story to see the powerful journey of pain that Leah went through accompanied all the way by her mother Zayna and her dad Jonathan.

As you might envisage, it is bad enough for adults to be in excruciating pain let alone to try and explain it to a two-, three- and four-year-old girl who is pretty much unable to understand why she has to endure this suffering, pain and agony. Not only that, but to this day I ask why should children and their families have to stomach such pain when I believe that there is a God of love, of compassion and of mercy. I'm no saint, far from it, but I do find myself at a crossroads when I witness such sorrow.

Just to give you an example of a single event from the many she had to go through and of what Leah had to endure, the operation that she had to do in Houston in the USA, where she was operated on for not less than 13 hours. The surgeon removed over 400 pieces of cancer from her tiny body. Imagine what this little girl had to suffer during her post-op recovery and she fought the pain with a lot of soreness but with so much character and strength.

Whilst I was interviewing Zayna, her mother, for an interview that will be featured during *Ghandi xi Nghid* (Radju Malta) next Saturday I could sense the atrocious sorrow this family had to bear. There cannot be greater pain than seeing life

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treasure their offspring we still need to strengthen our precautions, provide more resources and educate our children and carers on health and safety.

During these festive days my thoughts also go to those children, young people and their families who are recovering at Mt Carmel Hospital due to mental health issues they might be struggling with, young people who are in our prisons paying for crimes they most certainly did maybe because along the way they were abandoned by the system, children in orphanages discarded for one reason or other by their families and unaccompanied migrants who are in Malta without their families to comfort them.

Too many children and young people all over the world are suffering; children who are experiencing the brunt of the war in Syria and other places in the world, children being physically, mentally or sexually abused and so many young people who have lost all hope to live and subsist.

As words fail me, I quote from 'Leah' the book written by her mum;

*'Although her life was short, it was still precious. She was an inspiration to many. We all got stronger than ever because of our little one. She changed so many people's lives, first and foremost mine and Jonathan's. ...We thank God for the love of her heart, her beautiful smile, her strength and happiness. Thank you, Leah, for having been our daughter.'*

slip out of your children.

Sad indeed and this is not only about Leah.

This year we have witnessed so many fatal accidents that involved our little ones, children and young persons. Some might not have died but have been injured seriously. While I do appreciate that by and large Maltese and Gozitan people

**Ghandi xi Nghid**  
written by RADJU MALTA and G. Mifsud

Dr Andrew Azzopardi  
Senior Lecturer, Department of  
Youth and Community Studies  
Faculty for Social Wellbeing,  
University of Malta &  
Broadcaster - Ghandi xi Nghid  
[www.andrewazzopardi.org](http://www.andrewazzopardi.org)