

# As easy as pi for duo to memorise

The two hold records, run memory technique courses

By AMELIA TENG

HE IS known to misplace his car keys, but Mr Wellon Chou can recite 1,384 of the infinite number of digits that make up the mathematical constant pi.

For the last seven years, the 25-year-old memory whiz has spent about 30 minutes each day training his brain to perform feats like this.

"Memory skills have changed my life. I'm able to multi-task better, do well in my studies and be an entrepreneur at the same time," he said.

He has broken six local memory records – including the most number of historic dates (25 out of 158 dates recalled after memorising for five minutes), and names and faces (20 names and faces recalled after memorising for five minutes).

Good friend and third-year Singapore Polytechnic classmate Gerald Lim, 19, has an equally impressive national record, with the most number of random words – 52 out of 100 – memorised in order within five minutes.

Both men, who are studying engineering with business, have turned their hobby into a business by running memory technique workshops. They also hope to make memory skills as a mental sport more popular here.

Mr Chou, who has a younger brother and whose father is a carpenter and mother is an administrative clerk, insisted that he was not born with an exceptional memory.

"It's just that I know how to use memory techniques to retrieve information," he said.

"How good your memory is depends on how much practice you have."

The two

are setting up the Singapore Memory Sports Council to encourage people to take up memory skills as a mental sport. The society, to be set up by June, will be the local chapter of the World Memory Sports Council, which holds global memory contests. The pair have also developed personal "memory systems" that have helped them remember things such as speeches or presentations, telephone numbers and grocery lists.

"The idea is to construct a building in our brains, using familiar places such as our homes, schools and cafes to store information," explained Mr Chou.

In February last year, the enterprising duo set up Memory Ark, a company which runs memory technique workshops. These last from six to eight hours and cost \$240.

Last year, they conducted courses for pupils from Marsiling Primary and Zhonghua Primary schools, and got \$50,000 from Spring Singapore through their polytechnic's Enterprise Centre.

This year, they are moving into the polytechnic's InnoVillage, an office space for entrepreneurs.

"We want to help students turn their basic memory skills into independent studying abilities," said Mr Chou.

Mr Lim said he was intrigued when he first met Mr Chou in their first year of polytechnic studies.

"He started teaching me all these techniques and I was impressed with what I can do," said Mr Lim, the oldest of three siblings and the son of a sales engineer and a housewife.

"I used to have trouble with content-heavy subjects such as history and social studies in secondary school," he said. "But the memory techniques have helped me to study more efficiently."

Mr Chou and Mr Lim, who will run Memory Ark full-time after graduating this year, have grade point averages at the top of their cohort – of 3.91



Polytechnic classmates Gerald Lim (left) and Wellon Chou are setting up the Singapore Memory Sports Council to encourage others to take up memory skills as a mental sport. ST PHOTO: KUA CHEE SIONG

and 3.95 respectively, out of a maximum of four.

Mr Chou, who is married to a nurse and has a 10-month-old son, said parents have asked them to teach their preschool-age children memory techniques.

"We think that's a bit young, so probably not," he said.

"But I'll definitely teach my son when he's slightly older."

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