

HEALTH

HOW TO PUT A POSITIVE SPIN ON THE WORKPLACE

Founder of a conscious living website says giving staff a sense of purpose can have a huge impact on their happiness, satisfaction and productivity

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Stephanie Dickson has seen first-hand the effects a more conscious approach to workplace practices can have on staff happiness and productivity.

Since founding the Green is the New Black website devoted to conscious living in 2017, Singapore-based Dickson has helped champion a change in attitudes. "You can see that, when people are allowed to do something with a purpose, something in the workplace that has meaning for them, they go above and beyond," she says.

The rise of "conscious consumerism" – the act of considering the social, environmental, ecological, and political implications of consumption – has spurred a focus not only on what we do in our daily lives, but why. That includes what we do in the workplace, and this will be a focus of the Conscious Festival, organised by Dickson and friends at the Kerry Hotel Hong Kong next weekend.

engagement, and happy employees will stay and talk about how much they love their job. The knock-on effects are all positive."

Dickson was also among the speakers at the inaugural Island Exchange event at the start of March, held at Singapore's Sentosa Golf Club during its hosting of the HSBC Women's Championship golf tournament.

"Change makers" featured in a day of talks and there was much discussion about "waking up" the workplace, and about how workplace sanity is becoming just as important as workplace security.

"It's all about collaboration," says Melati Wijsen, an 18-year-old who co-founded Bye Bye Plastic Bags, an organisation based in Bali, and who advises corporations about adopting green and positive practices. "It's about getting people involved and working together and feeling the positive effects of what they are doing."

Vanessa Dew was another of the speakers in Singapore and has a story that might resonate with fresh graduates finding their feet in the corporate domain.

After earning a bachelor of science degree in biochemistry from the University of California San Diego and an MBA from the University of Southern California, Dew thought she had found the dream job when she was taken on by the sales and marketing department of a major pharmaceutical company.

"I thought I was going to change the world but I quickly realised that I wasn't living my life's potential that way," says California-based Dew.

Dew decided to look for work that, to her, had more meaning. She also wanted to really feel like she was making a difference to the world around her.

"We first started an entrepreneur club," she says. They turned to kombucha – a fermented, sweetened tea drink with supposed health benefits – as the foundation for an all-natural hair mask to combat hair loss. "We were giving the drink away as a by-product of the culture we were using, but it soon became apparent everyone loved the drink," Dew says. "It tasted great and we knew we had a great recipe and it all started from there."

In 2012, Dew co-founded Health-Ade Kombucha with her best friends, husband and wife Justin and Daina Trout. They have since taken their product from a Los Angeles farmer's market and turned it into a US\$100 million global brand, stocked in more than 20,000 stores, including the JustGreen chain in Hong Kong.

Dew has found that potential employees are seeking the company out because of what it makes and its use of traditional hands-on production methods.

Adam Johnston, managing director of professional recruitment at employment agency Robert Half Hong Kong, believes branding has become a key factor in attracting talent – and keeping staff happy.

"Corporate branding can shift a candidate's perception about whether the company is the right fit for them," he says.

Dew firmly believes her company's success has been built on the positive atmosphere they have created in the workplace. "People today want to work with a brand that is strong in the values that they have," she says.



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STEPHANIE DICKSON, GREEN IS THE NEW BLACK

The event features talks and seminars on conscious living as well as a marketplace featuring goods from conscious brands, artists and assorted change-makers.

"More businesses are coming to us for advice," Dickson says. "It's exciting, as normally it is an individual who will say they want to do more for sustainability in our office, or they want to get people together and form a green team. It's been an inspiring revolution. There are more green groups forming in big corporations, but there are common challenges they are facing, as some workplaces are more adaptable [than others]."

To help the movement along, Green is the New Black offers an online "Little Green Steps" programme.

"We've seen across various different-sized companies that when people are given the space to implement some of these things, they feel that purpose and meaning and want to get more involved overall," Dickson says. "It's directly linked to employee



Vanessa Dew is co-founder of Health-Ade Kombucha. Photos: Handouts

THE NAKED TRUTH



Illustration: Marcelo Duhalde

A better way to broach the birds and the bees

Short chats from a young age preferable to 'the talk' when they're older

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Teaching your child about sex is not just explaining the nitty-gritty. It is also about respect, openness and tailored support to reassure them that you believe in them and care about what they are going through.

A friend of mine had a rather ingenious response when she accidentally caught her young daughter masturbating. Instead of getting upset, she told her it was all right to be curious about her own body and took the opportunity to teach her about setting boundaries. She taught her to take care of her "private property" and not let other people come near it.

She did the right thing by not attacking her daughter's actions and treated her sexual curiosity as part of growing up. In the long run, this will also embed the idea that sex is not a taboo subject and should be discussed freely.

Parents who are open about addressing sexuality with their children often foster healthier feelings and relationships with not only their offspring, but also other family members.

Family education is undoubtedly important and family sexual education is equally vital. Parents need to take responsibility for educating their children

about sex, and how they approach the subject can have a significant impact on their future outlook on relationships – and even life. Unfortunately, many parents find it awkward to discuss sex with their youngsters or are unsure about when is the best time or age to tackle the subject.

"Instead of suddenly broaching the subject of sex at a particular age without any prior mention, make it normal to talk about the human body from the beginning, and facilitate an environment of non-judgment," says Sonia Samtani, a Hong Kong-based clinical hypnotherapist and life coach. "It's healthier to have many little conversations from a young age, rather than one big sex talk at a certain age."

The problem is many parents attach judgmental connotations to private parts, which plants a subconscious message that there is something bad about the genital area. This will only make a child more curious and perhaps lead to them hiding their natural interest. This could lead to other dysfunctions, Samtani warns.

Children as young as two can become curious about their body parts, so that is when parents can start talking to them using proper terminology such as penis and vagina, treating them like any other body part, Samtani says. "When they show this curiosity,

that's the time to introduce the concept of when it's appropriate to explore – that is, in private – and when it's not – that is, in public or when being touched by others. When conversations like this become natural, children will not feel judged about their sexual thoughts and feelings."

After "sex talk" becomes natural, you can gauge their knowledge by listening to the questions they ask to see how much they comprehend and then decide whether to provide more information about sex, Samtani says.

"It is important not to lie or shut down conversations. Remember, children are like sponges; they subliminally pick up how you are feeling. If you are awkward and dodging information, they will be too," she says.

"If your child is very young, like four or five years old, you could tell them you will continue to discuss it further when they grow up."

She also stresses that it is important to ask your child questions of where their curiosity comes from to understand what they are exposed to and how they are interpreting this information. Answering questions helps cultivate an open and trusting environment and encourages children to continue asking.

There are great benefits for both parents and children in talking openly about sex, as long as it



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SONIA SAMTANI, HYPNOTHERAPIST AND LIFE COACH

is factual, honest, mature and accepting. As a result, children feel safe to express themselves openly at home, which builds more trusting relationships with the family and greater self-esteem.

Samtani thinks once parents have equipped children with the right information, they need to let them make their own decisions.

"Whether parents like it or not, children will eventually make their own decisions about themselves, their bodies and their lives. The best thing the family can do is to facilitate an environment of trust and safety, so the child will feel inspired to reveal what's going on for them, and the parents can provide emotional support and guidance accordingly."

With awareness, parents can train children to become responsible adults by giving them information in an unbiased way and seeing how their child feels. Instead of making decisions for them, they can make decisions with them through open discussion, Samtani says.

Should parents prep their children for their first sexual encounter? "There isn't a need to have a talk before the first sexual encounter if you have already been having open conversations about bodies and sex as a natural part of their upbringing," Samtani says. "If they would like to have any further conversations, let it come from them."

Luisa Tam is a senior editor at the Post

LUXURY

That's a bit rich: gifts fit for a royal newborn

Reuters

From a HK\$881,000 diamond and gold dummy to a HK\$15,500 stroller, you can never be too young to enjoy a little luxury.

As Britain's Prince Harry and his American wife Meghan Markle prepare to welcome their first child, there is no shortage of high-end brands they can turn to for nursery furniture, baby clothing and plenty of toys.

Personalised cots, cashmere cardigans and traditional rocking horses are among luxury items on offer, with an array of brands seeking to capitalise on affluent parents' demand for such costly items. "It has grown into a huge market," says Kate Freud, editor at large of luxury parenting magazines *Baby London* and *Little London*.

"It's been hugely helped by the royals because it gives a lot of these brands an international platform. You can be looking at anything from a simple cotton baby grow that's £90 (US\$930) ... to a Burberry changing bag, which



Prince Harry and Meghan Markle, Duke and Duchess of Sussex, receive baby gifts from the Canadian High Commissioner to the United Kingdom Janice Charette; and a Dodo diamond and gold dummy (right). Photos: Handout, AFP

is £850 and beyond. Some of the prices are really eye-watering, but parents are prepared to pay it."

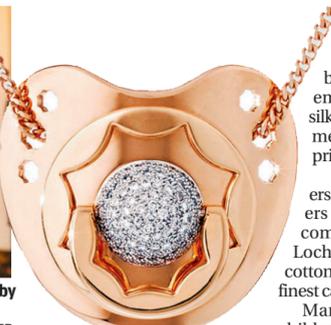
Among those providing luxury baby products is Spanish company Suommo, whose Dodo diamond and pure gold dummy is priced at €100,000 (HK\$881,000). An 18-carat, gold-plated cot will set you back €60,000. Other firms offer bespoke mattresses, gold high chairs and silver rattles.

Harry and Meghan, known as the Duke and Duchess of Sussex,

have revealed little during the pregnancy. Meghan told well-wishers in January she was six months pregnant but the couple did not know the baby's gender.

British media have reported they have picked neutral colours for the nursery at their new Frogmore Cottage home in Windsor and published a picture of a car with pram maker iCandy's logo arriving at their gates.

Harry's cousin Zara Phillips is an ambassador for iCandy, whose



strollers sell for up to £1,500. Like baby Sussex's cousins – Prince William's children George, Charlotte and Louis – he or she is likely to be an influencer.

When the three cousins have been photographed in childrenswear brands such as Rachel Riley, Pepa & Company and Amaia, many parents have swiftly snapped up the same looks. A report by British market research firm Mintel found that more than a third of parents think

branded clothes were worth paying more for.

At London children's boutique Marie-Chantal, embroidered baby gowns, silk chiffon dresses and cashmere knits are on offer, with prices reaching up to £350.

"We have royal customers, VIP and celebrity customers from around the globe," commercial manager Erika Loch says. "We use the finest cottons, the finest linens and the finest cashmeres."

Many designer labels carry childrenswear ranges, popular with fashionista parents.

At New York's Bergdorf Goodman luxury department store, baby Gucci shoes, Dolce & Gabbana dresses and Burberry outfits hang beside a US\$500 teddy bear and US\$6,000 battery-powered car. Handmade Mischa Aoki tulle dresses are priced at more than US\$1,000.

"It is as luxurious as you can get," says Andrew Mandell at Bergdorf Goodman. "It's almost couture for children and we start with babies."