



# Happy Family

Nicholas Lee reveals his secrets for building a great working relationship with his Foreign Domestic Worker, Grace.



**It's NEVER TOO  
LATE for School**

**RIGHT TO YOUR  
DOORSTEP**

Your FDW's Work Permit Card  
will now be delivered to you.

**OVERCOMING  
CONFLICT**

Listen. Encourage.  
Understand. Communicate.

**A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP  
for your FDW**

**NO WORK PASS, NO WORK**



# HAPPY FAMILY

**Name:**

Nicholas Lee, 38

**Occupation:**

Managing Director and Executive Producer at XXX Studio

**Family:**

Racheal Olivero and two daughters, Naomi and Rinoa

Best known for his role as Ronnie Tan in popular local family sitcom *Under One Roof*, Nicholas Lee and wife Racheal Olivero employed Foreign Domestic Worker (FDW) Adelle Grace Hinolan one and a half years ago. The couple knows they can trust Grace to take good care of their daughters, and the household. We find out from Nicholas and Racheal what being a responsible employer means to them, and their tips for living as one happy family.

**WHAT MADE YOU DECIDE TO EMPLOY AN FDW?**

**Nicholas:** Racheal and I were starting a family, and we were also moving house at that time so we needed the extra help.

**WHAT DO YOU LIKE MOST ABOUT HAVING GRACE AROUND?**

**Nicholas:** I sometimes work long hours and Racheal also works in my company. It can be tiring to manage things both at work and home. With Grace around, we have fewer worries, as she keeps everything in order. Especially now we have two young children, every bit of help counts!

**Racheal:** I learn new things from Grace, like her experience with children. For example, during my confinement, my newborn Naomi kept crying, and I didn't know what was wrong. Grace said that it could be wind. She walked around carrying and patting Naomi, and after a while she stopped crying.

**HOW DO YOU BOND WITH GRACE?**

**Nicholas:** We always have our meals together, unlike other families who ask their FDWs to eat separately in the kitchen. When we go out for dinner together, we let Grace pick what she wishes to eat; we hear of other people who order the cheapest dish on the menu for their FDWs, which isn't very respectful. In the recent Typhoon Haiyan, Grace's family was affected, so we made sure that Grace was able to check on them, and we donated money. It's a good thing that we're here to help, because if she were back in the Philippines, it would have been more difficult for her family.

**Racheal:** We know it's hard for Grace to be away from her family, so we set up Skype calls for her to keep in touch with her family, especially for special occasions such as her mother's or her daughter's birthday.

**DO YOU FEEL THAT REST DAYS ARE IMPORTANT FOR FDWS?**

**Nicholas:** I know that some employers choose to give additional pay in lieu of a rest day, but really, our helpers need their rest too. How would you like it if you worked every day without any rest, even

with the extra money? After all, there's no emergency that really requires Grace to give up her free day, that's what mothers-in-law are for. *(laughs)*

**Racheal:** Grace needs the personal time to do her own things, and meet her friends. With the free time, she can go out to explore Singapore and enjoy Filipino food too, which I'm sure she misses.

**WHAT IS YOUR FORMULA FOR MAINTAINING AN EFFECTIVE AND HARMONIOUS WORKING RELATIONSHIP WITH GRACE?**

**Nicholas:** We try not to think of her as an employee, but as part of the family. We want her to feel comfortable and happy.

**Racheal:** Any time we feel that there's a problem, we bring it up to Grace as soon as possible. We sit down and talk about it. It's better this way, rather than have things accumulate and come to a boiling point. We also remind ourselves that we can't blame her for things, mistakes that happen that we ourselves don't realise beforehand. We also feel that when people are happy, they'll be more willing to go the extra mile, to take the initiative in doing things. So not only do they benefit, we benefit too.



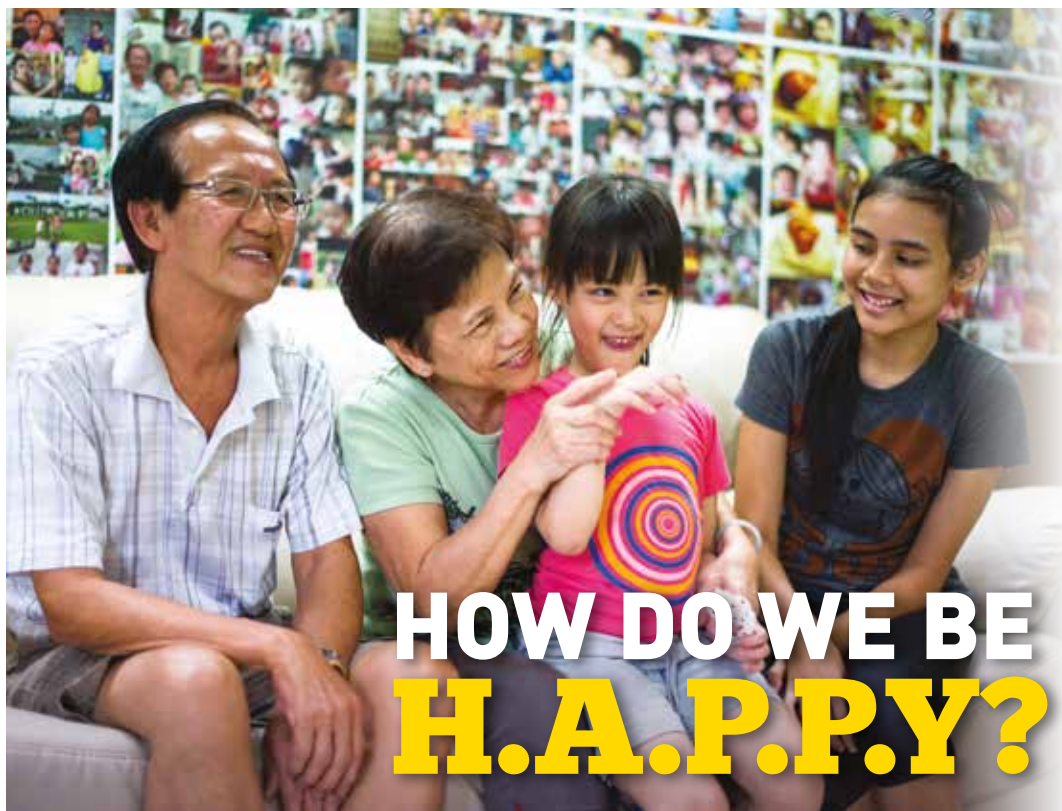
## Grace, who is from the Philippines, shares her views on working here.

**Did you have problems adjusting to working for the Lees?**

It was difficult at first, to be away from home. I cried every day because I missed home. But the Lees have been really understanding and helpful, and I enjoy working for them.

**How do you approach your employers when you have a problem?**

I speak with Ma'am (Racheal) whenever I'm not sure about something. She's very easy to talk to and she gives me guidance when I need it.



**Y**ou probably do not remember this, but one of the first things your foreign domestic worker (FDW) shares with you is that working in Singapore is actually a dream come true for them.

While the privilege is theirs to find work in our shores, the onus is on us, as employers, to make sure that our FDWs are in the best environment possible to work in. Most of the FDWs do not have families or relatives here in Singapore. Therefore, we are the closest people they know.

MOM has adopted a Be H.A.P.P.Y approach for both employers and FDWs, as a guiding principle for both you to live harmoniously together. You are not only an FDW employer, but to a larger extent, her pillar of strength and support.



## Be H.A.P.P.Y



### **H – Helpline for FDWs:** **1800 339 5505**

This is an MOM helpline for FDWs to call when they need advice or assistance on employment issues. However, do encourage her to approach you when she needs guidance in her work.



### **A – Avenues**

It is important for your FDW to know the various avenues they can go to for help as a second option. But of course, as her employer, you should always be her first point of contact in case of any issue or emergency.



### **P – Positive Employer-Employee Relationship**

A harmonious relationship begins with an open and honest discussion between you and your FDW. From mandatory weekly rest days to daily expectations, communication is important so as to avoid disagreements.



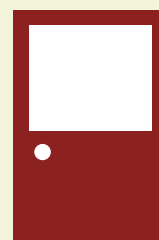
### **P – Protect your FDW**

According to the new safety regulations, your FDW must be supervised by you or an adult representative, and there must be window grilles which should be locked when cleaning window exteriors. Continue to remind and supervise your FDW. Her safety should never be put at risk when performing a task.



### **Y – say “Yes” only to right things**

It is an offence for your FDW to work for anyone else, even with your consent. As your FDW trusts you, it is your duty not to misplace that trust and ask your FDW to work for your friends or relatives. Say “Yes” only to the right things! Say “No” to illegal deployment.



## RIGHT TO YOUR DOORSTEP

As part of a commitment to improve service levels, MOM now delivers your FDW’s Work Permit Card.

From 10 June 2013, employers and employment agents (EAs) were saved the trouble of having to collect Work Permit cards personally from the MOM Service Centre at Bendemeer. This applies to all work permits issued to new foreign domestic workers (FDWs), as well as existing ones who are in the process of having their permits issued or renewed.

Sounds great? If you are keen, simply indicate to MOM the address you want the card delivered to when you or your appointed EA are applying for the work permit issuance on Work Permit Online (WPOL). Delivery can be made to the office where you work, the EA’s office, or your home, as long as it can be handed directly to your FDW.

**Card delivery hours are between 9am and 6pm from Monday to Friday, to any local address, as long as it is not a protected or restricted area (army camps etc).**



# Settling Disagreements: It doesn't have to get ugly

## 01

### Sign the written agreement with your EA

IT SHOULD INCLUDE:



Breakdown of fees



Circumstances for a refund of fees



Replacement of FDW(s)



Resolution channels that can be used in times of dispute

## 02

### Negotiate!

Raise the dispute with the EA and try to negotiate for a mutually satisfactory outcome based on the written agreement signed by both parties.



## 03

### Mediate

If your EA is unable to resolve the grievances then you may approach external accreditation bodies.

#### Association of Employment Agencies (AEAS)

**What you need:** written service agreement  
+ receipts + correspondences  
+ details of FDW  
+ payment of S\$50

- AEAS examines the written signed agreement.
- Appoints an independent panel of mediators to arbitrate cases.

#### Consumers Association of Singapore (CASE)

**What you need:** written service agreement  
+ receipts + correspondences  
+ details of FDW +  
payment of S\$35

#### How does CASE handle the dispute?

- Assists you in obtaining a written statement of opinion.
- Represents you in mediating with the EA.

If EA is found guilty of violations to the agreement, they will need to take corrective actions. In serious cases, the EA's accreditation status may be suspended, preventing them from placing FDWs.

## I need help! Where can I go?

#### Association of Employment Agencies Singapore (AEAS)

Complaint /Mediation Procedures

Blk 9 Jalan Kukoh #03-77

Singapore 160009

Tel: 6836 2618

(Mondays to Fridays, 10am – 4pm)

[aeas.org@gmail.com](mailto:aeas.org@gmail.com) or [helpdesk@aeas.org.sg](mailto:helpdesk@aeas.org.sg)

#### Consumers Association of Singapore (CASE)

170 Ghim Moh Road

#05-01 Ulu Pandan Community Building

Singapore 279621

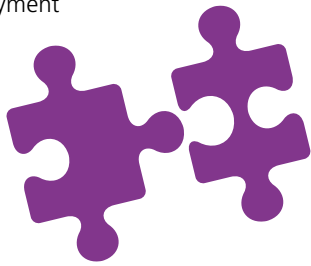
(Mondays to Saturdays, 10am – 4pm)

Tel: 6100 0315

(Hotline operating hours: Mondays to Fridays, 9am – 5pm, Saturdays, 9am – 12pm)


You may have engaged an Employment Agency (EA) to help you find and select an ideal foreign domestic worker (FDW). What if a dispute arises between you and your EA? What should you do?

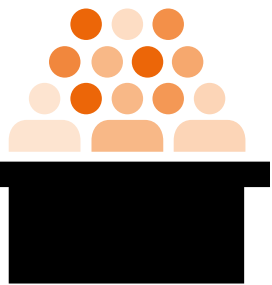
Let's explore possible conflict resolution routes, which you can take to resolve the dispute.



## 04

### Take further action

 If a resolution cannot be reached, then the mediation officer will advise employers on other options such as approaching the Small Claims Tribunal or taking legal action.



**Small Claims Tribunal**  
Level 1, Subordinate Courts  
No. 1 Havelock Square  
Singapore 059724  
Tel: 6435 5946



## THE SAFE WAY IS THE RIGHT WAY

Incidents of foreign domestic workers (FDW) falling from height (FFH) while performing household chores can be avoided. Since the tightening of the Ministry's safety guidelines in June last year, we have had fewer of such unfortunate incidents. Employers have played a part to help protect the lives of FDWs. We thank you for your cooperation in providing a safe working environment for your FDW.



### Signing of Safety Agreement

To maintain high standards of safety while performing household chores, on top of the tightened conditions, MOM has made it a requirement for employment agencies (EAs) to facilitate the signing of a compulsory safety agreement between you and your new FDW (both first-time FDWs and transfers). The agreement ensures that both employers and FDWs are fully aware of and understand MOM's requirements on cleaning window exteriors.

The agreement lists MOM's restrictions on cleaning window exteriors and employers' requirements for the FDW to clean window exteriors in accordance with MOM's regulations. The EA who facilitates this agreement, employers and the FDW are required to sign this agreement and abide by it. You and your FDW should each keep a copy of the signed agreement.



### Commitment to Work Safety Starts with You

Your commitment to provide a safe working environment will go a long way to protect your FDW's well-being. As the employer, you can start by first reminding your FDW to observe safety, and then supervising her closely when cleaning window exteriors. Most importantly, knowing your FDW is safe at work offers you peace of mind. We hope you can continue to do your part in ensuring your FDW performs her work in a safe manner.

## CLEANING WINDOWS SAFELY

To safely clean window exterior above ground level,

- You or an adult representative must be present to supervise.
- There must be window grilles and they must be locked during cleaning. Do not ask your FDW to clean window exteriors if the windows have no grilles.
- Your FDW should not be standing on chairs, stools or any raised platform while cleaning the windows.
- Provide your FDW with cleaning tools equipped with extended handles.
- Educate her on the importance of working safely.

# FOR A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP...

In 2008, a foreign domestic worker (FDW) was made to sleep in an exposed balcony of her employer's residence. The area was unsheltered and her bed was located next to the washing machine and the air conditioner compressor. The neighbours could see her bed and she got wet when it rained. This is certainly an unacceptable accommodation arrangement for an FDW.

To help employers better understand accommodation requirements, MOM recently updated the accommodation guidelines for FDWs. With these guidelines, MOM hopes that employers will have greater clarity with regards to the standards of acceptable accommodation for their FDWs.

## PROVIDE ADEQUATE SHELTER

Protection from natural elements such as the sun, rain or strong winds. As the example above has shown, letting your FDW sleep in a place like an unsheltered balcony is not acceptable.

## PROVIDE BASIC AMENITIES

You must provide your FDW with these: A mattress to sleep on, a pillow for better head and neck support to prevent spinal injuries and a blanket to keep her warm during a cold night. Your FDW deserves these after a hard day's work.

## ENSURE SUFFICIENT VENTILATION

Accommodation must be sufficiently ventilated. Mechanical ventilation (e.g., an electrical fan) should be provided if natural ventilation is inadequate. Rooms with no proper ventilation are the biggest sources of moisture. Moisture causes mildew, which results in a foul smell and respiratory problems! Please ensure your FDW's resting area is well ventilated.

## ENSURE SAFETY

Clear any dangerous equipment or structures that could cause harm. You should not

turn your FDW's room into another storage area. Your FDW should not be sleeping near dangerous equipment or structures that could hurt her. Please be considerate and ensure she is safe where she rests.

## ENSURE MODESTY

Your FDW must not sleep in the same room as a male adult/teenager. Your FDW should not have to worry about her modesty and be allowed to rest with an ease of mind.

## PROVIDE SPACE AND PRIVACY

If possible, provide a separate room or private space for your FDW. If not, you should try your best to ensure that there is enough space and privacy for your FDW and meet the other five accommodation requirements as outlined above.


We hope that the new accommodation guidelines for FDWs will help clear most of the doubts that you may have regarding the well-being of your FDW. As her employer, her accommodation and welfare are your responsibility. We believe that if your FDW is happy, her productivity will also increase.


# Why Q?



**From 16 December 2013, make an appointment with us to be served promptly at the MOM Services Centre.**

- Salary matters and employment related claims
- Work Permit resignation/ cancellation dispute with an employer/ worker


 How do you make an appointment to see us?

 Visit MOM Website: [appointment.mom.gov.sg](http://appointment.mom.gov.sg)

 Call our Hotline: 6438 5122



Scan here for more information [appointment.mom.gov.sg](http://appointment.mom.gov.sg)

For general enquiries, please visit our website at [www.mom.gov.sg](http://www.mom.gov.sg) or use  **ASK MOM**



# GETTING ON *Familiar Ground*

Overcoming conflicts with your FDW is easy with some patience and understanding.

It is expected that misunderstandings may arise between you and your foreign domestic worker (FDW), due to differences in culture, language and expectations. Hence, it is important that you and your FDW communicate effectively to overcome problems amicably. Read on for some tips you may apply to help you and your FDW overcome difficult situations.



## LISTEN

Make time to listen to your FDW and be patient with her. Remember, your FDW may be unfamiliar with your needs, so constant communication and support is important in creating a harmonious relationship. Engage her in conversations about her family back home, her expectations while working here and her aspirations after that. Get to know her friends and whom she hangs out with during her rest days. The more she shares, the more comfortable she will become with you.



## UNDERSTAND

Understand why your FDW may do things in a certain way and why she may have difficulty adapting. If you find that your FDW cleans exterior of the window glass in a risky manner, be sure to teach her how to work safely and supervise her. Your FDW may not have experience working in high-rise buildings. Check on your FDW as she works to ensure that she carries out her chores safely and efficiently. Patience is also key to understanding your FDW and ensuring her needs are met. Remember, your FDW needs time to adapt to our way of life.



## ENCOURAGE

Someone who accidentally cuts the tip of their finger while dicing tomatoes will be more careful the next time he or she dices a tomato. We all learn from our mistakes. Apply the same concept to your FDW. Always give her the benefit of the doubt when she makes a mistake the first time around. If she hangs the clothes the wrong way, show her how it should be done. Give her time to get it right while you supervise, so you can correct her if she is still unsure.



## COMMUNICATE

Have realistic expectations of your FDW and communicate your needs to her. If a misunderstanding occurs, stay calm, ask questions to find out the details and avoid jumping to conclusions. It is important to be patient and understand that the learning process takes time. Speak to your FDW regularly to find out if she can cope with her workload and discuss ways to help her better adapt to your household.

## CASEFILE

# No Work Pass, No Work

Mother and daughter fined for illegally employing foreign domestic workers without valid work passes.

A 63-year-old woman, Mary (not her real name) and her 40-year old daughter Jane (not her real name) were convicted in October 2012 for illegally employing foreign domestic workers (FDW) without valid work passes.

Mary was fined S\$4,000 for employing an FDW without a valid work pass to work at her hawker stall for over nine months from July 2007 to April 2008. The FDW who was working for Mary was actually employed

by her daughter, Jane. Needing more manpower, she managed to get a second FDW employed by her husband to work at her stall. However, Jane asked the second FDW to work at her home and ended up with a fine of S\$2,000.

Mary had committed the illegal employment offence despite knowing that the FDW was only allowed to work for her daughter Jane, at the address stated in the Work Permit Card. She was also fully aware that FDWs

could only perform household chores yet she deployed them for work at her hawker stall. Likewise, Jane knowingly committed an illegal employment offence by asking her father's FDW to work for her, when she knew that the FDW could only work at her father's place of residence.

This marks the second time both mother and daughter are convicted of the same offence.

MOM strongly advises all FDW employers to employ foreign manpower only if they have the valid work passes. They should also abide by the Work Permit Conditions governing the workplace conditions of the FDWs by only allowing the FDWs to work as a domestic worker in the stated address indicated on their Work Permits.

## DO YOU KNOW?

### IT'S NOT FINE TO *Moonlight*

Pub boss fined for employing four moonlighting foreign domestic workers (FDWs).

On 6 August 2013, a director of a pub was fined S\$2,500 by the Court for illegally employing four FDWs to work at his pub without valid work passes. The 28-year-old director had employed

three of the four moonlighting FDWs as waitresses and one as a cashier.

These offences were in violation of the Employment of Foreign Manpower Act (EFMA).

MOM would like to remind all employers that they should not be tempted to use the services of FDWs who might be keen to moonlight. It is an offence to employ moonlighting FDWs, even on a part-time basis.

## PENALTIES

MOM warns that all employers and business owners must comply with the EFMA. They should employ foreign employees only if they have been issued with valid work passes. For illegal employment offences, the penalties have been enhanced to a minimum fine of S\$5,000 up to a maximum of S\$30,000, and/or up to a 12-month imprisonment.

## IT'S NEVER TOO LATE

*For School*

An exemplary employer tells us about how upgrading is beneficial for both you and your foreign domestic worker.



**S**u-cheng Ong is not your average foreign domestic worker (FDW) employer in Singapore.

For starters, she was nominated by her helper of 12 years, Jocelyn Mompal, to be the "Outstanding Employer of the Year" in 2008, an accolade she eventually won, much to her surprise.

When asked what could be the reason that led to her nomination and win, she said with a smile, "I wanted Jocelyn to upgrade herself."

That's how aidha got involved. aidha is a Singapore-based micro-business school that aims to educate FDWs, through a two-year management programme covering different aspects of financial education and entrepreneurship, with classes held on alternate Sundays.

"With my encouragement, Jocelyn started attending school at aidha in 2007. She has since taken classes in computer skills, leadership, basic business studies and has become an active volunteer." Practical skills such as communication also make up a large part of aidha's curriculum.

Recounting the biggest change in her FDW, Su-cheng says that it has to be Jocelyn's confidence level, which gradually spilled over into her role at home. "I leave everything to her," she says with a laugh. "She has so much initiative, I don't have to ask her to do things; she just does them! It has to be the training Jocelyn receives at school." For so many women who have had to spend their lives simply following instructions, this change can be quite revolutionary on a personal level. "Jocelyn can communicate better now," says Su-cheng, "she is always giving me ideas for the house."

For Su-cheng, improved communication between the two over the years has not only helped Jocelyn develop as an employee, but also turned her into a friend. "She is my companion," she says. "My 'Girl Friday!'" Both women stress the difference this has made to the level of trust in their relationship. Jocelyn cites high levels of trust as the one thing that has made her a more effective and happier employee. "I have the freedom to do my work," she says, "without a boss looking over me all the time."

Su-cheng feels this increased level of connectivity has definitely made a difference to Jocelyn. "If she's happy, there's a space in her mind that opens up for thinking, for taking responsibility. Her productivity improves too," she says. "If she's happy at home and at work, only positive things can happen" – **Article contribution by aidha.**

**If you need any information about the courses aidha offers to domestic workers in Singapore, please don't hesitate to get in touch with them. Call aidha at 6884 9938 / 9789 4041 or visit their website at [www.aidha.org](http://www.aidha.org).**



“

For Employer Su-cheng, communication has improved between her and Jocelyn who has grown into a friend, especially after attending school at AIDHA.

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