

Michael Teh has found his true calling in helping others find happiness and fulfillment in life



State Your Happy

In today's hectic, fast-paced and materialistic world, Michael Teh shares his formula for regaining one's sense of balance and happiness in life *By Elizabeth Soong*

We all want to be successful in life, but every so often we continue to hustle and grind till we become exhausted, anxious, irritated, angry, sleepless, burned out. In a word, it's called stress and if proper steps are not taken to manage it, chronic stress develops which then potentially leads to depression, insomnia, raised blood pressure, heart rate, and blood sugar levels. It does not only affect you but others in your life as well.

If anyone can relate, it's Michael Teh. As an

entrepreneur and investor, Teh had amassed wealth and financial gains, having made his first million dollars at age 26. But the drawback was, chasing after success had become an obsession, and he found himself expending time and energy focusing on investing and trading on the stock markets and buying businesses. Due to excessive risk taking and commitments, he became overwhelmed with immense stress and fear, and even allowed his ego to get the better of him, leading to constant arguments with his family and business associates.

"It actually created a lot of unpeaceful moments towards my family," he shares. "My life was being driven by external factors—the stock market, my business dealings—and when my expectations were not met, I get very upset, which then leads to anxiety, anger and all that. So I realised, this shouldn't be the way, because if you're not mindful, we become consumed by all these negative energies and if we don't purify them, we will create a negative [vibe] towards yourself first, then your

family, your kids, your parents, and ultimately your friends and colleagues. It made me question, why have we become the puppet of all these negative energies?”

His life turned around when he attended a seven-day meditation workshop by Master Umesh H Nandwani in Singapore, in 2018. “I literally walked out of the programme with a newfound realisation,” he says. “In those seven days I realised that life is not just about chasing figures or material things but about spiritual happiness. There is something within yourself that is trying to seek [the meaning of life].”

With his wife Allyson Yeo’s support, he went and did some soul-searching in Nepal, India, Hawaii and Thailand to discover what his life’s true purpose was and expand his philosophical understanding. He also got himself certified as a registered yoga teacher by enrolling in a 500-hour teacher training programme under the tutelage of Shilpa Ghatalia, a renowned yoga teacher who received training from the Swami Rama Institute of Yogic Sciences Honesdale in the USA. He went even further and learnt qigong from Mantak Chia, a Taoist master. These gave him the credentials to become a meditation coach and conduct a series of signature workshops where he teaches self-realisation through meditation, philosophy, and his own practice of qigong-yoga.

While the science around meditation is relatively young, it suggests a compelling list of health benefits. Apart from reducing blood pressure and boosting the immune system, it also rewires key parts of the brain associated with attention, self-awareness, compassion and stress. Teh points out: “In this era, meditation has become so widely known in America; all the successful entrepreneurs and sportsmen, they meditate.” He cites Ray Dalio, founder of the world’s largest hedge fund, who said: “Meditation, more than any other factor, has been the reason for what success I’ve had.” Dalio has been meditating for 40 years.

Based on his own experiences, and seeing the effective results his workshops had on his participants, there is no doubt in Teh’s mind that meditation is the key to unlocking spiritual happiness/higher potential through self-healing and self-transformation. He shares, “What we do in my workshops is not just learn about meditation and philosophy, there is also a lot of wisdom sharing among my participants. Like, how do they bring their life forward? How do they forgive people who have hurt them? How do they let go of old grudges? In that process, they experience self-healing and self-transformation. I could see them being transformed in their own mind; as they realised many things [about themselves], they were able to let go of all their unhappiness.”

“When I talk about a life of higher potential, it essentially means to come back to the true nature of who you truly are and cultivate seeking happiness from within”





Michael Teh conducting his signature workshop where he teaches guided meditation, philosophy and his own practice of qigong-yoga

As a new year calls for new beginnings, Teh shares some wisdom in reducing stress and leading a more joyous and fulfilled life.

JUST BREATHE

Simple, breathing exercises can make a big difference if you make them part of your daily routine. It's a form of "entry level" meditation that anyone can do.

When conducting his meditation workshop, Teh uses the art of breathing to slowly bring his participants back to a state of peace and calm.

"One question that I always ask is, am I breathing?" says Teh. "What happens when you ask this question, is that you straight away bring your mind to your own consciousness. A lot of people are not even aware they are breathing, but breathing is what gives you life. That's how we have taken life for granted; we do not even realise we're breathing consciously. When you breathe, you realise you have energy. And what happens if this energy is taken away from your body? It becomes lifeless, your life force is gone."

While we know it's hard to sit still even for five minutes, Teh suggests to count your breaths, starting at 1 and going up to 20. When you reach 20, return to step 1 and repeat. Start again at 1 when your attention wanders and you realise you have lost track of the number.

"Why people can't do meditation is because the moment they sit down, the mind is everywhere. For me, I bring my mind back to breathing, so in that zone, it's

all about mind exercising—to bring my mind back to the now. But in my current state (having mastered the technique), it's just emptiness—no thoughts, nothing. Emptiness is preferred, because the moment you go in with emptiness and you back out with emptiness, you feel rejuvenated. Life is full of possibilities."

LEARN TO DETACH FROM YOUR EMOTIONS

"In our day-to-day life, we have a lot of thoughts [and worries] in our head—we've got lots of to-do lists, we've got lots of debt. Our mind is nothing but our thoughts, emotions and consciousness; and 98 per cent of our life experiences is driven by emotions. If today you wake up not happy, you go out in an unhappy state, and the day will not be so great for you.

"What we do in meditation is to slowly create that awareness that you are not your 'emotion', you are not your 'thoughts'. You will come to a state of what we call 'equilibrium'—a state of becoming mindful that there is anger, but you are not angry. You'll be able to detach, and in that process of finding that stillness and peace, you get the wisdom to understand when you ask yourself 'why am I feeling angry?'

It also helps to write down your thoughts, without analysing them or pausing to consider whether you are putting everything in the right order. "In that process comes self-realisation, and then when you feel peace and calm, you will have that energy to go on with your life."

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SEEK HAPPINESS FROM WITHIN

In some ways, people tend to seek validation from external parties, like you're attaching your happiness or fulfilment in some form, to other people or material things. But when you decide you're in charge of your own feelings and emotions and do not rely on the approval of others to feel content, you have achieved emotional independence. You don't rely on the other person to make you happy, instead you look inside yourself and find that joy and happiness from within.

“When you're born, you're born innately joyful. When babies fall, they may cry but the next minute they will just laugh again. That's who we truly are, that's our nature,” says Teh. “But as we grow older, for some reason we forget our nature. Life becomes very stressful, life becomes full of responsibilities, life becomes having to fulfil and meet all that expectation (of your spouse, your kids, your boss, etc)—therefore you lose touch with yourself. So when I talk about a life of higher potential, it essentially means to come back to the true nature of who you truly are and cultivate seeking happiness from within.”

PRACTISE COMPASSION FOR OTHERS

Teh came across this quote from the Dalai Lama: “The planet does not need more successful people. The planet desperately needs more peacemakers,

healers, restorers, storytellers and lovers of all kinds.”

Believing that we all have this deep compassion within us, Teh urges us to be “joyful, and render some help and loving kindness every day.” Imagine a day when things are not going well for you, but then a friend calls who's having a true emergency in their life, and you immediately go and help them. In that moment, something happens to your state of mind. Suddenly, you have high energy and your well-being increases tremendously.

Teh explains, “This is what we call a very high state of vibration where [we perform little acts of kindness]. You see, generosity is not about just donating money. Generosity means, can you donate your smile? Can you share your warmth, your love? Those simple things. If you have money and want to share your wealth, that's fine, even more beautiful. At the end of the day, it is all about the betterment of humanity. It's not about your individual success. If you're rich, you have a responsibility to help humanity evolve, in that sense. So in a way, success doesn't really mean just how many assets you have. Are you happy in whatever you are embarking on now? Are you able to impact people? Are you able to share your loving kindness and compassion? To me, that is success. You can be the change you want to see in the world.”

