

Below are the 4 articles published by STAR newspaper in 2009. These articles aimed at educating the Malaysian public on how to manage their body, mind and spirit.

Star Sunday 21 June 2009

How to succEEd in life

By Dr LEONARD YONG

Knowing how to develop your emotional intelligence can help you succeed in the workplace.

EVERYONE wants to be successful in life. Success can be attained by some but for many others it is only an elusive dream.

It was widely held that one's success in life is measured by one's Intelligence Quotient or IQ. But in recent times, it has been proven that Emotional Intelligence (EI) is also an important determinant.



Dr Yong talking to participants of a psychology seminar.

EI is often defined as comprising two components: intrapersonal skills (or self awareness) and interpersonal skills (the ability to relate well with others).

Studies have shown that people with high EI are often the most successful in their personal lives as well as in their careers.

Thus, knowing how to develop your EI to an optimum can help you succeed in the workplace. However, merely being knowledgeable about EI does not enable an individual to be emotionally intelligent.

I have discovered that people are not able to be emotionally intelligent because they are not motivated. At the core of the motivation problem is our heart or, more specifically, our spiritual heart.

In my research over the last decade, I have found that in order to be consistently emotionally intelligent, an individual needs to develop Emotional Excellence (EE), which is the heart motivation. Leaders who are emotionally excellent will be able to help their organisation to connect with its most important asset — people. When this special connection exists, the leaders will be able to lead others with their hearts.

Employees working under these leaders are inspired to give their best, to work from their hearts, and to channel their creative energies to produce an emotionally intelligent organisation.

Using these ideas as pioneering director of the University of Malaya Centre for Continuing Education from 1998 to 2002, the centre became self-financing and profitable within a very short period.

This and the following articles, extracted from my book *Emotional Excellence*, will teach you how to develop emotional excellence by using the Leonard Personality Inventory (LPI) Model.

The LPI will help you to gain insights into your own personality and the behaviour of others. Knowing how people tend to behave is very important to understanding them and to your interactions with them.

In fact, Leonard is derived from the acronym Let's Explore our personality based on Openness, Neutral, Analytical, Relational and Decisive behavioural tendencies in people.

Understanding our personality is crucial to knowing our strengths and weaknesses and developing our emotional excellence.

Personality and the LPI Model

Personality refers to the stable and unique patterns of behaviour that determine a person's adaptation to the environment.

Researchers have generally employed four basic approaches to obtain a better insight into the construction of personality. These approaches are the personality structure, psychoanalytic theory, transactional analysis and developmental theories.

The LPI focuses on one aspect of the structural approach to understanding personality. It is based on the personality type approach.

There have been numerous attempts throughout the centuries to describe personality. One of the earliest was documented by the Greek physician Hippocrates who listed the four temperaments as phlegmatic, melancholic, sanguine, and choleric.

In the last decade, however, there was a consensus among personality researchers that there are actually five main factors (called Big Five) of personality descriptions.

I have modelled the LPI on a combination of the four Greek temperaments and the Big Five. The extensive use of the LPI in Malaysia and many countries has affirmed its reliability for the purpose of identifying the preferred behavioural styles of the respondents.

Individuals can use the LPI to enhance their emotional intelligence (intrapersonal and interpersonal skills). Organisations have found it especially helpful in encouraging teamwork and innovative approaches in the workplace.

This is the first in a series of four articles. In the next segment, we will discuss how the LPI Model can help us develop emotional excellence.

> *Dr Leonard Yong is an educational psychologist. He consults internationally and is now based in Dubai (www.leonard.com.my). He will address the Malaysia Festival of the Mind, jointly organised by Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman, Malaysia Mental Literacy Movement and Kolej Tunku Abdul Rahman, to be held July 10-12 at Utar's Perak campus in Kampar. Admission is free. For enquiries call 03-76250328 or e-mail mmlm@utar.edu.my*

SUNDAY STAR 28 JUNE 2009

Taking note of our own traits

By DR LEONARD YONG

AN individual's personality can be profiled with the use of the LPI software (available from www.leonard.com.my). Based on the profile obtained, the individual is given recommendations for personal improvement, enhancing teamwork with others, improving leadership styles, improving creativity and enhancing learning skills.

Individuals who are high in each of the five LPI dimensions of Openness, Neutral, Analytical, Relational and Decisive display certain tendencies.

Openness individuals tend to have an inclination towards creativity and challenges. Unusual and novel events not only fuel these individuals but also motivate them.



DR YONG: Perception is our interpretation of the outer world.

The Neutral person adjusts himself to accommodate others.

Neutral people are calm and patient, and motivated towards maintaining peace with others.

Analytical individuals set high standards for themselves and others. They not only set mental benchmarks, they are inclined towards precision.

Relational individuals love fun and people. They always reach out to others and inspire others. They are motivated by recognition and approval.

Decisive individuals enjoy assuming leadership roles that are challenging and competitive. These challenging factors are a source of motivation to them.

Body, mind and spirit

The LPI research indicates that behaviours displayed in our body are motivated by the perception in our minds.

Modern science has thus far paid more attention to the mind and the body, largely ignoring the spirit.

We know that our body is flesh, bones and blood; our mind comprises emotions to feel, intelligence to think and will power to decide. But what is the spirit? What does it do?

The spirit lies at the core of every being. It is the very thing that makes us human. It holds the key to emotional excellence and intelligence.

People who are emotionally intelligent allow their spiritual intuition to guide them.

A keen spiritual intuition enables the emotionally intelligent to perceive situations accurately.

Perception is our interpretation of the outer world, which we perceive through our senses.

When our perception is accurate, the appropriate words and deeds come easily and naturally. But when it is wrong, everything will come out wrong.

That is because the spirit has thermostat-like qualities that protect us from un-intelligence.

The spiritual thermostat regulates our emotional responses.

A spirit that is well will produce consistency. It is a spirit with a cleansed conscience.

Conscience is that “small voice” within us. It talks to us constantly, but it is capable of talking both sense and nonsense.

The cleansed conscience, however, talks sense. It tells us what is right and wrong.

It is the source of consistency in emotional intelligence.

On the other hand, the un-cleansed conscience talks nonsense and allows the person to act in an unhealthy manner.

The un-cleansed conscience is a dangerous thing.

How can we cleanse our conscience? By having a worshipful relationship with a higher power – or what most of us call God.

A belief in the Creator can transform an un-cleansed conscience into a cleansed one. Chief among the national principles contained in our Rukunegara is the belief in God.

A cleansed conscience can be found in a well spirit, and it is the result of a reverent relationship with God.

This relationship will guide us to always treat others with fairness and care.

The LPI Holistic Model proposes that the emotionally excellent individual maintains wellness of the body, mind and spirit. Wellness of the body requires us to exercise regularly, eat healthily and abstain from anything we know could harm our body.

If you want your mind to be well, feed it with things that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, or praiseworthy.

Next: We take up the question of how to be well in body, mind and spirit.

Dr Leonard Yong is an educational psychologist. He consults internationally and is now based in Dubai (www.leonard.com.my). He will address the Malaysia Festival of the Mind, jointly organised by Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman, Malaysia Mental Literacy Movement and Kolej Tunku Abdul Rahman, to be held on July 10-12 at Utar's Perak campus in Kampar. Admission is free. For enquiries, call 03-76250328 or e-mail mmlm@utar.edu.my

STAR NEWSPAPER SUNDAY 5 JULY 2009

Sunday July 5, 2009

Handling stress the right way

By Dr LEONARD YONG

Self-pity can spiral downwards into severe depression and suicidal tendencies.

LEE had an unhappy childhood because of his father's addiction to alcohol and gambling. His father often beat his wife in front of the children.

Lee grew up hating his father. He struggled through his studies and eventually qualified as an accountant. His colleagues noticed he had very low self-esteem as he often compared himself to his peers and felt they were happier and more successful than him.

Things came to a head when Lee missed a promotion. "These people look down on me. I will never get promoted in this company," Lee told himself. His wife noticed that Lee was depressed and could not sleep well. After quarrelling with his wife, Lee became bitter. "Nobody understands me; they make my life miserable," he cried to himself.

Cognitive distortion

You may know someone like Lee. So what was going on in his mind? Lee was suffering from a common problem called cognitive distortion. His inner dialogue or self-talk was negative and distorted. For instance, when he said "I will never get promoted in this company" he was, in fact, fortune-telling.



Dr Yong with participants of an earlier seminar.

The future is unpredictable, yet Lee spoke like as if he knew what would happen, "Fortune-telling" is a type of cognitive distortion. Although cognitive distortions occur primarily in our minds, they can have serious consequences on our body and spirit when the distortions cause us to go into self-centredness and self-pity.

A spirit that is unwell can lead to excessive focus on oneself, or self-centredness. It begins with feelings of self-pity. The symptoms of self-pity include regret, disappointment, envy, jealousy and greediness. Self-pity can spiral precipitously downwards into severe depression with suicidal tendencies.

Of endorphins

Our bodies produce a hormone called endorphin that makes us feel good. Endorphin is actually an abbreviation of “endogenous morphine”.

Morphine is used medicinally to relieve pain, but it also alters perception by producing euphoria and dispelling fear and anxiety.

Endorphins can do the same thing. The only difference is that they are natural and therefore safe (while morphine is addictive).

Endorphins are beneficial because:

- They give us a sense of security and significance;
- They build up our immune system;
- They can help relieve aches and pain; and
- They improve the accuracy of our perception, hence helping us in problem-solving.

If endorphins are so good for us, how can we “get” them? Endorphins are released during physical exercise. However, they don’t last long because the body produces an enzyme called endorphinase that consumes them.

What then can we do to increase levels of endorphins?

According to scientific research, thinking positively will aid the release of endorphins, and vice-versa. One way to understand why an unhappy person would have low levels of endorphins is to look at the fourth property: that endorphins help improve the accuracy and positivity of our perception.

If a person considers half a glass of water as half-empty, then he is not interested in problem-solving. His endorphin level will drop as the mind “informs” the body that he does not need fresh release of endorphins.

On the other hand, when the person focusses positively on the glass as half-full, he enters a problem-solving mode and the mind will inform the body that he requires endorphins.

In real life, a half-empty mindset would be to regret a bad experience from the past and constantly replay that episode in our mind. Self-pity will do that to the individual.

Accepting the past and moving on with renewed hope will strengthen the individual to face tomorrow. Emotionally-excellent individuals do precisely that.

How do they achieve this? In the next article (in *StarTwo*, July 9), we examine the two basic human needs in our spirit.

Dr Leonard Yong is an educational psychologist. He consults internationally and is now based in Dubai (www.leonard.com.my). He will address the Malaysia Festival of the Mind, jointly organised by Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman, Malaysia Mental Literacy Movement and Kolej Tunku Abdul Rahman, to be held July 10-12 at Utar's Perak campus in Kampar. Admission is free. For enquiries, call 03-76250328 or e-mail mmlm@utar.edu.my

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Towards wellness

By Dr LEONARD YONG

The basic human needs of security and significance determine a person's behaviour.

I AM deeply grateful to psychologist Dr Larry Crabb for expressing his views that humans have deepest longings for the two basic human needs of security and significance.

In my interviews with hundreds of clients, I have confirmed that these two basic inner needs reside deep in the human spirit.

The need for social-emotional security manifests itself as the need for a sense of belonging and being accepted.

The need for inner significance shows itself as the need to feel that we are important to other people and that we add value to others.

Individuals who are internally secure and significant are open to new ideas and creativity in their responses to challenges that the world presents. Conversely, those who are insecure tend to display negative behaviours.

Emotionally-excellent individuals have learnt that only when they have inner significance and security can they overcome the negative aspects of their behaviour.

TENT and the spirit

I have developed a technique called the TENT therapy to help individuals gain inner security and significance.

TENT therapy helps protect the spirit and mind from the elements of the outside world. When an individual's spiritual tent is strong, he can better withstand the pressures from the external world. The individual is also in a better position to handle sudden changes.

TENT utilises a form of psychotherapy called Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) which is based on the discovery that our thoughts affect our feelings and behaviours.

However, TENT is based on the knowledge that the individual comprises spirit, mind and body.

TENT is supported by the two T's: the twin poles of thankfulness. That thankfulness is one of the keys to our well-being has been substantiated by research.

The E in TENT stands for enjoyment. It includes enjoying the present, whether good or bad. Enjoyment enables you to focus, to be fully engaged in whatever it is you're doing, and to do your best.

The N is a phrase: “(There are) No coincidences or accidents in life.” This is worth remembering especially when bad things happen to us.

In these situations, some people may use the cognitive distortion called personalisation — they blame themselves for what happened. A little self-encouragement goes a long way to attaining resilience.

Performing TENT therapy

You can perform TENT at any time. Many of my clients have found it very useful to start at 6am and then repeat the TENT every three hours after that.

Step 1: Thanksgiving attitude

Begin by closing your eyes and recalling a pleasant memory and dwell on it. This enables you to switch from a negative to positive mood.

Make this memory brighter, bigger and clearer in your imagination. Make any sound associated with the memory to be louder.

Step 2: Enjoy the now

Continue by enjoying the present in a wholesome way. Enjoying the present is a vital mental habit that can enrich the spirit because the mind is the doorway to the spirit. Say to yourself: “It is now 9am (or whatever time). I have this present moment as a gift. I am thankful for this moment.”

Step 3: No coincidence in my life

Remind yourself in the next few minutes of quiet meditation that there are no coincidences or accidents in life. Let go of any traumatic and oppressive memory of past failures or defeats.

Step 4: Thankfulness to God

At the same time, declare joyfully to God your gratefulness for all the blessings he has showered upon you. Be thankful for all the things that you have and enjoy them. Thank God for your health and your family.

By performing TENT every day, we can help stimulate the release of endorphins in larger quantities at a higher frequency. Delegates at our seminars have reported that exercising and practising TENT at three-hour intervals help them tremendously in managing their emotions. This will help us achieve emotional excellence. ■ *Dr Leonard Yong is an educational psychologist. He consults internationally and is now based in Dubai (www.leonard.com.my). He will address the Malaysia Festival of the Mind, jointly organised by Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman, Malaysia Mental Literacy Movement and Kolej Tunku Abdul Rahman, to be held from tomorrow till this Sunday at Utar’s Perak*

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