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Praise for success special

Foundation backs positive feedback at school, work

"People were born to be praised." This is the message that Kunio Hara, leader of the Ho-Me-I-Ku Foundation and the author of the book, "Praise-Based Management," is sharing with the world.

Ho-Me-I-Ku, a play on the Japanese words for "praise" and "raise," is an education and training method Hara developed; he teaches and demonstrates at educational institutions of all levels, as well as companies in various industries in Japan and abroad.

Hara started to use Ho-Me-I-Ku in consultations with enterprises in 2007, and around 300 companies have implemented it. In 2015, he established the Ho-Me-I-Ku Foundation, aiming to make it more widespread in Japan and abroad to help people nurture others effectively and carry out charity activities.

In Japan, the method has also been applied to many educational organizations. "Currently, 16 kindergartens are practicing Ho-Me-I-Ku. Each kindergarten has its own philosophy of how they want to educate children, so I had discussions with the teachers of each kindergarten to create a standard of its own," Hara said.

In Osaka Prefecture, he delivered a lecture to about 150 teachers. "The method of praising changed not only the children, but also their mothers and families," was one piece of positive feedback Hara received and, "It helped prevent bullying," was another.

"Many children may wonder why they have to get along with each other when they see adults not being friendly to each other. So our foundation serves as the model of good relationships based on praise," said Hara.

He aims to increase the profitability of companies by improving communication, and create a profit circulation system that would allow part of the profit to be donated to the next generation.

Vision and background

According to Hara, the major vision of Ho-Me-I-Ku is to incorporate the method in the education policy of the people on earth.

"I would like to teach the Ho-Me-I-Ku method to people with jobs related to child-rearing. Through Ho-Me-I-Ku, I would like to nurture children who can contribute to society," said Hara.

Hara was born into a Christian family in Hyogo Prefecture, where many of his

ancestors and family members have run various businesses. "If you go to a church, you will notice that what people say to each other is basically words of praise and goodness," said Hara.

Ho-Me-I-Ku can also be read as Home-Iku, a combination of the English word "home" and the Japanese word "iku," which means "to go."

"Together it means 'to go home.' It fits perfectly with the message that my parents, Michihiko and Motoko, have passed to me over the years; value your family," Hara said. Good family relationships are always the key to the healthy growth of children," he added.

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Hara strongly believes that it is the trust and confidence that his parents have had for him and their words of praise and encouragement that made him what he is today.

His grandfather on his maternal side was a scientist. "Everyone is valuable," was his belief. "He gave the credit he received for his achievements to his subordinates to give them an advantage in their careers," Hara said. "So the spirit of dedication runs in the family. I feel that I received the baton, and now it is my turn."

Negative to positive

However, Hara was the same as most new recruits when he entered the workforce after graduating from university. As a new sales representative, he was scolded every day for the first two years about his manners and behavior.

The culture of being hard on newcomers continued in his second workplace. After he became a top salesperson at the first company he worked for, he became a consultant at a major consulting firm, but was struggling to accomplish anything. He thought that he needed to have a field in which he could be No. 1.

To experience something that other consultants had not experienced and to have a specific area of expertise, he decided to dive into an entirely different field — working at a ramen shop. The owner and other staff

members scolded him while he got used to the job. He did the same to his workers when he became the manager of a branch.

"I had no doubt that being harsh was the right way to train my staff, for the sake of our customers and for the sales of the shop," said Hara. However, scolding did not do any good. His employees left one after another, making him frustrated and upset. Then, one day, one of the workers asked him who he thought the MVP of the month was.

"I was stuck for an answer because I was always looking for faults. There was no MVP from my perspective. But then, I remembered that my parents raised me with a lot of praise, which helped me nurture my self-esteem and allowed me to try new things with confidence," Hara said.

He started to praise his workers. "At a monthly meeting, I praised each person for their specific action that led to a sales increase," he said.

Hara also focused on the larger picture instead of exclusively favoring an employee's results or their process. He praised the process that led to the desired outcome. As a result of this shift, sales improved and turnover decreased.

Creation and application

Hara tried to systematize the method of praising, convinced that this experience could help many people. "We need to see the virtues, and we need to make the standard for praising. Praise five good points and scold once. Here, scolding means having an expectation," he said.

He explained why the standard is necessary and how it should be determined, "In education, you need a policy about who you want your students to be. In business, you also need a policy to realize your mission and philosophy. To act in line with the policy, you need to set a certain standard to follow."

A standard is a collection of clearly defined things on a checklist that one is expected to fulfill to achieve the collective goal of the organization. It should be designed in a way that helps evaluate a person's performance and clarify what exactly is worth praising.

He went on to point out that the standards naturally vary depending on the type of organization — whether it is an educational institute or a company — and the level of each person. For example, in the case of a company, new recruits and board members should have different standards because their responsibilities and expectations differ.

"Also, each company should have a customized standard that matches its policy and philosophy. Make sure that you praise the actions that are in line with the standard to ensure the growth of the company," Hara said.

From Japan to the world

In 2016, Hara traveled to Cambodia with a friend, and saw children being born and dying young at a dump site. "I was shocked to know that there are such children; I decided to join a donation project to build a school in Cambodia," he said. The opening ceremony for the school was held in August 2017.

He had originally been interested in working on a global stage since he spent some of his time during college in Montebello, California, as an exchange student,



Ho-Me-I-Ku Foundation leader Kunio Hara explains the praise-based management method that he developed at The Japan Times office in Chiyoda Ward on Nov. 29. YOSHIKI MIURA

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but this experience in Cambodia fueled his passion to reach out to the world.

So far, the Ho-Me-I-Ku Foundation has conducted lectures and workshops in more than 10 countries and regions, including Australia, China, India, Israel, Malaysia, Norway, Taiwan, Thailand, the United States and Vietnam.

He explained that it is important to learn the background and the situation of each country to customize the standard of Ho-Me-I-Ku in a suitable way. "Each country is different, so the standard should also be designed differently."

For example, praise seems to be part of the educational process in Australia already, but self-affirmation should not be baseless, he said. "Singapore excels in diligence but the suicide rate is high. China places importance on manner and order, but those who are not good at it tend to hop between jobs. I take these things into consideration when I propose the standard for each country's case."

In November, Hara attended the World Innovation Summit for Education 2019, an annual international conference dedicated to education, in Qatar.

"It was such a fruitful experience to talk about the future of education with educators from around the world," he said.

Future of Ho-Me-I-Ku

To realize Ho-Me-I-Ku's vision of including Ho-Me-I-Ku into global education policies, Hara needs more peers and partners.

Currently, people who learned Ho-Me-I-Ku from me are promoting the method in various places. To increase the number of such partners, we are enhancing our e-learning programs, including streaming video content on YouTube," Hara said.

He also plans to make a speech titled "People were born to be praised" at a TEDx event next year to attract a more international audience.

"It is said that human beings have five major concerns: work, money, human relationships, health and a sense of accomplishment," Hara said. He suggests that if people can solve many of the problems through Ho-Me-I-Ku and maximize their potential and work toward who and how they want to help becoming their only concern, the world would be a better and more interesting place.

"Wouldn't it be better if we are constantly discussing who to make donations to instead of complaining about the current situation?" he said.

For more information on Ho-Me-I-Ku, visit <https://homeiku.com/>.

Timeline of Kunio Hara's life accomplishments

- 1973:** Born in the city of Ashiya, Hyogo Prefecture
- 1996:** Graduated from the Osaka Institute of Technology and began his first job at Nihon Shokken Holdings Co.
- 2001:** Attained a job as a consultant at Funai Consulting Inc.
- 2002:** Worked at a ramen shop, where he came up with the idea of nurturing people through praising, which served as the basis for Ho-Me-I-Ku.
- 2007:** Started to spread Ho-Me-I-Ku practices to various industries in Japan.
- 2011:** Established Spiral Up Co., a Japanese company specializing in management consulting and training in retail, restaurant and other service industries.
- 2012:** Established Spiral Up International in L.A. and appeared on TV for the first time on the major news program Hodo Station as a Ho-Me-I-Ku consultant; held a seminar in L.A.
- 2013:** held a seminar in China.
- 2014:** Launched the Ho-Me-I-Ku Association, which focuses on Ho-Me-I-Ku consultant training; held a seminar in India.
- 2015:** Published his first book "Praise-based Management" (Japanese edition); English edition was published on U.S. Amazon.com Inc. The English edition of "Praise-based Management" became available on Amazon.com Inc. in the U.S. Established Ho-Me-I-Ku Foundation, which aims to introduce Ho-Me-I-Ku to 196 countries in the world and to carry out charitable activities.
- 2016:** Traveled to Cambodia with a friend and witnessed children live very short lives devoid of praise; held a seminar in India
- 2017:** held a seminar in Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.
- 2018:** Donated to a project school construction project for an orphanage in Cambodia; Lectured in Taiwan.
- 2019:** Participated in World Innovation Summit for Education 2019, a large-scale international conference on education held in Qatar; held a seminar in Malaysia.



Top: Hara visits an orphanage in Siem Reap, Cambodia, in July 2018. Above: A group of businesspeople listen attentively to Hara during his lecture held in Makuhari, Chiba Prefecture, on Feb. 21, 2018. SPIRAL UP CO.



Top and above: Hara visits a kindergarten in Tokyo's Higashi-Yamato in July 2018. SPIRAL UP CO.