Let's share, fail and be less stressed in 2007

By Shashank Nigam

I t is time of year again — time for resolutions.
I have come up with the top three things I wish we could change for a more exuberant, passionate and inviting Singapore.

♦ Don’t hold the sand too tight, or we’ll lose it all.

Through leading the entrepreneurship society in my university, and spearheading efforts to get more students to start businesses, I have realised that one of the biggest problems is that ideas are often not refined.

That’s because we are wary of sharing our ideas with others, even friends.

Behind this mental resistance is the fear of being ridiculed or mocked at if the ideas are “stupid”.

We also worry about the idea being “stolen” if it is good.

But I feel these fears exist only in our minds. You never know how excited the other person might be if he hears of a new idea.

And good ideas are hardly ever stolen for two reasons.

First, we like to contribute to a good idea and help to build upon it, rather than run away with it.

Second, what really makes an idea a success is the follow-through and the will to make it happen. Few have as much passion to take something forward as the original creator.

We need not look far for inspiration, as the Government has recently launched the Singapore Cooperation Enterprise, to share Singapore’s public sector capabilities with other countries. It is true — our knowledge grows only if we share it.

♦ It’s okay to fail.

Failure might even lead to success. Singapore has a long way to go when it comes to encouraging failure. From the classroom to the workplace, we must stop ostracising those who have failed, and making it hard for them to bounce back.

Look at Donald Trump. He was declared bankrupt before he became a billionaire for the second time. We need a few Trumps from Singapore as well, so the words “You’re fired” should be interpreted as “Go do something bigger”, and not an attack on our self-esteem.

♦ Let go of big bad words.

I have been in the US for more than five months now. And I have noticed that there are two things very Singaporean that are totally absent in the US.

They are Singapore food, which I truly miss, and the Singapore vocabulary, which I am glad to be away from.

It’s been months since I last heard someone say: “Oh, I’m so stressed”, or “I feel so depressed today.”

The lifestyle in most metropolitan areas around the world is no less demanding than that in Singapore. But the people in these places have learnt to take things easy, be it in New York City, Frankfurt or Sydney.

I sometimes feel that Singaporeans focus too much on the future and fail to appreciate the present.

I am not saying being competitive or having a vision is bad, but too much of anything is not healthy.

In the US, I have never heard a friend of mine use the word “stressed” or “depressed”. And trust me, students at my campus work just as hard as my classmates back at Singapore Management University.

In the words of Dr David Schwartz, the author of The Magic of Thinking Big, this is the power of the spoken word.

For example, the moment we refer to a problem as a challenge, it looks much more solvable instantly. So it’s time we strive to remove such words from our everyday conversation.

Let us ring in the New Year on a high note.

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