

# TalentTalks

Evolving Thinking through best industry reads.

ISSUE # 6

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■ **DO YOU HAVE  
'DISCONNECTION  
'SYNDROME'?**

■ **QUICK GUIDE**  
TO REDUCING UNCONSCIOUS BIAS DURING  
PERFORMANCE REVIEWS

■ **THE FIVE PILLARS**  
OF EMOTIONAL FITNESS

■ **COMMUNICATION**  
THE CONNECTION TO CONSCIOUS LIVING

■ **WHAT DO PEOPLE MOST  
WANT FROM LEADERS?**

■ **DOUBLE ISSUE  
WELLBEING SUPPLEMENT**



# FROM THE 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.

I have the immense privilege of putting together the content which our very valued contributors create for each edition of our Talenttalks monthly magazine. Kerryn researches and conducts the podcasts and AI creates the beauty that catches your attention and tantalizes you to dig deeper into the articles, listen to the podcasts or just relax and skim through to see what catches your interest.

October is World Mental Health month and with so much consciousness of the importance of Wellbeing and how it affects every aspect of our daily lives, we have had fun creating a Special Bumper Wellbeing Supplement especially for you.

Each of our lives is so uniquely different, economically, family and relationship-wise, the stage and age we are at, how much free time we have to indulge ourselves and the work we do. At the base of it all and

what carries us through the journey is our physical and mental wellbeing and how much attention we are paying to it.

We hope that you find a "Wow", a sweet spot which resonates particularly for you in this month's

Wellbeing edition. My personal message, enjoy the ordinary things right here and now.

Have a wonderful October.

**SUE DE WAAL**  
Chief Executive Editor



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OUR WEEKLY NEWSLETTER

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GAYLIN JEE

# CULTURE AND ENGAGEMENT

“When we have more civil environments, we are more productive, creative, helpful, happy and

Healthy. Let’s put an end to the incivility bug, after all, it pays”

- Christine Porath



**LISTEN TO FROM IMPOSTER TO EMPOWERED PART 2 WITH CAITLIN WATSON**



**LISTEN TO GET THROUGH THE TOUGH STUFF EPISODE 1: BUILDING A PSYCHOLOGICALLY SAFE WORKPLACE WITH JULIA KERR HENKEL**

In this series Get through the tough stuff – a guide for leaders I sit down with Julia Kerr Henkel, MD and founder of Lumminos Consulting; a professional coach and one of the few Brené Brown accredited facilitators in Africa, to discuss how leaders can get through the tough stuff, starting with how to build a psychologically safe workplace.



**LISTEN TO BUILDING TRUST-BASED PARTNERSHIPS EPISODE TWO: OPENING PATHWAYS FOR CONVERSATION WITH DR ROBYN WHITTAKER**

Join me in discussion with Dr Robyn Whittaker as we talk through what it takes to build the Trust-Based Partnerships that lie at the heart of transformation and focus our attention on how to open pathways for conversation.



# WHAT DO PEOPLE MOST WANT FROM LEADERS?

GAYLIN JEE

If you show two groups lists of words, and include many rude words for one group, but not the other, what do you think happens on subsequent tasks both groups perform? The group exposed to the uncivil words is more likely to miss information, take longer to make decisions and put those decisions into practice. Does this experiment seem oversimplistic? Well, for a change, it is.

Incivility, or rudeness, makes people less motivated. Leadership researcher and author of 'Mastering Civility in the Workplace' Christine Porath has spent a long time researching the effects of incivility in the workplace. Her comprehensive studies show that 66% of people cut back their efforts, 80% have lost work time worrying about it, and 12% have lost their job because of incivility. Does performance really suffer? It certainly does. Rudeness hijacks our attention and diminishes our brain power. The effects are not limited to those directly on the receiving end of disparaging remarks, put-downs or teasing. People who are exposed to rude behaviour as a witness also show a drop in performance, up to 25%, and they are 45% less likely to offer ideas. Teams constantly exposed to rudeness don't share information

as readily, and they stop asking one another for help. These are hardly the kinds of behaviours we work hard to inculcate in our teams and organisations. In fact, we spent a ton of money trying to do the opposite.

Stress can be a trigger for rude behaviour, but why else would people be rude to their colleagues when it costs so much? (Cisco put a figure of 12 million dollars a year on it when they came across Porath's research results). Perhaps some leaders still believe that nice guys don't get ahead. But again, research shows that this is not the case. Most uncivil executives sabotage their own success. The reason for executive failure (according to work done by McCall and Lombardo while at the CCL), is that leaders who have an abrasive, insensitive or bullying style don't tend to get helped out when they are vulnerable, in a position of weakness, and need something from others.

What do people want most from leaders? A bit of a respect. More important than recognition and appreciation, useful feedback, even opportunities for learning, says Porath's global data from over 20000 employees. Those people that felt respected were 56% healthier, 92%

more focused and 55% more engaged. They were also less likely to jump ship.

Sometimes we tend to over-complicate things. In this case, they are rather simple. Being civil to others at work directly and positively impacts performance. And it is not that hard to do. It is about smiling at people, saying hello, thanking people, sharing credit, small moments of pause, listening, showing a bit of personal interest, challenging directly from a place of respect. This concept is described by Kim Scott as radical candour and it came up in the Discipline of Innovation article published in the May Edition of Talent Talks as one of the four paradoxes for effective innovation: 'psychological safety that requires radical candour'.

The leaders that perform best are known as smart and friendly, competent and warm. Small and civil actions lead to better outcomes, and they can roll up into bigger and longer lasting impact. Leaders have many touchpoints each day, but we can all exercise our civility muscles. Civility lifts people.



'When we have more civil environments, we are more productive, creative, helpful, happy and healthy. Let's put an end to the incivility bug, after all, it pays.' – Christine Porath

# CREATING MAGIC IN TEAMS THROUGH SAFETY, SHARED RISK AND PURPOSE

WENDY NAGEL



I've just finished devouring *The Culture Code* by Daniel Coyle, which is essentially a four year study into what makes great teams great. He has managed to distil the complexity of this topic into 3 fundamentals, which if grasped and applied by leadership, can create magic and amplify the quality delivered within the collective.



*"We all know that crafting culture, is by far, the most important thing you do as a leader, but our traditional conception of culture as a soft skill, vague and mysterious, isn't how things really work. Beneath the surface, there exists a deep grammar of human cohesion, critical signals that ignite and sustain connection and cooperation. Creating great culture isn't magic - it's a leadership skill you and your group can learn."* - Daniel Coyle

It's a simple equation really and we

hear it all the time - "we are as strong as our weakest link" - but what are we doing to ensure that each link is strong, empowered, enabled and able to bring the very best of themselves to the party. It is so easy to let people become invisible, or lost within the collective. A space where the loudest voices or strongest political players are lauded regardless of their contribution to the whole.

How do we encourage collaboration as opposed to competition? All too often I hear of peers competing instead of partnering or collaborating. Everyone is so internally focused, it's no wonder the competition are eating your lunch out in the market.

So what is being asked of leadership? According to Coyle's research here are the 3 fundamentals to creating winning cultures:

## 1. Leaders need to Build Safety

In a world where people are generally living in a state of fight, flight or freeze, constantly looking for safety cues; it becomes imperative that leaders create a sense of belonging within the team. A place where people experience connection and have a strong sense and appreciation of their own identity. A place where bad news is tolerated and embraced, a signal that the truth is welcome.

A place where 2 types of engagement is present, "deep fun" and "shallow fun". The issue in most contexts is that it's all about the "shallow fun", the pause area where people can play games and chill. These areas are important to allow for social interaction, but it needs to move beyond this into "deep fun"; where teams are given the opportunity, mandate and budget to re-design their work space. It

provides ownership and therefore deeper engagement and commitment.

Finally, great leaders reveal that "we're all in this together". It is not just spoken about, but rather consistently role modelled through acts of service by leadership.

## 2. Leaders create Shared Risk

This means that leaders need to reveal their own infallibility first and often. When leaders can say "I messed that up" it opens the possibility for others to do the same. It creates a level of cooperation and trust, because honesty allows teams to learn and grow stronger.

Strong teams don't avoid making mistakes, but they make sure that they learn from them. Nobody said that this way of being is comfortable, in fact it can be downright uncomfortable and messy; but they create cohesion and strength. When we share our weaknesses we can become stronger. It's the principle of when an issue is acknowledged, it can be dealt with. When we fail to admit our weaknesses, they remain the things that keep us stuck in a holding pattern.

Feedback is vital within the team, and nothing is trickier than providing difficult

feedback to a poor performer in the team. Striking the balance between being too soft and too harsh is always a careful balancing act. Either of these two routes is never really successful as the soft approach diminishes the importance of the feedback and the brutal approach can completely demoralise the receiver. An option offered by Coyle is WWW/EBI - What Went Well and what would be Even Better If...

## 3. Leaders need to Craft Purpose

This idea about purpose is less about inspiration and more about navigation. It's about having a grounded criteria for decision-making that holds everyone accountable to a common objective. "Great groups relentlessly over-communicate to their teams exactly what they are about, and exactly how to get there." The use of stories helps to guide prioritisation and problem-solving.

If you think you are over communicating the priorities, communicate them 10 times more often. This idea is supported by a recent survey of 600 organisations that found only two percent of employees could name the top three priorities of their company in order. So the importance of constantly engaging on the question, "what do we stand for?"

cannot be over-emphasized.

The creation of smart catch phrases helps groups to solve problems on their own. By defining the potential problems your people may encounter, and having simple catch phrases that can define a positive response, you enable people to behave appropriately in pursuit of the shared goals.

Finally, it is important to determine whether proficiency (striving for the same outcome each time) or creativity (building something new) is required from the group and then lead accordingly. For proficiency the group needs to understand priorities and core behaviours in support of the outcomes; so map out what needs doing. If creativity is required, the supporting systems need to allow for processing many ideas so that the appropriate choices can be made; fundamentally, supporting the team as they work out what needs to be done.

*The bottom line from my perspective, is that human beings show up to work, and the need to belong and be a part of something that is greater than ourselves is universal. It is imperative that in order for organisations to flourish, the human beings in the system need to flourish.*

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# DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION (DEI)

Could you condemn a man  
If your faith he doesn't hold?  
Say the colour of his skin  
Is the colour of his soul?  
Or could you say if men  
For king and country, all must die?  
Then Mister you're a better man than I  
Yeah Mister You're a better man than I  
Oh Mister You're a better man than I  
Yeah Mister You're a better man than I

YARDBIRDS, FEB 1966

# QUICK GUIDE TO REDUCING UNCONSCIOUS BIAS DURING PERFORMANCE REVIEWS

WERNA OBERHOLZER

As individuals, we are all biased, whether we realise it or not. Biases stem from the shortcuts our brains have created over thousands of years to help us make faster decisions. But these mental shortcuts can actually prevent us from making the correct decisions when we don't rely on logic or review all the facts available to us.

When it comes to performance reviews, unconscious bias can severely impact on our objectivity and affect the credibility of performance reviews in the eyes of employees. When performance reviews are viewed as unfair and biased, they negatively impact engagement, employee performance and

Fortunately, we can take steps to limit the impact of unconscious bias by learning more about the types of bias we could fall prey to and building measures into the performance review process to mitigate against these mental shortcuts.

## Common types of bias in performance reviews

Here are some of the biases that show up most often in performance reviews and ways to keep unconscious bias from derailing performance discussions.

**RECENCY OR EXPEDIENCY BIAS** happens when we judge people primarily on their most recent performance or failures. When performance reviews are done annually, the process may be especially vulnerable to this bias.

## HALO/ HORNS EFFECT

happens when someone is really good or poor at one aspect of their role or have a particular trait that overshadows all other aspects of their performance.

## SIMILARITY BIAS

When we are more likely to give people with similar interests, backgrounds and skills a higher rating than others don't share these characteristics with us, the similar-to-me bias can be at play.

## CONFIRMATION BIAS

happens when we look for or interpret new information that confirms our existing beliefs about someone. To address this bias.

## GENDER BIAS

during performance reviews happens when women are more likely to receive feedback on character traits and behaviours and men on their achievements.

## CENTRALITY BIAS

or sometimes also called central tendency, happens when all employees are rated as average performers.

## LENIENCY BIAS

When a reviewer tends to rate all employees at either the positive end of the scale or the negative end of the scale, leniency bias could be at play.

## IDEOSYNCRATIC RATER BIAS

occurs when managers rate skills which they are not good at higher or rate skills which they excel at lower in employees.

## Steps to reduce bias during performance reviews

To limit the impact of bias on a performance review, follow these steps ensure a more objective process:

1. **Build awareness of bias** in your team to help everybody understand what bias is and how bias can show up during performance reviews.
2. **Set clear targets and expectations** upfront and write these down. When performance is reviewed against clearly defined and agreed targets, it reduces bias.
3. **Track and review performance against goals often** and document the feedback to reduce the effect of recency bias.
4. Encourage employees to **request and collect feedback throughout the year** as they finish projects.
5. Where possible **use analytics and data as an input** into the performance review process to improve objectivity.
6. **Ensure that performance is evaluated against multiple aspects** including individual performance, their contribution to team performance and 360-degree feedback reviews to reduce the impact of the halo/horns effect.
7. **Ask for specific examples and data points** when line managers give performance feedback to reduce the impact of similar-to-me bias or stereotypes, leniency bias and centrality bias.

# HOW COACHES CAN CONTRIBUTE TO THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN

ZANI MASHININI

Organisations across the globe are looking to improve their diversity and inclusion efforts. Women remain underrepresented in the corporate pipeline, despite many efforts to aid their advancement, such as designing women leadership development programmes.

This is recognised by both industry experts and researchers in the field of career management and leadership development. Literature has demonstrated that men have been able to advance due to the adoption of different behaviours associated with social capital. It appears that men are better networkers than women and this has worked in their favour. This is not to say women can't network, but the research certainly suggests that women can do with more support.

It is of great importance to embark on a study to explore why women still remain underrepresented at senior management level within corporations, particularly those who are in male-dominated environments. The study needs to investigate the role that leadership development interventions such as coaching can play in enabling women to make use of social capital, strategic networking, accessing mentorship and sponsorship.

I recently devised a conceptual framework to illustrate the interplay between leadership development programmes which incorporate coaching, women's preferences and values, use of social capital and abilities and behaviours and their outcomes in relation to career advancement.

This was inspired by research I conducted. Data was collected from qualitative interviews conducted with senior female managers. They had participated in a women's leadership development programme and coaching that appreciated the concept of social capital. A case study method was used which enabled all these variables to

be explored. The findings showed that women's preferences and values and their abilities and behaviours limited their career advancement. It was only after they had attended a leadership programme that trained them in various social capital modules and participated in coaching that focused on their career advancement, that they started to adopt behaviours associated with social capital. Additional findings also showed that a systemic approach to women's career advancement is critical given the role that other factors, such as discrimination, play in limiting the advancement of women in the workplace.

The study recommends that, in order to facilitate the coaching experience and outcomes pertaining to career advancement, coaches need to understand the competencies that women need to adopt to make use of social capital. Further, the study recommends that human resources practitioners can make use of the findings to design leadership development programmes differently. Human resources practitioners are also encouraged to include men in their diversity and inclusion initiatives to address matters of discrimination in the workplace.

Coaches can consider specialisation in gender diversity and inclusion. It is apparent that there is an opportunity for coaches to specialise in the area of diversity in the workplace with a focus on women. According to research conducted by Ibarra (2016), behaviours associated with social capital as strategic networking, are harder to adopt in industries like investment banking, where women are in the minority. Ibarra (2016) also referred to lazy networking meaning that individuals are likely to adopt networking that isn't being adopted for means such as understanding the world around us better.

It is therefore important for coaches to facilitate the deliberate intention

behind the adoption of the behaviours associated with social capital. Based on the study, these behaviours require skills such as political skill, courage, building networks, being resilient, self-awareness and social confidence. Parker and Kram (1993) demonstrated how certain competencies associated with social capital can be trained. It is therefore recommended that coaches incorporate these competencies into the outcomes of the coaching experience. The following is a list of the competencies that enable social capital for senior managers. They can be provided to coaches to support their specialisation:

**Political skill.** The ability to understand others at work and to use that knowledge to influence them to act in ways that enhance personal objectives;

**Courage.** Stepping up to address the difficult issues and saying what needs to be said particularly where something is being covered up;

**Building networks.** Personal, strategic and operational aspects. Creating a fabric of personal contacts who will provide support, feedback, insight, resources, and information. Ensuring coordination and cooperation among people who have to know and trust one another in order to accomplish their immediate tasks. Examples of personal connections are associations, alumni groups, clubs, and personal interest communities;

**Being resilient.** Rebounding from setback and adversity when facing difficult situations and positively adapting to difficult situations (Lombardo & Eichinger, 2009);

**Demonstrate self-awareness**  
A combination of feedback and reflection to gain productive insight into personal strengths and weaknesses (Lombardo & Eichinger, 2009).



DOWNLOAD THE QUICK GUIDE TO REDUCING BIAS DURING PERFORMANCE REVIEWS

# THE CONTEXTUALIZATION OF DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

RAJESH KAMATH



*Could you condemn a man  
If your faith he doesn't hold?  
Say the colour of his skin  
Is the colour of his soul?  
Or could you say if men  
For king and country, all must die?*

*Then Mister you're a better man than I  
Yeah Mister You're a better man than I  
Oh Mister You're a better man than I  
Yeah Mister You're a better man than I*

**- Yardbirds, Feb 1966**

When the Yardbirds composed this song in 1966, little would they have known how relevant these lyrics would continue to be half a century later. All across the world, these are the burning questions which determine whether society is harmonious, vibrant, prosperous or discordant, violent and tormented. The "better man" here is but a conflict - it is indicative of bias

and exclusion. In organizations, the last decade and a half has ushered in whole lot of work in the domain of what we refer to as "Diversity and Inclusion" or simply "D & I". But as Human Resource or Talent Management professionals, we know that we seem to have made headway in D but not the I. Let's examine the reason for this contention.

Simply put, inclusion can be understood best by understanding what it is not. Exclusion is to leave out or not take into account. Thus inclusion is the act of having a place for - ideas, beliefs, people. The Notion of inclusion is contextual to culture - the social milieu - both historic and current. Hence considerations of Inclusion have to be grounded, not in best practice or trends, but in context. Historic study alone can explain how things have evolved or diminished. Objective research will reveal what actually worked and got weakened by alien ideas. This in turn will

enable the shape of things to come. But there seems to be a confusion on this ground. We are embracing patterns from the developed (or is it advanced?) nations without blending it with cultural evolution.

Local and global have to go hand in hand. There has to be consideration of how society is structured in the geography of application - and this too, deeply, not on the surface. The early developments of our nation continue to live within us and continue to determine our behaviour, try as we might to alter them. So a deep dive is imperative. Then alone, what would emerge would be complete. But has this happened and are businesses alive to these considerations? Imagine speaking about inclusion and both cultural evolution and the local context being sidelined. Let's take an example. Nations like India and Egypt have very old civilizations with deeply entrenched

value systems, customs, traditions and so on. They were however colonized later on, which led to colonization of minds and beliefs subsequently. But that should not lead to an obliteration of its DNA. Practices, processes, dashboards, success stories, rankings, cannot be uniform across the world. They need to emerge from a comprehensive and prolonged study of all that matters to the most inconspicuous member of society. That alone can lead to true Inclusion. Anything else is but an illusion of being inclusive.

Looking at things with a lens of universality leads us to incorrect conclusions and the "corrective actions" are actually damaging. We need to un-bias ourselves. The notion that modern is beneficial and old is outdated does not serve us well. Likewise, the belief that the advanced nations have the best practices needs to be jettisoned. The best Diversity is the diversity of thoughts and by narrowing our actions to a uniform set of actions worldwide defeats the purpose of diversity.

Older civilizations have a lot to offer. They have the foundation of human evolution itself. This understanding led to a search for powerful possibilities. The consulting work which we do has a continuous exploration into that which is "eternal" in its application. This led to three ideas, of which one has completed its implementation; another which has come a long way; and a third which is yet to be operationalized. The first two will be discussed here. Both were conceptualized as a combination of organizational need and looking deeply into culture of the Indian civilization. This led to initiatives titled Shakti and Matrika.

Indian civilization, like old civilizations, has a long history of development of human thought itself. This manifests in a multitude of signs and symbols. These signs and symbols have layers of stories and spirituality around them, which often makes them unfathomable to the modern mind. But once delayed and more importantly, adapted to contemporary concepts, the same symbols become fascinating and meaningful. One such symbol is Shakti. Shakti is the symbol of the ultimate creative energy of our universe, and creative energy itself being feminine (as in mother, earth, nature, etc), Shakti denotes the unlimited potential which

every human holds.

The organization where this concept came alive is a Leading conglomerate in Engineering, FMCG, Retail and Realty segments with significant reach in domestic and international markets. With a near 100 year existence, tradition blends with modernity and the workforce and culture reflects the same. To try and alter this is to attempt to alter DNA. That said, as society develops dynamically and with it the consumer tastes, the organization has to transform its thinking. Practices are merely an expression of this thinking. Shakti paid attention to this need, without sacrificing the civilization's influence on its people. Shakti became a fifteen month intervention which immersed, ignited and illuminated the minds of nearly two hundred women of this conglomerate who signed up as torch bearers to lead this fantastic organization into the future. The experiences these Leaders were put through included facilitated sessions, workshops and exercises, sharing of stories of challenges and successes, journal writing, introspections, collaborative endeavours and more. The outcomes began to become visible during the period of the intervention itself.

Yet another symbol is Matrika. Like Shakti, Matrika too is feminine and refers to the feminine divinity, which in turn represents everything that moves the world - such as Knowledge, Vision, Action, Accomplishment, Preservation, etc. Matrika is a set of seven individual forces, which when integrated bring great mastery into the lives of individuals. Conversely, ignoring these forces, which lie latent in humans is tantamount to ignoring one's own endless possibilities of development. The organization where this concept flowered is a Healthcare IT Services organization with a footprint across India and US. With a relatively young workforce, and a significant percentage of them being women, there was a clear need to provide Leadership opportunities to the most talented women amongst them, as very few seemed to presently occupy those.

What followed was a year-long intervention with numerous opportunities to hone skills and shine through Workshops, self selected Projects, continuous learning inputs through face to face and online modes

as well as exposure to some select achievers of society. Through the first few sessions itself, the participants were already beginning to realize the forces of Matrika operating within them and through them, equipping them with the power to make their dreams possible.

In both cases, impact has been tremendous. But this would hardly have been possible, without the deliberate effort to study and replicate what others do, notoriously understood as "Best Practices". They are best only for the organizations which adopted and found success. Organizations need to show the appetite for customizing their approach to initiatives and resist believing that the Leaders show the way for each one to walk. If Unilever speaks about "achieving" 50-50 gender balance, its only indicative of their own ideal of diversity and should not be taken as the benchmark for all organizations.

The consequence of replicating D & I practices uniformly across organizations in every corner of the world is the exact opposite of what we set out to do - they will all lack imagination and variety in what they do. The vibrancy of organizational cultures lies in its unique DNA combined with the society in which its embedded. Nature is a beautiful metaphor for this. Can one imagine the same flora and fauna or insect kingdom in every inch of the world? Or one can even consider music as a Metaphor. One such musical piece about music was created by two musicians who have enthralled audiences across the world - they are Sir Paul McCartney and Stevie Wonder. I close this article with the first two verses of this song.

## Ebony and Ivory

*Ebony and ivory  
Live together in perfect harmony  
Side by side on my piano keyboard  
Oh lord, why don't we?*

*We all know that people are the same  
where ever you go*

*There is good and bad in everyone  
And we learn to live, we learn to give each other*

*What we need to survive together alive*

# IS UNCONSCIOUS BIAS COMPROMISING DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IN THE WORKPLACE?

CAMILLA PENNINGTON

Unconscious bias is something we are often unaware of but which creates barriers that prevent diversity and inclusion in the workplace, damaging relationships that could foster creative and innovative ideas. The costs to the business can be significant in terms of missing out on potential talent, an inability to assess certain risks or make the most ethical decisions about change – or even missing out on opportunities to exploit new markets effectively. In this article we will explore exactly what unconscious bias is, give you the opportunity to test yourself for unconscious bias and provide examples of strategies that can be deployed in the workplace to prevent unconscious bias thereby promoting diversity and inclusion.

## What is Unconscious Bias?

Unconscious Bias can be explained by the well-known idiom, “Birds of a feather flock together” – which essentially means that we naturally gravitate towards people who are more like ourselves, with whom we have more in common. We all have unconscious biases – like it or not! As a result of our social identity we have a certain frame through which we see and evaluate the world around us as well as the people in it – and this can result in stereotypes and prejudices that we are unaware of i.e. the “unconscious” part. Our unintentional prejudices or preference can be about anything from race and gender to previous job experience or management style. Our biases affect our perceptions of competence and thus our hiring, promotion and talent management decisions in the workplace context.

There have been several studies conducted into unconscious bias. One

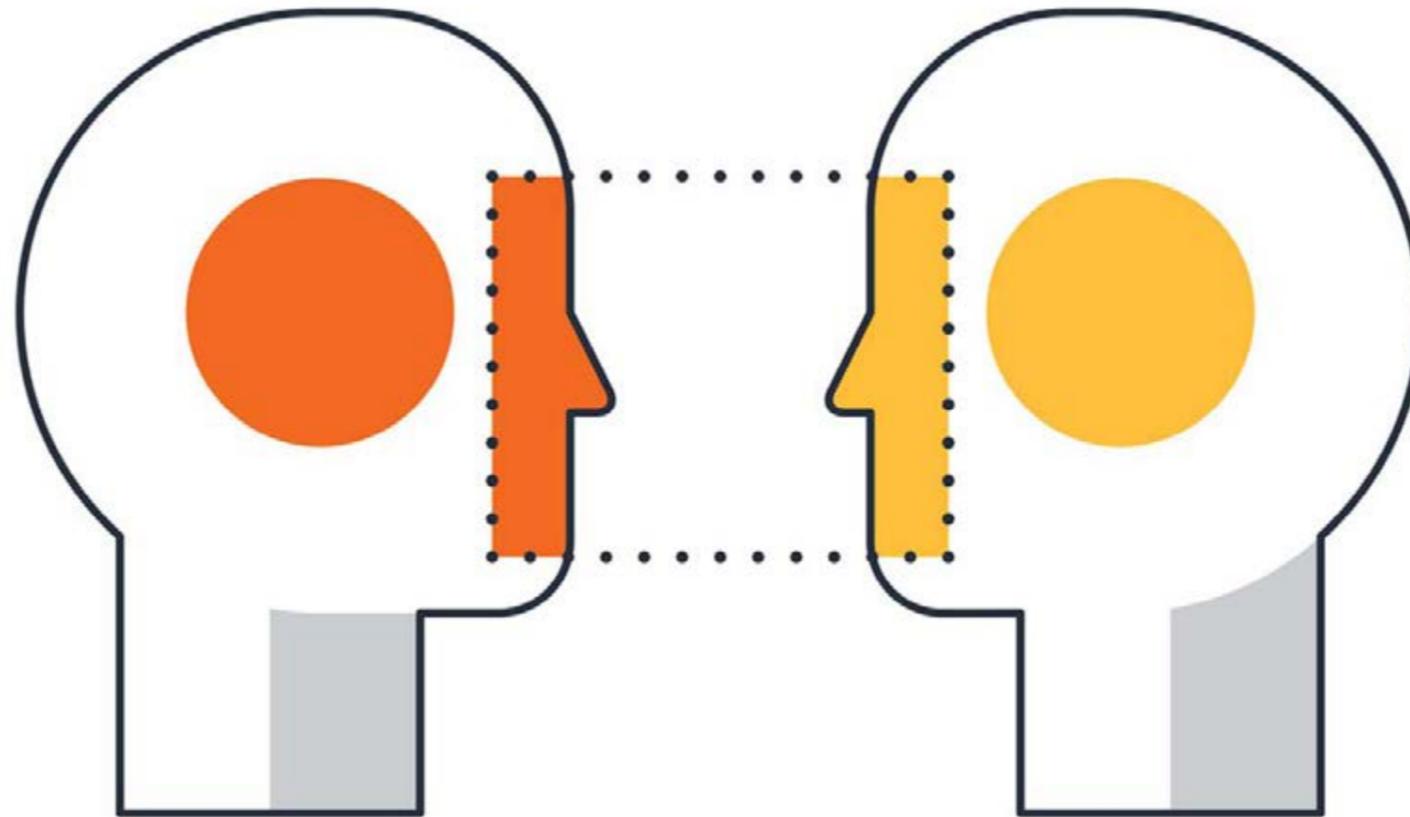
particular study conducted by the DWP (Department of Work and Pensions, UK) in 2009 found that when sending fake CV’s with identical qualifications and experience candidates who had a white, British-sounding name had to send 9 CV’s before receiving a positive response from an employer whereas candidates who had an ethnic minority-sounding name had to send up to 16 CV’s for the same response. The study thus revealed unconscious bias with respect to ethnicity.

A similar study conducted in 2012 by the UK Policy Exchange examined age bias in the UK labour market. In this study 1 000 identical CVs were sent out, applying for bar and personal assistant jobs. Half of the CVs claimed to be 25-year-olds and the remaining half claimed to be 51-year-olds. The 25-year-olds were 2.25 times more likely to receive a positive response than the 51-year-olds! Again, demonstrating unconscious bias but this time on the basis of age.

## How do we identify Unconscious Bias?

There are three types of bias we should be mindful of, as follows:

- Affinity bias (like me) – affinity bias leads us to favour people who are more like us i.e. they look, sound and behave similarly to ourselves. With affinity bias we would tend to ignore faults in people who are more like us and notice faults in people who are less like us.
- Confirmatory bias – this form of bias leads us to search for or interpret information that confirms our existing perceptions. In other words we will “weight” information



that confirms our existing viewpoint and ignore information that might contradict our existing viewpoint.

- Social comparison bias – we constantly compare ourselves to others in order to develop a sense of individual or group identity – and we tend to see ourselves as better than or superior to other groups.

There are several tests one can take which will help to identify any unconscious biases that we may have. Often we will be blind to having these prejudices so taking a test can help us to acknowledge our bias. The Harvard Implicit Association Test (IAT) is a free tool and offers a number of tests which give an indication of age, gender, race, religion and disability IAT’s, among others. To take one of these tests, follow the link, <http://bit.ly/1m808ph>

A simple way to identify potential biases in your recruitment process, for example, would be to develop a basic spreadsheet evaluating the ethnic background (or gender, or both) of the candidates who reach each stage of your recruitment

process. You can then measure how many in each “group” pass each stage of your process. Then apply the “4/5ths” rule to your findings. If a particular ethnic group (or gender) makes up more than 80% of “passes” you are likely to be encountering bias. By evaluating each stage of your recruitment process (e.g. pre-screening, screening, first round interview, assessments, second round interview etc.) you will also be able to identify whether unconscious bias is creeping in at a specific stage of your process. A similar exercise could be conducted when you are making decisions regarding promotions or pay increases.

## What are the workplace consequences of unconscious bias and why should we address it?

Unconscious bias can result in unfair discrimination in many aspects of the workplace – from hiring decisions to performance evaluation, promotions and even how work gets allocated within a team. Addressing bias can have positive outcomes as follows:

- Better decision making
- Increased diversity in the workplace
- Reduced recruitment costs
- Increased staff engagement
- More productive teams
- Reduced attrition
- Reduced mediation & labour disputes

## What can we do to avoid unconscious bias in the workplace?

The good news is that we all have the capability to change or re-write our people preferences, but first we need to acknowledge that they exist. Once we know what our “blind spots” are we can do a number of things differently to help us avoid discriminating against others.

Some suggestions for overcoming bias in the workplace – be it in your recruitment and selection processes, performance management, talent development or any other area of the business are as follows:

- Learn to question your own first impressions and reactions to others – and encourage colleagues

to do the same

- Learn more about people who come from different cultures, values or backgrounds from yourself and try to understand how these differences might affect their work style, behaviour, communications and relationships
- Provide training in diversity management / unconscious bias
- Work hard at creating a culture in which you have a common language around bias and where people feel comfortable to question decisions in a non-confrontational way
- The more diverse your teams the less risk there is of bias if decisions are made as a group (e.g. the use of diverse panels for selection interviews)
- The more clearly you are able to define criteria e.g. selection criteria, promotion criteria, etc. the less room there is for bias
- Apply the exercise used earlier in this article – evaluate your recruitment and talent management processes using the 4/5ths rule. You can vary the dimensions you evaluate e.g. race, gender, age, tenure with the organisation, school or university attended and so on.

Facebook have recently highlighted the need to eliminate unconscious bias both in the workplace and in their interfaces with customers. They have offered some of their training material for free – please follow this link to view what is on offer: <https://managingbias.fb.com/>

## Conclusion

Unconscious bias is a trap we can all fall into – without even knowing it – and the consequences for our workplace are that we end up denying ourselves the opportunity to embrace diversity, share different ideas, different views and learn new ways of doing things. A good start is to take a self-evaluation test to understand your own potential biases and then learn to question your decisions and reactions in situations where bias could arise.

JONI PEDDIE

# LEARNING AND PERFORMANCE

The stormy seas are not the enemy, they can help us sharpen our skills.

'Smooth seas do not make skilful sailors'.  
An African Proverb



**LISTEN TO :**  
**POWER SKILLS EPISODE 4**  
**MANAGING OUR STRESS BEFORE WE BURNOUT. DEALING WITH TOXICITY IN THE WORKPLACE WITH DR KARINA DE BRUIN**



**LISTEN TO :**  
**THE STATE OF LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT EPISODE 2 WITH LINDA VAN DER LOO**

# ARE ONLINE MEETINGS IMPACTING THE NEED FOR 'CONSTRUCTIVE CONFLICT' IN TEAMS?

JONI PEDDIE

In one word: **Yes!**

**Is this a problem?** Absolutely!

We are observing that teams are under the whip to 'perform' and deliver in this volatile world of unprecedented change, turbulence and uncertainty.

The pace of work seems to have ramped up in the 'post pandemic' world. There is a greater need for quicker turn-arounds on projects, innovative solutions, solving problems, and addressing customer service demands ...and all a lot faster!

Having worked in Corporate Teams, both in South Africa, and hybrid across countries, and led an Exco Team and 5 Regional Teams for a NPO (of volunteers) ... I have been fascinated, intrigued and motivated to facilitate programmes that focus on **igniting optimal Team performance.**

Post the pandemic many of the Teams that we work with, have 'seemingly' managed really well. We are, however starting to see the 'cracks' in both team performance as well as an increase in people suffering burnout. This is above and beyond the challenges (and opportunities) of 'hybrid working' / WFM (Working from Home).

In these turbulent times, teams are sailing in 'stormy seas' - attempting to navigate the continual waves of change. Team cohesion, and exemplary leadership is vital for survival and 'thrival'.



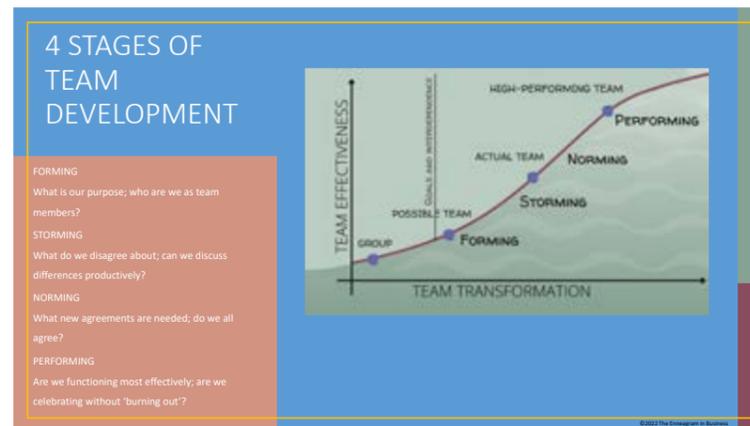
*Side-line note : Thrival is an adjective describing a person who has transitioned out of survival mode and into an optimal state of health, vitality joy and wellbeing.*

In fact, we all want to be in this optimal state and thriving. The stormy seas are not the enemy, they can help us sharpen our skills.

An African Proverb comes to mind: **'Smooth seas do not make skillful sailors.'**

**These are the necessary stages in Team development for skillful team performance**

Psychologist Bruce Tuckman first proposed these four stages in his 1965 paper, 'Developmental Sequence in Small Groups': Forming-Storming-Norming and Performing.



As per the diagram above: The Storming Phase is a necessary phase before 'Norming' and 'Performing'. Dealing with differences and promoting constructive conflict is essential. Let's remember that conflict results from the tension between team members. This results from both real or perceived differences.

The above path is what teams need to follow on their way to high performance. Tuckman said that these phases are all necessary for a team to grow, face up to challenges, tackle problems, find solutions, plan work, and deliver results.

**Side-line note :**

Tuckman later added a fifth stage, 'adjourning' (also known as 'mourning') to mark the end of a team's journey.

**We are however observing that Teams are skipping the necessary 'Storming Stage'. Is this happening in your team?**

As mentioned earlier, we are seeing Teams 'avoid' courageous conversations. Heated debate may happen 'offline' between two or three members, but Team conflict is often viewed as stressful, disruptive and 'derailing'!

I love Brene Brown's phrase: 'courage over comfort'. It takes courage to speak up and disagree with a team member's approach and / or the 'task at hand'. The team should be reminded that discussing 'divergent views' can also be incredibly stimulating, and this should be done in a team setting with all team members present.

The Leader needs to set aside time for this Storming Stage.

**A stitch in time saves nine!**

Having robust conversations about issues at this stage (before the Norming



Stage) is hugely beneficial, because it surfaces issues that otherwise might not be considered, and down the line these issues may be far more difficult to address.

As a Leader, or a facilitator of teams, it is also useful to differentiate between task conflict and relationship conflict at this Storming Stage.

**Relationship conflict issues:** these are disagreements about working style, 'sense of urgency', values, interpersonal style, input from other teams. All the 'people stuff'.

**Whereas Task conflict issues :** these are disagreements about the distribution of resources, procedures, policies, processes, judgments and interpretation of facts.

**The Storming Stage may need to be revisited... more than once.**

This is necessary if a new team member joins, or if there is a new Team Leader. As a result, a new 'Form-Storm-Norm-Perform' cycle will be established. The stages may not take long, there may just be 'tweaks' ... but they are crucial for team performance.

The team could be performing well, but one new / different 'ingredient' will change the 'team's recipe'! A vanilla cake becomes a chocolate cake with one new ingredient: cocoa. Team dynamics

are important and change dramatically when new people join / leave the team.

You can't just switch on team cohesion. Interdependencies need to be established, in order for the team to 'gel' and to work to the team's full potential. What's more, team members go through stages as they move from strangers to co-workers, and then perhaps even to becoming friends.

**What are the main reasons that teams are skipping the 'Storming stage'?**

**Time-pressure.**

1. We are observing that in both 'in-person' meetings as well as online meetings ...teams are skipping past the Storming phase.

One Team Leader said to us that her new team went straight from 'Forming-to-Performing'. This looked excellent ...'on the surface', and as new team members joined ... this 'loop' continued. She started noticing fatigue/ people getting sick more frequently and some team members experiencing burnout. At this point, we were called in to facilitate a few team sessions to ascertain the team issues and interpersonal problem/s within the team.

In the Team Leader's words: "There is destructive, underhand and manipulative conflict in our team. Add to this, excessive customer expectations,

and the result is that team members seem to be irritable, snappy and at times rude to one another. My team services 'internal customers' within our bank. Plus everything seems to be accelerating ... projects need to be done faster; research done on the double; we need to outwit the competitors and get 'points' on the scoreboard...all pronto!"

**Now what?**

We facilitated two Team sessions using Tuckman's Model (see the two Pdfs with more details and Qs). As a result, the Team Leader is now spending time on 'design thinking' and getting team members around a table, to 'storm' and interact meaningfully on an ongoing basis. To use her words: 'even if this takes more time initially, because conflict in our team is no longer seen as bad and counterproductive!'

Adam Grant (organizational psychologist and bestselling author) speaks about conflict as one of the ways that a team of people can be creative and make good decisions.

I love Adam Grant's words: **"The absence of conflict is not harmony, it's apathy. If you're in a group where people never disagree, the only way that could really happen is if people don't care enough to speak their minds."**

**1. The limitations of online meetings**

**Exacerbated by only seeing each other**

### in a 'thumbnail square' on a screen.

This is far more problematic than we realize.\* We're only seeing people from the neck up, (that's if they have their camera on) and it is impossible to read body language. As a result it is often difficult to know when it is the right time to have a debate, or to have a 'tricky conversation'.

- The various icons (clapping hands or a thumbs-up) are a really poor substitute for body language.
- Emotions drive people. People are energetic beings.

One-dimensional screen conversations are missing the quick cross-pollination of ideas, as well as the 'energy' and dynamism that comes from sitting around a table.

- The loudest voice on screen speaks...a real problem for diversity, inclusion and building trust.
- In large online meetings, people tend to use the chat room for backchannel connections. There are likely be many side-line conversations happening...which is distracting and not conducive to good team conversations!

- There are a 'long list' of other factors, many of which are probably popping to mind for you as you read this article.

#### **A few basic steps for you to implement : Taking into account the psychology of Forming -Storming -Norming -Performing**

1. Identify the stage that your team is at? (Remember that teams can move 'up and down' the stages, and that this is absolutely fine).
2. What do you need to do, in order to move onto the next stage?  
These Qs could help:  
*As a Team Leader...*  
\*Are you aware of the different styles of leadership you will need to 'display' at each of the Tuckman Stages?  
\* Are you able to adjust to the new challenges at each stage?  
\* Can you make the necessary tough decisions?  
\* Do you understand the personality differences in your team, and can you harness this diversity in style, temperament and behaviour?

#### *As a Team Member...*

- Are you self-aware? How do you

'play to your personality strengths?'

- What are the different approaches (attitude and behaviour) needed from you at each Stage ?
- Is your behaviour helping or hindering the team's progress and development?
- What can you 'stop doing' or 'do more of', in order to add to your own behavioural repertoire ... thereby assisting your team in it's growth and development?

#### *As a Team Leader or Team facilitator...*

Schedule regular reviews of where your team is at, so that the team members (and yourself as the Leader / Facilitator) can adjust your behaviour and approach accordingly.

Teamwork, life and relationships come with many ups and downs. The difficult times are what make us compassionate, resilient, and dynamic team members. Teams are looking to navigating 'change', in order to find innovative solutions and / or opportunities and of course to handle uncertainty and problems. When you understand Tuckman's model, you'll know how to help your team get into flow, and be high performing - faster.



RESILIENT PEOPLE

## **BOUNCE FORWARD™**

THINK. FEEL. ACT

## TIPS & TOOLS

### Leading Through the Forming, Storming, Norming & Performing Stages

#### Ways to move from Forming to Storming

To establish clear objectives for the group at this first stage, create a Team Charter and specific Team Goals. Help team members to set their own personal goals...aligning with the greater team goals.

The forming stage is also about people getting to know one another. If you're working remotely, use various, fun ways of connecting as Human Beings, as opposed to Human Doings. There are loads of exercises that help to forge a group bond. Ensure, as a Leader that you get buy-in to your vision.

#### Ways to move from Storming to Norming

Storming can make or break a team, so it's essential that you establish processes to track the progress, completion and success of tasks.

The group must also feel safe putting forward ideas. Use 'diversity' in the team as a strength Find various ways to build team trust. Try asking for help on certain tasks. That way you'll encourage people to reflect on what they can offer and what they need from other team members.

Don't leave team conflict unchecked. Remember that a little friction can be a good thing - it might reveal inefficiencies for the group. Robust debates often lead to innovation.

Psychological safety is essential. Ensure that each person is recognised and has a 'voice'. Help quieter team members to have their say, to ensure that louder individuals don't dominate meetings.

#### Ways to move from Norming to Performing

Get your team to bond further with face-to-face or virtual team-building sessions. These can be short one hour sessions. They need not be elaborate. These social connections are especially important, given that in many teams people are working from home. Use your regular one-on-ones to encourage individuals to step back, review their goals, and take responsibility for them.

#### Ways to move from Performing to Adjourning

When the team has settled into the performing stage, you can focus on other goals and new areas to benefit the business. Free up more time for yourself - and boost team engagement - by delegating tasks and projects.

You should also make time for the group's personal development. Discuss with your team what opportunities and resources are available to them.

#### The additional Adjourning (or Mourning) Stage:

Take the time to celebrate the team's achievements. This is essential as a Team 'adjourns'. Having positive shared experiences will make it easier if you work with some of the same people again in the future.

If any team members feel uncertain about what's ahead, boost their confidence and career prospects by praising them at company meetings. And offer to provide LinkedIn recommendations and references if they're moving on.

You can also ask the group for 360 degree feedback in order to reflect, learn, and better manage future teams.

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## TIPS & TOOLS

What happens at each of the Tuckman Stages:



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## TIPS & TOOLS

What happens at each of the Tuckman Stages:



### What Happens at Tuckman's Forming Stage?

*When a new team forms /and or a new team member joins: there isn't necessarily clarity on ...*

- The team's Task : purpose, team charter, goals, deliverables and resources
- The team's Relationship issues : how they fit in, and whether people will work well with one another.
- People may be anxious, curious, or excited ?
- Team members need to learn about each other's strengths, and how they can each be a valued member of this team. This may take some time, as people get to know their new colleagues and one another's ways of working.
- The team leader needs to give a fair amount of direction at this stage.

### What Happens at Tuckman's Storming Stage?

As mentioned earlier in the article : this is the stage that often gets 'skipped'! In addition, team members may challenge the management style, or even the team's vision, mission and goals. If roles and responsibilities aren't yet clear, team members might begin to feel overwhelmed by their workload or frustrated at a lack of progress.

People can also start to push against the established boundaries.

Task related Q:

- Are we organising our efforts well (processes, procedures etc) so that we are efficient?
- Are we going in the right direction?
- Do we have consensus about how well we function as a team?

Relationship related Qs:

- Does everyone have a voice and are they listened to?
- Are we willing to bring up areas of difference on issues big and small?
- Do we have constructive ways to surface and deal with disagreements and conflict?
- Are there formal and informal lines of authority and influence, which are supported by the team?
- The team leader needs to ensure that time is set aside to rigorously address issues at this stage.

**Note:** If the Team Leader is normally 'conflict -avoidant' ... this can hinder the team's progress.

### What happens at Tuckman's Norming Stage?

This is where team members start to resolve their differences, as well as appreciate one another's strengths! x.

At this stage, team members feel more comfortable asking for help and offering constructive feedback. They'll share a stronger commitment to the team's goals, and they should make good progress toward it.

Task related Q:

- What norms do we need / ways of operating that make us efficient and effective?
- Are there other working agreements we need to make that may seem like minor ones, but are still important?

Relationship related Qs:

- Are we using decision making processes that work for us?
- Are we using our communication and problem solving skills effectively ?
- Are we fully listening to everyone?

### What happens at Tuckman's Performing Stage?

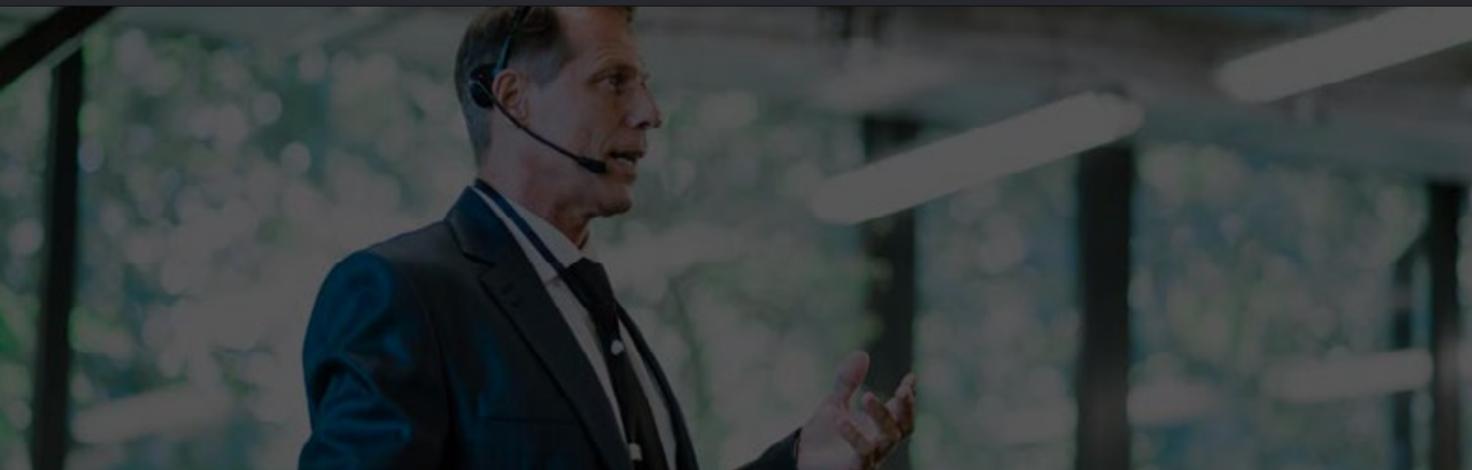
This is where the team is in flow and performing to its full potential. There are structured processes, team members are committed to the team 'mandate' and work well inter-dependently. The team is likely to achieve its goals efficiently.

Task related Q:

- What are we doing well that we need to continue doing?
- What can we do differently to improve?

Relationship related Qs:

- Are we celebrating our successes?
- Are we ensuring that the team work is well-spread, and that no one is getting 'overly stretched' or 'on the way to burnout'?



DR ERIC ALBERTINI

# THE HYBRID WORLD OF WORK

One thing is clear about the future of work ...

It's clear that hybrid work arrangements are going to be a norm for many organizations ...

No matter what sector you operate in ...



**LISTEN TO  
PANDEMIC IN REVIEW A LOOK AT LESSONS  
UNLEARNED WITH BRAD SHORKEND**



**LISTEN TO  
GETTING FIT FOR THE FUTURE. EPISODE 2  
THE NEW WAYS OF THINKING THAT LEADERS  
NEED TO DEVELOP WITH DR ERIC ALBERTINI**

As the world around us changes, we need to change with it. Staying relevant and efficient is no longer a given; we must work for it. But by developing the skills required to deliver value, we can stay ahead of the curve. Listen as Kerryn Kohl talks with Dr Eric Albertini from the Future fit Academy about how we can prepare for the world ahead.

# TIME TO BUILD A WELLNESS CULTURE THAT IS FUTURE FOCUSED

The COVID-19 pandemic brought many changes to the world of work, a key change being a renewed focus on employee wellness – and with good reason.

Because over and above the impact of people having to take time off work after contracting COVID-19, the disease also had – and will continue to have – an impact on mental health. A report published in The Lancet said almost one in five COVID-19 patients develop a mental health condition such as depression, anxiety or dementia within three months of diagnosis. And then there is the mental health impact of simply living through a pandemic – according to the WHO, in the first year of the pandemic, global prevalence of anxiety and depression increased by a massive 25%.

Many organisations have also failed to consider that between 10% and 30% of COVID-19 sufferers can expect to get Long COVID, which some have predicted will be a major form of disability by 2023.

In the past, big corporates tackled employee wellness in much the same way – they outsourced it to a wellness company, usually paying a fortune for access to counsellors, financial coaching and basic health screening. Uptake was quite low; typically between 10% and 20% of employees.

That was before the pandemic – and if it wasn't working then, chances are it won't be remotely suitable for the post-pandemic employee, given what we have all gone through since the beginning of 2020.

To their credit, many companies have realised that wellness is a massive issue, and tried to put various interventions into place. However, it's going to take more than online yoga and meditation sessions, or annual company wellness days to

deal with the fallout from the pandemic. Wellness has to be infused into our company cultures.

So how do we ensure that we are creating a culture that is inherently sufficiently caring – and which covers the diverse needs of a diverse workforce? Employees don't just need their blood pressure and cholesterol checked, they also need support and understanding, and spaces and opportunities for growth and development, so that they can thrive. We need to create psychological safety so that people can bring their whole selves to work.

This will need leaders who have high EQ. It means crafting family-centric, human-centric policies, and a culture of compassion. At the same time, we need to find the balance between creating that empathetic and compassionate environment, and supporting a high performance culture.

We must be aware of the impact of the economy on people, such as the rising costs of fuel and food, and increasing inflation. Many people are experiencing financial stress, despite being fortunate enough to be employed. In addition, there are environmental impacts like water shortages and loadshedding. People are already on overload before they go to work or log on from their kitchen tables.

Then there's the social disconnect – because we're trying to create team cohesion in this new world of work. And what we're seeing now is an increase in something called "quiet quitting". Before Covid-19, the problem was "presenteeism" – where people were physically at work, but not really there mentally, not engaged. Quiet quitting sees people are in a space where they want to take care of their own health, but resignation may not be

an option. So they do the bare minimum required of them, because they don't feel the organisation cares about them. They quietly check out.

We have to look at the cost of keeping the workforce well versus the cost of not doing it – and the previous approach to wellness won't do the trick. Companies are going to need to design something bespoke that fits with their values and purpose.

Bearing all this in mind, how do we increase productivity and talent mobility? How do we keep things human in a digital world?

We need to remember that extra aspect of DEI, which is "belonging". There is a cost that comes with every employee who feels as if they don't belong, as if they are on the periphery and are not valued. It changes how they relate to their colleagues; it changes how they approach their work. It certainly has a damaging effect on their performance and productivity.

Thinking through health and wellbeing, therefore, needs to be a proactive step that is built into employee experience, because it's an important part of that. It's a vital part of our employee value proposition. We give employees benefits like medical aids and pensions, but can we do it better? Can we make wellness part of what attracts them to our companies?

The traditional approach to wellness is not only backward-looking, it's also not multifaceted enough to address the complexity that employees are dealing with. We need to find ways to address wellness that look to the future, to build stronger, more productive, and healthier employees who are equipped to deal with the demands of the new world of work – and then train our leaders to lead accordingly.

## PROF SHIRLEY ZINN





# DISRUPTION IN THE WORKPLACE: GAINING EMPLOYEE BUY-IN FOR IN OFFICE TIME

DEBBIE GOODMAN-BHYAT

Bringing coherence and a new kind of clarity to the workplace will be the key to ensuring successful teams in a post-pandemic future, and should be one of the major considerations for company leadership in coming months as 2023 comes into focus – particularly because of continued uncertainty on the part of employees.

Companies and employees have been trying to find their feet in what remains shaky ground, with ongoing uncertainty over work-from-home vs in-office and hybrid approaches.

Expectations on the part of senior leaders are often in direct conflict with those of the broader workforce, and the negative impact of this situation is exacerbated due to unarticulated needs, sentiments and beliefs from all parties.

It is necessary for all the stakeholders – leaders and employees – to recognise that the workplace as we know it has been disrupted, and now requires fresh thinking from different vantage points in order to formulate a healthier and clearer framework for the future.

**Whether locally or globally, evidence shows most employees want to retain as much of the flexibility, autonomy and self-determination regarding work as possible and they are very reluctant to go back to pre-pandemic rigid work structures.**

When this feels imposed on them by 'management' – a feeling that is common in workplaces everywhere – resentment is the result, as could be witnessed earlier this month with Apple's mandate that employees return to the office for 3 days a week from September 5.

Examples abound, and Apple's employee

predicament is but the latest example of the tug-of-war that continues between leadership and teams across the globe, including in South Africa. It is therefore necessary for everyone to get on the same page with some urgency before continuing down this path of uncertainty and incoherence.

A strong proponent for allowing flexibility and common-sense, win-win solutions in the hybrid vs return to office debate, it is important to communicate the purpose of the office where applicable, while balancing that with the ability to work from home where possible.

Almost a year into our post-pandemic normalisation, data is now showing clear evidence that there are certain elements of work that people are – for the most part – substantially worse off doing on their own, remotely.

In addition, the negative impact on career and professional development for remote workers is starting to become more noticeable. Add to this recent research studies that show how certain groups of workers want more in-person time with their teams, and we have a very complex scenario to address and manage in the hybrid world of work.

The following is a list of the core areas that people are not as good at doing on their own, remotely:

- Building culture and feeling a sense of belonging
- Collaborating on projects
- Learning through mentorship
- Building social and professional capital
- Networking with cross-functional teams
- Sparking innovation

In addition, due to proximity bias and presenteeism, recent data shows that people who choose remote work options are 50% less likely to be considered for promotion in their organization.

The way to get employees to buy in to spending time in the office on a synchronous basis, meaning people need to be there at the same time in order to reap the benefits of being in person, is to be intentional about the types of meetings and connections that will take place during this time. When the office becomes an intentional purposeful place to do work in a way that is not easily replicable remotely or asynchronously, people then start to see the value of going to the office.

The cadence of synchronous time in office may differ from one team and company to the next, with some 'remote first' companies choosing to bring people together as little as once to three times per year, and others testing out more frequent, weekly synchronous time.

The point here is that when 'the office' is considered a tool, channel or device to achieve outcomes that are beneficial and supportive of both individual and company goals, there's significantly greater buy-in from everyone.

That's not to say that this is simple to organize. Hybrid is complex, but companies that are unwilling to embrace the challenges of establishing new norms around 'the workplace' are going to suffer the consequences of being last in line for top talent.

We know that people are choosing hybrid roles where they are able to retain their flexibility. Companies who supplement this with high quality, purposeful in-office time will undoubtedly be leading the pack.

RAJESH KAMATH

# INSPIRE

Regular Leaders have the knowledge and skills to help organizations to address the first category ( viz. enhancing known strengths and mitigating weaknesses of identified Talent.). The Awakened Leaders work harder on unleashing the potential of their promising Talent. But the Enlightened Leaders belong to a rare breed, they smell out the Talent in the most ordinary people – because, they recognize that there are no ordinary people, only lazy Leaders. Enlightened Leaders do not seek contentment at work, but meaning. This makes them extend themselves beyond the commonplace Leaders – they are like the scientists who are constantly striving to discover the energies which exist, but are beyond the limits of our senses. This gives them and their organizations, deeper and enduring character, and longevity.



# THE POWER OF SO WHAT?!

NATALEE HOLMES



My coaching sessions of late seem to be carrying the recurring theme of anxiety. People are stressed. People are anxious. It's everywhere. And unfortunately the vicious irony about anxiety is that it has a ripple effect that sets off a chain of continual, anticipatory anxiety. The more anxious you feel, the more anxious you feel about feeling anxious, and then, the more anxious you feel. Etc.

In a session the other day, I was with a young woman whose life plans have been derailed and she suddenly finds herself totally at sea. She had a plan, she had a purpose, she had a direction. Now she feels lost. She no longer has a plan. Her purpose was linked to her plan, so as a result she feels she has no purpose. Her direction was set, but no longer seems to be the direction she wants to go in.

She is very anxious, and as she sat in front of me, in a complete state of panic and uncertainty, I simply asked her, "so what?"

Her eyes almost popped out their sockets when I said it, and I could see she was ready to run. But I continued.

"So what if your plans have changed – nothing is permanent and no one, particularly at the age of 22, has their whole life perfectly mapped out. So what if you don't know what your purpose is right now? So what if you

changed your mind? So what if you have decided that what you were doing is not for you?"

## So frikking what?

Her eyes began to return to their sockets as my questions started sinking in. The ugly – or beautiful – truth is that life is messy. Plans change. Life happens.

I think we have spent so long hearing that we need to do the work and figure it all out, that we have falsely assumed there is a finite answer. A definite plan. An indisputable purpose. And if you don't have it all figured out, and if you aren't living your life to a specific purpose, then who are you and what exactly are you doing with your life?

I had coffee with a friend this morning and she asked about a girl I know who has just, at the age of 22, gone overseas to start a pairing. She wanted to know what her plan

was and was quite disappointed to hear that at 22 she was only just starting her journey. Her words were, if she was 18 that would be fine, but to start this journey now at 22 is something else. The disapproval was palpable. But if I had questioned her on it, I know she wouldn't have felt the judgement consciously.

It's because of that lie we are fed. Let's be honest, is 22 really so "old" to be starting an adventure? How many people in their 40s have mid-life crises because they wish they *had* adventured more and done more? Nonetheless, I digress.

I think we have been sold a lie. The lie that if we have a goal, and set our course, and find our purpose, life will be peachy, and we will be happy. It's a lie because how many plans are actually that neat and tidy and attained in such a linear fashion? How many of our life paths follow the exact plan we set out?

And how often do we feel we aren't there yet, which results in horrible anxiety?

I think the problem with planning and setting goals is that you continually put success off until you reach that milestone. The problem with that, is that we are continually chasing something and live with a sense of "I am not a success yet" ... which means until I reach that I am failing. I am not a success. I am stressed and unhappy. I am anxious.

I am not saying you shouldn't set goals or make plans, but I do firmly believe that they should be more like journeys than definitive endings, because life doesn't always go according to plan. Goals cannot be seen as binary, either-or objectives. **Either** you reach your goal or you're not successful. This implies the nirvana of success/happiness is the holy grail that only our future selves can enjoy. It is a faraway accomplishment that we haven't yet realised.

We have to be agile. We have to enjoy the journey. We have to stop creating our own stress and unhappiness. **So what** if you aren't thin yet. So what if you haven't put on 10kgs of muscle yet? **So what** if you aren't a millionaire yet? **So what** if you aren't exactly where you want to be yet?

Life is a journey. It is a process, and every stage and obstacle should be acknowledged for the segment of your journey that it is. We need to fall in love with the journey. If plans get derailed, we need to acknowledge that and see the learning in what we have done. If it means we haven't complete a course because we feel that it is not the right thing for us, it is not a loss. It is learning. It is part of the process, and our lives should not be isolated to single, solitary triumphs.

There is power in so what. So what if your plans have changed? So what if you are starting your journey at 22? So what if you aren't there yet; you're still somewhere.

Achieving that success is only a momentary triumph. It doesn't define you. It doesn't suddenly mean you have got all your sh!t together. It doesn't suddenly mean you are happy. And it certainly doesn't mean that you suddenly have a purpose.



There is power in **so what**. It makes us ask ourselves what really matters. It helps us rethink our situation from that anxiety causing catastrophe, to recognising that it is simply a bump in the road on our journey. **So what** if you aren't there yet? **So what** if you fell off the rails for a bit? So what if you messed up? **So what** if you are a continual work in progress? (In fact I hope I **never** feel I am no longer a work in progress.)

When we ask ourselves **so what**, it allows us to assess, reframe, and get back on track to our destination. It may mean we take the train and not the bus. Or we take the windy road instead of the direct route, but **so what?** Life goes on. And it is messy and muddled and surprising and unpredictable. And if we can travel that journey without the stress of feeling we need to have it all figured out every second of every day of our

lives, we will be less anxious and less likely to sink into the sulky mud of self-defeat and self-inflicted anxiety.

Cut yourselves some slack, enjoy the journey, and when you come across those detours where you feel you have made some irreversible bummer up, ask yourself "**so what!?**" **So what** now? So what are the consequences? **So what** am I going to do to fix it? **So what** is next?

The relief and self-love you will feel when you embrace the power of **so what** will make your journey so much more enjoyable. It will make your purpose easier to see and feel and enjoy. It will make your goals feel more realistic and attainable. It will silence your inner judgement.

**So what** are you waiting for?

KERRY KOHL

# WELLBEING

Wellbeing shapes our experience of the world. It sways our resilience, influences the quality of our relationships and determines our capacity to engage and perform.



# I WANTED TO BLAME THE WHOLE WORLD! BUT THE ONLY ONE TO ACTUALLY BLAME WAS ME.

That's a big headline... but waking up one morning and not being able to feel at all from the neck down, is BIG!

**BRAD SHORKEND**

Let me clarify, I could move but I had no sensation. You could pinch me, hold a flame to my skin... I could not feel anything.

I drove myself to hospital, using the muscle memory of many thousands of hours driving in my life before.

The tentative hospital admission and then the testing process that followed was nothing short of horrific. I was a pin cushion, I gave more blood and had more high definition pictures taken of my brain than anyone ever should or would choose to.

And all of this came with no conclusive diagnosis. No named condition. Nothing that could be definitively treated.

Just one finding, an abnormality on my spinal cord. And no explanation as to how it got there. But certainty that it was causing the chaos in my nervous system. I still could not feel.

I fired one doctor after the other, yes you can do that. Especially those who told me I was going to die.

I may have been a patient, but I was also a client. And I was an even fussier client under the circumstances (specialist names withheld for reasons of me not being sued).

And then, someone told me the truth. A genius doctor who made it all so clear. I had probably done this to myself he said... my body was screaming out for

me to slow down. It had been giving me signs that I'd ignored, gentle whispers. So it decided to up the game and scream at me. And it did, LOUDLY!

The medical advice was not for me to go the route of a long script of medications and treatments that could have potentially been even more damaging in the long term. And don't misunderstand me, I'm all for big pharma when it's needed.

The guidance here though was for me to get my system into a healthy state. To serve my body so that it could serve me. To make better choices.

It sounds so cliché. It sounds like the stuff we hear all the time, and take with a pinch of salt.

But it's real, and it's true.

The recommendation was to get more alkaline foods into my diet, fermented ingredients as much as possible. Acidity is a killer.

Also the reduction/elimination of processed sugars.

Sleep! Get more, lots more. Stress... manage it. Make sure that it's my own and that I'm not taking in everyone else's. And then, once I am sure it's my own work out ways to reduce it.

And stay away from people who pile on the stress. Yes, you actually can. It's all about choices.

Exercise, every single day. Even if only for 20 minutes. Move meaningfully, it matters.

And get some sun, in moderation. It does indeed light us up.

This was my protocol. And I believed in it.

And none of what I've described here is novel or rocket science. But it is true, and most people get it all wrong. So did I.

But not anymore.

I took the genius doctor's guidance, and I applied as much of it as I could as often as I could. My life may have depended on it. Six months into the process, my feeling returned. It happened suddenly, my body lit up. I cannot describe the euphoric elation!

And 1 year later, when I was tested again the spinal cord issue was significantly reduced. Two years later it was gone.

I am strong and healthy. And very much alive!

So you can blame the whole world. But maybe, just maybe... maybe your wellbeing is in your own hands.

Not maybe. It is.

And I'm not saying that any of this is easy to do, but at what price do you not?

Be well!

And believe that you can.

One can choose to go back toward safety or forward toward growth. Growth must be chosen again and again; fear must be overcome again and again.  
**Abraham Maslow**

## Top tips to change your mindset and adopt new ways of thinking



### Cultivate Curiosity

The desire to know more, a willingness to seek out and embrace the unknown. The most common barrier to curiosity is the fear of the unknown and anxiety caused by facing uncertainty.

### Tip 1: Get rid of 'I'm bored' from your vocabulary

Look at things from multiple and different perspectives. Watch the mannerisms of people around you.

### Tip 2: Do something different

Make it a habit to practice doing something new and different every week. Listen to a different genre of music. Watch a new TV channel.



### Have a Growth Mindset

Believe that talents can be developed through hard work, strategy and input from others. With a fixed mindset, when we face challenges or receive criticism, we easily fall into insecurity or defensiveness.

### Tip 1: Find your purpose

Take time to reflect and find your purpose.

### Tip 2: Integrate the word 'yet' into your vocabulary.

This will help you believe that despite struggles, you can do still do what it is you want to do.



### Practice Learning Agility

A willingness to learn from experience and apply learnings in new situations. Let go of outdated beliefs and ways of doing things that are no longer appropriate or may no longer serve you.

### Tip 1: Be aware of being stuck in certain ways of problem-solving

When facing a problem or challenge, start by asking "What may be stopping me from trying something different?"

### Tip 2: Look for connections across seemingly unrelated areas

Choose something you have expertise in but may be unrelated to the work you do and ask yourself how you might apply this knowledge to your current challenge.



### Deal with Paradox

Deal with contradictory perspectives and think 'both/and' instead of 'either/or'. Our brain is wired to resolve tensions or competing demands by reacting defensively with a quick either/or option and response.

### Tip 1: Let go of control

Learn to admit you often don't have the full solution, but that you may need to integrate a variety of options from other people.

### Tip 2: Be aware of biases

Become aware of any biases you may have that make paradoxes or contradictions seem threatening and to be avoided. Are these biases inhibiting your ability to navigate paradox?



### Tolerate Ambiguity

Be comfortable with uncertainty, unpredictability, conflicting directions and multiple demands. Our brains are wired to avoid ambiguity - rather, we seek certainty and predictability.

### Tip 1: Change the way you see uncertainty

Change your narrative to redefine ambiguity, so you can accept it. Use phrases like: 'It's only human to worry and this is okay', and 'This situation is scary, but I'm not alone in feeling this'.

### Tip 2: Make small bets

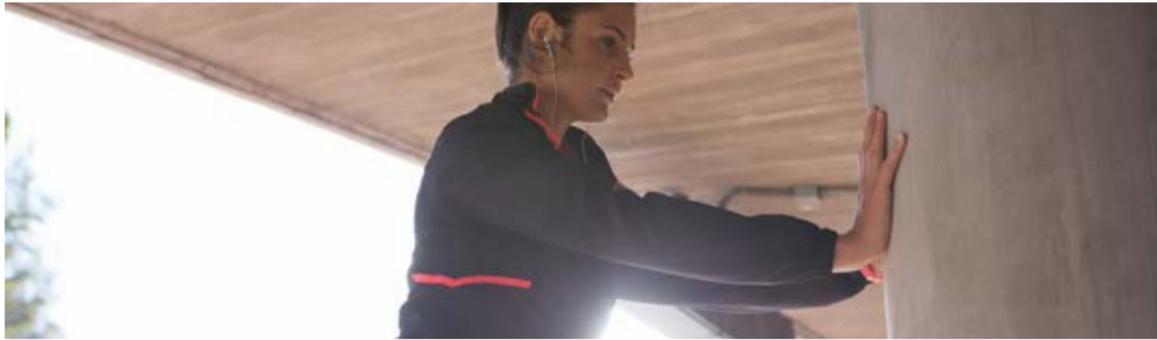
To manage uncertainty and ambiguity break down risks into a series of experiments or small bets. Try out things on a smaller scale 'to test the water'.

Take the Future Fit self-assessment and identify your areas of strength and weakness across a variety of essential leadership and success traits.

<https://www.futurefitacademy.com/the-futurefit-index/>

# THE FIVE PILLARS OF EMOTIONAL FITNESS

CHANTAL DAWTREY



The last few months have been hard. Preparing, curating and presenting content for offerings that are consistently admired but not purchased, the trudge of endless marketing and sales initiatives, increasingly constrained finances, a harsh winter and a month of ill health took me on a rocky trek. My emotional state dipped and skidded. At times it felt like I was shoved into thick, cold sludge and it took all my resolve and energy to keep my head above the mire.

You may have been there. You may have had it worse. What got you through it? For me it was multifaceted, sometimes conscious, occasionally automatic, and very much about a focus on sustaining my emotional fitness.

Most will agree that our mental health and emotional wellbeing are vital for living successfully in the world. Despite this we do very little to attend to and build and maintain our emotional wellbeing, or as we call it, emotional fitness. Mostly because none of us were taught how. For a long time there has been little appreciation for why we should even care or bother. The issues around emotional wellbeing have typically been relegated to recovery from mental illness.

The increased and wide spread emotional difficulties that have surfaced as a result of the stresses of being kept in the pressure cookers of our homes in very unnatural circumstances have made it abundantly clear that you do not have to be ill to need emotional support and assistance. The need to

have a proactive approach to building and maintaining one's emotional fitness, is becoming all the more apparent.

Building emotional fitness is a bit like building physical fitness. It is a process not an event. It is not a magic superfood or a quick antioxidant fix but a multifaceted, holistic strategy to living a fuller, more engaged and healthier life. This approach is couched within five pillars:

**Thinking, nourishing, moving, relating and feeling.**

**Thinking** - The thinking pillar focuses on lifelong learning, an openness and desire for ongoing growth and development, often for its own sake. It is also about a willingness to be vulnerable in the face of not knowing. Appreciating that there is clumsiness in knowing I don't know and not getting it right the first time, or the second time or maybe even the third time. Thinking is also about watching where I put my focus, being discerning about what I consume and allow into my awareness, and ensuring I critically evaluate it and don't simply accept anything at face value.

**Nourishing** - The nourishing pillar covers how I nourish my body through the choices I make about the quality, quantity and type of food I eat. In addition, it concerns how I nourish myself in other ways, through practicing self care including engaging in play and creative pursuits.

**Moving** - We have become so sedentary.

I'm still trying to shake the lockdown layers. Our bodies are made to move, to stretch, carry, pull, push, run, dance. Movement is key for building emotional fitness. It helps release the hormones and chemicals built up as a result of stress, anxiety and fear. If our bodies get stuck so do we, emotionally and psychologically and spiritually. Finding fulfilling and fun ways to move makes it easier to get up and go.

**Relating** - The relating pillar firstly focuses on improving my relationship with myself. If I have a difficult relationship with myself it will reflect in my outer relationships. Social skills and a supportive social circle are a vital element to ongoing emotional wellbeing and the ability to thrive.

**Feeling** - Coming back to my body, tuning in, listening to what my somatic sensations are telling me is the foundation of the feeling pillar. Many of us are quite disconnected from our bodies. None of us have really been taught how to resourcefully deal with our emotions. Learning emotion regulation skills and strategies has helped me navigate through the darkest, most difficult times.

Life, certainly in South Africa, is a bumpy carnival ride through the haunted, and very dark, house of looping blackouts, pothole traps, scary clown drivers, and opportunistic criminals. Consistently working at my emotional fitness makes me feel more prepared to manage the madness better and to keep my face to the sun.

# TAKING BACK THE POWER TO BE WELL AND HAPPY

DEBBIE CRAIG



Gallup's 2022 Global Emotions Report<sup>1</sup> (150,000 people in 120 countries) reveals a record high of negative emotions worldwide (stress, sadness, anger, worry, physical pain and loneliness). The study indicates a record 41% of people experience high levels of daily stress and that 330 million adults go at least two weeks without talking to a single family member or friend. Positive feelings, such as laughing or being well-rested, also hit new lows. Countries where social connections are strongest—such as nations in Central America—have the highest positive emotions scores globally. Whilst recent events are making it worse, unhappiness (the antithesis of wellbeing) has been rising for a decade. Many things contribute to make people unhappy, but five stand out: (1) poverty, (2) weak social connections and communities, (3) hunger, (4) loneliness and (5) lack of good work. All of these are on the rise

and can perpetuate unhappiness and unwellness because our emotions guide our decisions at the ballot box. Whilst we may not be able to do much about poverty, hunger or good work in the short term; we can positively influence how we think, feel and connect with others... and in so doing positively impact our levels of stress, happiness and well-being. Where we place our attention, is where our energy goes. When we are stressed and in survival response, our brains automatically become vigilant, self-focused, risk-averse and critical (of ourselves and others) and focus on worst case scenarios. As the brain does not know the difference between an imagined threat and a real one, and our bodies follow the brain, we can become perpetually stressed and flooded with stress chemicals that prevent rest, renewal, empathy and connection. We also miss out on the opposite effect of being in a state of

creation and flooded with hormones that encourage happiness, possibility thinking, creativity and connection. Neuroplasticity (forming and reorganizing synaptic connections in response to learning or experience) and Hebbian law (Neurons that fire together, wire together) enables us to consciously cultivate new neural paths, connections and automatic habits through repetition. In this way, we can train our brains to focus on what we do have rather than what we don't; what we can appreciate rather than complain about; what we are able to do and create, rather than on the limitations of our environment. Over time, this becomes the automatic response to life, resulting in greater happiness, health and overall well-being AND most often new possibilities to collaborate and create a richer and more abundant life experience.

[Reference 1](#)

# IT'S WHAT WE DO TO EACH OTHER AND FOR EACH OTHER THAT MATTERS MOST!

MARTIN PROBST



The last few years in particular haven't been easy, because we have seen the world changing almost faster than we can bear - and the sure knowledge that it's going to change even faster. Life is not always what it's supposed to be, and it doesn't appear to become easier any time soon.

But there is an important silver lining: we can get better at it, at life that is, by building our personal resilience. By developing our strength, our courage, and our confidence, we can improve the way we deal with what is happening around us and in turn enhance our wellbeing.

There is no doubt that our mindset has an enormous effect on our level of resilience and wellbeing. Essentially, everything starts with the humble thought. Because when we don't **think** well about ourselves and what's happening around us, we in turn don't **feel** well and hence don't **do** well. It is imperative that we learn how to improve our thoughts to think well, create a balanced mental and emotional connection to feel well, and introduce strategies that support our actions so that we can **do** well now and in the future. This will help us establish our wellbeing on all four planes of our existence: the Body (Physical), the Mind (Mental), the Heart (Emotional), and the Purpose (Spiritual).

To harness the power of thought and to **think well**, we can schedule regular self-reflection sessions to identify limiting thoughts that we need to

let go of, particularly when we get stressed. And then come up with new and more empowering thoughts going forward. - In order to feel well, we must create conscious awareness around our unconscious mind by tapping into our emotions and recognising why they are there to ensure that the brain and the heart are truly connected, work together, and possess and apply excellent communication. This will create our most congruent and authentic self, which allows us to live in harmony and with great mental and emotional wellbeing. If the optimism of our heart says 'yes', but the pessimism of our mind says 'no', or vice versa, we experience mixed results, because we give ourselves mixed messages. This leads to confusion, frustration, negative emotions and destructive self-talk. Balance and congruence are key! - And last but not least: To do well, one important step is to stop pretending to be superhuman! It is our responsibility to take charge of our outcomes and stop hiding our feelings just to keep others going. We must reach out to people for help if required, because our wisdom, experience and expertise do not prevent us from feeling stuck once in a while - we all do. We must make our mental health and our emotional wellbeing a top priority and learn to ask for help when we know that we can't do it ourselves and accept help when it's offered. Let's help each other out within the team, our organisation, our family, or any other group we are a part of. Because the moment we stop fighting for each other, we lose humanity. So,

let's embrace diversity and leverage from each other's strengths and different skill sets. And when we do, we will realise that people all around us who always wanted to help, didn't do so in the past because they thought we didn't need it, and all was under control.

**My practical wellbeing tip:** You can't control the uncontrollable, so you must let it go. Holding on to things that are not in your control can be detrimental to your mental health, and the following 3 steps can help you when feelings of stress, pressure or overwhelm creep in:

1. Write down everything that stresses you out.
2. Cross off all the items that are not in your control and let them go; truly!
3. Start to focus and invest your time and energy into the things that are within your control, one at the time!

If you shift your attention and thoughts straight to solution-based thinking and start to take action, you will experience a sense of achievement, success and fulfilment which leads you back on track so you can achieve the outcomes you are looking for.

So, let's collectively look after our mental wellbeing. It's what we do to each other and for each other that matters most! And this insight and realisation will strengthen our outlook and help us overcome any obstacles we might face to succeed in today's busy and ever-changing environment.



## 6 Ways to Prepare for Difficult Conversations

by Julia Kerr Henkel, MD of Lumminos

### Getting yourself ready

In preparation for your conversation, consider: the environment - is it safe for both parties; humility - recognition that each party is as much a part of the challenge as they are a part of the solution; readiness - are you both ready for a courageous conversation?

### Remember: the body speaks first, never lies and always wins

Breathe deeply and slowly and sit in an open posture when you get to have the conversation, otherwise your body will think it's in a threat situation.

Sit with your feet on the ground, back and spine is upright - but with a relaxed spine. Your arms, hands, legs and ankles are open, uncrossed and unfolded, your gaze direct but with soft eyes.

Notice your mind-talk - is it fearful and negative? Practice saying 'I'm going to be brave, open, clear, kind and curious'.

In any courageous conversation, there are three conversations playing out:

- **The what happened? conversation:** Most difficult conversations involve disagreement about what has happened or what should happen.
- **The feelings conversation:** Every difficult conversation also asks and answers questions about feelings.
- **The identity conversation:** This is the conversation we each have with ourselves about what this situation means to us.

Every difficult conversation involves grappling with these **three conversations**, so engaging successfully requires learning to operate effectively in each of the three realms.

### Starting the conversation

Your opening statement (this can only be a max of 2 minutes to avoid overwhelming your partner and causing them to become armoured up and defensive)

#### Name the issue.

The problem named is the problem solved. Name the behaviour that is causing the problem and the area the behaviour is impacting.

#### Select a specific example that illustrates the behaviour or situation you want to change.

Since you only have two minutes in which to make your entire opening statement, this example must be succinct.

#### Describe your emotions about this issue.

Telling someone what emotion his or her behaviour evokes in you is intimate and disarming. You are letting the person know that you are affected, that you are vulnerable.

#### Clarify what is at stake.

In other words, why is this important? What is at stake for you, for the other person, others, for the customer, for the team, for the organisation?

#### Identify your part and contribution to this problem.

What is appropriate here is a brief acknowledgement that you recognise any role you may have played in creating the problem and that you intend to do something about it.

#### Indicate your wish to resolve the issue.

Use the word resolve. It shows that there is not a firing squad waiting outside the door.

Invite the other(s) to respond. At the end, clarify what action or commitments will each of you take or not take

# WELLNESS BEGINS WITH THE WELLBEING OF OUR “TRIBES”

JUSTIN BODILL

The concept of wellbeing has become a hot topic and high priority for us all over the last few years in particular. The issue of work life balance has become increasingly poignant, and levels of stress and burnout have continued to rise. Proposals for a 4-day work week are underway, and this was all before the world was thrown into the clutches of a global pandemic.

As such, people have become more intentional about prioritising their mental, emotional and physical wellbeing.

While this is important, I was reading a fantastic book (Belonging, by Owen Eastwood), where the author reminded me that wellness begins with the wellbeing of our 'tribes'. We are social

creatures, and all have a strong need to belong within a group. Our ancestors understood that their purpose, was always driven by the wellbeing of the tribe. They did what was needed to ensure the survival and growth of their tribe of people.

I can't help but feel that in today's day and age, we seem to have forgotten that. The wellbeing of the people is often last on the list, usurped by the KPI's and goals of the teams, companies, and institutions that they belong to. The pursuit of group success was never meant to happen at the expense of the very people who belonged to that group. The author puts it like this: "Success' of a group is an illusion without these wellbeing markers being

met. In so many endeavours today, from sport to business, we see the achievement of an outcome at the cost of broken people. That is not the definition of success we inherited from our ancestors. Rather, that is us having lost our way, led rather by ego than the welfare of others."

As leaders, managers, coaches, teachers, parents etc. our focus should be to come back to the essence of wellness: to create environments, goals, structures and processes where the wellbeing of the tribe is prioritised. If we want to see a true shift in wellness, we need to recognise that individual wellness actually starts with the wellness of the group.

# FINDING THE ROAD BACK TO YOUR SELF

//

"Self-care is how you take your power back." — Lalah Delia

NATALIE MOORE

I can distinctly remember the moment that I claimed my power back. I was stressed, overwhelmed, unhappy, unfulfilled, dissatisfied and was spending every day yearning for something in my life that would turn it all around. I had returned to work post my maternity leave from having my daughter. It was a mental and physical struggle like I had never experienced. I never could have anticipated my whole body response to this moment in my life, but on one particular day I remember making a conscious decision to get myself back.

I was working on a project for my then workplace; the focus was on exploring new values, mission and purpose for the organisation. Like a slap in the face, I was struck with the immediate response, I had no idea what my own values, mission or purpose was in my life. But I knew in that instant that this was what I needed to investigate. I spent days and weeks exploring this work and connecting with myself, taking moments of quiet time, breathing, walking, journaling, listening to myself to reconnect with what mattered to me most in my life.

I unapologetically gave myself the care I needed. I tuned into my desires for my life, for my health, for the woman I wanted to be then and in the future. Knowing my values allowed me to make decisions that aligned with how I wanted to live and for my health. I let go of the guilt that was birthed the moment my daughter was born. I let go of the "shoulds" and juggle and chose to care for me, to reclaim my power so that I could be healthy, well and thrive as I chose to.

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ACADEMY



# Game. Set. Match.

[CLICK HERE](#) to check out this month's resilience tips and tricks to see how matching values will help you win.

# COME, TELL ME HOW YOU WORK

LITA CURRIE

Flexibility and autonomy – focusing on these have changed my life. During my 22-year career in corporate I loved my job, loved the people and loved the learning – but didn't love having to be at the office on a Friday afternoon, or having to sit in multi-day (boring) management sessions. Ever since I left corporate almost 6 years ago, having the flexibility to choose when I work and the autonomy to say no to certain tasks has made all the difference to my wellness. Hopefully my story adds value to you.

As an executive at a fast-moving consumer goods company, I had a well-paying job with the challenges and the stress that came with it. I thought I was well-adapted. I would not have to work late into the night or over weekends, like some of my colleagues. I enjoyed the role and had the opportunity to learn a lot. But I would get sick constantly. During winter I would drag myself to the office on a Monday morning, work throughout the week and over weekends collapse into bed with a cold or the flu. And the next Monday would be the same routine. It was starting to take a toll on my health and family life. Although I loved the work, I was getting increasingly frustrated by “futile” tasks e.g. spending weeks compiling a budget that would just get cut by 25% or creating a presentation that might not be seen at all. The endless hours sitting in management meetings where only about 40% of the content was relevant to me overwhelmed me with a sense of futility. But we accept the reality we are presented with, and it never entered my mind to question this. Over time I became more cynical and toxic, unwilling to take chances and irritated with my co-workers.

The change when it came, was

unexpected and scary, as most changes are. Our company got taken over by a bigger conglomerate. Suddenly, the job that I thought I would have for the next 10 years changed dramatically. The culture changed and I found myself unable – and unwilling – to change with it. The only sane option was to resign. I had never anticipated being my own boss and leaving the relative security of formal employment was terrifying. Worries about putting food on the table and paying school fees kept me up at night. But now, almost 6 years later, it was the best decision that I could have made.

Being my own boss, I have the autonomy to decide the type of work that I'd like to do and who I'd like to collaborate with. I am in the privileged position to be able to say no to projects that I don't want to do – either because it doesn't make the best use of my skills, or it's not the type of work that I want to be known for.

Are you feeling like I had in corporate? How do you know that it is time for a change? For me, it was the reality of being sick all the time. It was feedback from my colleagues that I was unwilling to help or inflexible. Feelings of resentment were building up and threatened to become overwhelming. I wasn't having fun anymore and faced Mondays with a sense of dread.

So, what can you do?

I was lucky to be able to take a severance package which would cushion the dip in salary for a couple of months. If you can, build up some spare cash to carry you for 6 – 12 months as you establish your company. Tighten your belt if you can – cut down on luxuries and even things that you think are necessities. I stopped buying clothes because, really,

I had enough to wear! You probably need fewer items than you think you do. I moved to ready-made meals, which turned out to be cheaper than cooking my own meals because there's less waste. I stopped subscriptions to magazines and rewards programmes that didn't add value and managed to save quite a bit on my monthly expenses.

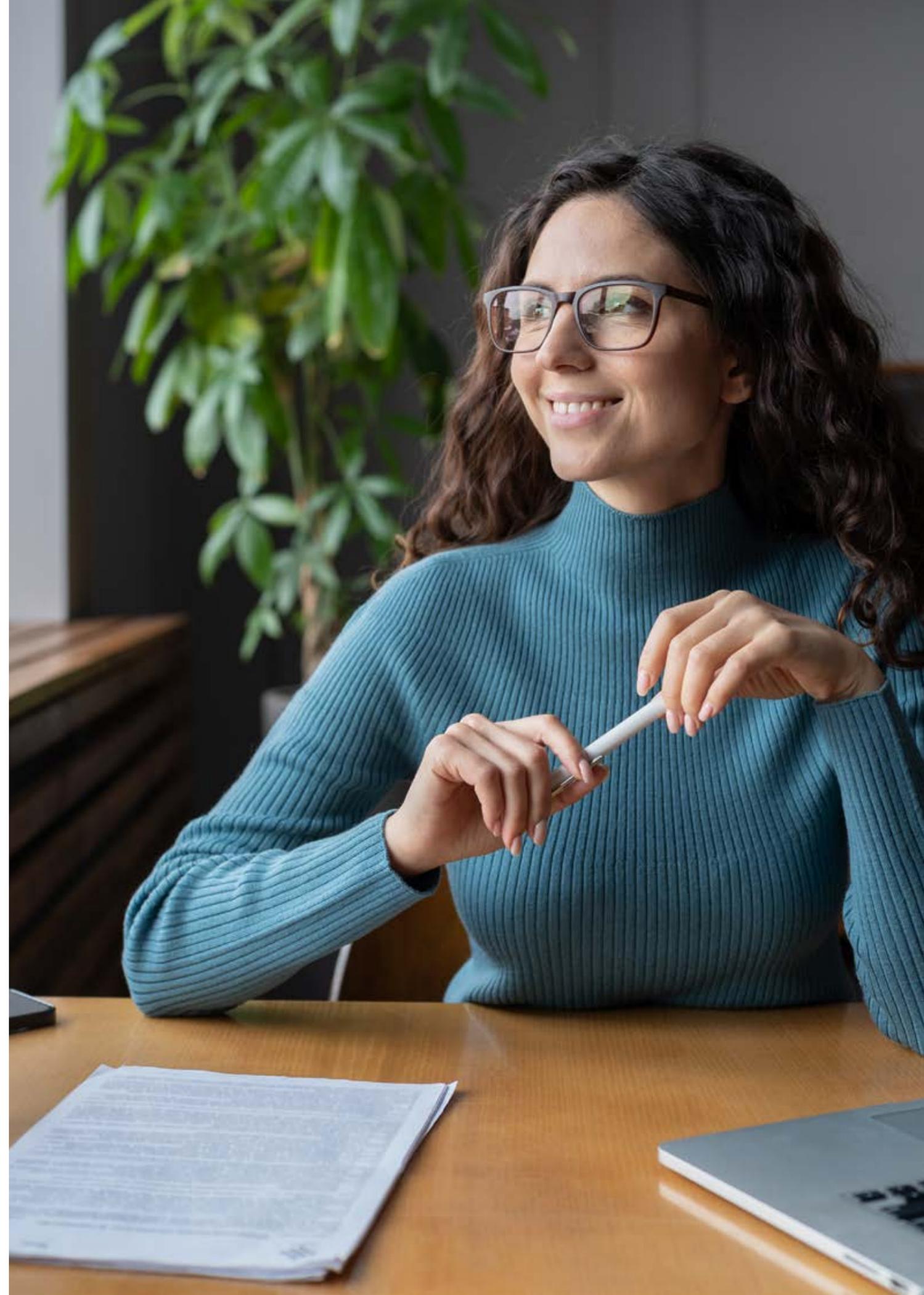
Next, make a list of what you can do that you can charge money for. You probably have a lot of skills that will be in demand in the marketplace. And then decide what you'd like to focus on and what you'd like to spend your time on. If you've nurtured a side-hustle, now is the time to turn it into a business.

Reach out to your network and put the word out that you're going on your own. Take people to coffees and lunch and get your name out there. Ask people to involve you and reach out to potential collaborators.

Ramp up your social media. If you've been stuck in corporate for a while (like I have) your LinkedIn profile is probably old and stale. Fix it up, add new photos and focus of publishing and posting often. Share your journey and your insights – you might be surprised at the positive reaction you get.

Finally, if it's not possible to take the plunge into your own business, but you need a change, inquire about the possibility of taking a sabbatical. Companies are much more open to this idea than they have been in the past. Take a couple of months off to find your groove again and join the team with renewed energy.

Satisfaction and health go hand in hand. And it is possible to have both.





# THE FULL TOLL OF THE PANDEMIC

NATALEE HOLMES

I saw a new client last week. She was in Gr.7 in 2020, 13 years old. The final year of her primary schooling should have been marked with celebrated milestones and ceremonial traditions. Instead, her primary school career and entry into the teens was marked by isolation and loss. She ended primary school without being able to say proper goodbyes to her friends of eight years. The cocoon she had been in for most her childhood was unceremoniously ripped away. She had no formal closure on primary school, no celebration of the momentous occasion, no rite of passage.

Her long-awaited 13th birthday was celebrated on the edge of her driveway, while friends and family did a drive-by wave and hasty lob of sanitised gifts to wish her happy birthday. A great idea, given the circumstances, but a dismal dilution of what, to most children, is an epic moment of coming of age.

Fast forward to 2021 and high school began for her. Under the restrictions she had no proper orientation, no new Gr.8 camp, no Valentine's ball. High school began under the watered-down haze of pandemic conditions. Two months of being at school and she was plunged back into tight restrictions and online schooling. The few new friends she had made were only available to her through online platforms. No hugs. No giggles around her. No warm fuzziness of peer acceptance. No testing the boundaries in the pursuit of self-discovery. When she finally was allowed to go back to in-person schooling, five of the seven new friends she had made, left. More loss. More fumbling around the phenomenon of teenagerhood in an unnatural way.

Present day, and she came to see me. Her academics have plummeted. She does not want to go to school anymore. She feels lost and lonely and out of sorts. Not surprising really. It's all foreign and 'new' – she went from Gr.7 to Gr.9 without the luxury of adjusting gradually to the situation.

Adolescence, the end of primary school, and beginning of high school, should be marked with so many exciting experiences, surrounded by peers all in the same boat. It is a critical stage of development where peer relationships help develop independence from their peers, and their own identities. Peers are the biggest influence in teens' lives and the past two years deprived them of that social camaraderie, that critical development support. Good peer relationships are positively related to adolescent identity, and our current adolescents missed out on two years of this journey of social and emotional maturity. No parties. No camps. No sport. No socialising.

In the past three weeks, I know of four suicide attempts in young people aged 12, 15, 17 and 19. Unfortunately three were successful. Mental health in young people – specifically helplessness, depression, and suicidal ideation – has been declining since 2009, but the pandemic has made things much worse. The toll the pandemic has had on everyone is yet to be fully counted, but in our youth, there has been so much unexpected loss. We are facing a suicide crisis.

Living in South Africa is stressful at the best of times. Add to that the pandemic, and our teens are struggling. They have been isolated, lost friends and relatives, been privy to the strains on their parents who were not at work compartmentalising their stresses. They have become acutely aware of increased financial stresses that the pandemic put on a lot of families. They couldn't hang out with their natural social support systems. There has been so much more stress and anxiety in the past few years and our youth are not coping, but, the increase in depression and suicide has been since 2009. We have to do something. Stat!

Unfortunately acting after the horse has bolted is useless, particularly in

the case of suicide. This is why Mental Health should not just be a month in the year. It needs to be something people are conscious of all the time. You never know what someone is going through, what life changes have happened, or how these events have affected them.

It is so important that we speak about mental health issues as a means of empowerment and prevention. It is overdue. We need to stop the stigma, stop the spread, and ensure people are well informed and protected when it comes to mental health. And it is even more important that we keep an eye on our young people. They aren't "just kids," and they aren't "just bouncing back" from all this. Adolescents are in a critical stage of development and Covid threw an almighty spanner in their works.

I fear that the full toll the pandemic has had on adolescents is still adding up. Now more than ever, we need to create awareness in our homes and communities. We need to proactively educate and empower people with the resources to cope with mental health challenges. We will not stop mental health issues, but we can focus on creating a community and attitude where there is no longer a stigma around mental illness, and rather, a society where lives are valued, challenges are managed, and potential can be reached. Feeling depressed and anxious about the state of the world are perfectly understandable responses. Everything is not "fine" and acknowledging that truth is half the battle. We all need to be more open to communicating mental health struggles, particularly talking about resources available.

Healing can only begin when we stop pretending mental health is not a thing. When we stop saying we are 'fine' when we are not, we will begin to open the channels to destigmatise mental health and create a community of safety, where people will feel safe to speak about their struggles.

# HOW TO ATTEND TO WELLBEING... WHEN WE REALLY DON'T FEEL WELL....

DR ROBYN WHITTAKER

If wellbeing is important to you, as it is to me, you too will have been exposed to many (many) different suggestions and approaches to improve your own, your children's and your family's levels of wellbeing – and all this prior to even beginning to think about workplace wellbeing. We are, without doubt, in time and state where we – and those we love most – are being exposed to very high levels of stress, from multiple different sources. So what to do when even paying attention to our wellbeing seems a stretch too far – as a friend said recently, "It's gotten to a point where the fact that I have not "journalled/ walked in nature/ done yoga/ etc etc etc" is now making me feel stressed out and guilty that I have not paid attention to my wellbeing, and that I can't seem to stick to these habits I know I need, despite my repeated commitments to myself to do so."

It's one thing being intellectually aware of, conceptually adept at, and perhaps even excellent at speaking about wellbeing practices – it's another thing entirely to practice them with such consistency that they become indispensable to us.

Sometimes, when we are most in need of self-soothing, self-calming, we are least able to access these practices, because we are already in a physiologically hyper-alert mode – overtired, overanxious, overcommitted and frankly, overwhelmed.

So today, I offer something that I am finding useful, right now, right in the moment, and that is accessible without a lot of intellectual processing. This is a set of body-hacks – not mine, certainly not new, and not in any way complex. Rooted in polyvagal theory, these tiny actions help to physiologically reset our bodies to a calmer state. Switch-flippers that help us move from a predominantly "activated" state in which our sympathetic nervous system (fight/flight/freeze) is running rampant, towards a more balanced state in which our parasympathetic nervous system (rest, calm, clear) has a chance at a look-in. And when we are in a state where our parasympathetic nervous system is working decently, this helps to open up more space to do the other things we know we need, but somehow can't access.

Try these as "tiny habits" – so tiny that you

know you can do them every day, with no need to psyche yourself up. And if you can do just these three tiny habits – even if you need to do only ONE of them until you can do two, then three – every day, your body recognises them and learns how to flip more quickly from the hyper-activated state to the calm... They are best done first thing in the morning before the mind starts experiencing worry, but also whenever there is a sense of anxiety escalating.

## MOVE:

Literally just 2-5 mins of vigorous exercise. It's ideal to start your day straight out of bed with this, before your brain kicks in... Running on the spot, jumping jacks, arm swings, bend and stretches -anything super short and simple.

Move your body before you start thinking yourself into fight or flight mode (sympathetic nervous system). Getting your heart rate up activates your parasympathetic nervous system.

You can exercise for longer if you want to in the morning or another time of the day,

but try not to skip that 2-5 minutes of getting your heart rate up before you do anything else. You should be slightly out of breath by the time you stop.

## STOP and NOTICE

Find an internal or external sensory focus and pay attention to this. It could be the sound of your breath, the feeling of your pulse as you settle from the exercise, or the sensation of fabric, sound of birdsong, noise of the traffic. It must be real and sensed. Should your mind wander, bring it back – the point is not to not wander – its to be intentional about bringing your attention back to that focus point. The choice of focus is not important, as long as it's something that can be experienced rather than thought about. This habit teaches your brain how to pause between stimulus and reaction.

## REBOOT

Have a shower at the usual temperature, then at the end, turn the water onto full cold, not gradually, immediately. Stay under it for 5 seconds, or longer if you can. Do this every day for a week, then try to progressively increase the time. It won't be pleasant – but it's not supposed to be. Cold water stimulates our vagal nerve, and "shocks" us into a calm state.

And for those of us with access to partners, families, friends, even friendly strangers, as well as for those of us who are grappling with how to support those we love who are confronting their own demons – there is another extraordinarily powerful physiological hack which has been shown to be very effective in resetting our neurological state – also through powerful vagal nerve stimulation, neurological mirroring, and triggering of oxytocin, a powerful hormonal relaxant. A long, intended, safe hug – at least 20 seconds or longer – literally contains us. Ask. And offer.

With thanks to @Janine Barnes, who reminded me of, and shared, these simple, oh so valuable body-hacks.... This doesn't mean we don't need to attend to the deeper stuff – but sometimes, a little help in getting into a state where we are able to go there really helps...



# KEEP COMING HOME TO YOURSELF

GAYLIN JEE

In early 2021 I posted a reflection called Meta: Reflections from an unknowable year. It contained insights from a year that will go down in history as the year the world stopped. Mostly the pause made me think about what was good in my life and the many things I am grateful for – good relationships, fulfilling work, a roof over my head, food in the belly, health. I was also longing for the things that were no longer certain, perhaps the longing was just for a little more certainty. In May 2020, I had a trip booked from South Africa to the UK for a friends' wedding and some work. In early May, I was optimistic (or naïve) enough to think we would still fly out later that month. Suffice to say neither wedding nor work went ahead.

Two years on, and we have learnt that no matter how much we wish it, there are many significant things that

are not within our control. We have been wrestling with our monkey minds ('Angel Investor' Naval Ravikant's term), trying to absorb and make sense of what a profound lack of control means for today and tomorrow. Some days we 'have not got this', no matter how many post-it notes and meme's of positive affirmations we pace in our path.

Byron Katie (look her up if you do not know her) beautifully states: Keep coming home to yourself, you are the one you have been waiting for. I find this an immensely powerful and empowering statement.

Here's my take on preparing for 2023.

Make it the year of coming home to yourself, of knowing yourself, as 2023 will be another unknowable year, as will be the years after that.

- Value the pause (rather than seek always to fill it)
- Slow down (to hear yourself)
- Identify physical sensations (where they show up, what they tell you)
- Remove primary agitators (see Centre for Human Tech, watch Adam Grant's Give and Take) Play (seriously, at work)
- Walk (preferably outdoors)
- Practice positive inquiry (ask more beautiful questions)
- Set intent (for your days, months and years).

Last, but not least, create a calm and curious space for your monkey mind. Give it some permission to 'play up' with whatever it wants to tell you, and then let it settle. Maybe it knows you better than you think.



## Lighting The Way

Lumminos is a full-service coaching consultancy founded in 2007 by Julia Kerr Henkel, an ICF PCC accredited Integral Coach. We have a global network of professional coaches and consultants who work across the areas of change management, leadership and organisational development.

### Our five key services are:

1. Individual coaching
2. Team coaching and cohesion
3. Dare to Lead™ courage building programs
4. Deepening connection and understanding with the enneagram
5. Keynotes



### Individual Coaching

We offer individual coaching that is tailor-made to meet the client's objectives, desired outcomes and timeframe.

### Dare to Lead™ Courage Building Programs

Any one of our online sessions, in person workshops or modules can stand alone or be built into your existing leadership development programs. Designed to build practical, measurable skills for your work, team and life, covering the daring leadership and practical courage building skillset of Dare to Lead™ based on the empirical research of Brené Brown.

### Keynotes

**Calling All to Courage:**  
Drawing on all you've got for times like these

**Returning Home: From Bali to Bryanston:**  
A South African's lessons of resilience after being locked out during lockdown

### Team Coaching

We partner with various teams within the organisation to assist them and their people to successfully transition through complex layers of change and relational dynamics for high performance and ongoing results. Together with our clients, we work on developing intelligent systems and synchronised teams who like to work and win together. We develop daring leaders and managers who operate with bravery, accountability, authenticity, skill, clarity and compassion.

### Enneagram

The Enneagram is an archetypal framework that offers in-depth insight to individuals, groups and collectives. Using the Enneagram system, our programs are designed to increase tolerance for diversity and to build individual and team self-awareness, accountability and interpersonal strategies so you can pull together rather than apart during times of high pressure, challenge or difficulty.

**To find out more about the Lumminos offering email [julia@lumminos.co.za](mailto:julia@lumminos.co.za)**

# HOW CAN I GET BACK CONTROL OF MY SCHEDULE?

Implementing small but impactful changes to our schedules will help us find a little more balance.

CAITLIN WATSON



For a long time now, I have felt as though my diary has been out of control, and that my day has been determined by other people's priorities. I have been rushing from meeting to meeting, running frantically upstairs to a boardroom for one face-to-face meeting, then rushing back to my desk for another virtual call, leaving no time in between to catch my breath, get a snack or water, or give my eyes a screen break. Inevitably, most meetings then start with an apology from my side, which puts me on the back foot for the rest of the meeting, and impacts my confidence.

I've realized that I've structured my diary – both personal and professional – in a way that depends on everything running according to plan, with no space for the unexpected (a sick child,

a traffic jam, a system glitch, or dreaded loadshedding). The fact is that this way of operating is not sustainable, and I've been considering the following as I look for ways to find some balance at work:

1. For those hour-long team meetings, implement a 50-minute time cap, so that we give each other 10-minutes to get that coffee and settle before the next call. The only way that this would work is if as a team, we:
  - Have a clear agenda with time allocations
  - Assign roles for the meeting: e.g., timekeeper and gatekeeper to keep the conversation on track and hold each other accountable
  - Have a feedback/update template that team members

complete before the session so that the information shared is relevant and impactful

2. For those other meetings, where people keep you on the call until the last second, even though you've highlighted that you need to get onto another call:
  - Put a boundary in place at the start of the call: indicate that you will need to leave five minutes before the end of the call, and then remind them five minutes before you need to leave, so that they can close off the conversation. And then, actually leave the call... so, hold your own boundary
3. Is it necessary for me to be included in all the meetings to

which I am invited? Consider the following when deciding whether a meeting is important to attend:

- What is my role in the meeting? If I have no direct accountability for, impact on, or influence over the

else can do, and may enjoy doing, to free up my time for more value-adding activities?

4. How can I center myself before each call, so that I am fully present when I join and can

that meeting and understand that it is important enough for me to be present, then it generally warrants my full attention.

5. Are these changes to my schedule making the impact I need them to?

items and activities discussed in the meeting, then is it necessary for me to join? If the purpose of attending the meeting is simply 'FYI', perhaps respectfully decline and request the meeting minutes.

- Could my time be best used elsewhere? Since moving into the consulting space, I have become acutely aware of the cost of an hour, and have the following question top of mind when trying to prioritise my activities:
- Is this a good use of my skills and time, given my areas of expertise?
- Is my customer getting value for money from me doing this activity?
- Is this an activity that someone

use the time productively?

- Breathe. There is much research available around the benefits of taking a few deep breaths before starting your next activity, from managing stress and anxiety to improving focus
- Drink water (and a little less coffee). Considering that the brain is composed of mostly water, drinking water will increase energy and help combat fatigue
- Focus. It's tempting to attend to emails and scroll through social media while in a meeting, but I've seen that important information is missed if I don't focus, and I end up having to take extra time to obtain the information I missed. If I have committed the time to

James Clear's Atomic Habits refers to the impact of creating tiny habits, which, if applied consistently, yield significant results

- Identify the small changes you'd like to make to your schedule, and consider using a habit tracker to track your progress to see what has and hasn't worked so that you can make adjustments

Sometimes taking a step back to review our diaries and the relevance of all our activities will help us take a step forward in the right direction.

Once we start to take back control of our schedules, we start to take back control of our lives and start to live a little more intentionally.



## REFLECTIONS ON REST.

SOHINI PETRIE

Rested, we are ready for the world but not held hostage by it; rested, we care again for the right things and the right people in the right way. In rest we re-establish the goals that make us more generous, more courageous, more of an invitation, someone we want to remember, and someone others would want to remember too.

- Rest. An excerpt from *Consolations* by David Whyte.

### Rest is one of those intersections of leading well and living well.

Without sufficient rest, not much in our lives can go well. The emotional wear and tear of modern life stresses chip away at our hopes, dreams, and sense of worth. We are bombarded with advice on how to do more. Advice on how to be more effective, more efficient, more productive. We are taught that you need to be working hard. And that those who do, deserve all the riches and fame that grind culture promises.

What if our lives didn't centre work and productivity? What if rest was not a luxury? What if rest was not a guilt-ridden activity?

Rest is not just the absence of work. Nor is it a reward for work. It is part of living. If you need scientific evidence to convince you of the mental, physical, and creative benefits of rest, I am sure you will find a multitude of studies and neuroscientific research to back this up. The invitation here is a more activating approach. A pause to consider what role rest has in your life...and what might be possible if you thought differently about rest.

The Nap Ministry has started a revolution with their "Rest is Resistance" framework. They see rest as a tool for social justice and liberation from systems of oppression. In an article for *Yes Magazine*, Tricia Hersey the founder of the Nap Ministry says:



" I don't want to work so much that there is no space to have leisure and to just be. I don't want to grind on at an unsustainable, machine-level pace. I don't want to place my entire worth as a divine being at the feet of capitalism, begging to be truly seen for who I am: a perfect, brilliant human being and citizen, worthy of rest simply because I am alive. "

Find her book *Rest is Resistance: A Manifesto* here: <https://thenapministry.com/>

The rest and wellbeing revolution is gaining momentum in conventional work as well. A few countries are now experimenting with a four-day work week. And there is a growing sentiment and awakening to prioritizing our wellbeing across all industries and sectors.

Alex Soojung-Kim Pang, the founder of Strategy and rest says **"The world tells us: Work is important; we need to reply: Rest is important too."**

His best-selling books on this subject can be on his website:

**Rest: Why you get more done when you work less**

**Shorter: Redesign your work and reclaim your time**

We build so much of our lives around work and I have recently started fiercely rejecting making work the central and motivating factor in mine. There are trade-offs of course. We still live under the thumb of capitalism. So a healthy shift in expectations and perspectives go hand-in-hand.

Here are some journaling prompts to help you reflect on rest and create the shifts that you want in your life and work:

[Quick start guide to journaling:

- Choose a comfortable spot that you enjoy being in
- Light a candle or incense or play your favourite tunes to create a lush space for your journaling
- Take a few moments to close the open tabs in your brain. Try box breathing or a body scan.

- Set a 4/5 minute timer to answer each question]
1. How did my relationship to rest and work first get formed?
  2. How did that shape my definitions of success and failure?
  3. How do these beliefs about rest and work impact my view of my own worthiness?
  4. When was the last time I felt well rested?
  5. What are some things that make me feel restored and nourished?
  6. Read: How to rest well and enjoy a more creative sustainable life. What might layering work and rest in my daily routine look like for me?
  7. What might be possible if I rested more, and felt restored and nourished every day?

Rest well.

## WELLNESS: BEYOND PERFECT TO BALANCE

JULIA KERR HENKEL

Feeling out of kilter and overwhelmed from competing commitments and time compression is an experience many of us are far too familiar with. Achieving the Goldilocks effect of 'just right and just enough' in our personal and professional wellbeing can feel unattainable.

If you've ever used a pair of old-fashioned measuring scales, you'll know what a delicate pairing act it is to get the elements perfectly aligned. The scales tip and dip to stabilize and find balance as you add and remove a little at a time.

There is an invitation in this metaphor to shift our thinking and our self-talk away from needing to achieve perfect scores across all of life's domains and rather to weight the different ingredients in our lives, to make small adjustments to experience enhanced stability knowing that on occasion circumstances will tip you off balance and you'll need to recalibrate.

Measure what's on your plate right now using the Circle of Life diagram below. Honestly and compassionately consider where you might be in and off balance across these 12 categories\*. Place a dot in each area to rate how positive it is in your life. The further from the centre, the more positive it is for you. Then connect all the dots and notice the spider graph which appears showing you areas of 'wellness' and areas of imbalance. Getting this snapshot can give you a steer as to where to make small but necessary adjustments.

Remember to set attainable, realistic goals which feel supportive and consider the basics of wellness medicine: water intake, movement, home cooked nutritious meals, clean self-talk and plenty of sleep.

As James Clear, author of *Atomic Habits* says: Every action you take is a vote for the type of person you wish to become. So, doing 1% of something aimed at



source: Institute for Integrative Nutrition Circle of Life

balancing your wellness is better than doing 10% of nothing. Three months from now you will either have three months of excuses or three months of progress. Make your choice.

# THE STATE OF OUR MENTAL HEALTH DETERMINES THE STATE OF OUR LIVES

WENDY NAGEL

It's September 2022, I am not sure how we have arrived at this point in the year. It feels like we are moving through time at the speed of light and the invisible g-forces hitting our bodies, emotions and mental states are next level. Given that October is Mental Health month, I am observing my deep need to slow things down and create space for reflection on my experience in this world that is emergent, unpredictable, chaotic, uncertain, and uncontrollable.

It raises the question: So, what is in my hands and circle of influence?

The straightforward answer, from my vantage point, is YOU. You are 100% in charge of your experience in this life. This is not great news for people who would like to point fingers at everything and everyone around them as to why they are suffering, and I'm ok with that.

For those reading this and wondering, well how can I get more of a grip on my mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual life I offer the following based on the many conversations I have had with countless clients and teams this year so far:

1. **You have been granted a Lifetime not a Worktime** – I see so many people trying to include a slice of life into their all-consuming work. It's time to swing the pendulum on this one. Consider how you deliver your work in the context of living your life.
2. **Attunement and Presence:** Become completely attuned to your experience daily; that is, your mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual sense of yourself and notice the inner landscape you inhabit. As inside, so outside. It is only from the place of being deeply connected to your own experience, that you can connect with more capacity to the world and its demands.
3. **Notice the state of your nervous system** – are you in the red

fight, flight or freeze zone where numbness, dissociation, depression, helplessness, hopelessness and collapse live or do you sense relaxation, curiosity, mindfulness, creativity, expansion, groundedness, compassion, and connectedness in the green zone? For so many, life is being lived in the red at 6000rpm, which is fine in bursts; but is not sustainable over time, not even for high performance vehicles. It's time to get serious about taking radical responsibility for your nervous system as it is emitting a frequency based on where you are hanging out and as we know, our frequency attracts more of the same. If you don't like how you are feeling every day, then it's time to change how you live each day and believe it or not, these choices are in your hands. It just requires placing a value on yourself and redefining boundaries.

4. **Let's talk boundaries** – who are you angry at when you are feeling put upon? I would suggest we get angry at ourselves for not living according to what we value, and we neglect ourselves for fear of upsetting others. Sadly, this way of being does not serve relationships honestly or authentically, because each time we sacrifice our needs to keep the peace or keep someone else happy; we create a distance in the relational field anyway and so relationships break down over time. It's time to get really clear on values and start building habits and structures that will support who you want to be and how you want to live your precious life.
5. **Get real and authentic:** When we can get to a place of being authentic and have shed the masks of our personality and can assert ourselves into the world with confidence, we claim our space and the quality of our lives. Getting to this point in life,

rarely happens by accident and requires growing self-awareness and consciousness through life's trials and tribulations. Inhabiting our lives fully, means we show up for ourselves first and foremost, so that we can make our best contribution from a place of courageous confidence.

6. **You have choice of response instead of reaction:** Welcoming home all of the limiting self-beliefs, saboteurs and unwanted fragments of ourselves so that we can see them for the intelligence that they are in keeping us safe and how they now need to be acknowledged and no longer acted on out of auto-pilot, but rather consideration for what becomes possible when I can see these mechanisms and choose an alternative response in the moment.
7. **Take radical accountability for yourself:** living into each moment noticing your experience and being responsible for how you react or respond is all that is required in the end. Knowing that you ultimately do get to choose in each moment, become more intentional about the choices you make, as these determine the quality of your life every day, week, month, and year. If you don't like where you currently find yourself, make different choices.

In closing, the quality of our mindset impacts our heart state, and how we feel impacts how we behave or act in life. Mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual health and well-being are the birthright of each and every human being and it is necessary to understand that we are not responsible for the traumas that are inflicted on us, but it is absolutely our responsibility to heal what ails us, so that we can offer a different frequency into the collective consciousness and so transform the human experience from fear-based to grounded in unconditional love for ourselves and one another. Get well and stay well.





# COMMUNICATION. THE CONNECTION TO CONSCIOUS LIVING.

MARISA WOLLHEIM

From the time we are born the people around us start to communicate with us. Through sounds, facial expressions, smiles, and touch. As we grow words are shared with us to express love, joy, support, safety, anger, sadness, grief, disappointment and more. We start talking and we call it communicating. We learn from our Parents, Teachers, Friends and Community. Yet that does not mean we are really communicating. Rather we are talking.

Proper communication needs feedback and participation. It needs a listener and a reflector. No one actually teaches us communication skills unless we have an interest in developing them. We often hit brick walls and potholes in our relationships, be it with a partner, our parents, our children or at work and we realize our communication skills suck. Poor communication is the cause of the majority of conflict in our relationships.

To understand proper Communication perhaps we learn from our mistakes. Have you ever felt unheard or misunderstood? I can almost guarantee it was due to poor communication.

Have you ever assumed something about someone or a situation or something was assumed about you by someone else? Chances are it was due to poor communication.

The lack of open and clear communication opens the opportunity for so many things to be taken personally and assumed and we can play power games with the way we communicate or don't communicate.

Communication is not just about an exchange of words. We exchange feelings, support, and nurturing. Our body language forms a part of our communication and can be easily misinterpreted.

I believe Communication skills should be a part of our curriculum and it would save us a lot of pain.

Communication is a process, a dance with words, feelings, and expressions; and it takes two to tango they say.

Whenever I teach Communication skills it involves self-awareness as so much is revealed in how we do or don't communicate. It offers us an opportunity to a deeper understanding of ourselves, our relationships and our reality.

Many of us have experienced some form of dysfunction in our lives, perhaps due to trauma or loss or perhaps we were born into a dysfunctional system and never knew anything else.

If so, our communication is also dysfunctional, filled with denial, avoidance, manipulation, control, suppressing or domineering to survive.

Before we can learn new communication skills, we have to unlearn some of the bad habits we have picked up during our dysfunction and survival.

Learning how to communicate openly and clearly is learning to live consciously and to recognize the power of our words. As the quote says, **"Words cast spells"**. That's why it's called SPELLING. Words are energy. Choose them wisely.

## Communication involves the following process:

Self-Awareness

You as a whole person – body, mind, emotions, and spirit

Understanding loss and how it affects us

Listening vs hearing

Listening to understand not listening to fix

Using door openers – inviting the person to share more

Reflecting

Reflecting – content and feeling

Understanding what reflecting content does  
Understanding what reflecting feelings does

Empathy – understanding the difference between empathy and sympathy

Reflecting empathy

Learning how not to go home with the other persons shoes

The art of Questioning

Exploring

Understanding the difference between conflict and confrontation

The art of confrontation

Understanding blocks in communication

Understanding the dysfunctional system

Problem solving. Resources within as outside

Empowering Life skills. Understanding death, dying and grief

The power of attitude and perception

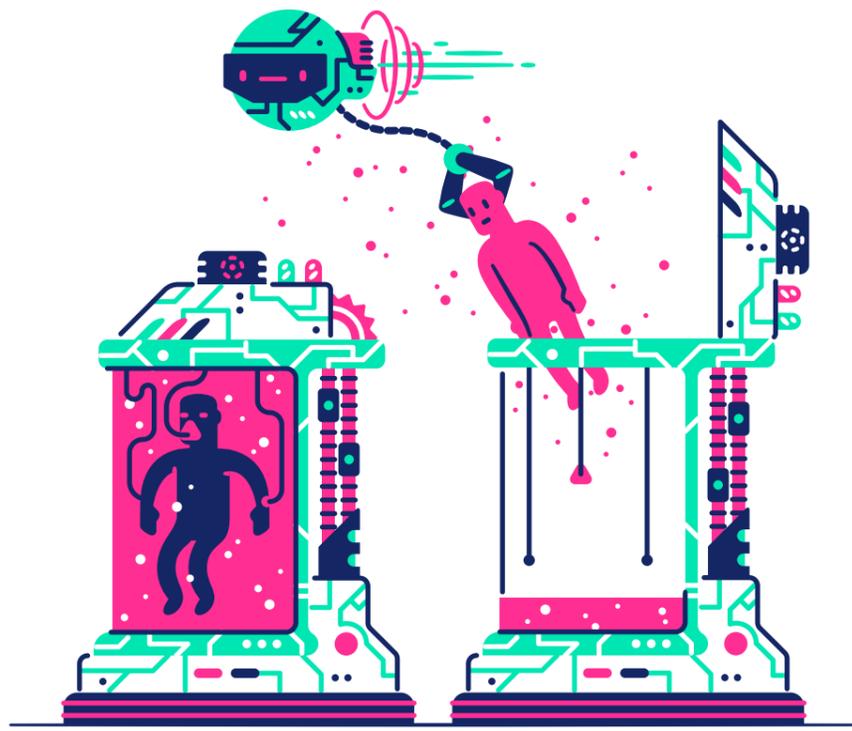
Communication as a whole person

Communicating with self. Inner dialogues between body, mind, emotions, and spirit

Relationships and communication

I offer Self-Awareness plus Communication, Counselling and Life skills over 5 months. Weekly classes where you learn a skill and have a week to practice the skill in your own reality.

The course is called "The Art of Conscious Living" and will change your life forever, enhance your communication and relationships.



# DO YOU HAVE 'DISCONNECTION 'SYNDROME'?

JONI PEDDIE

Understanding your brain-style today will affect your 'critical thinking' tomorrow.

We readily accept that our daily lifestyle choices impact and affect our heart health, immune system, energy levels, weight, and general well-being.

Research is now revealing that our current lifestyle choices and habits are exceedingly influential in affecting our brain health. This is exacerbated by the fact that we are living in a digital era!

The worldwide pandemic has ignited a 'tectonic shift' in our behaviour. Life happens on our screens: our work, attending weddings, socialising, attending funerals, baby showers, and ordering food, etcetera. This is excessive, and hence many people are suffering screen fatigue – our eyes are constantly fixated on our computers, mobile phones, and TVs often late into the night!

It is devastating to read that in the last +/- 14 months, burnout, depression and suicide rates have all skyrocketed around the world. In the USA alone, one

to two Medical Professionals (Doctors) commit suicide each day. The number of antidepressant prescriptions has increased by more than 400% in the USA since the 1990s (National Center for Health Statistics, USA 2010). We could add many more statistics to this bleak picture, but let's instead look at: 'the problem behind the problem'.

In this fast-paced, digital world, our 'brain health' is taking the strain. People are reporting feeling fearful, anxious and overwhelmed. David Perlmutter, MD and Austin Perlmutter, MD (Authors of the Book: Brain Wash) call this 'Disconnection Syndrome'. They describe a vicious circle of looking for 'instant gratification', leading to chronic use of short-term 'quick fixes, leading to chronic stress, chronic illness, and chronic inflammation. They define Disconnection Syndrome as 'a state of separation from sustainable happiness'.

Many of my coaching clients worldwide are openly sharing that they feel

unhappy, fearful and anxious daily and that a specific life issue or event doesn't necessarily trigger these feelings. Many of them are realising that these feelings could be connected to the +/- 8 hours (and for some people +/-12 hours) hours spent behind their computers daily. At the end of the day, they are seriously tired and express that they feel 'severely exhausted'.

This often leads to grabbing a quick fix, high carbohydrate, unhealthy meal, and perhaps binge-watching Sport or Netflix. After this, they are desperate for a good night's sleep. This is impossible, especially if our eyes and brains have had an onslaught of 'blue light' (from our various digital devices) throughout the day and into the night. Blue light inhibits the production of melatonin, which is necessary for deep, restorative sleep. Deep sleep ensures that we wake up feeling refreshed, ready for a day of critical thinking and good decision-making.

If your day is similar to the one

described above, you may be suffering from 'Disconnection Syndrome'. These excessive screen activities keep your amygdala (the emotional centre of your brain) engaged and 'fired up'. The problem is that these activities also inhibit the functioning of your Prefrontal Cortex (your 'executive function' of your brain).

**Are you experiencing 'Disconnection Syndrome?' Here are some of the characteristics outlined in the Book: 'Brain Wash':**

- you are easily 'hijacked' by mindless activities;
- you often experience feelings of loneliness (no family, friends of the community to turn to) and perhaps even aloneness (even if you have people that you can 'call on', you don't feel like they are the people who can support you);
- you feel unhealthy (you are carrying excess weight, often tired, and suffer low energy (you could unknowingly have chronic inflammation in your body));
- you often crave instant gratification (food, sex, drugs, sleeping pills, whatever vice serves you);
- you feel that you don't have 'high quality, deep and true friendships, and relationships (at work, and in your home life);
- you are suffering from chronic stress and feel anxious a lot of the time;
- you are a slave to impulsivity' (often wanting 'instant gratification' or quick fixes for 'consumption', more energy, or even online shopping);

If you are 'suffering', you may be wondering **how and in what way** you can address this and strengthen your Prefrontal Cortex so that you can enhance your 'critical thinking' and decision making.

Research on this goes back to Daniel Kahneman's groundbreaking work in his book 'Thinking Fast and Slow'. He was the first psychologist to win a Nobel prize for Economics in 2002. He is also known as the godfather of behavioural economics. He describes two systems of thinking: System 1: 'SLOW thinking', and System 2: 'FAST thinking'.

Both are useful and necessary. However, we can be a slave to System 2: 'FAST

thinking', the unconscious, automatic thinking with little self-awareness.

The big question is HOW to develop System 1: 'SLOW thinking', which is described as intentional thinking, influenced by facts, logic and evidence, where we seek missing information to make really good decisions.

An excellent place to start is by understanding your Brain Style[1]. This helps us strengthen the resiliency and plasticity of our Prefrontal Cortex and, in turn, harnesses the ability to 'think critically'. When you understand your Brain Style, you can focus on cognitive flexibility. In this way, can you choose to think differently instead of living on 'automatic pilot'.

Brain Styles help us to understand how the emotional and rational parts of our brain work closely together. In other words, we should embrace 'SLOW thinking' to optimise decision-making.

For clarity, we'll discuss Brain Styles on three separate continuums. Neither side of each continuum is better than the other. Knowledge is power, or as Aristotle said: 'Knowing yourself is the beginning of wisdom.'

**The first Brain Style continuum FOCUS :**

How does your brain focus? What do you notice/observe first? Do you prefer to notice and gather data on a situation? Or are you on the other side of the

continuum, where you pay attention to people, emotions and the 'feeling state' / 'emotional energy' in a room?

**The second Brain Style continuum DECISIONS :**

How does your brain make decisions? How do you balance risks versus opportunities? Do you tend to analyse and evaluate issues and work hard to avoid risks? Or do you prefer novelty and change / innovative ideas and options?

**The third Brain Style continuum DRIVE :**

How does your brain balance motivation for today versus motivation for the future? In other words, are you usually motivated by practicalities and taking action to drive results? Or are you more idealistic and spend time focusing on a vision for the future?

Your Brain Styles can change over time. Understanding your 'current' Brain Style helps you develop cognitive flexibility and critical thinking skills.

Managing our life and work challenges in this pandemic world is stressful. Keeping your brain sharp, healthy and able to handle exponential change is a subject that desperately needs attention in business today. We are indeed the architects of our brain's plasticity! We should take the time to learn actionable techniques and skills to improve our 'critical thinking'.



**LISTEN TO  
DISCUSSING DISCONNECTED  
SYNDROME WITH JONI PEDDIE**

**CHANGE  
ISN'T DIFFICULT,  
WITH THE RIGHT  
RESOURCES**



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