



Building a positive family culture and traditions are critical for cementing the bonds between family members. Photo: Bloomberg

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How family values can be passed down

The core value of sauce maker Lee Kum Kee International Holdings Ltd. is “family first, business second”.

The 128-year-old family business, in which the fifth generation of founder Lee Kum Sheung’s family are now involved, also adheres to the principle of “considering others’ interests” in every aspect of its business operations.

For a family business to last so long, family harmony, a consensus about family values and effective communication among members of the family are clearly necessary.

Different people have different values, which can vary a lot between different generations.

Lee Shu-kam, associate professor at Hong Kong Shue Yan University, published a study recently that shows parents and children have marked differences in values.

He said parents should reduce their reliance on a parenting style based on dependence by their children on them.

Lee said parents should increase their positive interactions with their children, which will help improve mental resilience and instill moral values in their children.

Also, if parents fail to show care for their children from the perspective of the children, or lack effective communication or consensus with them, it could easily cause friction between the two generations.

Personal values are demonstrated in their behavior.

Differences in values could cause grudges or even lead to family breakdown.

Fighting among family members for wealth is the trigger point for many family feuds, and the underlying cause is likely a poor family relationship and disagreement in family values.

Family culture and traditions are keys to cementing family ties.

Family traditions, with many small stories embedded in them, are important in forging an identity for a family.

These traditions will teach children where the family comes from and its history and make them more confident in and attached to the family.

The family traditions will enhance mutual understanding and trust among family members and make every family member feel unique and recognized.

And these traditions will give some sense of safety to children even if the family faces challenges or change.

Families should have a clear purpose when building a new family tradition.

For example, if you want to build a culture of gratitude within the family and help family members understand the significance of being grateful, every family member could write a few sentences expressing gratitude on a piece of paper before dinnertime and put them into a grateful box.

Each family member would take turn to read what is written on a piece of paper from the box and share it with the others.

If every family member can share his or her own values, the family can find the values common to all its members.

These values will become part of the family culture, and help forge the family's vision and mission.

Building a positive family culture and traditions are critical for cementing the bonds between family members.

Allan Lee Ka-fai is the writer of this article, which appeared in the Hong Kong Economic Journal on May 27.

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