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REGION'S FIRST HAPPINESS CONFERENCE FROM 20-21 MARCH 2020 WITH MORE THAN FIFTY SPEAKERS SHARING INSIGHTS ABOUT HAPPINESS AND WELL-BEING

SINGAPORE -

Happiness Initiative will be holding the **Region's First Happiness Conference** from 20-21 March 2020 at the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts Lee Foundation Theatre.

The number of people with mental health conditions in Singapore have been on the rise. Even with accessible treatment and awareness campaigns, more needs to be done on a preventive level. There is a growing body of science and research around happiness and well-being which shows that happiness can be developed through a set of learnable skills. The conference aims to provide a platform for people to share the latest insights and inspire action.

Simon Leow, Co-Founder of Happiness Initiative, says, "Happiness is an ideal that appears in both our pledge and national anthem. This conference offers insights into what is happiness and what choices we can make to be happier. We hope to bring an Asian perspective to this field, which is often dominated by Western research."

It will also be held concurrently with the second edition of the Happiness Film Festival organised by Happiness Initiative, which will be returning on 18-22 March 2020 after it sold out in its inaugural year, with more than 1,500 participants attending. More details on the film festival will be released on a later date.

Over two days, the conference will feature over thirty talks, fireside chats and workshops, with more than fifty speakers. The topics will focus on three main strands – Well-being in Education, Well-being at Work and Well-being in Community.

Founding member and associate editor of the World Happiness Report, Dr Shun Wang, will be opening the conference as a keynote speaker. The release of the World Happiness Report 2020 will coincide with the first day of the conference. Dr Wang will present his insights from the World Happiness Report and what accounts for the difference in ranking of the countries.

Dr William Wan, General Secretary of the Singapore Kindness Movement, will kickstart the second day of the conference. Dr Wan will share how happiness and kindness is intertwined and the key to discovering sustainable happiness. He will also be on a panel alongside **singer-songwriter Inch Chua** and **World Toilet Organisation founder Jack Sim**, to exchange perspectives on the new values and aspirations relevant to build a happier Singapore.

Among the panellists for the discussion on workplace happiness, audiences will hear the thoughts of **Mercer's Health Consulting Leader Samuel Tan** and **Lyn Lee, Chief Diversity & Inclusivity Officer of Royal Dutch Shell**. In the sphere of education, insights on happiness and well-being in schools will be shared by panellists such as **Dr Mark Charles Baidon from the National Institute of Education** and **Singapore American School's Deputy Superintendent Dr Jennifer Sparrow**.

Audiences can also gain insights from the Nordic countries, who are consistently ranked top ten in the World Happiness Report. **Nordic ambassadors from Finland, Denmark, Norway and Sweden** will engage in a panel discussion on what makes their citizens happier than most in the world and whether these practices are applicable in an Asian context.

Ritva Naumanen, Deputy Head of Mission for the Embassy of Finland says, "For Finland, well-being in work and education bears an extremely high importance. This focus on people's well-being, is one great reasons behind Finland excelling time after time in education rankings and work-life balance. Finland was ranked as the happiest country in the world for the second year in a row now, and we want to share our ideas and experiences to spread the happiness and to create even better solutions to support well-being!"

The Nordic panel will be moderated by **Dr Siok Kuan Tambyah, an Associate Professor of Marketing at the National University of Singapore Business School**. She has been involved in research on the happiness of Singaporeans for the past two decades and has published multiple books and articles on this topic.

In partnership with **Druk Asia**, the Happiness Conference will also feature prominent speakers from Bhutan. Bhutan was the first country to introduce Gross National Happiness as an alternative measurement of growth in 1998. **Dasho Kinley Dorji, the editor-in-chief of Bhutan's national newspaper and the former Secretary of Bhutan's Ministry of Information and Communications**, will be speaking at the conference on the need to go beyond Gross National Product and why Bhutan implemented Gross National Happiness.

Passes for the two day conference starts from \$99, for youths, social enterprises, and non-profits. For the general public and corporates, the full conference pass costs \$199, with special offers during the early bird period in December.

"The closest well-being conference to Singapore geographically costs about one thousand Singapore dollars to attend. That, coupled with flights and accommodation, made it very unaffordable to many people," explains **Happiness Initiative Co-Founder Sherman Ho**. "But we believe that for us to have any impact on the narrative of happiness, the conference has to be accessible for everyone."

This event is supported by **Health Promotion Board, Singapore Kindness Movement, National Youth Council, Institute of Mental Health**, and **National Healthcare Group**.

Mr Gary Khoo, Health Promotion Board, Director, Preventive Health Programmes says, "HPB recognises that one of the ways to better mental well-being is to be happy and do more of what makes one happy. As mental health is an important area of public health, HPB focuses on equipping individuals with resilience and coping skills, as well as building supportive environments to foster mental wellbeing. More can be done to promote the importance of mental wellness. Events like the Happiness Conference help to raise mental health awareness and drive mental health advocacy in the community."

Through this conference, Happiness Initiative also hopes to reshape perspectives on how greater happiness can be achieved and illuminate the measures individuals and the community can take for a happier Singapore.

The Happiness Conference is organised by **Happiness Initiative**, a social enterprise that focuses on promoting happiness and well-being in Singapore. They believe that happiness can be a choice, and focus on helping people understand the science behind happiness and well-being. Through their programmes, they hope to take a more preventive approach towards mental health conditions.

MORE INFORMATION

- The Happiness Conference is organised by Happiness Initiative, a social enterprise that aims to promote happiness and well-being in Singapore.
- The conference will be held over two days from 20-21 March 2020.
- The main conference venue is at National Academy of Fine Arts Lee Foundation Theatre and the breakout sessions will be held at various venues around NAFA.
- Happiness Initiative is also the organiser of the Happiness Film Festival, which is returning for its second edition from 18-22 March 2020.

Visit <http://happinessconference.asia> for more information.

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