

THE NAKED TRUTH

# Of sharing, caring and other steadfast relationship habits

It's the little things that make a big difference when it comes to building a lasting partnership

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Time together with your partner doesn't always have to be action-packed, goal-oriented or cost a lot of money. Doing small but meaningful things – such as relaxing together or even simply sharing domestic chores – can be enjoyable ways to spend time and foster a deeper sense of intimacy between you and your other half.

Similarly, showing love and affection doesn't always have to be done through conventional means such as saying "I love you" or giving a bunch of flowers. Sometimes lending a helping hand or doing little favours for one another, or giving a compliment can be a powerful love booster.

Some people don't like such public displays of affection and find being lovey-dovey in front of others awkward.

**Be honest about your likes and dislikes because you can't fake it in the long run**

I have to confess I am an outwardly affectionate person and show my feelings openly. When my daughter was a child, for example, I made it a habit to kiss her on six different places of her face whenever I sent her off for holiday with her father or to visit her paternal grandparents in Britain.

I still do it now, even though she is 26. I do the same to my partner sometimes, but it is not always easy when such displays of affection are not returned, or even volunteered.

My point is that partners need to share – or at least be aware of – each other's habits in order for the relationship to thrive.

If one partner enjoys such displays of affection while the other does not, you need to find a point that is acceptable for both. Otherwise, resentment will build as one side might feel rejected or unloved while the other feels overwhelmed.

Another good couple habit is sharing a hobby. When one partner is passionate about a sport, for example, the other partner can try

to be supportive by learning the rules or watching a few matches with them.

There are endless benefits in maintaining healthy relationship habits because when you show respect and appreciation to each other, you look forward to spending time together.

It also helps reinforce bonding, builds trust and makes communication easier, says Jacqueline Chia, co-founder of Hong Kong matchmaking service Meet Mozaic.

"You can build good relationship habits by first focusing on having open communication and having a listening ear by giving each other time to voice an opinion," Chia says. "Other approaches include being a critical listener who will not be easily offended at what is being said."

If your partner is not receptive then there are ways to encourage them to share good habits for mutual benefits, says Carol DeCandido, another co-founder of Meet Mozaic. "You can try to understand what your partner is looking for, while at the same time try not to be negative or critical of their needs. You can also try to let them know you are willing to compromise to make things work and be flexible and understanding of their opinions. It is also important not to nag them to agree with you, but give them time to see your views too."

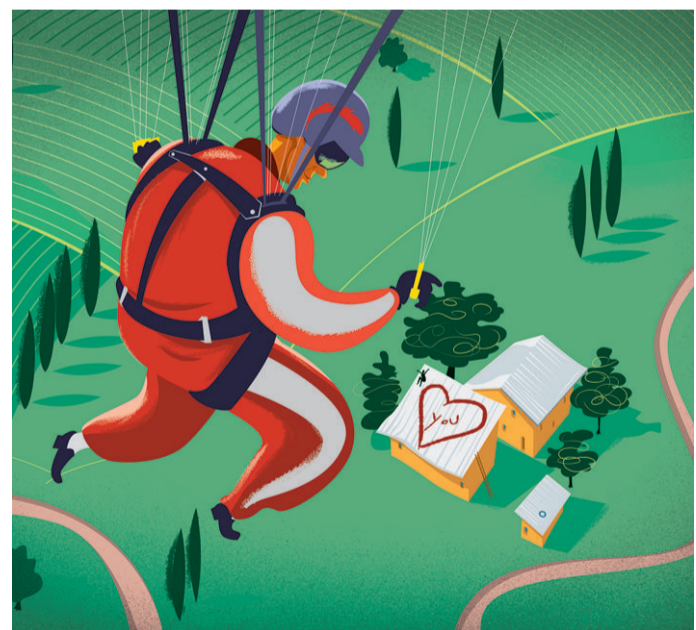
Some common mistakes that cause bad habits to fester, or kill good habits, include pushing your opinion or habit on the other person; trying to change the other person into someone they are not, just to please yourself; being too possessive, jealous or disrespectful; and disagreeing or arguing in public, DeCandido says.

My personal take regarding good couple habits include not being afraid to say sorry; working and living as a team; not going to bed with an argument unresolved; not making threats to win an argument or gain the upper hand; not opening old wounds; never saying "I told you so"; not neglecting your sex life; and not using sex as a weapon to punish or hurt your partner.

And remember your love should always be unconditional, so don't expect anything in return and don't quantify what you give.

And finally, be honest about your likes and dislikes because you cannot fake it in the long run.

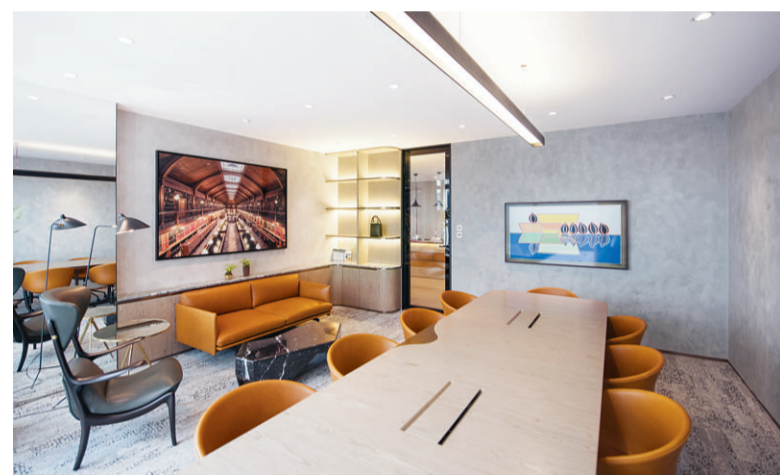
Luisa Tam is a correspondent at the Post



INTERIORS



Clockwise from above: the One Taikoo Place office of global law firm Eversheds Sutherland; RKH Specialty's Causeway Bay office; and Sapiaientia Investment Consulting. Photos: Handouts



# WORK, REST AND PLAY: FRESH LOOKS FOR MODERN OFFICES

As workplaces evolve, it is out with cubicle-style uniformity, and in with open-plan versatility

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In office buildings around Hong Kong, something odd is going on: the firms moving in are specifying interior design far removed from the styles their clients – and staff – are accustomed to.

Office design is being disrupted. No longer are indoor slides and foosball tables a measure of workplace attractiveness – now, it's all about quiet sophistication.

Take the new One Taikoo Place, Quarry Bay office of global law firm Eversheds Sutherland. Stephen Kitts, managing partner for Asia, wanted something edgier than a usual law office, so his brief to design firm Spatial Concept was to "do something awesome".

Gary Lai, founder and design director at Spatial Concept, took inspiration from the hospitality sector. "We're seeing a lot of offices looking more like a luxury hotel, and vice versa, hotel lounges becoming work environments enabled by mobile technology," he says.

The first sign of this trend is evident in Eversheds Sutherland's 37th-floor foyer, modelled after a first-class airline lounge where receptionists stand at pods and greet each visitor on arrival. Behind are harbour views hotels would love to have.

Instead of walls, partners'

offices are sectioned by custom cabinetry from high-end Swiss brand USM, which functions both as privacy screens and storage. Both designer and client view this non-fixed modular system, though expensive, as an investment in "future-proofing" the office, as it enables the spaces to be reconfigured at any time. It also saves the cost of building walls and moving utilities such as air conditioning, which would be necessary with compartmentalised offices.

For times when client confidentiality is required, partners can choose private booths accommodating two to four people. In the various meeting rooms, gallery-quality artwork and sculptural lighting by brands such as Flos and Tom Dixon create the relaxing ambience of a hotel lounge, doubling as elegant venues for entertaining clients. Smart features, such as glass walls that switch from transparent to opaque, help address the business sensitivities of a law firm while retaining an open-plan feeling. Back of house, a wellness room with massage chair provides a place for staff to refresh.

Completed in July, Eversheds Sutherland's 22,000 sq ft office has capacity for about 150 staff. "If we'd gone down the cellular office route, we'd have had [for the same spend] a budget version 'cheap and cheerful'," Kitts says. "We've

finished with investment-grade open-plan in the best building in Hong Kong."

Across town, in Causeway Bay, One Space was tasked with bringing together on one large floorplate two sister companies – RKH Specialty (formerly known as FP Marine Risks) and Howden Insurance Brokers – from under the Hyperion Insurance Group, the world's largest employee-owned insurance business.

Architect Greg Pearce, co-founder of One Space, says that although these teams had largely worked together in the same premises for a few years, "this relocation project would present an unprecedented opportunity to tailor-make a home that would support a more integrated business operation and generate synergies previously untapped".

He describes the 9,700 sq ft floorplate in the Citicorp Centre (a project completed in November last year) as a large "square doughnut" with lift lobby access delivering guests to the side overlooking Victoria Harbour.

Breakout spaces, brainstorm areas and a secondary wet pantry anchor each corner of the design, aiding navigation by creating destinations.

Because the client had specified no enclosed offices, the design team created focus rooms and shielded settings for confidentiality when needed.

The spatial layout provides 98 desks plus an additional 34 "agile work points". Collaborative spaces account for about 22 per cent of the total, which Pearce says allows for a diverse range of opportunities previously unrealised in old-fashioned cubicle-style offices.

**We're seeing a lot of offices looking more like a luxury hotel, and vice versa**

GARY LAI, SPATIAL CONCEPT

According to Kenny Kinugasa-Tsui and Lorène Faure, founding directors of architectural and interiors company Bean Buro, this nascent crossover of hospitality qualities into workplace design is driven by the increasing trend of employees working from home or attending to personal matters in the office.

"Health and lifestyle are growing priorities, especially for the millennial generation," says Kinugasa-Tsui. "According to our research, employee engagement is the greatest concern for most employers, and also an opportu-

ity to create an environment where employees feel good about coming to work, can be productive and also sociable, thereby accelerating the development of the company and its culture."

He adds that qualities such as well-being, ergonomics, comfort and flexibility, as well as materials, mood and feel, are all necessary considerations in designing a workspace that succeeds in engaging with its users. "Every detail – whether it's a curve, a material choice, light, sound, aroma or tactility – all affect the users' experience," he says.

For the 1,600 sq ft IFC Two office of Sapiaientia Investment Consulting, completed in 2018, Bean Buro aimed to create a tranquil and sociable workspace for a small workforce of six to eight people. "When we first visited the site, we were intrigued by how calming the atmosphere is high up in the busy district of Central," Faure says.

The designers created a hotel-like lounge room – with art, a sofa and bookshelves – that doubles as a boardroom.

"All the furniture has a 'non-office' aesthetic," Kinugasa-Tsui says. "The Frame TV screen is the latest from Samsung that displays art when not in use."

"We also encouraged the company to display oriental plants and cultural objects as identity for the CEO's Chinese roots – for us this is 'branding' done in a natural, non-corporate way," he says.

SOCIETY

# Alt-right cartoon frog now a face of city's protests

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In a sea of black-clad protesters wearing safety goggles and yellow hard hats, one face has emerged consistently since Hong Kong's summer of protests began.

His wardrobe is extensive and colourful, his face iconic, his presence strangely uplifting: he is Pepe, and he is a cartoon frog.

Even before the June 9 anti-extradition march, Pepe was a familiar figure among Hong Kong youths, thanks to viral WhatsApp stickers depicting him in various forms: Pepe puts in overtime at the office, he reclines on a bed of pink clouds as if in a Katy Perry music video, he gives you the finger and even appears as a penis.

High art it is not, but his extensive range of micro-emotion stickers made him a delightful and expressive alternative to emojis.

And as the pro-democracy movement heated up, so did the proliferation of Pepe stickers – he became a frontline protester, an intrepid reporter, an anti-riot police officer, even Chief Executive Carrie Lam Cheng Yuet-ngor.

It was not long before he was emblazoned on fliers inviting citizens to reclaim Yuen Long, was being sketched onto Post-its decorating the city's "Lennon Walls", and was stuck onto the backpacks of peaceful airport protesters, inviting tourists to scan a QR code that led to details of the movement's five demands.

What's most surprising about Pepe's appropriation is not that

he ousted Hello Kitty to become the group's animated poster boy, but that just a few years ago the same thing happened in America – but in association with the alt-right movement.

Initially created in 2005 by artist Matt Furie, Pepe became a popular meme on MySpace and Tumblr before being co-opted by the self-proclaimed alt-right in the lead up to the 2016 US presidential election. As a result, he quickly became a symbol associated with the Trump campaign.

Pepe was so indelibly linked with white supremacy and anti-Semitism that Hillary Clinton's campaign website publicly denounced the frog as a symbol of intolerance.

Because of this unsolicited association, Furie "killed" Pepe in a

comic depicting his funeral. Furie has taken legal action against companies that profited from the use of Pepe's image in far-right propaganda.

Few protesters in Hong Kong seem to know of the alt-right association – and those who do, do not care. On local messaging board lhkg.com, one user said an American tourist inquired as to the amphibian's ubiquity at the airport during Monday's mass sit-in.

"Why [are there] so many Pepe frogs around here ... what's the significance? You know, in the US, it means something different," they wrote.

In a Reddit thread titled "Take Back Pepe!", one user wrote, "In Hong Kong Pepe is not at all associated with Trump ... The original artist did not want Pepe to be used

like that", before sharing a link to download a full suite of anti-extradition bill Pepe stickers.

One member disagreed: "It's much better to abandon the character for this movement because of the Western connotations," the post reads.

To Hongkonger Paper Chu, who has taken part peacefully in protests and marches since June 9, Pepe is the perfect ideological ambassador of the movement. Her affinity for the frog came about even before the first march.

While she wasn't aware of his association with the alt-right movement in America, she applauds his "reincarnation" as a local hero.

"I congratulate him on becoming a Hongkonger," she says.



A protester has a Pepe the Frog poster on her back. Photo: Handout