



Are you having a laugh?

"When we laugh—we change. When we change—the world changes." These words of advice were given by Lenny Ravich and, Avi Liran, Instructors for Joy-care Factor, during a recent workshop in Hong Kong. The workshop aimed at demonstrating to HR managers the benefits of being happy, and sharing that happiness with their employees.

Ravich and Liran follow a unique program delivery method and philosophy named 'Easier Done than Said' (EDTS) which has several aims:

- Provide Mind-Body-Soul activities that allow participants to learn how to take action and achieve their goals
- Encourage learning through play, fun and humour involving tools researched from positive psychology.
- Engage participants' emotions and encourage them to take ownership in creating their own reality.

Body-mind connections

The first part of the workshop covered making a body-mind connection, and got

participants involved and moving around, along with lots of laughing—the goal being to shift focus from the logical left brain to the creative right brain. The group were encouraged to talk about pain, and how it affects the body and how to manage it. Ravich and Liran pointed out that it is 'mind over matter' when dealing with pain—and focusing on it will only make it worse. The same is true for both physical and mental pain.

The workshop then moved into dealing with fear and the group was encouraged to write down fears that can be controlled and those that cannot be controlled. The group was then encouraged to face their fears and to help others face theirs. Ravich and Liran pointed out, "Almost everyone overcomes his/her fears then supports others to overcome theirs."

Happy moves

'Happy movement' was next on the agenda and Ravich and Liran explained, "When you move your body in a more

positive and energetic manner, your body will release happy hormones and you will almost double the amount of oxygen in your body." In order to encourage this, they suggested:

- Straightening your back and walking at a faster pace. Help your body feel that you are successful—and it will become a self fulfilling prophecy.
- Adding a smile to make a connection between your physical state and your happy mood. The smiles of others will give you energy to sustain it.

Breathing

Ravich and Liran also taught deep-breathing exercises aimed at increasing blood flow to all organs and relaxing the body. They used the example of smelling a flower, and how deeply inhaling the smell can help people relax and soothe stress. They added that staff do not necessarily need an actual flower, but instead can just use their imagination to achieve the same effect.

Non-verbal communication

Once relaxed, the group moved on to using non-verbal communication. Through a series of fun, and at times downright silly, drills the group let go of their inhibitions and instead used emotions and intuition to communicate. Ravich and Liran pointed out, "The mastery of non-verbal communication is also a leadership tool.

While the left brain is great in pointing the finger to the symptoms of the problems, the right brain is essential in developing and sharpening non-verbal perception, which helps people get closer to the root that manifested the symptom. Thus getting them closer to success in communicating."

Projecting happiness

The workshop highlighted that people tend to think in 'images' and 'video clips' which in turn can affect the emotions they project. Ravich and Liran advised, "You are not only the actor of your life, you are also the director and the producer. The emotions that are associated with the images that you choose to project affect your physical strength almost immediately." In this respect, how you think not only affects your emotions, but also the way you act, and how you are perceived by others.

Techniques to make yourself (and your staff) happier

The workshop also introduced techniques such as 'laughter yoga' to help further melt barriers between staff, and encourage them to let go and better embrace happiness. Ravich and Liran were quick to point out that happiness is not just about pleasing your customers, boss or family, it is about pleasing yourself. In order to achieve this they suggested a number of techniques.

1. Look in a mirror to release emotions. Ravich and Liran suggested, "Instead of going against your emotions and attempting to suppress them, the mirror allows you to release them with catharsis."
2. Take ownership of problems. The workshop advised HR managers, and people in general, to deal with their



(Left to right) Lenny Ravich and Avi Liran, Instructors for Joy-care Factor

problems rather than running away from them, to avoid making things worse.

3. Resurrect the child within. Ravich and Liran extolled, "Neuroscience and education researches conclusively show that learning by playing using the right brain and positive emotions, is far more effective and memorable than the boring left-brain teachings. For parents, playing with your kids is an opportunity to live a second childhood."
4. Laugh & smile. Ravich and Liran also suggested that people laugh and smile as much as possible as in doing so, it appears you are happy, and in turn will make you happier. They also pointed out that happy people tend to be healthier and lead better lives.
5. Recognise achievements. The workshop highlighted the importance for HR managers to recognise their own and others' achievements. As people we crave recognition, and when our achievements are recognised, we are happy. HR managers should ensure they promote this practise throughout the workplace in order to help keep

all employees happy. One idea put forward was to record gratitude twice a week in a journal, which can lead to a higher level of happiness. This may include recording: good things you have, bad things you avoided, blessings in disguise, downward comparisons, and grateful moments.

6. Accept change. The workshop also recommended that HR managers should accept what they can't change, and embrace what they can change. The world is always changing, and people need to change with it, the people that embrace change, and can view change with a positive attitude are more likely to succeed, and be happy.
7. Give yourself a pat on the back. Finally, Ravich and Liran concluded with the simple idea that very few HR managers take the time to do—give themselves deserving complements. In taking time to giving themselves complements, HR can increase their own happiness both in work and in their personal lives.

Happiness work-out

Ravich and Liran are adamant that happiness in the workplace cannot be achieved with one person, but needs to be achieved by a team of people working together to face any and all challenges. They suggested that the tools learnt to increase personal happiness can all easily be applied and taught to employees. They summed up by comparing happiness to working out. They said, "...it does not work if you only do it once in a while. The happiness exercises and tools given need to be practiced every day, and over time there will be a beneficial increase both individual and workplace happiness."

