

UNIQUE WISDOM

Presented by Dr LiFong Woo (Ph.D.)

Jess Goh Wee Teng

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This book is dedicated to the Singaporeans in Texas Whatsapp group that gave us the inspiration which led to the book creation

Contents

	Vords From Our Seniors	
-	Wisdom	2
-	Uncertainty	4
-	Success	6
-	Career and Workplace; Relationships	8
-	Family	10
-	Education	12
	Vords From Our Overseas Singaporeans and Friends of Singapore	
	A SECRET PROPERTY.	
-	Adaptability	16
	Culture	
-		18
-	Culture	18 20
- - -	Culture Community	18 20 22
	Culture Community Family and Friends	18 20 22 24
- - - -	Culture Community Family and Friends Transformation	18 20 22 24 26
- - - -	Culture Community Family and Friends Transformation Perspectives	18 20 22 24 26 28
- - - -	Culture	18 20 22 24 26 28 30

Words For Our Overseas Singaporeans Who Have Loved Ones At Home	
- Elderly Parents	36
- Home	38
The Adventure Continues	
- Gratitude, Clarity & Love	42
Acknowledgements	45
About The Producers	47
Last But Not Least	49

WORDS FROM OUR SENIORS

Carolina Mariante Contraction of the Contraction of

Wisdom

Wisdom encompasses knowledge and the ability to think critically. It also involves self-awareness, empathy, and concern for others. Therefore, wisdom helps me in making wise decisions, bringing joy and happiness into my life. Furthermore, it empowers me to play my part in my community, fostering happiness in the lives of others.

Wilfred Chan Singapore My late father's most valuable advice, "Take Good Care of Yourself As No One Will", emphasizes the importance of self-care in all aspects of life, including physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual well-being. It encourages me to take responsibility for my own well-being, seek balance, and make choices that prioritize my long-term happiness. This advice empowers me, enhances resilience, and ultimately reflects self-love, serving as a guiding principle for a fulfilling life.

Oi Wey Lee Singapore



Uncertainty

Allow yourself more time and concentrate only on issues that can be resolved. Engage in conversations and share your thoughts with friends. Ideas tend to emerge when you exercise your mind during casual conversations.

Ong Kah Chye Singapore

Facing challenges is normal, and with time, these obstacles will pass. Seek help when you are unable to solve them on your own. Sometimes, what seems like a big issue to us may have a solution known to someone else.

Ho Chiaw Lin Singapore My most significant change was experiencing retrenchment at the age of 50. It was a period of embarrassment and loss, filled with directionless days. However, connections from my previous employment led me to short-term jobs, not only to sustain me financially but also to keep me mentally engaged and purposefully contributing to the organization. During this time, ambitions ceased to be crucial, and cherishing the present was. It was a refreshing period marked by the joy of learning new things.

Yeo Hock Yew Singapore



Success

Success would be that we feel good about what we have wanted to do and we did it.

Prosperity is being able to use whatever we have been successful at to pass it on to others for them to prosper through our experiences. We find joy and accept it as a blessing. Everything we do, we know it is a blessing, and we are not forced to do it. We are blessed to do it.

Malini Menon Singapore

The journey can be rough and tough. As you believe in faith and self-confidence, you will pull through. Nothing can stop you.

Chow Cheong King Singapore When I was younger, I had responsibilities for my family, particularly my children, which involved substantial material wealth. I worked hard to ensure that I could provide them with a reasonable standard of living. As I grew older, circumstances changed, and I had fewer responsibilities since the children became independent. Material wealth became less significant. I came to realize that physical and mental health are more important. In particular, having peace of mind and emotional satisfaction takes on a more important perspective.

Hor Siew Fu Singapore



Career and Workplace

You need to have faith and trust, as the true self within will guide you throughout your entire career. It possesses the wisdom to navigate through all kinds of difficulties and sufferings.

Chow Cheong King Singapore

In the first market "meltdown" I encountered, I found myself facing possible "bankruptcy" and a "technical breach in a legal matter" overnight. It was so sudden and frightening. Survival instincts took control, and together with friends, we held hands to work ourselves out from the mess.

Ong Kah Chye Singapore

Relationships

Make genuine friends and those who show sincerity. We do not need to entertain those whose presence we do not enjoy. Put in the effort to meet them, as we never know if we still have the chance to see them. Learn to make the meetings enjoyable so that everyone has fun and shares laughter.

Rinna Hoe Singapore



Family

After getting married, my wife and I started serving tea to my parents on the first day of the Chinese New Year, extending warm wishes for the year ahead. As our family grew with the arrival of children, we instilled the practice in them, making our children serve tea to us. Now, with grandchildren in the picture, my children and grandchildren continue this tradition, serving tea to me first, followed by the grandchildren serving their parents. I hope this cherished tradition endures for generations to come. Naturally, after the tea ceremony, the tradition of giving Hong Bao or Red Packets follows.

Hor Siew Fu Singapore Respect the family members' decisions and casually present alternative options for them to consider, instead of imposing our own desires. Additionally, share the responsibility of caring for elderly parents.

Rinna Hoe Singapore



Credit: Jess Goh Wee Teng

Education

Outside of formal education, my faith has given me the most essential lesson in living life. I realize that respecting my fellow human beings is about my own interest for them. It can be greeting the bus captain, the solitary walker on evening strolls, and the foreign worker trudging to work. At times, passing a bus stop at night sparks my curiosity about the people waiting there - what occupies their minds? In buses or trains, I observe my fellow travelers, wondering about their destinations and thoughts. While formal education imparts countless lessons, the essence of living lies in maintaining interest in those around us every day. For when we lose interest in others, we gradually diminish a little every day.

Yeo Hock Yew Singapore There are always solutions to something. If it is not A, then it is B. If it is not B, then it is C. This is akin to when my students tell me during my drama lesson, "This is too tough for me to learn. There are so many lines." So, I always tell them, "Don't look at the lines. Look at the meaning of the line, and automatically the action will come to you. An expression will come to you if you are seeing a line that signifies happiness; you're going to smile. And I don't have to teach you how to smile. So, if you're going to see a line, automatically your emotion comes." That is how I teach my drama students. I do not teach them dot by dot by dot or to join the dots. Emotions are the most important thing to show your expressions.

Malini Menon Singapore For anyone aspiring to broaden his horizons through continuous learning and personal growth, I would wholeheartedly encourage him to go for it! Back in my days, many of us only had O Levels, with only a few holding A Levels and even fewer possessing tertiary education. During that time, Singapore had just two universities, now known as NUS and NTU. Contrastingly, it's now commonplace for individuals to hold degrees, and lacking one could potentially pose a challenge to a smoother career path.

Sebastian Yeo Singapore Over time, the value of education has undergone significant transformations influenced by diverse societal, technological, and economic factors. This evolution encompasses the rise of digital learning platforms, a focus on interdisciplinary learning, and the growing acknowledgment of the importance of lifelong learning.

Lifelong learning is crucial for adapting to new challenges, embracing change, pursuing personal interests, and fostering professional growth in today's dynamic world.

Oi Wey Lee Singapore

WORDS FROM OUR OVERSEAS SINGAPOREANS AND FRIENDS OF SINGAPORE

Carried Marie Contraction of the Contraction of the

Adaptability

Being independent overseas means learning to be knowledgeable about many things, especially paperwork. Additionally, rebuilding a community that can assist us in navigating through these administrative matters is almost a necessity. Consequently, I have learned not to be shy when reaching out for help, and most of the time, other overseas Singaporeans are very willing to assist us.

Francesca Chan USA

I've learned to protect myself and my family more effectively in a practical manner in the real world, compared to being in Singapore where we had been extremely sheltered. Rather than having everything planned out all the time, I've also acquired survivor skills of various sorts, having navigated the pandemic overseas, multiple hurricanes in Texas, an unprecedented snowstorm causing major blackouts, and snowstorms, train, and teacher strikes in England.

Shanshan Fan England I'm a Singaporean Indian who moved to the US for higher education in social work. I moved here with my husband, and we were newly married. We were working for about 10 years before we moved to become students again. It was a different life season to be mature students, but we were able to adapt because we were matured. However, coming to study with our life savings took a lot of faith and perseverance. We lived simply and learned to stay present. We connected to wonderful people in our current church whom we now consider as family.

The different experiences in the US have shaped our perspectives. There is no gun violence or drugs in Singapore, safety is a completely different feeling, race is a hot topic here. It has opened our eyes to be more informed about the various issues in the world.

Sujeeta Menon USA



Culture

I've traveled extensively and developed a profound love for traveling. However, I've come to realize that truly understanding a location requires immersing oneself in the local life. During my stays in the US, China, and Thailand, I dedicated considerable time to aimless wandering, taking drives, or going on walks with no specific purpose or destination. It allowed me to encounter moments of people going about their daily lives, a stark contrast to the typical tourist activities of restaurant hopping or visiting points of interest.

This experience has been crucial to shaping my perspective on culture and loving people for who they are. I've gained insight into how people live in and adapt to their environments and vice versa. Importantly, it has become a foundational principle in how I choose to live my life — not charging at things head on but instead embracing flexibility and approaching situations with the goal of learning and adapting.

Carynn Tey USA I moved to the United States for college. Quite honestly, there wasn't a lot of culture shock because I grew up in China where there were a lot of Americans. I attended an American school, so I was pretty much acclimated to American culture as soon as I reached Beijing at the age of two years old. I've been a third-culture kid ever since, and I adapt pretty quickly and easily to whatever culture I am immersed in.

Faith Goh USA



Community

During my time in HK, I initially believed that our cultures were similar. However, it became apparent that there were notable differences. There seemed to be a quicker pace of decision-making and a sharper business acumen among the locals, requiring me to adapt to their approach.

In my assignment in the US, I resided in Brownsville, TX, where my family was among the few Chinese, if not the only Singaporeans. The majority of the population in Brownsville is Hispanic, and we found their community to be quite family-oriented, which facilitated our adjustment. Thirteen years ago, we made the decision to move to Houston, where a larger Chinese community and diverse international food options are available. Over our time in Houston, we've observed that the White community tends to be more reserved than the Hispanic community - this is not a judgment but merely an observation on our part.

Throughout our international experiences, a consistent theme has been the importance of community. Thankfully, as a Christian family, we were fortunate to participate in excellent community groups both in HK and Houston. Brownsville posed a challenge, even though the locals were welcoming; it seemed like we didn't fully connect for one reason or another.

Andrew Mok USA I am currently employed with Meta in Austin, Texas, where my role involves small business marketing. Having been in the US for 2.5 years, my decision to move here stemmed from a desire for a new adventure and the opportunity to work and live in the US.

Prior to my time in the US, I had worked and lived in Ho Chi Minh City for 6 months and Manila in the Philippines for 9 months. However, my current stay in the US is the longest and most indefinite period I've spent away from my home, Singapore.

This year, I encountered an unexpected incident while touring the Amazon forest over the Easter break - I was stung by a stingray. After seeking medical assistance in Bogota, Colombia, I promptly returned to Austin on the next available flight. Subsequently, I underwent a three-week stay at St. David's Hospital in Austin, which included a debridement surgery and the use of a wound vacuum for 10 days. Following my discharge, my summer was dedicated to outpatient wound care for dressing changes and allowing my skin tissue to heal over the entire four months. It has been quite a journey, and through this experience, I've come to appreciate the significance of having a strong community, which has been both paramount and a tremendous blessing.

Samantha Kwan USA



Family and Friends

Working in the oil and gas industry and always living in Singapore, coming to the US as an expat has been a life-changing experience. Realizing that family support is no longer present, we needed to build a new 'family' with friends, a social network. At times, feeling slightly out of place just because we are not American, we were encouraged to learn, understand, and assimilate to the new culture. What we did appreciate from this move was that our family got much closer to one another as we only have each other. That's one thing that I will always treasure and hope to stay closely knit when we return to Singapore.

Casey Soon USA

I learn not to take things for granted and the importance of family and friends.

Gladys Partridge USA I chose to leave Singapore and come to the USA as a break from all the family-induced stress, relationship problems, and a declining business due to COVID. Coming to the USA on my own in 2022 was a very different experience and a whole lifestyle change, for I've never lived away from home, nor been away from family. During my first year, I enjoyed the solitude and peace, but it also made me realize how "small" I am in this big vast country. When I recently fell ill, it dawned on me that I had to look after myself because I'm on my own, and that sometimes I just have to force myself out of my shell, and how important it is to have support. The whole opportunity brought me a lot of insights and courage. And at this moment, I've learned to value and treasure family much more.

Natalene Lim USA



Transformation

I married an Asian American, and after 7 years living in Singapore, he decided he wanted to return to his hometown in Los Angeles. I moved to LA with him in 2001 when I was 35. I was born in Singapore and had a comfortable job. At 35, it was my first time moving out of my home country. The year I moved to LA, 9/11 happened, and I realized how vulnerable any country can be. Coming from Singapore, I always assumed everywhere in the world is efficient and safe, and people are kind regardless of ethnicity. It was quite an awakening to realize I left a safety nest, and that Singaporeans have it so good. I no longer have the benefits of domestic help, family support (that we take for granted), and walking around freely in the middle of the night.

Dawn Ying Yuen USA

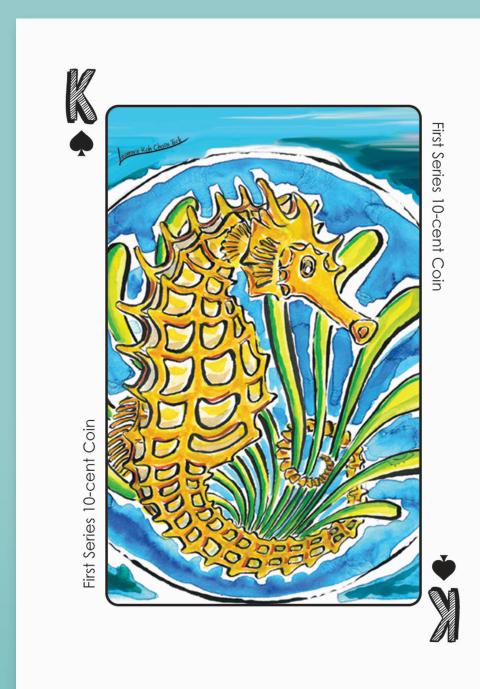
One profound moment occurred during my time in the UK, where I witnessed the resilience of the community amidst a challenging period. It deepened my appreciation for the strength that emerges from unity and further solidified my commitment to creating positive impacts.

Ruben Rathnasingham USA

I was a former semiconductor engineer and later a traditional business owner. I came to Arlington in 1991 to further my tertiary education at UT Arlington in Electrical Engineering. My overseas life experience involved being independent at a young age and having to work to survive during my university days. This humbled me alot

The wisdom of entrepreneurship leveraging allowed me to successfully run two businesses at one time. This wisdom gave me financial and time freedom, which is priceless. When I lost my first company, the painful lesson taught me to be strong, face the music, and get up and walk again. My advice is to grow up fast, learn to adapt, and be street-smart in a foreign country. And also, never forget the roots where we come from. Be humble.

Richard Ng USA



Credit: Lawrence Koh Choon Teck

Treasures of Singapore Cards

Perspectives

Living abroad has taught me to be open and curious about other people's perspectives and values, even if I do not necessarily agree with them. As an overseas student, I studied alongside local students and admired their confidence in speaking up and questioning authority, in the name of wanting to understand more. This was not the kind of education I had growing up, and it was refreshing to see that. Working with people of different country origins has taught me to handle disagreements in a respectful way, and I felt that grew me as a person, to be more accepting of others and even question my own limited perspective and views. I've come to deeply appreciate differences and diversity.

Living abroad has also forced me to step out of my comfort zone and learn quickly how to take care of myself in a foreign land. I had to pay my own bills, figure out how to get around, make friends, and reach out for help - all of which require me to take an active part in establishing my new life in a new country, and it strengthened my own confidence throughout the process.

Lina Lie USA We conducted a class survey on whether people preferred Coke or Pepsi, and the results were mixed. The professor used it to highlight that people's preferences are different, and we need to understand that in life. Although this seems obvious, it was profound seeing it in real life, emerging from a group of people I could be working with, that we can all have different preferences, and it is okay.

Mark Sin USA

I am a strong believer in cultivating a growth mindset. Living across cultures means I get to define who I am, understand my potential, and recognize my capabilities without the rigid structure of grading systems, cultural norms, and expectations. We are more than the sum of our societal stature, our achievements, and the material wealth we possess. Our true capability is determined by how much we are willing to stretch our imagination and resourcefulness.

Sandra Octaviani USA



Wisdom

Wisdom is recognizing that you know nothing but actively striving for continuous learning. It involves the application of knowledge and intuition. Being a first-time mother, raising a child without assistance has been the most challenging undertaking for me. I've learned to seek answers and trust my bestjudgmentinevery action taken.

Amirah Sauer USA

The wisdom that I've learned is that the only constant in life is Change. Only by changing myself can I change how I look at my environment. And change I did; I educated my husband on investment too, and we have a good stream of passive income, allowing me to stay at home with our child.

Clara Wong USA Wisdom comes with age, accompanied by realizations and experiences. It enables me to become a more open-minded and light-hearted person.

Hui Seah USA

Wisdom is defined as living with dignity, responsibility, patience, and trust without embracing selfishness. Life is short, so why should we choose a wicked lifestyle?

I am fortunate to live and associate with many nice and friendly people, even though I may have encountered a few negative individuals. I have learned how to distinguish between good and bad as a lesson to accept and search for a solution to improve my life daily. It provides me with an opportunity to have a better vision in multiple colors of life.

Be kind and helpful in society! This way, life will become easier to live in harmony and peace.

Jasmine Ng USA



Credit: Jess Goh Wee Teng

Passion

In 2010, my family and I relocated to Norway, then to Florida in 2013 due to our son's passion for golf. After a job relocation to Texas in December 2020, we returned to Norway in April 2022.

Living abroad has deepened my understanding of food culture, fueling my passion for cooking and sharing Singaporean cuisine with friends worldwide.

Rita Lim-Solhaug Norway

About Rita

I'm Rita Lim-Solhaug, a globetrotter with a passion for sharing Singaporean cuisine. After moving from Singapore to Norway in 2010 and later to Florida and Texas, I've embraced diverse food cultures. Living in different countries expanded my culinary skills, and now back in Norway since April 2022, I delight in serving Singaporean dishes and sharing their cultural stories with friends around the world.

Food holds the power to unite families and friends, fostering connections and shared moments. Raised in a traditional Asian household, I cherished my mom's homemade meals, learning invaluable cooking skills from her. Beyond the joy of preparing delicious dishes, cooking plays a vital role in daily nutrition and promotes healthier food choices. Passing down this culinary knowledge to my children ensures lasting benefits. Whether in Florida, Texas, or Norway, the meals I create for loved ones strengthen bonds and friendships. I once spearheaded a cooking club in Florida, where diverse moms, each bringing a piece of their cultural cuisine, shared stories. When crafting Chicken Rice, I share insights into Singapore's rich food culture, enhancing the joy of communal dining.





Credit: Rita Lim-Solhaug

Connections

Throughout my career and professions, I've been blessed with opportunities to travel both near and far on an international scale for work. I firmly believe that this experience has significantly impacted the fostering of some of my core values and the enhancement of my skillsets related to resilience, independence, flexibility, and open-mindedness. The age-old saying, 'be kind to everyone you meet because everyone is going through something that you don't see', has proven true more times than not with the diverse people I've encountered everywhere I went. It has made me aware that some of the struggles we may feel alone in experiencing are, in fact, more universal than we think. Moreover, I believe it has instilled in me the skill of intentional and active listening, fostering empathy in our hearts in our interactions—a skill that may seem minuscule but holds more impact and value than one might realize.

Lilian Wee USA

About Lilian

Lilian is a proud native Singaporean, born and raised. Her career in the oil & gas and offshore energy sectors, specializing in commercial management and vessel chartering, has provided her with opportunities to experience diverse places and people on a global scale. However, nothing quite prepared her for the decision to uproot her life altogether and start a new one in Houston, Texas, USA in September 2018. This significant move was driven by a love story between her and her then-fiancénow-husband, spanning across these two vastly different cities.

Having graduated from Murdoch University (Perth, Australia) with a Bachelor of Commerce in Marketing and Hospitality & Tourism Management, Lilian finds joy and nourishment through human connections, yoga, long walks, traveling, experiencing places through its food, culture, and nature, and spending time with her beloved pup, Sadie. She is also passionate about connecting with and uplifting other females in the energy sector and has been actively involved with the non-profit organization Women's Energy Network since 2019, assuming chair and director level positions overseeing memberships and programming for the Houston chapter.

Lilian hosts her podcast, Heart Open Convers Asians, a passion project she started during the thick of Covid (Dec 2020). Through this platform, she holds space for intentional and honest conversations, sharing the heart-stories of fellow Asians, with the hope that it would encourage others to embrace a version of their lives that is most true and beautiful by their own definition.

About Lilian's Podcast

A thoughtfully curated space where intentional and honest conversations are held for and with a community I hold near and dear to my heart - the Asian collective. Each month, you'll hear a guest join me in conversation, followed by a solo episode in the same month where I share and weave in my reflections and learnings from that dialogue.

Together, we'll exchange stories of our uniquely challenging yet beautiful lives, our journeys, learned experiences and lessons, with the hope that it will encourage and empower you to live out your one precious yet nuanced life that is most true and most YOU. I'm that friend you can count on as we walk together on this journey to learn to embrace and make space for all parts of us. You're welcome here.





WORDS FOR OUR OVERSEAS SINGAPOREANS WHO HAVE LOVED ONES AT HOME

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Elderly Parents

A significant portion of my interactions with the elderly comes from both my family members and personal training clients.

These elderly are much like everyone else, just an older, grown-up version of their 8-year-old selves. It is crucial to view them as individuals with hopes and dreams, just like anyone else. We should not assume that they have everything figured out.

Carol Teo Singapore My interactions with the elderly have been incredibly meaningful.

This unique age group has traversed childhood, adulthood, and now finds themselves in the early or late stages of old age. They embody the culmination of their diverse life experiences. Recognizing that the elderly have endured numerous losses throughout the average human lifespan, it is important to approach them with empathy.

Natalie Chan Singapore



Home

I have been working in Hong Kong for the last 6 years due to my career.

My family is in Singapore because Singapore is a more preferred choice for the kids' education. Hong Kong is not that different from Singapore, in terms of life, career, etc. Just take it in stride and do what you do best.

Delvin Tan Hong Kong Juggling a long-distance relationship, especially with family in the picture, is challenging despite technology's help.

Trust and understanding are our lifelines. Life often demands more than I can handle alone, teaching me the importance of asking for support. I believe challenges have a purpose, and things will work out, be it the hard or easy way.

Jess Goh Wee Teng Singapore



Credit: Jess Goh Wee Teng

THE ADVENTURE CONTINUES

Capaboli Marie Capaboli Capabo

Gratitude, Clarity, and Love

My journey to the US has been an unexpected adventure, one that I have embraced in ways I never imagined.

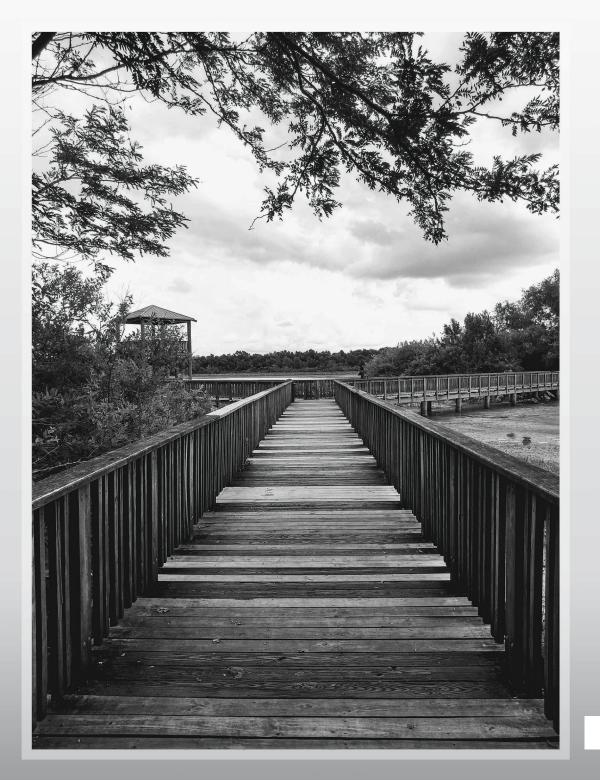
With just three months to tie up loose ends at home, wrap up my children's schooling, and manage work matters before our relocation, the pressure was intense.

The pressure did not end upon arrival in this new land. Navigating a new school system, an unfamiliar environment without my usual support network, and the absence of independent income sources added to the complexity. Coupled with the ever-looming uncertainty of natural phenomena, it felt like I was constantly facing uphill battles.

Yet, amidst these external challenges, I unearthed a newfound approach to life. Venturing into uncharted territories, I embarked on a journey of self-discovery and discovered the joy of unlearning and relearning. Delving inward, I found solace in the midst of life's storms, with a sense of anchoring myself in the eye of hurricanes. Rather than feeling depleted and burned out, I found myself being and giving in a way that replenished and nourished me. I started to learn to move through life more effortlessly downstream instead of fighting against the current, guided by appreciation and clarity.

This unexpected gift of clarity and gratitude has been the greatest blessing of my overseas adventure.

Li Fong Woo USA



Credit: Gammae Woo Li Fong

Acknowledgements

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the incredible team of contributors who generously shared their insights, experiences, and stunning visual work, bringing "Unique Wisdom" to life. Your dedication and creativity have enriched this project beyond measure.

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We would also like to give our heartfelt appreciation to Ms. Oi Wey Lee for going the extra mile to invite responses to the book, enriching its content with profound insights.

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We also want to acknowledge all the individuals and organizations whose support and collaboration contributed to the success of Unique Wisdom and its related events.

A very special thank you to our readers and supporters from all corners of the globe, particularly those from the US and Singapore, who have supported Unique Wisdom in various ways. Your encouragement and enthusiasm have touched us deeply, reinforcing our commitment to fostering connections and spreading positivity in our shared journey.

With gratitude, LiFong and Jess Unique Wisdom

About Our Producers

Jess Goh Wee Teng is an art and crafts explorer who has found her artistic voice through her fingers, constantly experimenting with new materials and techniques. She believes that art and crafts is a pathway towards inner peace and strives to BE PRESENT and engaged during the creative process. This philosophy is at the heart of her artistic practice and is shared during her workshop. For Jess, art and crafts is a way of life and a means of achieving balance within ourselves. She hopes to inspire others to embrace their creativity and connect with the world in a deeper, more meaningful way.

Jess has conducted numerous art and crafts workshops at schools and private corporations as well as online platforms since 2017. She was featured as Guest Crafter on "Get Fit With Me - Season 9" by MediaCorp. Jess is the co-writer and illustrator for "Knowing Yourself through The Little Prince" e-journal (English and Chinese). While she explores art and crafts, she is also a Music and Movement Educator.

Connect with Jess on The Dancing Fingers by scanning the QR codes.



Dr LiFong Woo (Ph.D.) is a holistic life visionary and committed to serve. She wears multiple professional hats, that include being a business owner owning a chain of online franchises, holistic life coach cum metaphysician, numerologist, educator, and multiple award-winning community project producer. She believes and advocates the holistic integration of living, and such alignment eventually brings forth sustainable and true abundance, peace, joy and love.

Connect with Li Fong on Holistic Connection by scanning the QR code.



Last But Not Least

While we have reached the last page of the book, our adventure to connect with our fellow Singaporeans and friends continues.

We invite you to connect with us on holistic.wellness.vs@gmail.com or on our website by scanning the QR code.

Stay updated with news, events, and discussions related to Unique Wisdom.

Let's continue this journey of connection and inspiration together!







