Talenttalks

Evolving Thinking through best industry reads.

ISSUE # 3   EDITION JUNE 2022

■ **RETURN TO WORK ULTIMATUMS**

■ **SHOULD I STAY OR SHOULD I GO?**

■ **5 ESSENTIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE RETURN TO THE HYBRID WORKPLACE**

ORGANISATIONS GRAPPLE WITH HOW THEY WILL ORGANISE THEIR WORKFORCE.

HOW TO CREATE MEANINGFUL &

■ **LASTING CHANGE IN YOUR TEAM**

FROM THE EDITOR

JUBILANT JUNE

We are proud and excited to celebrate the "Jubilant June" edition of Talenttalks with you. Our own celebration of connection, growth and impact as we see the Talenttalks footprint spreading globally, at a time when so many people are looking for empowerment, inspiration and connection in all aspects of their daily lives.

Talenttalks provides access to relevant knowledge based on accurate information tested in a real world context and covering the themes of Culture and Engagement, Diversity, Employee Wellbeing, Learning and Performance and The Hybrid World of Work. A diverse mix with Inspire adding the softer touch.

If you are a regular Talenttalks reader, thank you. Please do celebrate with us and help to build connection and quality conversation by sharing the magazine within your individual circles of friends and colleagues and encouraging them to subscribe either to our weekly newsletter or the magazine or, even better, both. Be the catalyst that inspires them to move forward in their careers, workplaces and lives.

Happy reading, happy listening, happy connections as you dip into "Jubilant June" with Talenttalks.

SUE DE WAAL
Chief Executive Editor

We believe that we can make the world a better place by providing a gateway to quality information that can empower and inspire people to progress in their careers, workplaces and lives.

CONTENTS

LITA CURRIE

CULTURE AND ENGAGEMENT

We are trying to make sense of the new world post-pandemic with the greater focus on work-life integration, hybrid offices and changing employee expectations. But the fundamentals are still true – people need to feel that their work has meaning, that they contribute every day in a meaningful way and that they are in charge of their destinies. As organisations we need to step up to create cultures in our teams where these things are valued. If not, true engagement will remain forever out of reach.

HOW TO CREATE MEANINGFUL & LASTING CHANGE IN YOUR TEAM

JULIE KERR HENKEL

I once saw a cartoon of a leader standing at the front of a large auditorium addressing his staff. He posed one question: Who here wants change? All hands in the packed audience shot up. He then posed a second question: Who here wants to change? Not one hand was raised. This anecdote speaks to the fact that we all want change to take place without us having to be impacted at all. We want change to happen in others, in the structures, systems and processes out there. And yet, if nothing changes, nothing is going to change.

Behaviour change can take place at three levels. These can be visualised as three concentric circles. The most obvious level is the outer layer which is concerned with the 'what' needs to change – the outcomes, results and goals you wish to achieve and the problematic or opportunistic situations which require improvement or leverage. Outcomes are about what you're aiming for and hope to get.

The second level of change is concerned with the 'how', in other words the processes, habits, rituals, routines and systems required to support any change ie: process changes are about what you do.

The third and deepest level focuses on changing identity. This layer is concerned with the 'who' needs to change and involves deliberate reflection and action around changing your beliefs, assumptions, biases, worldviews, self-image and even judgements about yourself and others. Identity change is about what you believe.

All three levels of change are useful and can support a leader's strategic intentions. However, research conducted by James Clear, bestselling author of Atomic Habits: Tiny Changes, Remarkable Results, shows that what is key is the direction of change. Rather than starting from the outer levels and working your way in, begin at the core of identity and expand outwards towards outcomes.

True behaviour change is identity change. Crucial to self-motivation is when a habit becomes part of your identity. It's one thing to say I'm the type of manager who wants to be more intentional, for example, and something quite different to say I'm the type of person who is intentional. The more pride you have in a particular aspect of your identity, the more likely you are to be motivated to maintain behaviours and habits associated with this, and the less likely you have to convince yourself to maintain these. Doing the right and necessary thing is easy because your identity and your behaviour are fully aligned.

What is meant by 'intentional leader'?

An intentional leader is someone who invests the time to get clarity upfront and decides the kind of person they want to be. This approach is applicable at multiple levels – as an individual, as a team, as a company, or even as a community.

Key questions to raise your intentionality and chances of success:

1. Who is the type of person/s that could get the successful outcome I/we want?
2. What are the beliefs this person would have? What do they stand for? What are their principles and values?
3. What are the habits and choices they practice daily? Weekly? Monthly? What are they not doing?
4. What resources, processes and systems would they have in place to be successful?
5. What beliefs, habits and choices of mine would need to be edited and upgraded to fully live into this identity of who I wish to become?
6. What is a fundamental habit I want to put in place as a building block starting from today? How does this behaviour/action help me become the person I wish and hope to be?
7. How can I make this habit obvious?
8. How can I make this habit attractive?
9. How can I make this habit easy?
10. How can I make this habit satisfying?

Your identity emerges out of your habits – scrutinise your habits to determine how effective you will be.

Once you have clarity on the type of person or team you want to be, you can begin taking small steps and implementing processes to reinforce your desired identity. James Clear notes that our habits shape our identity, and our identity shapes our habits. He is well quoted for saying that "You do not rise to the level of your goals. You fall to the level of your systems".

While goals are useful for setting a

direction, but systems are best for making progress. If you want better results, focus less on setting goals and rather be intentional about putting in place repeatable effective behaviours, systems and processes which will support not only the identity you are forging but also the outcomes you're aiming for.

The most practical way to change who you are is to change what you do and how. This way, every action you take is a vote for the type of person or team you wish to become. For example, each time you encourage your employees, make clear unambiguous requests and give them constructive feedback in the moment, you are an engaging leader. Each time you advocate for and stand by an ethical decision in a heated debate, you are a person with integrity. Each time you do what you say you're going to do, you are a trustworthy person.

Four ways to be more intentional every day

Make a decision to become an intentional person

While this might seem self-evident, it may not be. By deliberately choosing to embody the identity, habits and beliefs of someone who is intentional you are one step closer to becoming so. You might want to identity an intentionality role model who embodies these qualities and observe their daily practices.

Be deliberate with your daily top three

To be more deliberate with your day, identify the three important activities that will help you achieve the outcome you want in line with the kind of identity you are wanting to foster. If you are wanting to increase your sales numbers and contact calls with your customers this month, ask yourself what would a top salesman or woman do today and every day? When you are intentional with your time, energy, and focus each day, you are far more likely to achieve the result you want. Being intentional with your time ensures you have direction for your day and allows you to establish daily routines. Without an intentional focus for your day, you can feel stuck and waste time on non-important activities. Without intention, you can take on too much and get easily distracted.

Clean up your communications

Being an intentional leader requires being deeply present to other people as a sign of how much you value and respect them and for this you will need to hone your ability to listen and be physically present and still in discussions. For example, by setting an intention when going into a difficult conversation of being the kind of person who is deeply attentive, calm, centred and a great listener, you're priming yourself and setting the tone for the conversation to follow.

Make clear requests of others

Learning to be intentional also requires learning to be a better communicator. A crucial communication skill is developing your ability to make clear requests. For any request to be effective, in other words, fully understood by another person so they may implement it to the standards and levels you require, four things are necessary:

1. Clarity on who is making the request and who is receiving the request (check they have the context, competence, confidence and means to carry out the request).
2. The timing of when the final output of the task is required including the specific format you require and any interim check point expectations.
3. Shared understanding of the actions to be taken and the conditions to be fulfilled. This might take a few rounds of clarifying questions to make sure your intentions and the other person's interpretations are aligned.
4. Avoid assumption-based thinking. A helpful question to ask someone is: Please play back to me your understanding of what I'm asking for.

The so what of intentionality

In summary, to be intentional means you have a clear purpose and are deliberate about taking repeated action, no matter how small, on a regular and consistent basis in line with the beliefs, thoughts and feelings that are most important to your identity and purpose, either individually or collectively. When you have an intentional focus, you choose to lead with a clear purpose that is meaningful to you and both evident and inspiring to others. When you become intentional, you focus your time and energy on the daily habits, rituals, systems and processes which reinforce the primary outputs you seek.

If I ask your employees what your strategy is, would they be able to answer?

In business you are out to achieve your strategy – implementing your plans, identifying the actions to get you there, training your resources to work in the most cost-effective way, in order to remain profitable.

Use a visual approach to craft, communicate and implement your strategy. Your employees will support it because they understand it.

In business you are out to achieve your strategy – implementing your plans, identifying the actions to get you there, training your resources to work in the most cost-effective way, in order to remain profitable.

Use a visual approach to craft, communicate and implement your strategy. Your employees will support it because they understand it.

crafting communicating implementing

IF YOU CAN DRAW IT, YOU CAN SEE IT!
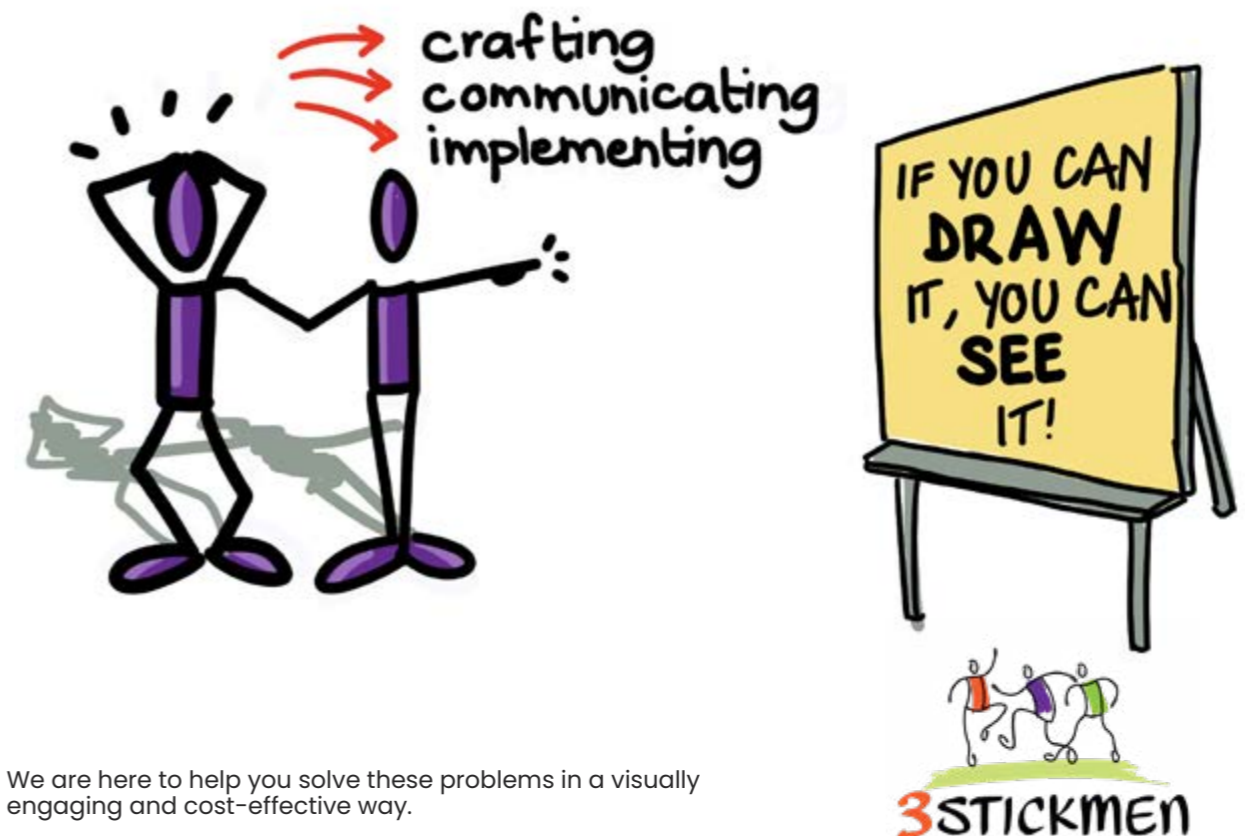
We are here to help you solve these problems in a visually engaging and cost-effective way.

Get hold of us on www.3stickmen.com to design and run a visual strategy session for your company – in-person or online.

3STICKMEN

WWW.3STICKMEN.COM

GLOBAL MULTINATIONALS BANKING ON NEXT GENERATION OF AFRICAN LEADERS.

ADVAITA NAIDOO

Strategies for future leaders to capitalise on growing demand

A clear trend has emerged from leadership search briefing patterns over the past six years, of global multinationals moving away from filling top roles with expatriates towards seeking explicitly to place local leaders in key roles.

An analysis by Jack Hammer, Africa's largest executive search firm, shows that during 2017 to 2019, global companies sought to have a local executive placed for only **29% of key vacancies**, in line with historic trends. However this number has increased dramatically over the past three years, with the average from 2020 to date already at **78% of executive search** briefs calling specifically

for a leader from the region (South Africa or the rest of Africa) as opposed to the net being thrown open to global candidates.

This is a significant new trend providing insight into the direction of the future of leadership and leadership opportunities in South Africa and the rest of Africa, in particular Kenya, Nigeria, Botswana, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia, where these briefing patterns are being observed.

There are push-and-pull factors involved in the dramatic shift over the past three years. On the one hand, the regulatory environment is making it harder

to place expats due to visa and quota issues, as well as higher costs and shorter incumbency associated with expat placements from for instance Europe, the USA and the Middle East.

On the other hand, companies have, without a doubt, also come to understand the importance and value of placing senior leaders who have a real connection with the environment and cultural context in which the company needs to operate.

The above highlights the importance of and necessity to build a substantial pipeline of qualified and experienced leaders on the continent. This is of course also good news for

young people who are actively and strategically working on their careers, indicating that there currently is and will continue to be opportunities for them in South Africa and beyond.

It should also be noted that while the global economy is taking strain, multinationals are still recognising the value of and investing in Africa, where the population growth continues to be the fastest in the world and where, despite the slowdown effects of Covid19 and climate, economic growth is still predicted.

The impact of this is that companies and organisations across all sectors – from consumer goods and services, to venture capital organisations and NPOs – will continue to establish a presence where markets exist.

CAREER TRAJECTORY STRATEGISING

The executive search briefing patterns of global multinationals on the continent is objectively good news for the future prospects of a new generation of leaders.

The question then is how they can strategise their career trajectories to ensure that they are in line for these opportunities – based on the ideal skills and experience that will position them competitively for leadership appointments. Based on current client briefs and skills projected to be in high demand in future, future leaders should craft their approach as follows:

TERTIARY QUALIFICATION
A commercial/financial/computer or data science qualification from a top university remains essential.

HYBRID QUALIFICATIONS
A second skill or qualification to complement the first is

important – think a postgrad or an MBA. Through institutions like Getsmarter, it's possible to gain valuable additional qualifications more affordably.

EXPERIENCE
When qualified, aim to land a position – even if it is an entry-level one – at a company in a role relevant to your field of expertise. Entering at a lower level is preferable to not making a start at all. Then actively manage your career within the organisation – don't leave your career progression to chance. Ensure that you diversify your exposure and seek out work that is not necessarily restricted to your current wheelhouse. If you're in sales, don't just stay there. Seek out cross-functional team projects and learn to understand the business from end-to-end. Learn the entire value chain of the business. Put up your hand for projects. Make yourself visible.

MENTORSHIP
Seek out the support of a mentor or a sponsor – someone who can help you navigate your career, and who isn't necessarily your line manager. Many organisations offer business coaching which is extremely useful to help you work on the softer skills that are crucial to master as you move into leadership positions. These skills include relationship skills, and the ability to navigate difficult internal and external situations. Coaching and mentorship help you become aware of blind spots and shift your behaviour accordingly.

While the future remains volatile and uncertain, connecting the dots of the positives that are happening on the ground in South Africa and elsewhere in Africa provides not only hope but fantastic incentive for future leaders who are serious about rising to their full potential. It is clear that the demand for their

skills and experience is growing, and that the opportunity pipeline is real for those who position themselves strategically.

REFLECTION POINT. A SENSE OF BELONGING

Have you ever found yourself spending most of your time in a place yet feel like you've never arrived? I've just come from visiting my in-laws in Kenya. This, after months of my husband, Sammy being unwell due to COVID. The trip was interesting in many ways. To my surprise, I discovered a lot about myself through a trip I had thought was meant for Sammy to reconnect with his family. A big take-away for me was a message of home-coming, that screamed at me throughout our time in Kenya. I have spent 25 years of my life in marriage and have gone home a number of times. Yet, I have never felt the sense I got this time - a call to come home. I am yet to discover what else is entailed in this call.

I know that the call to come home is not a call for me alone. For some people, this call may have nothing to do with their physical homes. Some may be finding themselves in workplaces where they don't really feel like they belong. Whatever that means for you, the reality is that it's difficult to find fulfilment in life and a sense of security until you have come to that place of home-coming. This requires an internal journey of reflection and honesty about where you are at, a reflection on what it is that you need in order to have a sense of belonging and practical steps to walk towards home.

For me, one of the practical things we had to do is ensuring that we have a physical home of our own in that place where we call home. Whilst my call for homecoming is much deeper than a physical house, I am also aware that I needed that physical house as a symbol of belonging.

What do you need in order to feel you belong? What practical symbols can you think of to help you in your own journey.

THEMBELA NJENGA

KERRYN KOHL

DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION (DEI)

In a world that increasingly values tolerance, why do we still struggle to accept, acknowledge, and embrace our differences at the micro-level? Perhaps it is because we fail to recognize the importance of those who are different from us. They hold the key to seeing the world in new ways. By valuing diversity, we can enhance the way we experience the world.

LISTEN TO MIND THE GAP EPISODE 1 – WHY IS TRANSFORMATION SO HARD?

Part One: Why is transformation so hard? We explore just how far women have come in our fight for equality, and the systemic forces still at play in holding us back from achieving true transformation.

LISTEN MIND THE GAP EPISODE 2 – THE ROLE OF ETHNICITY IN PERPETUATING GENDER INEQUALITY

Part Two: The role of ethnicity in perpetuating gender inequality Join us as we discuss the role that ethnicity and our deeply held world views affect the progress we make as we strive for equality.

ADDRESSING WORKING MOTHERS NEEDS IN THE WORLD OF WORK

RIKKY MINYUKU

A recent article on McKinsey&Company featuring lessons from Joanne S Lublin, author of Power Moms resonates deeply with me, both in my personal and professional life.

Professionally, it is interesting for me that the experiences of the 86 executive mothers reflect many of the experiences that have been discussed on our women in the world of work platforms at **Womaniko Transforming Spaces.** During the COVID lockdowns women used the New Normal Series to express the Overwhelm they were experiencing and the frustrations in navigating social norms within their households to negotiate space and time for work and family responsibilities. We used these spaces to help women share coping tools and examine the pressures they were facing. As the world reopened, we ran the ReImagine Series for women to discuss the ways to re-enter the world of work and hold on to some of the gains of remote work.

One key realisation was that the challenges are systemic, structural and reinforced by social norms. So women began to explore how to work together and advocate for change, and this saw the birth of the **#Dare2SeeUs** campaign. In this campaign we draw from personal experiences to identify the systemic changes that are required, while we continue to share coping tools. This journey over the past 2 years has helped us to identify some of the key levers for systemic change, the work that can be done in organisations and the work that women can do individually and collectively. It has redefined our services and products, and we will be sharing our work via a 6-part podcast series in partnership with Talenttalks at the end of this month. It is affirming to hear that we are not misaligned and if these are the experiences of women at all levels, it is imperative that workplaces begin to do this work more deliberately.

We do not just advocate for deeper gender transformative work by women and in workplaces; but also apply this within our own organisation. The advent of the term "work-life sway" affirms our practices within Womaniko; practices that have become more valuable as staff face mental well-being issues, family care issues and bereavements in the pandemic context. These practices include deliberate check-ins that carry into conversations of how to manage workloads and deliverables. We also deliberately practice work-life sway and allow staff time when life interferes. This requires the fostering of deep trust amongst colleagues and often a sensitivity to the different cultural norms we live by.

But what does that look like when an organisation still has to deliver? It looks like sharing workloads and negotiating with clients to shift deliverables and timeframes. It also looks like showing up to work as a team when there are time crunches. It has impacted on our organisational development, how we structure our teams and what training and support we provide. It has also seen us spend much more time together as a team; we now have monthly sessions to connect, think together and do skills development. None of this has been easy for a small enterprise run and staffed by Black women. One day I will write another thought piece on the challenges and biases that we have faced.

For this discussion, there are some important lessons that I can share.

- From an organisational perspective, we have learned that we cannot see the change and benefits of doing deep gender transformative work without changing organisational structures and practices. This is interesting because most gender equality initiatives at workplaces focus on policy change and empowering women. We want things to change, but we don't want to change our organisations that systemically and structurally perpetuate gender inequality.

- As leaders we have also had to change. We have had to tackle our own beliefs about performance and value, putting in deliberate practices that challenge conventional organisational practice. This has been hard work as we think about how we model better practices for our employees and other women in the world of work. We always share on our platforms that we are not asking women to do work that we have not done ourselves. I, for one, have started working with a coach to challenge lifelong beliefs and behaviours that have informed my performance ethic, self-esteem, imposter syndrome and work addiction. I have had to learn to speak up, be vulnerable, honour myself and request that others do the same. I cannot expect my junior staff to buy into speak out culture or invest in their well-being if I do not model this.

- I have also realized that younger work entrants may have more confidence and be better educated, but they are not equipped with the emotional skills at universities for building relationships in the workplace and owning their own development, growth and well-being. Our junior staff have been equally challenged by the changes and struggle to align their concept of what the world of work requires and these new practices. They are afraid to say no; they are afraid to say I don't know. Yet this boundary setting and speaking up are exactly the skills that they need to navigate the world of work in ways that affirm them as young women. This is why workplaces must create spaces to hear the intersectional challenges young women face and provide programmes that allow them to be the change they want to see. Peer mentoring and reverse mentoring programmes allow culture change to filter into an organisation without sharp breaks or conflicts.

On a personal level, as a single mother of five amazing children, I am relieved to see the recognition of the motherhood penalty. This is not to advocate for a whole new spate of initiatives focused on single mothers; but rather to listen to their experiences and draw lessons that can support all mothers. My sister always reminds me that many married or partnered mothers still experience many aspects of single motherhood. By examining the extreme experiences of single mothers, we can begin to get to grips with the care burden that mothers carry and tackle the social norms that perpetuate this.

While some answers may lie in investment in childcare services; some are as simple as balancing childcare responsibilities within families. This is easier said than done because the care burden is upheld by social norms. Despite this, I believe that workplaces can play a critical role in challenging these norms and building better norms with all that we have learned from the COVID pandemic. I was relieved to see the Women's Empowerment Principles advocating for men to be challenged on how they are contributing to care work at home during remote work. I was equally relieved to see men enjoying new experiences of engaging with their children during lockdowns and wanting to continue to play a bigger role in childcare. This talks to some of the work that can be done with men in the world of work and through the significant power and resources that workplaces have.

Finally, as we close this month of May, I too reflect on the role my own mother has played in my working life. I live with my mother, and she provides a solid foundation for my children when I travel for work. She has done this courageously, critically and lovingly as I have hit the grind to build a small enterprise. This sometimes looks like helping with resources when clients haven't paid on time; other times it looks like having someone to talk through my challenges with. Sometimes in frustration she has asked why I can't just get a regular job, but in the end, she always steps in to help and hold space. I love that Lublin talks about generational wisdom and recognizes the role that grandparents can play in supporting working mothers. I always remind my mother, that I am exactly who I am because she is who she is. I hope that I too will have such an impact on my own daughters. Because working mothers matter for daughters, research has shown that these daughters are also likely to go into employment and leadership. Working mothers are indeed the change they want to see.

JONI PEDDIE

EMPLOYEE WELLBEING

Worldwide Corporate Leaders realise the need to prioritise employee wellbeing, especially in these turbulent and demanding times. Employees also realise that they need to be change-ready, energised and agile to embrace these changes.

This 'awareness' is fantastic. There is however a big gap that needs to be filled with practical and innovative initiatives, like more workplace flexibility, free online counselling, EQ training, Meditation / Resilience and other useful Apps.

Holistic wellbeing needs to straddle the four Resilience Dimensions : Mental Resilience , Physical (including Financial) Resilience, Emotional Resilience and Purpose-driven Resilience.

SHOULD I STAY
OR SHOULD I GO?

GAYLIN JEE

I was fascinated to read an article by David Allen[1], Professor of Management and Leadership at Warrick Business School, in which he traces out key reasons people quit their jobs. Pay level and satisfaction with salary are relatively weak indicators of a worker's decision to leave, the research indicates. More important is worker satisfaction, which takes into account the whole working environment. If you don't want to lose top talent, one, consider what nudges a person to leave, and two, work to create the conditions where people are thriving and don't want to leave.

On the latter, much has been written. For a deep dive into this subject, look at the text "Thriving in Digital Workspaces", published by Springer Switzerland. Or read the chapter I wrote: "From compete to create: exploring new tools", where contextual factors for thriving at work are briefly explored, along with creative approaches like Lego Serious Play that set people up to do their best work (the method uses Lego bricks to deepen understanding, explore what's possible and create alignment).

In a nutshell, you set people up to thrive by providing them with some freedom and some stretch, by creating clear goals and offering meaningful rewards. The line from the employee's work all the way to achieving the overall mission of the organisation should be drawn. Commitment and general satisfaction soar when people can see the difference their input makes, and feel valued for it.

Relationships also matter. People who are embedded in a web of relationships through work are more likely to stay. This web is formed through teams, participating in committees, at social events, and through voluntary activities, extending even beyond the organisation into local communities.

What can also be profoundly important is to establish a purposeful mission that people can attach to. As a leader you should drive this if it is absent – not only because it is the right thing to do, (we hope it will create good for more people and for our planet), but also because there is more pressure, more respect and more business benefit. Pay is important, but so too is fair treatment and being valued for a meaningful contribution that achieves a higher purpose. Organisations with a clear and actionable purpose have a surprising reserve of energy for thriving through all conditions.

We've considered briefly those key factors for staying – engaging conditions with purposeful and positive attitudes to work where people are valued and feel a sense of embeddedness. But what can push a person to leave?

As with emotions and job attitudes, there is growing evidence to suggest that turnover can be contagious. If one person starts to put their feelers out, it can make others in the team or group reflect on whether they shouldn't do the same. Significant dates like anniversaries and birthdays have also been shown to prompt a search for what

else could be out there. Back in 2019, Professor Allen reported on how shock events have a profound impact on a 'move' decision. This might be the promotion you did not get, a negative or unfair appraisal, or a paltry bonus in relation to your perceived effort. An external shock, such as a change in life circumstance, can also prompt the re-evaluation: "Do I really want to work here?"

Given we have had a mass global shock through Covid, it seems the perfect time for employers to reevaluate policies in response to a changing world. Those people who have the luxury of a move may have been shocked into doing so and great pay will not be sufficient to keep them. Policies around hybrid work are certainly taking shape, but creative adjustments to present and possible shocks may begin to define the organisational front runners of the future, and the talent they attract and hold onto.

Ideally, employers should consider what nudges employees into leaving as well as the conditions that make them stay. And employees should avoid sitting back to be served. It is highly likely that as our world changes, swiftly, shockingly and also in ways that are positive and much needed, more of us will need to take up the charge and lean in to create the webs of meaning and impact that will sustain and empower us all.

[1] Core Magazine Edition 8, Strategy for the Covid Era, Warrick Business School, pages 59-60

"In today's world people want connection, they want to know what you stand for not just who you are."

Talenttalks.net is a digital publication and portal for the best industry reads. We exist to evolve thinking and improve the quality of conversations.

We curate articles, podcasts and services which are published on the site, in our weekly newsletter, and our monthly magazine.

NEWSLETTER SUBSCRIBERS	SOCIAL MEDIA FOLLOWERS	PODCASTS
3413	1045 FOLLOWERS LINKED IN	1400+ DOWNLOADS
IMPRESSIONS 65K PER MONTH	293 FOLLOWERS FACEBOOK	UNIQUE ARTICLES 700+ 300% GROWTH RATE

LETS TALK
CONTACT SUE DE WAAL SUE@LIFE-ONLINE.COM.AU

Talenttalks
Evolving Thinking

WHY IS EVERYBODY SO TIRED
AND RESILIENCE SO LOW?

WENDY NAGEL

Working across various industries; including financial, entertainment, consulting, healthcare, FMCG and IT; I am observing people in various states of depletion because life feels like a game of survivor – outwit, outlast, and outplay. I observe the walking dead, in both men and women alike. It is so much more normal to be narcotised and numb than it is to be fully alive. How is it that this is the prevailing condition no matter what industry I touch? Is this the new normal given our highly demanded of lives?

It strikes me that people are already exhausted, and it's only the middle of May. The prevailing symptoms appear as general exhaustion, limited creativity and happiness, focusing on things outside of personal control, decreasing autonomy and choice, controls and hierarchies stifling initiative, innovation and progress, and systems and processes are not aligned for delivery. It seems that life is being lived in the red zone of the nervous system, which in itself will bleed energy.

These appear to be the symptoms, and so my curiosity to consider what the causes are?

Demands on our energy:

The macro global and country narratives are not particularly energising when one considers the state of the world and country level issues, it is easy to get drawn into the negative spiral and lose energy that way. But one does have to consider the degree to which these matters are in our hands and therefore the amount of time and energy we give to them.

The work experience (which consumes most of our time and energy) is often anchored in material and transactional terms, with little emphasis on what would make work meaningful beyond profit. The issues preventing individuals pursuing meaningful work is more about social conditioning and experience than reality. There is an unconscious acceptance that this is how it is and there is little chance of moving the dial. However, I would challenge this notion and say that what we experience is directly and proportionately related to how we choose to engage in these matters. Satisfying work fuels us, and so it is necessary to interrogate what would make for meaningful work.

Family, community, special interests, studies, and social demands all require energy of us.

Add then the social media and digital world offers distractions a plenty from ourselves. It may be energising for a while as the dopamine hit is felt from getting another fix, but soon it requires more daily hits to sustain that buzz, similar to other substance abuse. More and more we tend to mimic the "always on" requirement of the digital era and lose sight of the fact that in order to be high performing, we need rest and recharge. I saw a brilliant question a couple of weeks back "DO YOU RECHARGE YOURSELF AS OFTEN AS YOU RECHARGE YOUR PHONE?"

So what about Recharge?

Think about it...Ask yourself what you need to be at your very best every day, to achieve what you are capable of?

Is there a tendency to be blaming everything but yourself for the condition you find yourself in? Sadly, this exhausted way of being actually has more to do with the choices we make as individuals than anything else.

What are you contributing to your reality and what can you do to change your experience?

To be fair, not enough people out there are considering what they need to have in place to be able to bring the best of themselves to the party. I am curious as to the impact of this lack-lustre energy permeating the world right now and how it is driving high levels of discontent. In what universe is this Dead (Wo)Man Walking acceptable? It goes so against our fundamental birth right, which is to live a life of joy, abundance, vitality and wellness to live our lives by design instead of default. And yet sadly, it is the new norm for most... but not all.

So what are the shining examples of joy, abundance, vitality and resilience doing to achieve quality of life?

- They understand the importance of having a purpose.
- They know exactly what they need to be optimal in the multi-dimensional demands of life.
- They take full responsibility for their experiences.
- They put practices into place that allow the very best of themselves to show up every day.
- They know it doesn't happen by accident and that their daily experiences are determined by their thoughts, beliefs and actions on a cumulative basis. This requires a constant monitoring and evaluating of self.
- They know that they can start to shift their experiences by making choices that will gradually improve their reality.
- They are patient, knowing that it is only through consistency of practice that lasting change happens.

Once we start to implement strategies that support a healthy diet, regular exercise, quality rest, meditation, relaxation, fun and personal boundaries; we move out of the red zone of our nervous systems and restore creativity, initiative, innovation, solution-orientation and growth mind-sets, which in turn fuel growth for individuals, organisations and countries.

It is the job of each one of us to lead ourselves in a way that allows the fullest measure of our potential to emerge.
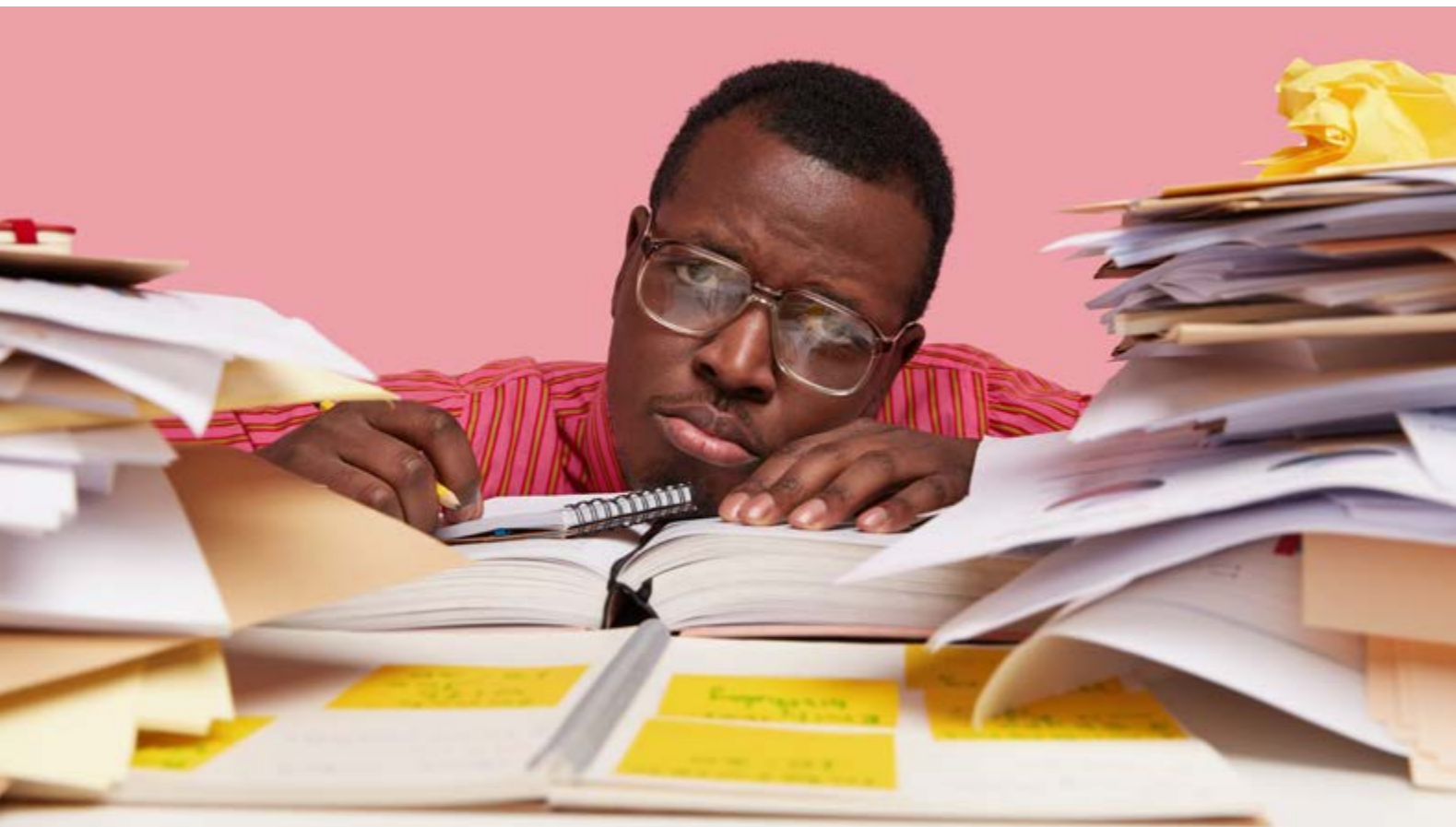
RETURN TO WORK ULTIMATUMS:

Beware the unintended consequences

ADVAITA NAIDOO

Companies across South Africa are rapidly demanding a return to work of all employees, often with very little time provided for the transition. And while there is a case to be made from the company's point of view of getting all hands physically on deck again after the great office exodus of 2020, leaders should be aware of the consequences of a top-down approach, a leadership expert says.

"The USA and a number of other countries around the world are feeling the effects of the so-called great resignation – the phenomenon whereby vast swathes of employees simply quit their jobs instead of returning to the office. But the socio-economic environment in South Africa means that while some people are indeed quitting, most don't have the luxury to do so. That does not however mean that return to work mandates at short notice will not negatively impact workplaces here – it will just impact in different ways," says Advaita Naidoo, MD: Africa at Jack Hammer Global, Africa's largest executive search firm.

"In South Africa, companies face a real risk of the rapid call-back impacting on their

bottom line. We are already fielding calls daily from highly sought-after professionals who are not prepared – through choice, changed circumstance or both – to return to the way things were before Covid. So while employees might not actually resign, the reasons for them wanting to do so will remain and compound," she says.

Companies might consider it their prerogative to mandate employees to return to work without delay, but they will be doing themselves a disservice if they don't pause, reflect and strategise the way forward before doing so.

"The reality is that after two years of pandemic fight-or-flight survival, employees are tired, demotivated, stressed, worn out, fearful of the future, straining because of the rising cost of living, and still dealing with the fallout from Covid's impact on their lives and families, to name but a few of the issues facing most people at the moment.

"One only has to look at the real-life impact of the return-to-work ultimatums on social media forums on the part of desperate employees who simply can't adapt and change their lives with short notice, to

understand that just because companies can make this demand, it doesn't mean they should."

There are essentially three scenarios awaiting companies following a top-down approach at this stage: losing people, developing a toxic workplace, and failing to attract good people down the line, Naidoo says.

"A tremendous amount of goodwill was built up during the pandemic, with companies facilitating work-from-home arrangements. The levels of teamwork and pulling together hit impressive highs despite the stress of the pandemic, and unprecedented levels of emotional support and 'keep in touch' initiatives ensured the mental wellbeing and cohesion of teams.

"For more than two years, companies were able to get the job done while employees continued to pull their weight and more from home. So, looking at it from the point of view of the employee who now must return to the office, it is not unreasonable for them to question why it is suddenly again necessary for everyone to be physically at their

desks from sunrise until sunset. Adding resentment on top of existing stressors is a sure-fire way to turn the workplace toxic, leading to reduced productivity, absenteeism, loss of motivation and a negative work environment."

Naidoo says it is essential for companies at this juncture to:

1. Communicate how the office is going to be a place of purpose going forward (as opposed to employees needing to be there... just because),
2. Allow sufficient time for employees to make new arrangements (because circumstances and logistics have changed for many people),
3. Consider hybrid options and continue to allow flexibility where possible and appropriate,
4. Consult sufficiently and substantially, and
5. Continue to provide support

services and check-in sessions as was done during the pandemic.

"Here and now, in the second quarter of 2022 as another shift is happening, it would be ludicrous to consider reverting to the leadership status quo of January 2020. Everyone who will be returning to the office has been changed by the past two years. For some, the impact was not majorly life-altering despite them no doubt experiencing all the fears and emotions the world shared. For many others however, their whole lives have been turned upside down.

"They would have made new arrangements for childcare, they may have been forced to move, perhaps they have divorced and now no longer have the support of a partner who can help out with admin and logistics, they may have lost loved ones, they may have lasting mental or physical health issues, and

so forth. The variations are legion and impossible to comprehend unless real conversations are had before one-size-fits-all rules are introduced."

Naidoo says that companies need to acknowledge that we are facing a period of transition, and that time for adjustment and consultation must be allowed – in the interests of their employees, but also in the interest of the company.

"In addition to addressing the challenges around motivation for current employees, it is also necessary to consider the company's ongoing ability to attract talent – many of whom now won't look twice at a company that doesn't consider the employee experience and which allows no flexibility. If a company isn't considering the employee experience, they will not only strain or even fail now, but also in the future."

REFLECTION POINT.

MIKE MIDDLETON

We often join organisations with the intent of taking it on a journey of positive change and evolution – or at least what we see as positive change and evolution – and then get disappointed when our endeavours are met with less enthusiasm than we would like.

I did some research on the evolution of corporate consciousness, and turned to Frederick Laloux, author of "Reinventing Organisations" to understand how to evolve corporate culture and especially corporate consciousness. Laloux's conclusion was that corporate consciousness can never be at a level higher than that of the CEO and that any attempts to evolve it faster than the CEO is willing to embrace will ultimately fail. So evolving corporate consciousness from, for example, autocratic and controlling to self direction and autonomy will ultimately fail without support from the senior leadership.

You may be entertained for a while but if your efforts are seen as causing static in the system, they will eventually be nipped in the bud. Real change is a team effort and needs support throughout an organisation, so be a liberator of change through others rather than trying to be a hero for yourself.

LINDA VAN DER LOO

LEARNING AND PERFORMANCE

"It's a great time to be in learning"

With the COVID lockdown, we had no choice but to do things differently, because overnight, our world of learning shifted dramatically, into a world where digitization and 4IR is now a reality. Overnight we lost our face-to-face classrooms, "pivoted" to delivering learning digitally and as a result learning became the flavor of the month with the business because they require new skills at a speed and pace that historically we as learning have been unaccustomed to.

DEVELOPING TOMORROW'S LEADERS, TODAY WITH NATALEE HOLMES.
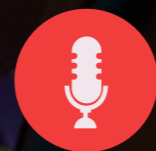
PART ONE   **PART TWO**   **PART THREE**

I am so pleased to announce this new series Developing tomorrow's leaders today, with Natalee Holmes. Natalee Holmes is the Director of Conscious Connections. She has worked in counselling, education and training for the bulk of her career. Her areas of expertise are all-around young people – from parenting coaching to youth and adolescent coaching, to continual coaching for a person's life and career, including subject choice and career studies and training guidance. Her passion is helping prepare young people for the unpredictable future they face. Her flagship programme is called Future Leaders Development Programme and young people around the world are finding great self-awareness and discovering where they will make their biggest impact going forward. Together we will be exploring critical leadership skills and discussing various strategies for their development. Part One of this series focuses on the core skill of Self-awareness, and part two explores collaboration as we focus on the critical skills needed to work effectively within teams. In part 3, we turn our attention to the competencies required to transition from Managing self to managing others in a leadership position. In part 4, we start framing the conversations that need to happen today to plan well for the future ahead. Part 5 is more hands-on as we examine the skills necessary to achieve our visions through deliberate practices like goal setting. Finally, in part 6, we discuss how best to marry our goals with organisational objectives and how to achieve our vision through career development.

ZEBRAS LOVE ONIONS

LITA CURRIE

"Mom, the zebra ate three apples out of my hand!" My son's excited voice came over the telephone, hardly pausing for breath. "And when we ran out of apples, I gave it an onion. It loved it! It ate the whole thing!"

I was calling my son from Chicago where I was attending a conference. He was at a bush break in South Africa, where we live. My husband had taken the two boys to a game farm close to Bela Bela in Limpopo, South Africa. We had tried to get them to come with me to Chicago for a mini holiday but couldn't organise the paperwork in time. We were very disappointed, because this would be the first time we would be able to go overseas as a family. They had been swimming in the river, playing with mud and (evidently) feeding zebras by hand. My son laughingly told me that they named the zebra "Spot".

I was proud of how they handled the disappointment. We know that disappointment is a fact of life. We don't always get what we want, how we want it or when we want it. And the way that we deal with it, can make life harder. It made me consider again that our mindset is critical in how we deal with disappointment. The way we think can either close us into frustration and regret or open us up for new experiences. Well, I didn't know that zebras loved onions. Who knew? But isn't it amazing to know? And even more amazing, if they had decided to mope at home, we would never learn this amazing piece of information.

Here's a couple of lessons that I learned about how to deal with disappointment.

1. **Face it head on.** Feeling disappointed is horrible. But if you try to dull the pain by ignoring it, it might take longer to work through. Face the pain, really feel the emotion, no matter how much it sucks. Allow it to overwhelm you – for a while. Shed a tear, rage at the sky, scream and shout.

Let it all out.

2. **Emotion is just information.** Our emotions might feel really strong. But if you reframe them as information, it might make it easier to deal with. Ask yourself what information the emotion is trying to tell you. What is the data saying?

3. **Look for the lesson.** Learning from experiences doesn't happen automatically. I know that there have been many experiences that I didn't necessarily learn from. Benjamin Franklin said that experience is a dear teacher. "Dear" in this sentence means "expensive" – if we don't learn from experience, we pay a high price. Really reflect on the disappointment. What can you learn from it? Take the time to think it through and write it down. Only by writing it down can you make it real.

4. **Let it go.** Hanging on to disappointment can have long-term consequences. It festers like an untreated wound and infects other positive experiences. You need to let it go. Even if you don't like it. And especially if you don't want to. Letting it go is a conscious decision. I have found that a symbolic gesture is useful – write the disappointment on a piece of paper and tear it into small pieces. Throw it on a fire or scatter it from a mountaintop. But let it go.

The bad news is that disappointment never really gets easier. But these steps might help you to deal with it better and be open to new experiences.

I wonder what else zebras might eat...

THINGS I HAVE LEARNT
ABOUT BEING SUCCESSFUL

LITA CURRIE

What makes people successful? I'm sure that the list is long – from doing what you love, to being creative to being in the right place at the right time.

Based on 30 years' worth of working experience, here is my list of characteristics that I have found you need if you're going to be successful.

1. **Bias for action.** More than anything, the ability to get things done is the key skill in my book for success. I had a colleague who called himself an "ideas person". He was a visionary, a great thinker and would come up with amazing ideas. But he struggled to bring them to action. And without action, the ideas would stay in his head. That's why we worked so well together. I had the ability to get things done. I learned how to identify what needs to be achieved, then break it down into smaller tasks, and focus on getting these done. And that lead to the success of implementing the ideas.

2. **Touch everything once a day.** When I was in corporate, I would be involved in projects that would take many months – and sometimes years – to get done. I learned from an empowering manager early in my career to touch every project at least once a day. That discipline allowed me to keep up with the progress on each project, and at the end of the year, I would be able to see what I had achieved. Things don't happen automatically – you have to push them forward. And touching each project once a day and getting that one action done that will move it forward, helped me to achieve great goals at the end of every year.

3. **Able to work with people.** Relationships with people is critical for success. No man is an island and working in teams is a critical skill. That means that you need to understand yourself first – your own preferences and triggers – and then understand other's preferences and strengths. In that way you can be deliberate about the way that you interface with people, and the team can use their strengths in the best way to achieve their goals.

4. **Learn about your industry.** Understanding the technical details of the industry that you're working in is critical to understand the impact of various elements. Ensure that you know the value chain, what happens at each step and what influences on your situation. Keep up to date by reading periodicals, attending online classes and conferences to keep your knowledge relevant and up to date. Don't rest on your laurels – commit to being a life-long learner.

5. **Make the hard decisions.** Really great performers realize that they need to make difficult decisions sometimes. Decisions that will make other people unhappy, but decisions that need to be made for the company to be successful. Don't shy away from these decisions – it needs a strong stomach and some grit to make them, communicate them and implement them. I have found many executives who stumble in this skill – the need to be liked by others can be very strong. Successful people understand that they don't have to be jerks, but that they would need to be unpopular sometimes.

VITAL SKILLS FOR THE FUTURE – EMPATHY

NATALEE HOLMES

Empathy is not just a future skill. It is something I wish everyone had. It is something the world needs. So why do I say it is a vital future skill?

We have all read the research; leaders who master **listening and responding with empathy** will perform more than 40 percent higher in overall performance, coaching, engaging others, planning, and organising, and decision making.

Let that sink in.

In a world that has shifted, and is changing all the time, traditional, hierarchical leaders no longer flourish. They just don't. But leaders with empathy show others that their feelings and circumstances matter. Being understood, heard, and accepted is key.

When I did my parenting courses, it was a lesson I had to teach parents too. Imagine this scenario... you are shopping with your partner, and you suddenly see a jacket that you just have to have! Unfortunately, you don't have the money to spend on the jacket. Response one from your partner goes something like this, "Don't even look

at it. We can't afford it and you know you can't get it so just keep walking!" Response two, "Wow. That jacket is gorgeous! You would look incredible in that! I so wish we could buy it!"

Easy to know which response would sit better with you. Both responses are saying no, but a response like the second one makes you feel **U**nderstood, **H**eard and **A**ccepted. I call it "**UHA**" moments, and for me, these UHA moments lie at the centre of empathy.

From when we are little, being responded to with empathy creates a much kinder disposition. No one likes being told no. It evokes feelings of rejection and often makes us want to challenge the person saying no, which is why children tend to keep asking, or nagging when told no. But if we are told no in a way where we don't feel we need to convince the other person just how very much we want that thing, the no is softer and easier to accept.

Empathy is about letting other people know that their feelings are understood. It helps them to feel that their perspective is being taken into account and that they have been heard.

And it ensures feelings of acceptance, rather than rejection.

Empathy is a vital skill. Full stop. But in terms of business and leadership, being able to recognise and share other people's feelings is probably the most valuable tool in a leader's toolbox. Empathy is a secret weapon, a competitive advantage for personal and professional success. Simon Sinek wrote about this in his "Start with WHY" book. Steven Covey's 5th habit for highly successful people is, "Seek first to understand, before being understood". There are so many books about it.

Empathy is important. And empathy can be learned. That may sound bizarre, because we tend to think of empathy as an innate quality in people. It is not. Empathy involves the following processes that are all shaped by learning:

- feeling another person's emotions
- reasoning about another person's perspective, and
- wanting to help, being concerned for, someone who is vulnerable or distressed

> **Empathy is about finding echoes of another person in yourself.**
> **- Mohsin Hamad**

The best way to teach empathy is to try put yourself in someone else's shoes. I know, we have heard that since we were young, but it is something that can be modelled and taught. Empathy can be taught from little. I used to say to my kids, "that will make you happy, but will it make your brother/ friend/ me happy?" It is about getting them to become aware of how you would feel if it were the other way around.

Fast forward 10 years... and we have adolescents. Stereotypically self-centred, but again, so important to get them to reflect on other people's feelings and perspectives. As a parent, it can be equally challenging to show empathy to a teen who barely looks at you and whose communication style is reduced to mostly non-verbal grunts, but all the more reason to demonstrate it at this stage. Despite the cries of "you have no idea what it is like to be to be

a teenager!" Empathy at this stage is about having a connecting response.

When for instance when you are late to pick them up and they get in the car with a mood like thunder, and you can feel the anger emanating from their pores, complete with insolent death stare, it is easy to say, "Oh for goodness' sake, the traffic was bad and I just was a few minutes late. Don't be ungrateful. Some kids have to walk!" Remember the UHA. "I am so sorry I am late, I am sure you are quite angry with me," Takes a lot when our day may have been less than ideal, but try remembering empathy. It takes the wind out of the battle sails because they feel you get it.

Fast forward another 10 years and more, and we have adults, working. Empathy in the workplace is essential. It is vital to take into consideration how your actions – or inaction for that matter – affect those around you, and in the workplace, in business in general, this is fundamental to building a strong corporate culture. There has been a tremendous shift, exacerbated by Covid, towards a more people-centric way of working. Empathetic leaders

have better relationships and increased productivity.

The simplest way to foster empathy is to be genuinely interested in other people and have compassion for their circumstances. It is to listen, actively. And these can be done with three simple sentences:

- I understand you
- I feel for you
- I want to help you

If we can teach people to say those three things, we will be fostering and demonstrating empathy. Building a culture of empathy creates psychological safety, which helps employees feel safe, comfortable taking risks and less fearful of making mistakes.

For organisations to be successful and have happy employees, leaders need the vital skill of empathy so that they have good rapport with their employees. When people feel understood, heard, and accepted, and see their colleagues as more responsive, increased productivity automatically follows.

DR KARINA DE BRUIN

THE HYBRID
WORLD OF WORK

In embracing the hybrid world of work, organisations had to quickly adapt to a new way of working. Technology, collaboration tools, and safety took centre stage in an attempt to set up individual workspaces that could lead to optimal productivity. In most instances, the emotional well-being of employees did not receive the same level of attention. Productivity relies on efficient technologies and tools, but we should not forget that happy and engaged employees are our biggest asset. Organisations have a responsibility to find a healthy balance between implementing technologies and promoting employee wellness. By doing so, they will facilitate a workspace where employees can be engaged, flourish, and realise their full potential to the benefit of the organisation.

**LISTEN TO
WHEN RESILIENCE IS
TAPPED OUT**

I may not be feeling as energetic and enthusiastic about my work as I thought I would be by this point in the year. In fact, that's true for most people I talk to too. It begs the question if our resilience is tapped out? Join me in discussion with Debbie Craig, Marisa Wollheim and Brad Shorkend as we discuss the impact to our resilience and what to do when we feel that its just tapped out.

**LISTEN TO
POWER SKILLS
PART ONE: WHY THE
SOFT SKILLS WERE
ALWAYS THE MORE
POWERFUL ONES**

Join Dr Karina de Bruin and I as we discuss the intricacies involved in developing the set of power skills needed to remain relevant now and in the future. Our discussion today in part one provides an introduction to these power skills.

TSHOLOFELO NKETANE

5 ESSENTIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE RETURN TO THE HYBRID WORKPLACE

Two years since the world shut down and companies and employees scrambled to set up work-from-home, we are once again in a transition period as the world opens up a little and organisations grapple with how they will organise their workforce.

As an executive search and talent advisory firm, we are well-positioned to both research and observe the trends in the human capital space, and have noted Prof Lynda Gratton's key considerations emerging as companies and leaders have to navigate a very changed working environment. The question they are having to ask is how to collaborate, lead and create a high-performance working environment that best suits their company, culture and – crucially – their employees.

1. Flexibility

Candidates approached for opportunities prefer to continue to work from home or hybrid model. Or prefer a chosen location, rather than being expected to report to the office and be with the team daily. They are now used to the hybrid model and the use of technology to connect with the team when required.

Globally, trends are that people are expected in the office two to three days a week; South Africa seems to have settled on three to four. But many candidates feel that working remotely provides them with the flexibility to do their best, work when they are most productive, and collaborate when necessary.

2. Autonomy

Giving people the autonomy to own both their work and their working hours and location means they can drive their own performance, and arises naturally out of giving them the flexibility described above.

If people feel seen and heard, and feel trusted to deliver the outcomes required, they will be more invested in their roles and their contribution to the company as a whole.

3. Navigating tension

When the work force is distributed – whether in totality, or just on certain days of the week, it's vital to support managers and give them the tools to ensure they treat and see everyone equally.

Leading in a hybrid space, where people are off-site, can lead to inequities, so it's vital that managers are consciously creating equal opportunities, fostering collaboration and communication, and driving high performance, while still respecting employees' work-life boundaries, and embracing diversity.

4. Driving human connection

While many have enjoyed working from home, they have also missed the connection with other people – the casual collaboration that happens in an office where you can just pop your head around someone's office door for instance, of have a quick coffee with them.

Virtual meeting platforms takes away the human connection and the ability to build trust or build relationships with new employees. New employees also tend to struggle in assimilating into a new environment quickly. Both employers and candidates are hungry to return to some measure of in-

person human connection, so it's vital to think about how to provide that as you design the return to the office.

Conclusion

It's vital that as managers prepare to lead in this new shift, they are reskilled in how to unlock productivity and manage output under very different conditions. We need to empower them with those softer skills such as communication, listening, empathy and emotional intelligence.

This is an important factor for many of the candidates we see – they want to know who the leaders are that they will be working with and for, and understand their leadership style.

Whether we like it or not, the fact is that hybrid work is here to stay, and it's vital that organisations find ways to make the most of it – and possibly to make it work in their favour.

Hybrid work done right can provide both the flexibility and the human connection employees crave, and possibly even mitigate the effects of the Great Resignation – and address the talent skills gap. But it will take some careful thought and design.

It will also take leaders who are prepared to treat their teams like the adults they are, if they want to hold onto their top performers. Now is the time to cultivate trust and deepen engagement – and then allow the talent you've hired to do what they do best.

Talenttalks MAGAZINE

MANAGE YOUR MEETINGS TO FREE UP SOME TIME

DR KARINA DE BRUIN

My situation is not unique. In fact, I believe that some people have it much worse. And I am convinced that the situation has worsened since working-from-home became the new normal. Online meeting platforms enable meetings from anywhere at any time without the need for travel. The world has shrunk and with the opportunity for international collaboration across time zones, working hours have expanded.

Workplace meetings are important. Apart from developing ideas, providing direction, and getting everyone aligned with a project, they can result in higher levels of engagement and collaboration, increased accountability, creative problem solving, and a shared sense of purpose. However, becoming more aware of my meeting behaviour (thank you, Mom!), I realised that meetings often consume valuable time and energy that could have been used much more effectively to focus on more important and relevant tasks.

Information published by socialbarrel. com shows that up to 74% of people perform other tasks such as responding to work emails, eating lunch, and checking personal emails while on mute in online meetings. Furthermore, in a 38-minute call, 8 minutes are wasted in getting the meeting started and 13 minutes are wasted with interruptions and distractions, leaving only 17 minutes for the actual meeting – less than 50% of the scheduled time!

When not properly planned and facilitated, meetings can be just another evil time and energy zapper. However, prioritising and applying a few basic meeting management and self-management principles may assist in winning back control of your busy day.

First, determine whether a formal meeting is really necessary. Sometimes, the issue could be handled equally well in an email or a quick phone call. If you must resolve something small,

use the instant messaging system your company subscribes to instead of calling a meeting. To determine if a meeting is necessary, consider the following:

- What is the goal and deliverables for this meeting?
- Does this topic require outside input, and if so, who should be invited?
- Will this meeting make valuable use of time for the employees?

All meetings should have a *purpose, agenda, and time frame.* Communicating the purpose of the meeting will help people evaluate if they need to attend or not. It will also help you set the agenda and determine if the meeting was successful. Send the agenda to all the participants well in advance so that they come prepared. The agenda can also be used to keep things on track during the meeting. Make the meeting as short as possible. A lot can be discussed in half an hour. Aim to not use more than

50 minutes per meeting. Participants lose interest and a distraction is just a mouse-click away when meetings are long and extended. Always remind yourself about Parkinson's law: "Work expands so as to fill the time available for its completion".

Make sure that the meeting was worthwhile. Get feedback after a meeting to determine if it was valuable, or what could have been done differently. Also send out a summary of the most important discussion points and action items to everyone.
Meeting management has to do with more than just your time and the process; it is also about managing yourself.

The ability to say no is a powerful time and meeting management tool. At times, meeting requests from others may be important and need immediate attention. Often, however, these requests conflict with your planning and take time away from working toward your goals. It is not always easy being assertive. Using a positive 'no' usually yields positive results. Say no, and then briefly clarify your reasoning without making excuses. This helps the other person to better understand your position. For example: "I would love to extend the meeting, but I have another project that is due by 17:00 today".

Delegating your meeting duties effectively can greatly expand your available time. Remember, in order to

delegate effectively, identify the right people to delegate to, and make the person aware of relevant information required to successfully attend the meeting on your behalf. Take the time to explain why you chose the person for the job and what is expected from him/her during and after the meeting.

Applying time management and self-management principles to online meetings have many great advantages, for example improved quality of work, greater confidence and feelings of accomplishment, and lower levels of stress. Make a conscious effort with your next meeting to see how much time you can free up and add to the list of benefits mentioned above.

LABELS ARE LAZY

NATALEE HOLMES

Girl. Boy. Deaf. Autistic. Smoker. Married. Single. Christian. Muslim. Atheist. Straight. Gay. Black. White. Young. Old. Liberal. Conservative. Socialist. ADHD. Bipolar. Fat. Skinny. Blonde. Brunette. Redhead. Rich. Poor. Intelligent. Stupid. Kind. Arrogant. Bully. Musician. Nerd.

What are you?
Are you a what? Or a who?

Labels are powerful. Labels are not facts. Labels are subjective. Labels are emotive. Labels are reactive. Labels are limiting. Labels are typically binary, and frequently associated with good or bad. Labels are divisive. They are contentious. They are gateways to polarisation.

Labels don't matter. Shouldn't matter. Unless you are a bottle of medicine, or an item of clothing, or

Whether you say it or think it, a label evokes a powerful, automatic stereotype in our minds. The effect of which, is that the labelled person becomes "it". It's WHAT they are, not WHO. The stereotype. Or worse, the stereotype threat, in our own eyes, and in the eyes of the others.

Labels are lazy. They give us a false sense of familiarity. They give us a false sense of superiority. They blind us to the richness and diversity of life. Don't be lazy. Do the work. Find out WHO the person is, not WHAT. Get to know the person, instead of holding on to your limiting, often false, beliefs. Labels oversimplify the world and that is why we succumb to prejudices like good or bad.

There is so much division in the world. In our mission to be inclusive, why do we insist on labelling people to highlight differences? Two conflicting missions in my very humble opinion. Perhaps it's time we rethink labelling, and look at people as WHOs, not WHATs.

SUSTAINABILITY IS INHERENTLY FLAWED

MIKE MIDDLETON

Since the onset of the industrial revolution, humans have been the main contributors to earths environmental crisis. From greenhouse gas emissions, ozone depletion and global warming to deforestation, plastic pollution and illegal animal trade, we have managed to wreak havoc on earth. In the past few decades, we started to comprehend the magnitude of our destruction and have tried to become more sustainable. But at this stage of the game, being sustainable isn't good enough.

Earth Overshoot Day 1970 - 2020

If we had to calculate humanity's annual demand for earth's natural resources in 2020 and compare this to the time it takes for earth to replenish those resources, we would have crossed the threshold of consuming more than can be replenished by 22 August. M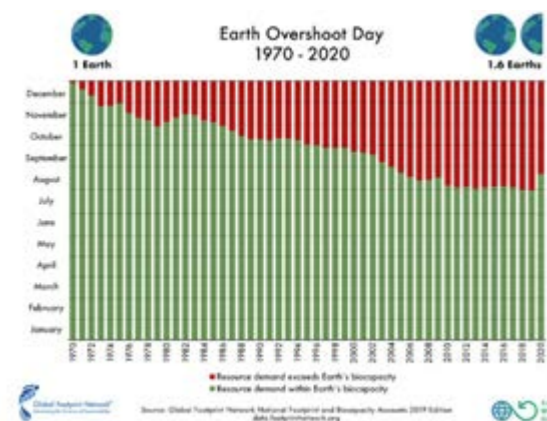eaning that everything consumed between 23 August and 31 December 2020, representing 36% of our consumption, was borrowed. And 2020 was an improvement on previous years, with the pandemic causing a temporary pause in human activity and a slowing down of our destructive tendencies. This date is commonly referred to as "Earth Overshoot Day" and is a simple calculation of humanity's demand for resources in a year less the amount of ecological resources earth is able to generate in a year. For the past 50 years we have been consuming more than earth can replenish.

Which brings me to the flaws of our sustainability efforts. The core premise behind sustainability is "to maintain at a certain level" or "to avoid depletion of natural resources". In our case, we have been depleting our natural resources for decades and efforts to reduce our ecological footprint aren't good enough. "Reduction" simply means "do less" ... but less harm is still harm. Don't get me wrong, it is a very good first step, and thankfully we have been on the sustainability journey we have been on, but it still isn't good enough. Even if we eventually reach an equilibrium of doing no harm, we will still need to repair five decades of damage.

Which is why we need to evolve our discussion from sustainability to regeneration.

Regeneration refers to the ability to replace, restore and renew. Unlike the intent of sustainability, which is to keep things as they are, the intent of regeneration is to make things better. One of the worlds gurus on regenerative business is Carol Sanford who wrote the book "The Regenerative Business" and she says that she always saw the incompleteness and shortfall of sustainability and felt that a new idea was needed, one that was more than "less bad". Sanford says that regenerative businesses don't waste time on trying to solve existing problems because this traps you into trying to improve what is already in the system, and that we have to find revolutionary ways to make things better rather than evolutionary ways to make things less bad.

Sustainability initiatives are rooted in trying to fix an existing problem with the consequence that all initiatives are centred around actively trying to do less harm. But doing less harm is not good enough and we need to find solutions that will make things better. Initiatives that will replace, restore and renew.

That's why we need to stop talking sustainability and start talking regeneration.

Talenttalks MAGAZINE

JNR ACADEMY

Focus on **the Grins.**
Get the **Wins!**

Build a **Resilient Team** by **Zooming in on their Strengths**

CHANTAL DAWTREY

INSPIRE

Positive energy, uplifting force, facing the light, motivated to move, to change, be someone better, to do something remarkable. This is what the word "inspire" invokes. It's like unzipping an over- tight jacket, shrugging it off and letting it fall. With a sweep of open arms, reaching high and wide, taking in a deep breath of crisp fresh air and feeling a tingling across shoulders, neck and arms.

With a surge of excitement that armours courage, great ideas are born, great strides are taken, and deep changes shaped. To be inspired is to be fired, to inspire is to forge.

SLEEP YOUR WAY TO THE TOP WITH JONI PEDDIE

LISTEN TO PART ONE   **LISTEN TO PART TWO**   **LISTEN TO PART THREE**

In this fantastic 6 part series "Sleep your way to the top" I am joined in conversation by Joni Peddie. Joni is the CEO of the Business called Resilient People, In a nutshell, she helps people to 'Bounce Forward' after setbacks, challenges or adversity.

CONTEMPLATING SELF LOVE

CHANTAL DAWTREY

As we stepped out of 2021, scarred and bruised from loss, many of us committed ourselves to take more care of ourselves. "Care for yourself, take time for you, look after you" echoed off the walls of the departing year. Now, almost halfway through 2022, I am revisiting some of those reflections and wondering not only about self-care but about the concept of self-love.

Self-love is a step up from self-care. Self-care is a part of self-love, but self-love is far more encompassing. It is as intrinsic to our ability to thrive as it is elusive. As the words hover above my head, the commandment: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" trumpets in my ear. I wonder, is this why we don't love our neighbours very much? Is this why there is so much conflict, descension and aggression? Is it because we are at war with ourselves that we are at war with the world?

If all we need to do is love ourselves in order for there to be more peace in the world, why is it so difficult? What is it about ourselves that is so unlovable? So detestable? So ugly so as to make us turn away in disgust, heaping judgment and scorn on ourselves? Because that is what we are doing when we heap judgment and scorn on others. And boy, has there been a lot of that over the last couple of years!

What will it take to turn towards ourselves, to look at our emotional scars with compassion, our human failings with mercy, our blunders and trip-ups with tenderness?

If we cannot do it for ourselves can we do it for our children and others we love? Can we be witness to the failures of our children and forgive their errors? Can we hold softly our loved ones' missed opportunities, the wrong turnings, and bad judgments?

Or do we react with scorn, disdain and dismay? Do we rage at them and rain blame and shame on them? The answers to those questions matter less than reflecting on how easy it is to do all of that to ourselves.

We are a mirror and a reflection of everything around us. If I cannot love myself, I cannot truly love anyone else. Despite the howls of protest I hear, fundamentally if I do not love myself, the love I proclaim for others becomes conditional.

It is a wellbeing imperative to learn to love who we are. In all our magnificent mess. The challenge for me, however, is how? How do I start a healthy loving relationship with myself?

How indeed? To find some inspiration I went on a journey of discovery. I searched the web for some answers and came up with more questions. It's been a curious adventure.

I began my investigation asking: How do I begin to love myself?

I was directed to a 2016 article titled Self Love for Beginners. Good enough place to start, I thought. Here are their recommendations:

- Nourish yourself
- Take yourself out on a date
- Start a gratitude journal
- Make your body happy
- Express yourself
- Write a loving letter to yourself
- Shower yourself in feel-good vibes

Excellent advice, except none of it, really changes the way I intrinsically feel about myself.

Next, I turned to investigate what makes a healthy loving relationship with another person in order to see if there were any useful lessons to learn there.

My research resulted in this list:
- Quality time
- Good communication
- A willingness to forgive
- Be open to change
- Practicing being present
- Maintain reasonable expectations
- Trust

Quality time – I need to make time to put aside distractions like electronic devices, turn off the ever busy brain, focus, be kind, listen and connect to me. To give myself the time to reflect or meditate. To connect to my body, listen to what it is trying to tell me and breathe. Go inwards and in the gurgling stillness allow the waves of madness that is my hopscotch mind, to wash over me until the tide calms.

Good communication – Good communication is vital for a sound relationship. How do you talk to you? I have been fiercely critical, even insulting to myself. Would I say some of those things to another person? Never! It's time to become aware of how I speak to myself and catch myself being rude or abusive. It's also time to speak to myself as I would to someone I care for.

A willingness to forgive myself. Can I, I wonder, really forgive myself? I went on a search about how to forgive and found that there is a four step process to forgiveness that could be useful for me:

1. Uncover your anger – I need to give myself permission to remember anger from as far back as I can remember: childhood, school, work, family, friendships, and romantic relationships. In my case, it will be anger about me, to me, against me. It could be a fairly long list.
2. Decide to forgive – Even if I am not quite ready, I just need to consciously make the decision to forgive (myself), to open the window of possibility.
3. Work on forgiveness – Basically, go to each incident and compassionately seek to understand, reframe with the benefit of experience, and accept and forgive any misdemeanor, wrongdoing, or sinful act I believe I was involved in.
4. Release from emotional prison – Realise that I am not alone in my suffering. Reflect on how I have grown and changed as a result of my life experiences and that I am worthy of love.

An openness to change. Here, it is being open and compassionate about the changes in my life and the changes I am going through. Being kind to myself as I stumble and trip over the new and different.

Practice being present. Being present to my life, taking time to notice the colour of the sky, smell the the sweet notes of season change and feel the sun on my face. Being present to my challenges while acknowledging my successes.

Maintain reasonable expectations. This is a good one. It's about turning down the dial of the "shoulds" must and have to's. The expectations that I must do it all, be it all.

Trusting myself. Do I trust me? Mmmmm, okay so let's talk about this thing called trust. Trust is a felt sense of confidence in behaviour and reliability. Do I trust that I will not let myself down? The nub of it all, I believe, is do I feel worthwhile enough to know that what I do and say is in the best interests of me? Trust and love are inextricably linked – if I can trust myself, I can love myself. If I can love myself then I can trust myself.

This has been a fruitful journey. It has given me plenty to contemplate about self love. I have come away with useful steps and workable techniques to start working on loving myself. I would like to have authentic relationships with others and it starts with me having an authentic, loving relationship with myself.

TO BE SELF-INSPIRED

MARISA DA FONSECA WOLLHEIM

The word 'inspire' found its origins in Sanskrit, Middle English, Old French, and Latin meaning "breathe into or blow into". The word initially related to a divine or supernatural being, in the sense ', of imparting a truth or idea to someone. When we break apart the word "inspired," we find it comes from two words "in" and "spirit." The word literally means "in spirit." In other words, when you are inspired by something, it means that you are living in line with your spirit, says Dr. Wayne Dyer.

It is believed that 'spire' is also from Spiral. And thus, the image of a spiral depicts a spiral from our deeper mind spiraling up to the frontal lobe which allows inspiration to flow through from our Spirit to our conscience. It symbolizes the consciousness of nature starting from the centre and expanding outwardly. Thus we mostly go still and move within for Self-Inspiration, allowing our Spirit and heart to Inspire us, either with a way to cope, getting a deeper understanding about something, or a resolution to something we are struggling with. Perhaps it is linked to the saying: "Listen to your inner voice"

It is true that we can also be inspired by Nature, People, Places, Things, Times, and Events. Perhaps these are connected to Spirit somehow and can be recognized by their frequency.

Often Inspiration shows up as an Idea. And during the toughest times as we are desperate for an answer or way forward an "inspiration" or an "idea" comes from "out of the blue", meaning out of the "normal" or current reality and we download a foreign idea to a current situation. When I teach about the stage of Bargaining in Grief and Loss I demonstrate that when we experience a Loss we may visit denial, we may visit anger. Then something happens and we realize that this loss is really happening and we say: "What

can I do?" The moment we ask: What can I do? our brains are forced to go beyond the comfort of denial. It has to reach outside of its normal limited reality. It has to expand and find a solution from outside the denial and anger comfort zone.

Think about it. Where do you think a bedpan comes from? Or a straw that can bend? Desperation/loss forced the person in need to find a way and find "Inspiration" out of the blue. And that inspiration can then serve many.

When one is stuck and refuses to change inspiration cannot come through. You cannot change reality from the mind which created it in the first place. It is outside of a limited space/ perception or attitude we are occupying in our minds.

The Chinese believe Crisis is an opportunity. Perhaps because loss and desperation force us to expand and be inspired.

Recently my precious granddaughter inspired me. Her mom was expecting her brother and whenever she was asked "are you excited?" she would promptly say "no. I wanted a girl". No matter how we tried to explain things she was occupying limited space in her brain that believed boys were naughty and nasty. Her Mom went into the hospital, and I stayed with her and often discussed her baby brother. The moment her Mom came home and she saw and held her baby brother her feelings took over and she was in love with him instantly, putting the belief of that space in her brain she was occupying to shame.

Often a fixed idea can limit our experience as it shuts out any other potential. Annabelle's fixed idea & belief about brothers shut out any possibility her heart, spirit or new reality had to offer. The moment she

experienced the knew her heart and her spirit inspired her mind to change. The sweetest thing was when, on the way to school, I commented on how cute Alexander was and that she would still enjoy him lots, and she immediately answered: "I already love him, Ouma!" This phenomenon made me contemplate how we can allow a fixed limited thought, perception, or attitude to cheat us out of an experience's potential. How the moment we allow our Heart, Body, and Spirit to Inspire us we can make a transition and can shift our perception and attitude, and have a wonderful experience!

If we are willing to go within and still have the limited voice of doubt and fear we will find more than we thought was possible. Our hearts and spirits have a lot to inspire us and we can expand and move forward, self-inspired. We are a whole person, body, mind, emotion, and spirit. If we allow just one part to control us, by dictating that its way is the only way, we cheat ourselves with the inspiration and experience we could have had if we were balanced.

To be inspired we must risk surrendering to the unknown.

To be inspired is to become humble, admit there is more than just this perception, belief, or attitude to experience and allow inspiration to reveal the possibilities.

To be inspired is to trust in a Divine or Supernatural Being within or outside of us to inspire us and expand into possibilities.
To be inspired is to breathe life into new possibilities.
Be willing to question yourself. "What else is possible?" "How else could I be seeing this?"
And allow the inspiration to flow through and open a portal of possibilities, change, growth, and evolution.