

STATIC 1 GROUP – OPEN

FIRST PLACE

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TITLE OF SUBMISSION: How to Train Your LIONS

SUMMARY: In 1299, Sang Nila Utama named Singapore "Singa Pura," symbolizing strength and courage. Today, this symbol faces a literal challenge in the form of the "Kiasu Mentality," characterized by a fear of losing and an obsession with being the best. While this mindset drives hard work and success, it also causes stress, anxiety, and strained relationships. Literary critic Gwee Li Sui highlighted that Singapore's competitiveness is crucial due to its lack of natural resources. However, this drive can be harnessed positively for a brighter future. By 2044, we envision a self-reliant, cohesive, and continuously growing Singapore, overcoming the negative aspects of the kiasu mentality through the LION values: Lightheartedness, Inclusivity, Optimism, and Networking. Lightheartedness breaks the cycle of stress caused by the relentless pursuit of success. It encourages relaxation, reducing negativity and promoting mental health. Singaporeans often focus solely on achievement, leading to high workplace stress. Embracing lightheartedness can create a balance between success and personal happiness. Inclusivity addresses the need to embrace diverse talents and abilities. Currently, societal standards prioritize educational qualifications, leading to a kiasu mindset and exclusion of those who don't meet these expectations. By valuing different skills and helping individuals discover their strengths, Singapore can foster a more bonded and happy society. Optimism counters the pessimism and fear associated with the kiasu mindset. Optimistic citizens can embrace challenges, support each other, and work towards a better future. This positive outlook can lead to a healthier, more united, and prosperous Singapore. Networking transforms the competitive nature of kiasuism into collaborative development. By fostering positive interactions and seeing each other as partners rather than competitors, Singapore can strengthen its social fabric. Collaboration and unity will drive the nation towards greater success. In conclusion, the kiasu mindset has shaped generations of Singaporeans, aiding survival but also causing anxiety and over-competitiveness. By cultivating the LION values, Singapore can transform this mindset into a strength. Lightheartedness promotes mental health, Inclusivity fosters acceptance, Optimism builds a hopeful future, and Networking encourages unity. Together, these values can guide Singapore towards a more united, progressive, and prosperous future. Majulah Singapura!

Ahoy, future leaders of Singapore! Get ready for a thrilling adventure with our contest. Picture this: twenty years later, powerful nations, corporations, and emotionally charged cultures are vying for attention and a chance to change the world.

Essay Title: How to Train Your LIONS

INTRODUCTION

1299. When Sang Nila Utama first set foot onto Singapore's shores, he saw a land teeming with potential and named it "Singa Pura," or "Lion City" in Sanskrit. This symbolised the nation's strength and courage, shaping it into what we see today. In recent years, however, we can see that this term has evolved into a very literal phrase. We often find ourselves entangled in the fierce claws of the "Kiasu Mentality." This seemingly harmless term is more than what meets the eye.

The word "kiasu" literally translates to "fear of losing." It describes a mindset characterised by an excessive fear of missing out on opportunities or advantages, leading to behaviours aimed at gaining the upper hand, securing the best deals, or being ahead of others. On the positive side, the kiasu mentality can drive people to work harder, be more competitive, and achieve remarkable success. However, when things do not go as planned, the relentless pursuit of outdoing others can create intense stress and anxiety, overshadowing personal well-being. This obsession with being the best has detrimental effects such as straining relationships, reducing overall happiness, and leading to a constant state of dissatisfaction. Thus, while the kiasu spirit can be a powerful motivator, it is crucial to find a way to prevent it from negatively impacting one's life.

THE FUTURE WE WANT

Literary critic Gwee Li Sui once said, "We have no choice. We can never break out of this because being competitive is our only resource. No water, no food, no land – only by being number one can we survive."

What if we could channel this innate drive to propel us towards a better future? A future we would want to belong to.

2044. We envision a Singapore that is in the process of becoming a more self-reliant and cohesive nation, providing for our own needs and wants as a country. We see a society that is in the midst of continuous growth in many aspects, ranging from economic to education all the way to political. We see a bonded community, united and connected. But if continuous progress is something that we

already have, even with all the problems we are currently facing, then what is the difference that we foresee in twenty years' time?

Kiasuism has become an integral part of our lives as Singaporeans, so much so that it has become our DNA and a trademark of our country. Many journalists and literary critics tie and relate this word to our society without second thought. It is something that courses through our veins, it is something that is extremely prominent in our day-to-day lives. Of course, to change something that is the essence of a community immediately is nearly impossible, but to tweak it slightly over a course of twenty years for the betterment of the nation's growth is entirely doable, with perseverance and dedication.

The "Kiasu" mindset is a double-edged sword. If you swing it one way, it can benefit you, and if you swing it the other way, it can harm you. As much as this school of thought has multiple benefits, ranging from positive competition to self-motivation, it is still an aspect that has proven to be an obstruction to the development of the country, as it has citizens competing against each other, rather than uniting and planning for our growth as one Singapore. To overcome this challenge, we propose that you train your LIONS. As much as the lion is a beast, an animal that can represent this mentality, if nurtured well, it can become a powerful weapon used positively. The LION is a group of important values that every individual should abide by in order to advance the state on a global scale. These values are as follows: Lightheartedness, Inclusivity, Optimism and Networking. With perseverance and dedication, Singapore can eventually utilise what was once a weakness to become one of its strengths.

LIGHTEARTEDNESS

The unrelenting pressure to outdo one another often leaves us stressed, anxious, and disheartened. People have become so over-reliant and over-competitive that they forget about their mental health, allowing this mindset to tire them out. However, lightheartedness acts as claws breaking through this draining cycle. It provides a break from the constant pressure. Embracing lightheartedness makes people more relaxed, reducing stress and negativity. When you're lighthearted, you don't take everything to heart, unlike in the kiasu mindset, where the goal of being number one consumes you.

Currently, in Singapore's kiasu mindset, people are so driven to be the best that they are consuming themselves without even realising it, becoming literal beasts in their relentless pursuit of success. This tunnel vision takes a toll on their lives, leading them to forget that life doesn't revolve solely around work. This is evident as Singapore was even ranked third in Southeast Asia for daily workplace stress, according to the State of the Global Workplace: 2021 Report by Gallup. Looking to the future, a society that values both achievement and well-being will not only be more productive but also more content. It is through lightheartedness that we can achieve such a future where success and personal happiness coexist harmoniously.

INCLUSIVITY

In every National Day Observance (NDO) song, there is usually a small part highlighting the significance of racial and religious harmony in Singapore. For example, in the song "One People One Nation One Singapore" (1990), the lyrics go, "Every creed and every race / has its role and has its place."

Fortunately, it can be seen that multiculturalism and multiracialism are quite prevalent and appreciated within our society. However, one thing that we still fail to do is to be accepting of these with different

talents and abilities. A person with higher educational qualifications is often held in higher regard and considered superior compared to someone without those qualifications. Sadly, this can be quite a difficult journey for the second person as they would have to fight their way to the top and endure more challenges just to be accepted by the community, often to the point where they are scared of failure or losing out, which boils down to the "Kiasu" mentality. From this, it is quite clear that the standards we have set are quite exclusive, and that is what leads to such a mindset.

Instead of purposely looking down on and turning away those who aren't up to society's expectations, we can instead be more inclusive by embracing them and helping them discover their strengths and use them to their advantage. After all, we need people of different talents, skills, and abilities to cover the extensive needs of the citizens. Like how German theoretical physicist Albert Einstein said, "Everybody is a genius. But if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life thinking it is stupid."

By being more open-minded and accommodating of different types of individuals, society will be more bonded and happier, and the need to achieve a certain standard set by the community will diminish, eradicating the "Kiasu" mindset to a great extent. With this approach, we will finally mean it when we sing "One People, One Nation, One Singapore!"

OPTIMISM

"Deep in my heart I just know / right from the start we will grow" (Our Singapore, 2019.)

Optimism. A light, a beacon of hope and faith. An ever-burning flame against the kiasu mindset. The robber of dreams. The pessimist of change. The promoter of a bleak future. Is that really a world you would rather live in? A world where the kiasu mindset prevails, but hope flutters? Or would you rather live in a world with the lion spirit, veiling the world with optimism?

The kiasu mindset has carved Singaporean island-wide into members of society who are impaled on pessimism, controlled by the sheer fear that they will lose anything or to anyone. By unsumming our inner lions, we can mould into optimistic citizens who can step towards a better future for our little red dot. We can build a more progressive and prosperous Singapore by embracing the waves of challenge and unlocking our full potential. We can build a healthier Singapore, both physically and mentally, where citizens support one another, leading to a more united nation. We can build a stronger Singapore. Would you not want to do that for your island home?

NETWORKING

In the world of the kiasu mindset, every interaction becomes a fierce competition. This relentless pursuit of being the best fractures our community and hinders collaboration. By nature, human beings require positive interactions in their daily lives, which the kiasu mindset turns around. With that, networking acts as a vision that transforms zero-sum competitiveness into collaborative development. It shows us that most of us are not enemies but rather partners. The togetherness of our social fabric and the strength of our communities are built upon people who care about one another, rooted in a shared ideal to grow not only as individuals but as one nation. As Benjamin Kheng sings in "Not Alone" (2024), "The more we're together, the further we'll grow". This defies the isolation and fragmentation bred by the kiasu mindset that sets people up in a mental war of over-competitiveness against one another. Slowly but surely, our little red dot will grow into a beacon of success.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, the kiasu mindset, like the double-edged sword it is, has changed generations of Singaporeans. It has helped us survive through our darkest days, fighting to keep us breathing. Yet, it has also turned us into anxious, judgemental, pessimistic, and over-competitive citizens. To fight against this, we must cultivate the LION values, which are: Lightheartedness, Inclusion, Optimism, and Networking.

Lightheartedness breaks through the relentless cycle of pressure and stress, promoting and prioritising mental health and relaxation. Inclusion brings about new ideas of acceptance of others, fighting against the negative outlook of life through the lens of accepting others for their differences. Optimism rebels against the kiasu mindset and the bleak future it upholds. Networking draws its claws against the overly competitive nature of kiasuism by fostering unity and togetherness.

By unlocking our inner LION spirit, we can bring forth change for the betterment of our beloved Lion City. We can live in a future where we live in harmony with one another without the need to feel like we need to be on top of everything, as the current status quo exists today with the presence of the kiasu mindset. In hand, together we can grow this land that we call home into a more united, progressive, and prosperous country without the negativity of kiasuism. We have done it before, and we can do it again. Majulah Singapura!