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## 5 life lessons with Joffrey Thin-Gris of The Aviary Hotel, Siem Reap

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By POPPY SKINNER | BLLNR



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While we might not be going anywhere at the moment, we can still dream. Here is some life advice from one of Siam Reap's finest hotel's General Manager.

### The saying "I'm happy if you're happy" cannot be more true

When I first moved to Cambodia, there was an occasion when I was very upset with my neighbour for throwing a party and creating way too much noise. It was a little disrespectful. I told my staff about it and they went like "Joffrey, why can't you be happy for them? They are having a good time."

It dawned upon me that I was being too individualistic and self-focused - in the West, people tend to focus on the self rather the community at large. Cambodians, however, derive happiness from around them. If you are happy, it makes them happy. Since then, I have learnt to be happy for others.



I see this beautiful culture and people in Cambodia everyday. A big part of Cambodia's success - and also The Aviary's - in the hospitality industry is attributable to this.

I often tell my Cambodian staff that just by being themselves, they have fulfilled 70 per cent of their job. I know that when the guests are happy, it really makes their day.

### Be consistent in everything you do

When it comes to running a boutique hotel, or any business for that matter, branding consistency is crucial. The brand's mood, message and communication, both on and offline, should maintain the same throughout, as this allows the building of trust and loyalty from our audience and clientele.

Consider how our property's new Sambok rooms's interiors blend elegance in modern trends with Cambodian design - this is in line with how we pay homage to Cambodia's art, culture and wildlife.

I am also confident in my three separate roles as General Manager of The Aviary, husband, and father to my three children. It's about being fair and consistent in communication and action so my 'stakeholders' know what to expect and how to 'play' their role.

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For example, as a father, even when I'm upset with my kids, I make an attempt to have dinner together and embrace them before heading to bed.

### We have more to learn from Asia than the other way around

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As Westerners, we have this notion that our civilisation and culture is remarkably superior to the others, that we are more highly-educated and have achieved more in life. I've come to realise there is actually a lot we could learn from Asia.

In Cambodia, people here possess strong values, such as being committed to family and community; and taking pride in their unique traditions and the quality of their work. In the realm of business, Asians base their relationship on trust and that is a great asset.

Contractual agreement is still very important but a relationship that is built upon the belief in each other and gradual trust over time is to be treasured.

### Work and Family are the two key pillars in my life

I love going to work and my role as a General Manager - it's my universe. It is important to love what you do. I have a habit of creating a daily list of tasks and goals just before stepping into office as it sets the tone of the day.

I set about accomplishing them during the day and in doing so allows me to be clear-headed, and thus provides direction for my team. When your work is rooted in passion and productivity, it inspires the people around you to do the same.

We are perfect as a team together, making it possible for The Aviary to be the urban oasis in downtown Siem Reap. The same applies to my family. I love my husband and three children and they give me energy to succeed at work.

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### Give people the key to succeed in life

At The Aviary, guests may notice - or not - that we are an inclusive team. You'll see that our members of staff are from all walks of life, from having special needs and single parents to orphans. I don't mean to sound altruistic, but I choose to give opportunities to people who are in need and require more help but also have the potential to grow.

We hire based on profile and personality; we like candidates who are team players as hospitality is all about teamwork - that way our guests enjoy The Aviary experience every step of the way.

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