

MY PERSPECTIVE ON LIFE HELPS ME STRIKE THAT BALANCE!

By Victor Koh

Work-Life Consultant

Victor is a Management Consultant, Business Coach and Trainer. He has a Master of Business Administration (International Marketing & Financial) and has been running his own management consultancy and training company for more than 7 years. He also gives regular talks on both business and parenting issues at non-profit organizations. Married for 19 years, he is a father of two - aged 15 and 10 years old.

"How much money do you need to live on everyday?" a question that I often ask my clients and friends. This seems contradictory coming from the mouth of a Marketing and Sales Consultant whose job is to help clients obtain more business and earn more money.

But no, it is not contradictory at all. I am actually helping my clients and friends align their perspective of life. Many of us know what we want in a business or career, that is, to make more money. Unfortunately, just as many of us have forgotten the underlining reason - the WHY's - of working so hard for the money. Very often, it takes some tragic experiences in the family before one realised what one has missed in life.

As a consultant, trainer and business coach, I feel obligated to help my clients and friends *right* their thought before it is too late.

My strong belief on the importance of family before business has influenced the way I bring up my two children - daughter, 15 and son, 10. My house is like a library - books everywhere. My proven experience: If you want your children to love books, you must first love it yourself. I set the example for my children by being a vivid reader. They followed my passion of reading. Both of them read very widely, from novels to sciences and nature, from cars to plane and fighter jets...anything that they may have an interest in.



The best gift that you can give to your children is a right positive attitude towards learning.

My wife and I are both professionals with our own fields of specialisation. We both hold a master degree in business administration, work more than 8 hours a day. We cook whenever we can; take time to clean our home and care for our children *because we*, unlike most working couples in Singapore, do not have a maid.

We do not believe that someone else should have the privilege of parenting our children. Living without a maid helps because it forces us to look after the children ourselves. You only have about 2-3 years to carry your babies. Following which, you only have another 6-8 years to hold their hands. After that, they will tell you that 'they are too old for all *these things*'.

When my children were young, they spent most of their after school hours in 'after school care' centres. Now, I pick them home whenever I can. I believe that children must know where home is, and children must feel that coming home is 'normal'. This has prompted me to start cooking at home 5 years ago. Prior to that, dinner was at my in-law's house. By cooking at home, I want to cultivate the children to know that eating out is a choice and not a norm. Eating at home is *the norm*. Now, my daughter has learnt to cook a simple meal for her younger brother and herself. My son also enjoys helping out in the kitchen.

On the personal side, I have to admit that balancing work and life is not an easy task, more so, in the rat-race environment like Singapore. People are so caught up with competing with each other on material luxuries such that they have lost sight of their main purpose in life. Many have also failed to enjoy the fruits of their labour. We are no different from them except that we value our family more. We have to consistently remind ourselves to place the family above our work. Very often we have to work late into the night so that we can spend more time with our children in the earlier hours. I suppose we may call this Work-Family balance.

A mother once asked me after a parenting seminar on how to get her daughter to come home after school. My suggestion to her was to provide a home and not a house with a maid. There is a great difference between a house and a home. The former is a cold

lifeless building and the latter is warmed by the parents' love. It has nothing to do with the size nor the expensive items you put inside it.

We have limited time and much lesser when our children are growing up faster than we know. There are still many things that I want to do with my children and time is running out!