

# High five for this gung-ho dad

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 32

I have always marvelled at big families, especially when they are very cohesive. Dorothy and I had initially actually planned for three or four kids in order to have what we deem a wholesome family. So when we heard that we were having five at once, it was definitely a bonus for us. The feeling was of excitement and mixed joy as it was a pleasant surprise. We were not concerned if

they were going to be a burden on our finances or anything. We had only one main cause for worry, and that was if they would be healthy and safe.

## How has life changed for you in the last decade?

One thing for sure is that I can't just pack my bags and go anywhere I'd like to any more. My wife and I have not gone for any holidays – no matter how short – without the

kids. As such, one-on-one spousal time has been reduced, so we try to make use of every little opportunity to spend time alone with each other. For instance, when we send our kids for tuition that would last for about two hours, both of us will use that time in between to catch up with each other.

The focus is now very much on the children. Whatever we do, we are always thinking of them and putting them at the top of any plans we make.

## How do you manage the expenses for five kids?

I'd advise people with kids to do what we have done - buy insurance for their education!

## Singapore is currently experiencing a declining birth rate. In your opinion, why is this happening?

This is not a Singapore phenomenon per se. But I feel that this is caused by the tension between having a fulfilling career and family happiness. Bosses will definitely place certain expectations on workers, and young couples will also place undue stress on themselves in wanting to achieve career success, and there is nothing wrong with this. But we should not slog away 24/7. There will come a time when you need to scale back in terms of your career and start thinking of the future.

When working long hours, most couples perceive that they will have less time to start a family. There is also the concern that raising a child is expensive, hence couples defer childbirth to a later stage in their married life.

We need to strike a balance in our lives, something like the *yin* and *yang* concept. So having children provides that balance in our lives. By all means work hard, but I must say that having children provides a sort of wholesomeness that I can't quite describe.

The most important thing is for couples to see having children as a joy and a gift, and that is a fact. There will never be a dull day with kids around, as they are always providing the laughter, happiness, and cheeky arguments in the family. But parenting is not a bed of roses – there can be heartaches, too.

## How do you ensure your attention is spread evenly among your five kids?

I try to mentally tell myself that I should do so, but this is easier said than done. More often than not, the children will yearn for my attention. What I do is to attend to those who call for me first, rather than have a set fraction of time, say, 20 per cent for each. Some are quieter so they don't really seek attention, while another can be louder and want more attention.

I have also learned that when the kids have unreasonable demands, there is no point in trying to talk sense into them at that moment. So I usually go back to them after some "cooling-off" time instead of just saying, "No, no, no!" right away. One important thing that

parents have to keep in mind, however, is to never let the situation fester.

## What are some key ingredients in building up a good family?

Have constant dialogue and communication between the husband and wife, so as to establish a common value system. This is important because it mirrors what you try to put across to your kids, so you don't want any contradictions to confuse them. Both spouses must



## Both spouses must agree on how they want to bring up the children.

— Lt-Col Humphrey Chin, on one of the key ingredients to good parenting

agree on how they want to bring up the children, and there must also be constant feedback to ensure that things are on the right track.

When dealing with kids, we must always suspend judgement. We tend to judge and jump to conclusions even before they have a chance to explain themselves. We cannot do this because it will only worsen our relationship with the kids.

It is important that parents and children adopt a two-way communication approach. Parenting is a learning journey, so there are times when you teach the children, but there are others where you must learn from them. We cannot think that since we are the parents, we will know more than the children, and that whatever we tell the kids is right.

## Fathers' Day is around the corner, so what is the best gift your kids can give you?

That would be for them to not misunderstand my intentions. I want them to understand my thoughts, as well as the reasons for making certain decisions. What I do is always for their benefit. I want them to know that I'm not trying to make life difficult for them on purpose. I think it's best if they can understand my efforts, because you can do a lot of things for them, but if they were to misunderstand your intentions, it will gradually fester into some sort of hatred.

# FANCY A CAREER AS A CHEF?

**SHATEC**  
The Singapore International Hotel and Tourism College

Attend our Adult Information Session on the **CRAFT (CREating Talent through Apprenticeship and Full-time Training) for Chefs Scholarship.** This programme is designed to

give potential chefs a strong foundation in skills and knowledge via institutional training and practical experience from apprenticeships.

## PROGRAMME

Date : Saturday, 16<sup>th</sup> June 2007

Time : Commences at 1.30pm

Ends at 5.00pm

Venue : SHATEC Campus (Bukit Batok)

- Presentation on SHATEC & WDA Craft for Chefs Scholarship
- Presentation on SHATEC's Administration procedures
- Facilities & Campus Tour
- Reception with light refreshments

## COURSE

Diploma in Culinary Skills

Intake in July 2007

- \* Stringent selection process based on eligibility and qualifications criteria
- \* Successful applicants will receive a 80% course fee subsidy
- \* Receive nationally recognised Workforce Skills Qualifications (WSQ) in Culinary Skills accredited by WDA
- \* For Singaporeans & Permanent Residents only (Males must have completed NS)
- \* Scholarships still available for July 2007

Work-study available

On-the-spot Registration & Interviews  
Please bring originals & photocopies of IC and certificates.



SHATEC Bukit Batok Campus  
21 Bukit Batok Street 22, Singapore 659589  
Tel : 6415 3588 Fax : 6415 3530  
www.shatec.sg email : enquiries@shatec.sg

Course consultation & registration :  
Mon - Fri 8.30am - 5.30pm  
Sat 8.30am - 12.30pm



SINGAPORE WORKFORCE SKILLS QUALIFICATIONS



CaseTrust  
Be Sure