

Creating creative workers

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DR Leonard Yong's interest in human creativity was triggered by two factors – his wife, and a desire to help people achieve their full potential.

The educational psychologist attributes part of his fascination with creativity to being married to a "very dynamic person, who makes do with whatever she has".

"I'm married to a very creative wife. She comes up with a lot of unusual ideas in solving problems."

Giving an example, he recalls the time the retaining wall in their backyard collapsed.

"She came up with the idea of using inverted drain moulds to stack against the wall to ensure that it didn't collapse again.

"And sure enough, we never had any more problems with that retaining wall again," he says, with a smile.

Dr Yong, who started his career as a Chemistry teacher at St John's Institution, Kuala Lumpur, pursued his postgraduate degrees in psychology following his growing

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DR LEONARD YONG

interest in how to help people maximise their potential.

This led to 20 over years of research in creativity and emotional intelligence as a member of Universiti Malaya's (UM) Department of Educational Psychology and Counselling.

The culmination of his research is the

Leonard Personality Inventory (LPI) and the accompanying software, meant to help people develop their creativity.

By analysing the responses to a questionnaire, the LPI software is able to pinpoint the respondent's personality type, including his strengths and weaknesses, what stresses him out and how he can be more creative.

Knowing your own personality profile can help develop your emotional excellence, while being aware of other people's personality profiles will enable you to improve your interpersonal skills, says Dr Yong.

"In most work places, people need to be emotionally well.

"If they are emotionally well, the workplace will become more productive and the workers more creative," he explains.

Dr Yong, who retired from UM in 2002, now runs a consultancy that trains corporate and government clients, both local and international, on emotional intelligence and creative thinking in the workplace.

His clients include officers from the Treasury Department, Petronas, Microsoft Thailand, the Saudi Arabian Government, Readers Digest and B. Braun.

Explaining the concept of emotional excellence, he says: "People need to feel accepted, like they belong.

"They also need to feel significant, like they add value to the workplace.

"If they feel secure and significant, they will be motivated."

In line with this, leaders have to ensure that their employees feel secure and significant in order to enhance creativity and productivity at the workplace.

This can be done by understanding the various personalities there and how to manage each person in the best manner.

On a more personal level, Dr Yong came up with the TENT therapy to help individuals withstand external pressures and stress.

This therapy, based on cognitive behavioural therapy, stands for thankfulness for life (T), enjoyment of life (E), understanding that there are no coincidences in life (N) and thankfulness to God (T).

According to Dr Yong, the concept for the therapy – developed in his book – was inspired by a visit to Syria with his wife.

"When we were travelling in Syria, we saw many goats' hair tents.

"When the sun shines, the tents absorb the sun's heat, making it cool inside.

"When it rains, the goats' hair expands, making the tent impermeable to the rainwater," he says.

The unique property of the goats' hair triggered off a chain of thought that led to him coming up with the TENT concept.

Many people, he adds, have changed their lifestyles after practising this therapy.

October talks

DR Leonard Yong will be giving two talks in October. Both are entitled *Developing Openness to New Ideas for Enhancing Creative Thinking*.

The first talk will be held at Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman's (Utar) Petaling Jaya campus on Oct 6, from 9.45am to 12pm.

Admission is free, but seats are limited. Those interested, can call Lay Har or Foong Yi at 03-7625 0328 or 016 223 3559, or e-mail: mmlmmalaysia@yahoo.com to register.

The talk is jointly organised by *The Star*, the Malaysian Mental Literacy Movement and Utar.

The second talk will be held on Oct 25, from 11.45am to 12.45pm, in conjunction with the inaugural Malaysia Festival of the

Mind 2007, on from Oct 25 to 28 at the Utar Petaling Jaya campus.

The festival will be open to the public from 9.30am to 4.30pm, and will feature various talks, demonstrations, exhibitions and competitions.

Its aim is to create awareness among Malaysians about the human mind and its unlimited potential, as well as ways of tapping into and developing one's brainpower to the fullest.

The festival is organised by the Malaysian Mental Literacy Movement, and is supported by *The Star* and Utar.

For details, call 03-7925 0328 or e-mail: mmlm2007@gmail.com.



Dr Yong explaining the TENT therapy he developed.