



Talenttalks

Evolving Thinking through best industry reads.

ISSUE # 7

SUSTAINABILITY & COLLABORATION EDITION

- 
- **MICROMANAGEMENT VS ENGAGEMENT**
 - **WHAT ABOUT PERSONAL SUSTAINABILITY?**
 - **GETTING OFF THE DREAMMILL**
 - **COLLABORATION**
YOUR SECRET WEAPON
 - **PUTTING HUMAN BACK IN PEOPLE**
 - **TURN AROUND AND TAKE A STEP FORWARD**



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.

In this issue of Talenttalks magazine, we say goodbye to 2022, a rather strange, transitional year, when we emerged gingerly from our homes back into workplaces and face to face relationships with colleagues, re-connection with friends and family and joy of joys being able to travel again. We were almost forced to be more introspective and re-invent ourselves, to think about what was important to us. Could life be simpler and happier? Could we achieve that very desirable but what felt sometimes unreachable goal – a work life balance?

I am fortunate to be spending the holidays in Melbourne, exploring Victoria and experiencing this vibrant city with its unique "coffee culture" the coffee capital of Australia. The ritual of arriving at the office early, rounding up colleagues and nipping out to the coffee café of choice and ordering a take-away coffee, sets the tone for the workday of many Melbournians. An upscaled water cooler chat.

Which leads us to our themes for this issue, Sustainability and Collaboration. Are we taking care of our Personal Sustainability by acting with our long term wellbeing in mind? Are we goal oriented instead of appreciating the journey that life is all about?

Is Collaboration about being in relationships for the sake of the work or do we work together for the sake of strengthening the relationships towards a shared purpose with passion?

Kerryn, Al and I wish you all a peaceful festive season and well-deserved rest. We hope that you find the time to relax and be inspired by the insights of our valued Talenttalks contributors.

SUE DE WAAL
Chief Executive Editor



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OUR WEEKLY NEWSLETTER

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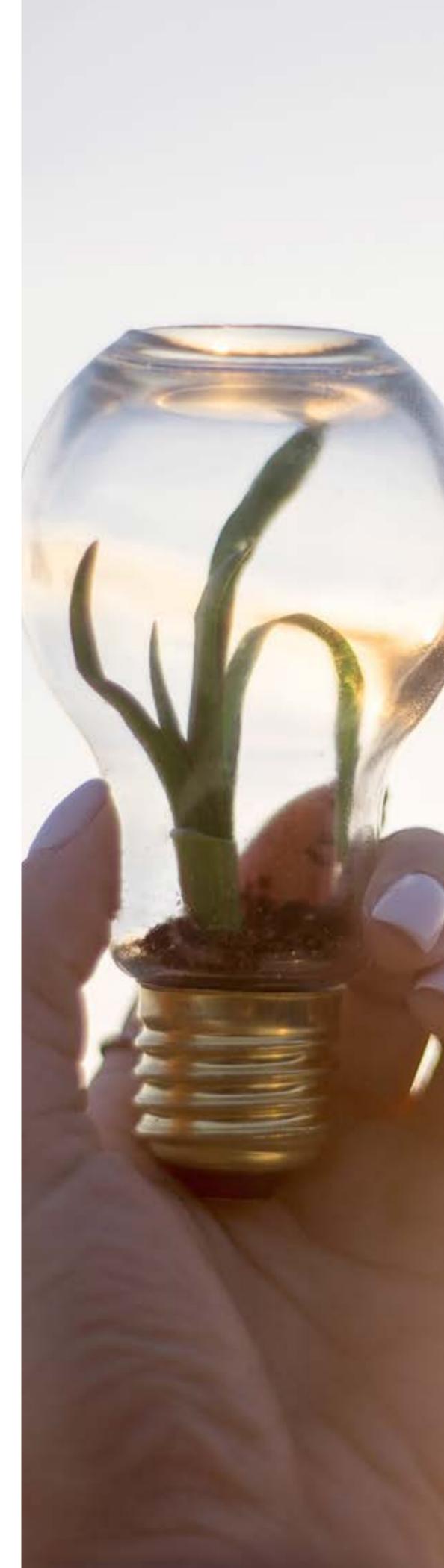
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**LISTEN TO BUILDING TRUST-BASED PARTNERSHIPS
EPISODE TWO: OPENING PATHWAYS FOR CONVERSATION
WITH DR ROBYN WHITTAKER**

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.



**LISTEN TO BUILDING TRUST-BASED PARTNERSHIPS
EPISODE THREE WITH DR ROBYN WHITTAKER**



**LISTEN TO BUILDING TRUST-BASED PARTNERSHIPS
EPISODE FOUR WITH DR ROBYN WHITTAKER**



**LISTEN TO GETTING FIT FOR THE FUTURE PART 3: LEVERAGING NEW
OPPORTUNITIES WITH DR ERIC ALBERTINI**

How can leaders improve their ability to leverage new opportunities and solve complex problems inherent in the Hybrid World of work? Listen as Kerry Kohl and Eric Albertini discuss these critical skills and how leaders can go about developing them.



**LISTEN TO GETTING FIT FOR THE FUTURE PART 4
WITH DR ERIC ALBERTINI**



**LISTEN TO POWER SKILLS – EPISODE FIVE:
DEALING WITH TOXICITY IN THE WORKPLACE
WITH DR KARINA DE BRUIN**



**LISTEN TO POWER SKILLS – EPISODE SIX:
WITH DR KARINA DE BRUIN**

"There must be a better way to make the things we want, a way that doesn't spoil the sky, or the rain or the land"

- Paul McCartney



LEADERS AT SERIOUS PLAY

GAYLIN JEE

There is a Chinese proverb that says to learn something, give up something. The concept of 'unlearning' has become popular in leadership circles and organisations. Give up the expert mind in service of the beginners one, shelve competence in order to be open to the new, says late organisational behaviour and development expert Peter Vaill. The message is clear: in our times, we need to do more 'beginners play'.

But what is play?

We can think of play as a universal bridge. We know how to play. We are born with this knowing and it serves an important purpose. Children draw on play to explore the world and relationships. As kids, play helped us make sense of what was new (practically everything!). We moved, experimented, explored, discovered. When we played with others, we began to understand more about how we are orientated in our surroundings, and about how others are too. There is so much to learn through play.

Play also develops energy. It involves spontaneous exploration and movement. When at play, constraints are relaxed, minds gently open. We are more curious, free, unstructured and immersed. When in deep, glorious play, we are 'outside of time'. We forget who we are and who we are supposed to be. We explore what is, and what if.

Given all that play offers – learning, connection, navigation, energy, fun – should we not take it more seriously at work?

Serious play

When play is serious it refers to the fact that it is applied – there is a

point to it. You set and work towards goals, and use observation 'What am I seeing now?' and reflection 'What have we discovered?' to learn and move forward.

You cannot be a serious innovator unless you are willing and able to play – Michael Schrage

For Schrage, (of MIT Media Lab and author of *Serious Play: How the world's best companies simulate to innovate*), there are clear benefits to using play to innovate. You build a model or prototype and feed it into a community for 'play'. Like a toy, you push it around under different conditions. Maybe it breaks. And then you learn. Innovation is visceral, he says, more so than cerebral. If play is a bridge to the world, serious play can be a bridge to a flourishing future.

What serious play is not, is mere comic diversion. It is kind and respectful. Change expert Robert Goldberg playfully introduced a small soft toy giraffe into his dialogues. The person holding the giraffe was seen to be 'sticking their neck out', and thus deserving of a space and the respect of being listened to. We use the LEGO SERIOUS PLAY method extensively in our work with teams. It sets the safe space where we can explore and be listened to. It unlocks new thinking, extends thinking, and builds sharing understanding, all using LEGO bricks. A 100% lean-in method, everyone participates, everyone shares the stories of their models, and a level playing field for contribution is created. A beautifully human dimension also emerges as we get emotionally attached to what we create.

'The creative mind plays with the object it loves.' – Carl Jung

Leaders at serious play

Leaders have been called upon to confront established wisdoms with a beginners mind. Yet most leaders got to where they are based on their expertise, what they know and have done well. So this concept of unlearning, or giving up, is counterintuitive. We believe that leaders can be the curators of seriously playful, exploratory climates, and that these climates may be our most fruitful chance of building positive and prosperous bridges into the future. To make this a reality, we need to move beyond appreciating leadership as just competence, and see it as experience too.

Play is a universal bridge. It connects, creates, teaches, bonds and stretches. When people come together seriously and safely at play, they lean into the messiness of our times, forming new ideas, disagreeing, giving something up to discover something new, forming new commitments. Serious play engages us with deeper issues, energises us, and generates meaningful community.

The new wisdoms are in the system, in the networked minds of people. Serious leaders are aware of this. This is where their curatorship becomes so valuable in perpetual whitewater environments. They can play a role in *activating, shaping and participating in* exploratory climates of play – returning us to our naturally curious, optimistic, exploratory natures, with intention and purpose.

MICROMANAGEMENT VS ENGAGEMENT. HOW TO BUILD TEAM CONNECTIONS WHILE RESPECTING AUTONOMY

JULIA KERR HENKEL



During the pandemic and remote working, many business leaders radically adjusted their leadership and/or management styles. In many instances, for example, leaders and managers attempted to maintain strong connections and company culture by scheduling multiple 'check ins' with their teams – often leading to fatigue and a resentment around too many meetings. Now that companies are returning to the office, business leaders are faced with a mixed response from employees, and many are navigating a 'hybrid' work arrangement and looking for solutions that work for both business leaders and employees.

As with many leadership and team dynamics, this requires a proactive strategy and tangible action steps.

Here are 3 strategies that forward-thinking managers and leaders can employ right away:

Embrace 'essentialism' and shorter-term thinking.

To build one's courage and connection levels as a leader, you're encouraged to discern what is truly required in terms

of team member contact and visibility of tasks and actions. Here, the most efficient way is not to guess or assume but to be direct and ask the team what is working well, and what needs adjusting after working remotely during the pandemic. As with Agile processing and project planning, identifying the narrow parameters in which you are working (for a set period of time) can sharpen focus and boost motivation.

Gain insight into personality styles and motivations.

Importantly, managers are also encouraged to be curious about the style and motivations of each of their team members. This might require following a more informal and engaging approach of having one-on-ones, asking questions of each person. A more formal approach may also be needed – such as using a personality assessment tool or a facilitated dialogue session so the team members can get to know each other better and create a space, away from day to day tasks, to have meaningful conversations about what makes them tick. When intentions and guidelines are made clear upfront, these engagements have the potential to raise courage levels

because team members feel it's safe to speak up and be themselves.

Establish boundaries, not barriers.

Within a business, being clear about requests you're making, receiving and responding to is vital. In addition, it's equally important to know when to hold a line and take a stand. Put simply, boundaries outline what is ok and not ok in any team, project or relationship. Most importantly, they need to be articulated, understood and agreed upon – if people don't know there is a boundary line in place, they are likely to step/trip over it. If a boundary is set up which prevents any form of discussion or engagement, then a barrier, like a stone wall, has been set up and needs to be understood and dismantled (one brick at a time), to understand why the employee feels the need to hide/self-protect in this way.

By leading with both awareness and empathy, leaders and managers can learn to identify when they are micro-managing instead of connecting and standing back instead of 'leaning in' to important conversations



How to set and maintain healthy boundaries in the workplace

by Julia Kerr Henkel, MD of Lumminos

Let's define boundaries and why they are so important:

One definition is that boundaries in relationship terms are about naming and making clear to others what's okay and what's not okay...and why. Failure to set boundaries can quickly lead to resentment, frustration and sometimes deep hurt.



Understanding your role

If a leader is anyone who takes responsibility for developing the potential in people and processes - and is courageous enough to do so - then all of us are leaders. So, as leaders we need to:

- Model appropriate behaviours. Be clear, respectful, and open for questions. Most of the time, people will be thankful for the clarity and appreciate the rarity of seeing someone else ask for what they need (rather than be passive aggressive or annoyed).
- Respect the boundaries set by others. If you respect people who are brave enough to say No, they will in turn respect your No. When we accept that others have the right to set boundaries with us, we feel better about (or more able to) set our own.
- Boundaries are a core component of honesty and trust building, and this starts with oneself. How committed and able are you to identify, voice and hold your own boundaries? Be honest with yourself: how do you typically respond to others' requests? Do you have a tendency to say Yes or No too often? How often do you negotiate?
- Watch out for secret, invisible boundaries. Because inner fear, people may set "secret" boundaries. They may withdraw, get resentful, or experience annoyance with someone's irresponsibility instead of being honest about how they affect us. Boundaries need to be made visible to others and communicated clearly and kindly.

Examples of boundaries

In relationships, both personal and professional, we need to understand that there are several areas where boundaries might need to be articulated, requested and respected.

5 key boundary domains/areas:

Emotional: these are boundaries around inappropriate topics, emotional dumping, and dismissing emotions
E.g. "This isn't a topic I'm ok with or willing to discuss further."

Material: Boundaries around possessions, when they can be used, and how they are treated.
E.g. "My car cannot be used on weekends; material from this workshop can't be copied and reproduced."

Time/energy: Boundaries around time, punctuality, when to contact, favours and free labour.
E.g. "If you're going to be late, please message me in advance of the meeting start time to let me know; let's agree to take short breaks every 45-60 mins."

Mental/spiritual: Freedom to have your own thoughts, beliefs, values and opinions.
E.g. "I respect that you may disagree with my opinion, and please don't force your own."

Physical: Proximity, touch, personal displays of affection, unwanted comments regarding appearance, gender, orientation or sexuality.
E.g. "I don't find comments about someone's body shape funny or appropriate."

LEADERSHIP FOR THE HYBRID WORKPLACE

DR ERIC ALBERTINI



Today's world of work is a hybrid of in-office and remote work. As we move into a post-pandemic future, companies are re-evaluating their workplace structure and seeking to implement a work model that fits the needs of diverse employee groups.

The hybrid workforce is a blended workforce comprising of employees who work from home part-time (or another non-employer location), and works at an employer location part of the time. A hybrid work environment allows a mixture of in-office and remote employees. Companies that adopt this type of work structure give their employees the ability to decide when, how, and where they work optimally on any given day.

McKinsey, in an article – *What executives are saying about the future of hybrid work* – state that in the post pandemic future

of work, nine out of ten organisations will be combining remote and on-site working. The same survey also confirms that both productivity and customer satisfaction increased during the pandemic.

Yet, despite the embrace of the hybrid model, most organisations have only now begun to think through and articulate the specifics of how to carry out a more permanent mix of remote and on-site working for all roles that aren't essential to perform on-site.

There are however, some challenges with hybrid work:

- Hybrid workers who prefer to work remotely may suffer unconscious bias. Not being visible to management could risk them feeling less valued than those in the office, due to potentially getting less facetime and fewer

- benefits than those in the office.
- It is harder to build, maintain and nurture a company culture when not all staff are co-located.
- Working remotely can negatively affect the mental well-being of some employees – the enmeshment of work-personal life is difficult for some to deal with.
- Communication, connectivity and creativity (innovation) has been a challenge in most hybrid work models.

In *Gartner for HR: Evolve culture and leadership for the hybrid workplace*, it states that, in accepting hybrid as a permanent feature of the future workplace, organisations must focus on two key areas:

- **Reshaping Culture** – leaders must work intentionally to align and connect employees to the culture.
- **Equipping Leaders** – Effective

hybrid leaders are human leaders who must lead with authenticity, empathy, and adaptability.

With regard to Reshaping Culture and instilling a corporate culture, there are two critical aspects:

- Alignment - knowing what the culture is, believing in the culture, and demonstrating the behaviours and,
- Connectedness - identifying with the culture, caring about the culture, and subscribing to belong to the culture.

It is 'culture connectedness' that is in a crisis and must be accounted for in the hybrid workplace.

When it comes to Equipping Leaders:

- **Human leadership** is made up of
 - **Authenticity** - acting with purpose and true self-expression,
 - **Empathy** - showing genuine care, respect, and concern for employee's well-being, and
 - **Adaptability** - being flexible and supporting team member's unique needs.

For both Reshaping Culture and Equipping Leaders, leaders must be skilled in virtual collaboration, use the right hybrid tools, and be able to build trust and psychological safety in a hybrid workforce. This entails reorientating and reskilling the workforce.

Simply put, **Hybrid Skills** are a combination of both technical and non-technical skills. The specific hybrid skills may vary from job to job and from company to company. Examples include administrative and support staff who will have to learn about social media, updating websites and being comfortable interfacing with a range of automation, robotics and technology.

Workers in traditionally specialised technology jobs will have to develop what we may know as "soft skills" such

as EQ, change resiliency, dealing with uncertainty and the ability to connect to others. It can be argued that the top skill for a company's future workforce is **being human**, as we will always need people to weigh their morals, ethics, context and experience against decisions made by machines.

A survey by **BetterUp** of more than 54,000 performance assessments found gaps in skill sets between in-office and remote workers. Those gaps were most pronounced in areas such as network leadership, executive presence, alignment, relationship building, authenticity, inspiring others, and empowerment. According to BetterUp, the largest gaps identified tended to be in so-called 'soft skills' that aren't as easily identifiable in remote working situations as compared to in-person offices. The findings suggest that as more workplaces shift to remote or hybrid environments, they'll need to focus on increasing skills that are most valuable in these dispersed settings. Those skills may be different than the ones employers used to value most—in particular, workers will need excellent soft skills to succeed in the changing work landscape.

In the future world of work, collaboration and co-creating through leveraging differences will be more important than ever before. Organisations will need talent that is able to think beyond their immediate job role to promote fluidity across a wider team. There has been an increased need for soft skills in key areas to facilitate this integration in a team with different skill sets and strengths. These are the interpersonal traits that enable your employees to interact with each other and with their work.

While AI is able to analyse and calculate, it cannot be empathetic or compassionate, which is key to employee and customer retention. With companies evolving and pivoting so regularly with the growing and fluctuating markets, employees should

be prepared for their job descriptions to grow and pivot, too. Organisations will be forced to view learning, not as a bonus or perk, but rather as a vital tool to develop the workforce and benefit corporate and employee growth. Employers will be looking for employees who not only possess skills that suite the job role, but who have a hunger to learn, upskill, develop and grow with the company.

This realisation of the future skills landscape poses the question of whether companies should be reskilling or upskilling employees. There is no black-and-white answer, because each industry and business has its own requirements for growth. Whether organisations find the need to teach new skills, or update and improve overall skills, the concept of continued learning is what will make the difference. Employers need to understand the importance of continued training and development, instead of once-off courses or programmes to really see and realise the potential in their workforce.

It's clear that companies must act quickly to build critical workforce capabilities. The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated trends in workplace skills that were already underway through the digital economy, shifting marketplaces and changing employee roles. In order to successfully respond, business leaders must look to create a reskilling programme that develops employees in both the short and long term.

References:

- [Upskilling for Hybrid Jobs adapted](#)
- [What is Hybrid Working?](#)
- [What Executives are Saying about the Future of Hybrid Work](#)
- [What Does Hybrid Work Really Mean?](#)
- [Hybrid Working: Reorientating and Reskilling the Workforce -](#)
- [The new skill set needed to succeed in the hybrid workplace](#)



LISTEN TO PANDEMIC IN REVIEW A LOOK AT LESSONS UNLEARNED EPISODE 3: WHAT SHOULD WE BE STRIVING FOR? WITH BRAD SHORKEND

In this episode, Brad Shorkend outlines what he believes leaders should be doing differently and why – focusing on the impact these behaviors will have on organisations and the people within them



LISTEN TO IGNITING OPTIMAL TEAM PERFORMANCE WITH JONI PEDDIE

Many of you are very familiar with Joni's Sleep your way to the Top podcast series, and her Biohack series which both focused on helping the individual to unleash their potential, but you may not be that familiar with the great work Joni does to ignite optimal Team performance, and I am thrilled to have Joni join us today to give us some insight into building teams that are not only resilient but that perform optimally.



LISTEN TO MIND THE GAP – EPISODE 4: WHAT ROLE DO WOMEN PLAY IN DRIVING TRANSFORMATION? WITH RIKKY MINYUKU

Listen as Rikky Minyuku talks to us about how women can play a bigger role in driving transformation both at work and within their homes.



LISTEN TO MIND THE GAP – EPISODE 5: HOW MEN CAN BE OUR ALLIES IN THE FIGHT FOR GENDER EQUALITY WITH RIKKY MINYUKU

Listen as Rikky Minyuku talks to us about how men can play a bigger role in driving transformation both at work and within their homes.



LISTEN TO FROM IMPOSTER TO EMPOWERED. HOW TO MAKE THE SHIFT. EPISODE 3: HOW TO DISCOVER YOUR PURPOSE – DEFINING WHAT I WANT TO BE KNOWN FOR WITH CAITLIN WATSON

Many of us spend a lifetime trying to discover our purpose. Caitlin shares her view on the journey to discover your purpose and gives us some great questions that she uses with her clients to help them discover their calling.

SHIFTING WORK PRACTICES

PAOLO GIURICICH

As the world learns to 'live' with Covid, it is interesting to see how people in the workplace are redefining their boundaries, leaning into their own personal leadership and perfecting the art of new skills, with a personal style which is noticeably different.

Covid19 has redefined the travel ecosystems of the world as one of the hardest hit industries through the pandemic. Hit by severe lockdowns and the restart of travel initially being slow, has resulted in low traveller confidence coupled with bizarre changing regulations and requirements. The recovery of travel since then, has been exponential (bar a small bump in the road from Omicron) and people at the heart of the industry moved on and reskilled themselves due to financial pressures and the need for alternative forms of livelihoods. The result is massive abrasion in the travel ecosystems and a new path of industry recovery. What can we learn from this industry and how do we support people in our organisations in their own recoveries?

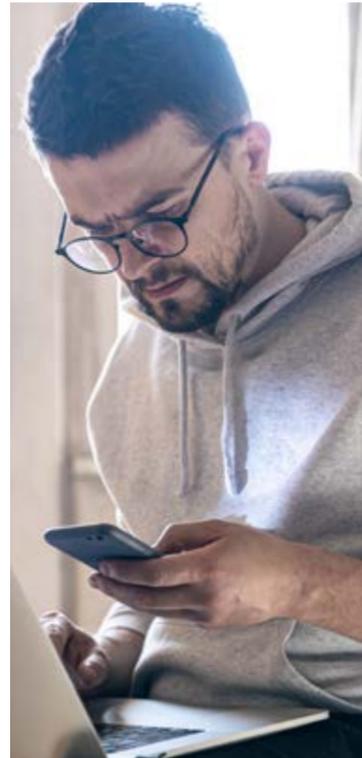
Redefining boundaries: People speak of the 'great resignation' as a metaphor for people redefining how they like to work and live. In reality, people are placing firm boundaries on how much they give of themselves to work and how they value and spend their non-work hours. People who reskilled during the pandemic are more inclined to hold those boundaries firmer and not compromise. In the travel industry, people are not coming back to 'old' roles and the lack of skills is hurting recovery, and by implication, the recovery of the globalised world.

Personal Leadership: With people having been furloughed or working from home for prolonged periods, the very thought of being told where, when and how to work almost seems

like a foreign concept. Instead people have taken ownership and responsibility for themselves and their work, in a way that demonstrates a clear leaning into personal power and leading self (as a positive unintended consequence). In the travel industry, the flexibility to reconnect with suppliers and customers has been more instantaneous and as a result a lower propensity to travel initially. The converse is also true as people also yearn for the in-person connection, beyond those in the travel industry, and hence demand exceeding supply of all commodities related to travel.

New Skills: When we think of how we used to do things, and the complete inefficiencies, we have come along way during the pandemic to be smarter and operate in a better, digitised ecosystem. Our ability to learn skills when we are under pressure and have no choice is remarkable. We need to harness this ability and continue our trajectory. In the travel industry, digitisation and personalisation have become key to distinguishing the new client experience. This may have also resulted in roles actually becoming redundant and not needing to come back to support the travel ecosystem.

These lessons from the travel industry allow us to reflect on how far we have come in our professional and personal lives during the pandemic. Harnessing these positive outcomes to keep the momentum of personal growth and learning alive, enables us to get closer to our personal aspirations.



Supporting people in their return to a different work world:

A mindset of flexibility and openness to conversations about a changed workplace, creates a safe space for exploration.

Prescription on work practices might be more necessary for the minority. The majority require guidelines and encouraged individual choice as adults, not prescription.

Teams require deep reflection and engagement on the new 'how' of their inner workings and recalibration of new desired ways of being.

Be aware to noticing peoples' emotional states and learn the signs of distress and anxiety to support people to an enhanced wellbeing.

WHAT ABOUT PERSONAL SUSTAINABILITY?

NATALEE HOLMES



Sustainability is one of the buzz words of our time. Save the planet... sustainable resources... environmental awareness... social responsibility... renewable energy... carbon footprint... these are all words that have become part of our daily vocabulary and thank goodness, very much a part of our children's too.

But what about personal sustainability?

Why aren't we talking about that more? We are not a limitless resource. The negative effects of stress have been spoken about for years, but we don't discuss personal sustainability nearly enough.

Stress is never going to go away completely, but we can renew ourselves by taking care and by managing our stress. We speak about work-life balance, but how many of us are actively ensuring that? We need to be more responsible about personal sustainability.

Our personal sustainability, like environmental sustainability, relies on us making sure that we're acting with our

long-term wellbeing in mind and not settling for short-term trade-offs. No one ever got to their death bed and wished they had worked longer hours, and yet, being busy seems to be something to aspire to. Telling people you're 'so busy!' seems to be a badge of success that we wear with pride and a status people admire. But we are busy getting ready to live, getting ready to be happy, and often so caught up in the busyness, that we are not living at all.

Somewhere along the line we have developed a goal setting mindset that makes us feel we are eternally seeking that holy grail and so we kill ourselves for a destination instead of appreciating the journey that life is all about. We always seem to be delaying happiness – we are not thin yet, not financially stable enough to have children yet. We are not ready to live yet because we are in a perpetual state of getting ready to be happy. The cemetery of squandered potential is filled with people who just had to do something first, before they could live. We could live now but instead

we choose to wait until tomorrow.

But what if there is no tomorrow?

We need to consciously focus on our personal sustainability by finding meaning and purpose in our daily lives, and enjoying our journey. Being present and mindful are critical components of personal sustainability and we need to ensure we are conscious about it. Cut back on our work hours, say no when you really need to say no, carve out time for things that make you happy and are good for you, eat properly, stop and smell the roses, spend time with the people who matter, stop waiting and saying, 'not yet'. Be present.

When we can get those things right, we are taking responsibility for our personal sustainability and suddenly the journey becomes the more important part of our lives and allows us to have a more fulfilling, present, satisfying, joyful, and sustainable existence.



CHANTAL DAWTREY

GETTING OFF THE DREAMMILL

If you cast your eye across the horizon of our current lives in the final quarter of 2022, the view is dirty-gray, murky and largely unclear. The murkiness could be more storm clouds, another wave of turmoil and noise. It could herald a drizzle or a hurricane. How can one know? We stand perpetually on a precipice of calamity. Fear-building concerns about our livelihoods, our health, future opportunities for productive employment, climate upheaval, food availability and water security continue to rattle us.

We live predictively. We make decisions and choices based on our individual and collective experience. That is how we are built. It is more difficult to do that now. The pandemic ran rampant over all planning and preparing. It laughed at our pathetic attempts to contain it and not destroy our economies, our livelihoods, our social support and our trust in medical science. As the virus ran out of steam, so did we. We limped back to work, those that still had work to go to, even more exhausted and burnt out than before.

Far from having learnt anything from our collective imprisonment, we seem to have emerged as many released inmates do: dazed, confused, out of touch, alone, contracted and fearful. Resentful and angry, some of us have also fallen back on our old ways, hooked up with the same gangs, and succumbed to the same old crimes. A desperate cry for help that will never come if we keep on doing the same things we always have done.

The monumental challenge we all face is how to fulfill the needs of those who are here on earth now without further compromising those of future generations. We have not done this very well to date. We have pretended to, made promises about it but in reality only stirred up desires and aches for things we want. What we want is very different from what we need.

Big Corp has conceived ingenious ways to hook us to a variety of addictive offerings most of which we do not need at all but really, really want. Like status and fame and the show of wealth, none of these things we so desperately want may last or do us much good. They just keep us in competition with each other, separated from our essence and wasteful on an earth shattering level.

In his latest book: *The Myth of Normal: Trauma, Illness & Healing* in a Toxic Culture, Gabor Mate says: "Among the great achievements of mass-consumption culture has been to convince us that what we have been conditioned to fervently want is also what we need." p203.

So what do we need? We need food, water, air, shelter and clothing for our survival. What we are sold is fast food with no sustenance, sugar-laden drinks instead of clean water, pollution-clogged air, over-priced housing filled with unnecessary stuff, one-season clothing that we buy too much of and barely wear. All of which produces mountains of waste that piles up in landfills and clogs rivers and seas.

What we also need is connectedness - with real people in real relationships engaging face to face. Our deep need for others is fed through screens. A weak alternative but easily addictive false connection that just leaves us empty, depressed and dissatisfied. And more disconnected as a result.

Society, certainly Western society, has been captured by greed, and bows down to the demands of quarter on quarter profits stoked by desires perpetually unfulfilled. We are devouring ourselves, leaving nothing for now let alone for a future we cannot see.

To get off the treadmill means taking the earphones out of our ears, turning our screens off, and tuning out of the airwaves and into ourselves, our loved ones and our relationships. Protecting what we allow to assail our senses with the determination of a bull terrier.

We need to come back to who we are, not who some clever marketing campaign wants us to think we should be. We need to reconnect with our environment, notice what is there, what we can be grateful for and what could be different. We need to choose to do things differently, consciously and carefully. We need to take back control, trust in our resourcefulness and decide to make a difference. While we are at it, we may also find the sense of purpose so evasive in our lives at the moment.

JAR
ACADEMY





1. Plant with Purpose

During WWII in the Haidari concentration camp,

inmates were put to labour in two four-hour shifts each day, except Sundays. The labour was not intended for any productive purposes, but merely to break the prisoners' morale: they had to dig holes and then refill them, build walls, and then break them down. The tasks were both laborious and futile.

There are many accounts of people who were able to survive these and other kinds of adversity and trauma because they were able to find meaning, connect to a form of purpose that they could focus and hold on to. In one of the most influential books of all time, *Man's Search for Meaning*, Viktor Frankl described his experiences as a prisoner in Nazi concentration camps, as well as his psychotherapeutic method, which involved identifying a purpose in life to feel positive about, and then imagining that outcome.

When we are going through tough times, finding purpose, and meaning in our existence is one of the most powerful ways to help us survive. It means that we can endure the pain or uncertainty of daily life because we are focusing on what is beyond that - what is waiting for us on the other side. Like a ship en route to its destination, we can do what is required in the moment to get to our destination because we are able to see beyond the current.

Once we have weathered the storm though, it is equally important to embrace the journey that we are on and be fully present in the here and now and find purpose and meaning in that. Shannon Kaiser advocates purposeful living when she suggests that we cannot think ourselves into our purpose, but that we must do ourselves into our purpose. She suggests the following to help us stop searching and looking, and find our passion:

- **DON'T OVERTHINK, DO.** Start doing new things to find what you are really passionate about. Clarity comes through the process of exploring and experimenting.
- **FOCUS ON WHAT YOU LOVE.** Take time to become aware of what makes you feel happy and inspired. What are those things providing you with moments of joy?
- **FORGET ABOUT 'THE ONE'.** Stop trying to find the one thing you are meant to do and rather explore and find a way to fit in various things you are passionate about.



Nurture

the Buds
& Blooms

2. Nurture

the Buds & Blooms

Many of us continued working

from home since the pandemic. Although we spend a lot of time in virtual meetings with our teams and clients, we may still experience a sense of isolation, disconnect, and loneliness. These feelings often have a negative impact on our emotional and mental well-being. During the pandemic, Brooke Anderson suggested six daily questions to ask during a time of isolation. All six questions relate strongly to the well-being of anyone working from home, but even to those who are working in the office (please refer to the reference to read all six questions). Anderson's last question is particularly interesting: What beauty are you creating, cultivating, or inviting in today?

Most of us think that creativity is reserved only for talented artists, but according to Elizabeth Gilbert, author of many popular books, if you are alive, you are a creative person. Creativity has many benefits in times when things are tough. Creating something has a calming effect on the brain and body. It reduces anxiety and stress and can improve our overall health.

If we are absorbed in an activity, it boosts our moods and slows our heart rate – which of course helps us to relax more, but also focus. Being involved in a creative activity also takes our minds away from negative catastrophic thoughts that so easily can cloud our rational thinking in difficult times. Repetitive creative motions such as knitting, drawing, or writing get us more absorbed in the activity. More dopamine, the so-called feel-good hormone is created, and it increases happiness and motivation which in return increases creativity.

Write something, bake something, or plant something. Compose a new song or design a new process to make the functioning of your team at work more efficient. By scanning your environment for opportunities to be creative, you may just be surprised by how much beauty you can invite into your life daily.

Reference: Anderson, B. (2020). Six daily questions to ask yourself in quarantine. https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/six_daily_questions_to_ask_yourself_in_quarantine?utm_source=Greater+Good+Science+Center&u



Keep Going
Come Rain
or Shine

3. Keep Going

Come Rain or Shine

Difficult circumstances and uncertainty

can cause a lot of anxiety and stress. It is important to keep these reactions in check and manage them proactively so that they don't overwhelm us and destroy our well-being and relationships. However, what is one to do when it feels like the tough times will never end, or when you try to come up for air just to have another big wave crash over your head, pulling you under once more?

Life is sometimes like a mountain bike race. There are ups and downs. Chances are good that there will be a single track, mud, water, sand, rocks, and obstacles. Fortunately, there will also be beautiful scenery and people supporting you and cheering you on – but you must make time to take it in while you are racing to the finish line. There will be many good and bad surprises along the way, but if you don't give up and just keep going, it is amazing how different the experience seems when looking back on it. In as much as one should be prepared, be fit, and have the right gear for the ride, a can-do attitude is critical in helping us to persevere through difficult times.

So, how do we cultivate perseverance?

RESEARCHERS AGREE THAT WE NEED TO:

- set worthwhile goals for ourselves
- remind ourselves of previous times where we felt like giving up and succeeded
- focus on the next task at hand
- keep moving forward
- believe that we will succeed

As Martin Luther King said: "If you can't fly, then run; if you can't run, then walk; if you can't walk, then crawl; but whatever you do, you have to keep moving forward".

Feed Your Garden
with

Gratitude

4. Feed Your Garden with

Gratitude

In the face of difficulty,

we are probably more than justified to experience default reactions such as fear, feeling overwhelmed, being angry, or ready to fight. However, even when we feel helpless and out of control, we still have a choice in how we react in any given situation. For most of us, gratitude would probably not be one of the go-to reactions in tough times. Of course, one should be frivolous and pretend that everything is wonderful when it is in fact not true. BUT, regardless of our context, we must find a balance in where we spend our energy, and this is where being grateful comes in.

When we open our eyes to really **SEE** what and who we have around us, it is quite a revelation to realise how much we have to be thankful for. If we then also apply the description in the Oxford Dictionary where it describes gratitude as: *'readiness to show appreciation for and to return kindness'*, it becomes clear that gratitude implies action and interaction. When we are grateful for what we have received and for what others do for us, it also mobilises us to pay it forward and make the choice to insert positive energy into a negative space.

Why don't you put a 'Gratitude Jar' in your kitchen or dining room and get each family member to place a daily note on what they are grateful for into this jar for 21 days – apparently it only takes 21 days to build a new habit!.

HOW IS LIVING IN SURVIVAL MODE NORMAL?

WENDY NAGEL



There is so much talk of sustainability right now, especially relating to Mother Earth, our home. Let's consider the definition of "Sustainability", which is the quality of being able to continue over time. Looking at the natural disasters happening around the world, and the scarcity we are confronted with on all fronts, it is hard to ignore the signs of Mother Nature being out of balance and amazingly, we fail to recognise that we as humans are a part of that balance, and so what are we doing to make ourselves more sustainable and coherent every day? Noticing how when we are out of balance, we are not sustainable and that is our contribution to the system being out of whack; whether at an individual, team, organisational, global, or universal level – we are on a collision course with burnout, breakdowns, increased risk of auto-immune disease, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, mental health issues, addiction and so the list goes on.

How is this NORMAL?

In his book *The Myth of Normal*, Gabor Mate states: *I have come to believe that behind the entire epidemic of chronic afflictions, mental and physical, that beset our current moment, something is amiss in our culture itself, generating both the rash of ailments we are suffering and, crucially, the ideological blind spots that keep us from seeing our predicament clearly, the better to do something about it. These blind spots – prevalent throughout our culture but endemic to a*

tragic extent in my own profession – keep us ignorant of the connections that bind our health to our social-emotional lives.

Another way of saying it: chronic illness – mental or physical – is to large extent a function or feature of the way things are and not a glitch; a consequence of how we live, not a mysterious aberration.

We neglect our nature and our need for embodied presence, deep rest, recovery, and resourcing and instead we sign up to the mad chase for economic enrichment and power, which to me seems a fool's bargain with momentary gratification before we move onto our next thing. We are normalizing the abnormal. It's as if we plug into the juggernaut of the 21st century machine and its relentless demands, desires, distractions, and devastation and are bewildered as to why we are exhausted and unable to find joy, peace, and happiness at the end of each day. Living from one breathless moment to the next, relentless in our own endeavours to prove our worthiness, value, success and belonging without taking a nano-second to question the sanity of it all.

How do we reassess the way we are choosing to live? How do we re-prioritise what really matters in our being human?

I observe most people to be completely disconnected from their lived experience, so absent to how the body might be coping with the assault on

the senses, totally out of touch with how they feel and think about life and merely hitting start at the beginning of the day, and end, when it's time to collapse because the body can't anymore. We choose to be governed by subconscious programmes developed to make us feel safe, that we belonged, and were loved in our early childhood development; that we forget that we have a choice in how we want to live and show up as adults in a way that we trust ourselves to self-regulate despite the external demands that need ever more and more resource to deal. It seems the real disease is the inability to say NO, enough, no more for fear of not belonging, missing out and failing.

When did our being become insufficient? The quality of our energy and presence seemingly less important than the doings. Measured on what we do as opposed to how we make one another feel. How do we get the balance between doing and being right so that sustainability is no longer in question?

The symptoms providing the evidence of humanity operating out of trauma response are mirrored in war, gender-based violence, substance abuse, anxiety disorders, aggression, intolerance, depression, over-eating, binge watching series, and constant scrolling on sensationalized social media (not an exhaustive list, but you get the picture). People are either hyperactivated or completely numb/

absent within their nervous system response to cope. Neither is optimal or sustainable because both take us out of our embodied experience.

How do we return to ourselves and build the muscle of being more deeply attuned to our experience and what we might need to practice in being sustainable?

There's no one size fits all here as each one of us has different degrees of awareness, resilience, and resourcing; the trick is to know where you are on the sustainability spectrum as measured by yourself. Where do you sit on the spectrum of survive or thrive?

If you are getting to the end of each day gasping for breath, feeling overwhelmed, anxious and like life is living you instead of you living it, then the following possibilities are for your consideration:

1. Decide categorically how you want to experience your life on every level (physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual) – get crystal clear on what you will and won't tolerate and set some boundary lines that you guard and protect in the interests of your lived experienced.
2. Create a habit of tuning into your physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual experience everyday so that you can respond more immediately to what your system needs to be sustainable and move towards thriving. In my view, we certainly

want our resources (physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual energy) to be ahead of the demands on them and so consideration needs to be given to what each aspect needs to be thriving.

3. Understand and heal the triggers that you react to in life with the intention of shifting from reacting out of autopilot to consciously choosing a healthy response. These triggers are data points that generally put us in fight, flight or freeze mode, revealing patterns of behaviour established to make us feel safe and secure in the world and which need to be assessed for their relevance in the present moment.
4. Consider what you might need to look at in your life to ensure that you trust yourself in every situation. When we trust ourselves, we open territory to be more confident and courageous in our contribution and relationships.
5. Reflect on the degree to which you feel like you can be authentically you in place of the masks you feel you need to present to fit in. This in and of itself is energy sapping stuff, so the more real you can be, the less energy you will burn.
6. Check in on your relationship with truth and speaking it. Anything we feel the need to contain or deny causes more energy leakage. Of course, we need to be able to skillfully bring our truth into the world, so that we aren't leaving a trail of destruction in our wake; but

7. Remove all the barriers within you that dulls the absolute brilliance of your light and potential in the world. Make room for your beautiful soul to embody this amazing thing called life so that the most resourced and thriving version of you is present always.

It is imperative that we see our sustainability and thriving as human beings having a direct correlation with Mother Earth's ability to sustain and thrive. We are in a symbiotic relationship with everyone and everything, we are a part of the whole and we feed the collective with our level of consciousness. If we do not like what we are seeing in the collective experience, consider the contribution you might be making to it by staying in survival mode where we all become reptilian. The call is for each one of us to level up and take radical accountability for our contribution to the whole. Our birthright is to be thriving and making the best contribution we can in each situation and relationship we find ourselves in, and the work starts within.

PUTTING HUMAN BACK IN PEOPLE

When we think about work and our workplaces, the word sustainability is often thought of as we consider the impact on our environment, our people and our profits.

With the impacts of an uncertain working and liveable world as a result of COVID and lockdowns across the globe, the future of work needs to consider a sustainable world that more specifically nurtures the "human" needs of our people.

The desire for better balance, greater sense of purpose and higher life satisfaction has greater awareness than ever before and the time to support and nurture these non-negotiable needs is now.

In its Global Wellness Economy: Looking Beyond COVID report, the Global Wellness Institute (GWI) has highlighted that the global health and wellness market could be worth almost US \$7 trillion by 2025, bringing to light that "the pandemic has brought new shifts that accelerate many wellness drivers, including a growing awareness of the role of the built environment in health, a growing focus on mental health and well-being, a rethinking of the balance of work and life, an expanding focus on social justice and environmental sustainability, and much more."

With the rise in an aging population and the prevalence of chronic disease, the way we support and address health and wellbeing is being influenced by simplified approaches, enabled working environments and a "healthy aging" mindset.

When you google or talk about "healthy aging" you are instantly met with headlines limited to the older generation. We never think about or consider that we should be thinking about aging healthily from an early age, until now. A

Melbourne University study, the Healthy Aging Program (HAP) has been focused on improving the understanding of health across our lifespan to help promote healthy aging and aid the prevention of disease. And excitedly, they have recently released details of their Women's Healthy Aging Project (WHAP) where they have spent the last 30 years examining the health of Australian women from midlife.

There is much we can take from this study that can support and give rise to creating workplace cultures and communities that provide sustainable health for our people. We can foster workplaces that create environments for people to thrive, to do meaningful work, to live out their why, to live a life of great satisfaction and of course this all starts with our health, at all ages.

What are some of the ways we can do this?

Bring awareness and education of the life stages to the forefront. As people, we evolve through various life stages from puberty, to parenthood, to Menopause, to midlife, to older years. We change, grow and experience all that aging brings but, we are often brought down by stigma, perceptions and taboos of most life stages. There is an opportunity to shift perspective and bring wellbeing programs that support and enhance the life stages of our people, so that we can support healthy aging and a sustainable livelihood.

Broaden your mindset from simply offering the 3Fs (Fitness, Flu Shot, Fruit Box) to incorporating the 3Ms (Meaning, Motivation, Mentoring). Research from the Wellbeing Lab Workplace Survey highlights that people can reach a state of consistently thriving if workplaces go beyond just the EAP and 3Fs and adopt a broader whole health lifestyle approach.

Embrace an integrated approach of Me,

NATALIE MOORE

We and Us. This framework created by Aaron Jardin, highlights the importance of addressing wellbeing and in this case healthy aging across multiple levels within a workplace - at an individual, team and wider business perspective. It affords the opportunity to bring to light the expertise, the people skills, the abilities of every person on every level and integrate that awareness and acceptance at all ages. Imagine a world where we embraced aging and used mentoring as a means to prevent chronic health conditions.

There is no doubt that the health and wellbeing of "people" has greater heightened awareness than ever before, but are we putting our energies into the right places? Every single one of us has the opportunity to create ripple effects of positive health from one person to the next, from one generation to the next, yet we live and work in a reactive state of being. We never consider that our health starts from the moment we enter the world right through our lifetime, nor that we can mentor and motivate those around us. As a business world, it is here we can make the greatest impact on a sustainable healthy future for our people and the time to do so is now.

Own Your Health Collective works with businesses to design workplaces of the future by addressing gender specific health and wellbeing needs across life phases that see people reach their peak in life and at work.

Fully accredited coaches, we use our complimentary passions in business, health and well-being, education, personal development and individual expertise to reveal the innate needs of men and women so they can work with optimum health, energy & performance.

TURN AROUND AND TAKE A STEP FORWARD

GAYLIN JEE



You might have seen the announcement in The New York Times, September 2022: **Billionaire No More: Patagonia Founder Gives Away the Company.**

Yvon Chouinard forfeited ownership of the company he founded with passion, persistence, and tireless commitment over 49 years: Patagonia. The company's statement on Twitter was a little more humble and down to earth (yes, pun intended):

Hey, friends, we just gave our company to planet Earth.

Chouinard, his wife and two kids decided to make Earth the only shareholder. They considered selling Patagonia and donating all the money but could not be sure the new owner would have the same values or keep their teams around the world employed. Taking the company public risked pressure to create short term-gain at the expense of long-term vitality and responsibility. Neither of those options was right.

When you search for a definition of sustainability, you mostly find this one: 'meeting the needs of the present responsibly, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs'. That's a bizarrely impossible aim. As the companies that sell us 'stuff' would nudge us into believing, we've a very large list of 'needs'. These needs are never fully met, because the more we sell the more we grow, and growth is supposedly good. Each year we have new clothes, new gadgets, personal care items, household items, phones, smartwatches, cars, the list of what will make us happier is endless.

"The top environmental problems are selfishness, greed, and apathy. And to deal with those we need a spiritual and cultural transformation - scientists don't know how to do that." Gus Speth

As it stands now, we are using up the resources of 1.5 planets. By 2050, we are likely to need between 3 and 5 planets. If you want to change the companies, you change the consumers, that's us! We must change. No amount of clever innovation will make up to a 'meeting the needs of the present' so that we have a future.

"Truth be told, there were no good options available, so we created our own."

- **Yvon Chouinard**

Instead of going public, you could say Patagonia is going purpose. There were no good options available, so they created their own.

- 100% of Patagonia's voting stock transfers to the Patagonia Purpose Trust, and
- 100% of the non-voting stock goes to Holdfast Collective, a nonprofit that is dedicated to fighting the environmental crisis and defending nature.

In place of extracting value from nature to make it into wealth for investors (without the necessary give-back), they will use the wealth Patagonia creates to protect the source of all wealth. What an inspiration.

But what can we do, ordinary 'us'? What is our role in sustainability?

There is this lovely phrase **"Turn around and take a step forward"**. It is the title of the last chapter in the book: "Let my people go surfing: The education of a reluctant businessman, Yvon Chouinard", which tells the personal story of how Patagonia became the successful, environmentally conscious business it is, and details the guiding principles in the business, including commitment to quality and environmentalism, and a pledge not to pursue growth for growth's sake. We can live a simpler life, we can apply principles of quality, we can grow stronger in place of fatter. We can become citizens again, and not be defined by consumption only.

How do we turn around and take a step forward? We get away from thinking that all growth is good. We are all consumers ... we are also producers, innovators, scientists, spiritual beings, and transformers of culture.

You could begin with the **Scale of Motivations developed by Zohar and Marshall.**

Where are you?

- Above the line motivations are positive, and the scale moves from exploratory, to gregarious and co-

operative, to power within, then mastery and a lofty generativity. As personal effectiveness increases and behaviour has a more positive outcome, we move up the scale, from deficiency needs (below the line) to higher level needs (above the line).

- Below the line starts with self-assertion, moving to anger, craving, fear, anguish and finally, apathy. They are mirror opposites of the positive motivations.

It is natural for us to bounce above and below the line at different times, but those who aim spend more time in the positive emotions are refining a kind of intelligence we call transformative intelligence, or SQ (beyond IQ and EQ, necessary but not enough in the 21st C). SQ is good if you are designing infinite games. Infinite games have more unknowns, and the rules change, but so do the players - the games are designed to play on.

At present we play a lot of short-term finite games. They have defined rules and players. We play through our resources until an end of winners and losers. (The real end will just be losers of course because there's only one pale blue dot). SQ sparks our curiosity about why we do what we do, and pushes enquiry towards what other ways could look like.

I'd say don't wait for the world's biggest problems to be solved by scientists. They can never do it on their own. And don't become apathetic. That makes you feel awful over time and helps nobody else. If there are no good options immediately available, create your own. Chouinard says we should step through the fatalism of the fate of our environment by taking action. Walk your own pilgrimage to a life that's more above the line, exploratory, cooperative, creates power within and mastery, that aims for generativity.

We can live simpler lives. It always seems impossible until it is done.

There are 12 principles* of SQ. I took the liberty of phrasing them into a series of statements to reflect upon.

THE POSTER BOY FOR SUSTAINABILITY

CAITLIN WATSON

From 'weekend warrior' to podium finisher: how my husband set the example for building a sustainable lifestyle

When I think of sustainability, the first thing that comes to mind is my husband. I came to this conclusion because when I picked up James Clear's Atomic Habits at the beginning of the year, I found that so many of the tips and tools provided by Clear were already being implemented in my home – by my husband, in particular. I am a Work In Progress, especially when it comes to exercise...

Six days a week, this man gets up at 5am and gets onto his stationary trainer to complete a grueling session on his bike. There are many mornings I check on him, convinced that he has keeled over because the pace and

intensity of the session sounds like it has gotten the better of him. But no, there he is, sweating it out and seeing it through to the end.

I remember taking his 'before' photo in 2018, wondering how long it would be before the new indoor trainer (yet another expensive bike toy) would find a permanent home in the black hole that is my garage. It never did, and I'm thrilled that he proved me wrong. He went from 'weekend warrior', training only on weekends, to winning races and becoming a provincial mountain biker.

It got me thinking about what it took

for him to get there, and how I could apply some of James Clear's tools for building sustainable habits:

Your habits shape your identity (and vice versa)

Many people begin the process of changing their habits by focusing on what they want to achieve. This leads us to use outcome-based habits – i.e., changing **results**, such as losing weight, writing a book, etc. The alternative is to build identity-based habits. With this approach we start by focusing on who we wish to become. This layer is concerned with "changing beliefs: your worldview, your image,

your judgments about yourself and others", and is the deepest layer for creating and sustaining change. This is the layer we should begin with.

I heard my husband's narrative change from 'I ride mountain bikes' to 'I am a mountain biker' – every action he then took supported this identity, from his diet to his social media presence to his relationships.

An accountability partner can change everything

At this point, I am going to acknowledge that it is difficult to create sustainable habits without the support of people in your circle. Yes, I'm referring to me, and more recently, our daughter – the support team, holding the sweat towels, energy drinks and snack bars at race time, standing at the start line on a freezing winter's day to watch our athlete conquer another mountain, and then documenting his success at the finish line and on the podium.

Also, the daily support from his coach has been key to his success: Darrin sets the workouts, builds in milestones to maintain and elevate performance (I have heard endless complaining about the dreaded FTP test), and provides expert feedback on progress.

On the weekends, his friend, Richard, would join him on his rides around Joburg, helping to set the pace, hold him accountable for showing up, and talk about post-ride ride statistics over a cup of Seattle coffee. This partnership was key in helping him sustain momentum through to the end of each week. Their 'habit contract', as Clear refers to it, included consequences for not showing up or arriving late – coffee was on the offender.

Richard has since emigrated, but because my husband is now accountable to a team, he continues to get up and show up, even when he may not feel like it. The post-ride analysis still takes place though: through a tracking tool called Strava, they can view each other's stats and provide well-deserved kudos to each other and those in their cycling community.

Make the cues of good habits obvious in your environment

It's simple: if you want to exercise

more, create a space to exercise with all the equipment available so that it makes the process of exercising easier. If you want to eat better, fill your fridge with healthy food and make the cooking equipment needed to support you easily available.

When we moved my husband's indoor trainer to our spare room, we created a dedicated space for him to close the door and focus only on his ride in the morning. The room is set up for riding success, with the cupboard filled with all his cycling gear, so that everything is easily accessible, and he doesn't have to spend time in the morning trying to make the environment conducive for riding.

Wherever possible, avoid mixing the context of one habit with another – the mantra 'one space, one use' helps to focus your energy on the specific habit you're wanting to build so that you're less likely to get distracted. If you live in a small apartment, where one room needs to play multiple functions, Clear recommends dividing your room into activity zones – a chair for reading, a table for working, a corner for exercising. You can arrange the same with your digital spaces as well – for example, use your tablet for reading, your laptop for working and your phone for social media and calls/texting.

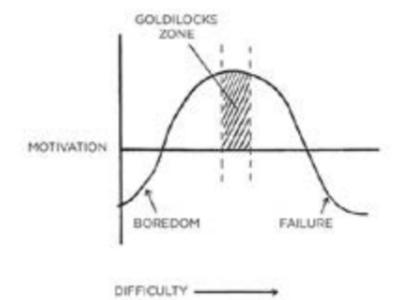
Professionals stick to the schedule; amateurs let life get in the way

Clear highlights that the greatest threat to success is not failure but boredom. "We get bored with habits because they stop delighting us. The outcome becomes expected, and as our habits become ordinary, we start derailing our progress to seek novelty." Those who are able to successfully create and sustain habits are those that can handle the boredom of repeating the habit day in day out. I saw that once my husband's initial progress on the bike plateaued, it felt as though he had lost the motivation to do much more than what he was already doing.

I then saw what Clear refers to as the 'Goldilocks Rule' in action. The Goldilocks Rule states that "humans experience peak motivation when working on tasks that are just right on the edge of their current abilities. Not too hard. Not too easy. Just right." To motivate himself, my husband

decided to set new, small milestones for himself: he would enter a race and aim to be in the top 10% of the field, and this required a slight change to his training schedule. He then aimed to finish in the top 5% after a few races, which required more adjustments, and then top 3, and then 1st. Had he set his sights on completing the Tour De France right out of the starting blocks, it is likely that he would have never made it out of his training room. These smaller milestones were challenging enough to keep him interested in continuing but were not too challenging to keep him out of the ring.

THE GOLDILOCKS RULE



Wherever you may be on your journey, I think that perhaps the most important tip is to just get started. Small changes applied consistently can make all the difference to achieving success.

I am incredibly proud of the example my husband is setting for our daughter, and know that if "habit maketh the man", then I'll continue to support his habits – because they've made a pretty good guy!



COLLABORATION IS YOUR SECRET WEAPON

LITA CURRIE



Being able to collaborate with others, and getting them to collaborate with you, is the secret weapon of success. However, sometimes we are reluctant to collaborate because of perceived competition, or not knowing the other person well enough or feeling inferior. Don't let that stop you! Here's how to build strong collaborative relationships:

1. Know your strengths... and your weaknesses. I'm a fan of the Clifton Strengthfinder, where the premise is that you should focus on your strengths rather than on your weaknesses. If you spend your energy on the things you like doing and are already doing it well, you'll get a higher return on the investment of resources (like energy and time). What about your weaknesses, then? The stuff that you hate doing, but that still needs to get done? That's where collaboration becomes a clever way to manage your weaknesses. Find someone who likes doing the things you hate and ask them to collaborate. You might be able to offer some of your strengths as a trade, which might be their weakness. Everyone wins! A colleague of mine reached out a couple of years ago. She had a concept for a training course and all the content but wasn't good at designing an intervention. Knowing that this is my strength,

2. Dig your well before you're thirsty. This book, by Harvey Mackay espouses the value of networking and building relationships continuously. Don't wait until you're dying of thirst before you dig a well – so, don't wait until you need to collaborate before you invest in relationships. Have a plan for building and maintaining relationships in your network in an ongoing way so that you can call on these when you have the need for collaboration. Schedule lunches and coffee dates often and invest the time and effort in relationships. It will stand you in good stead.

3. Don't be shy. The world is a global village. You are just a couple of degrees removed from your idols. Send them a connection request on LinkedIn or reach out in an email. The worst they can say is no. Imagine if they say yes! A key lesson that I have learnt in life is to ask for what I want. So, ask the people you'd like to collaborate with if they'd be interested, even if they are gurus way out of your (perceived) league. It might just be the smartest move you make.

4. Be visible online. Having a presence online is a table stake. Even if you're happily employed, keep your LinkedIn

we collaborated and created a very successful training course.

profile up to date, post articles and respond to other posts. This is a great way to build your digital presence. People get to know you online, and when you ask for collaboration, they will be more willing to respond.

5. Do favours when you can. People tend to repay favours. Research shows that it is a very powerful social contract. If someone asks a favour from you, do it without expecting anything back. Chances are that they will pay it back when you have a need of them. Investing a little effort could pay off bigtime in the future. I had taken part in an online research project a couple of years ago for a student's Masters. It took me but 20 minutes. Two years later I received an email from her. In her new corporate job they needed services from a consultant like me, and she thought of me. This led to a very lucrative project. Not bad for a 20-minute investment...

Being able to collaborate effectively is a critical skill to keep yourself future-fit. According to the World Economic Forum the top skills for 2025 includes problem-solving, self-management, working with people and technology use and development. With the world of work changing so fast the ability to collaborate effectively is not just a nice-to-have. Make it your secret weapon.



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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/>

MARTIN PROBST

COLLABORATION. RECIPE FOR SUCCESS OR DISASTER

Top tips to ensure your organisation uses cooperation appropriately.

Collaboration is the talk of the town. But is it time to put it on the chopping block? Collaboration can be both good and bad for an organisation, and too much of it can be just as damaging, if not more, than not enough. Let me explain...

Over the last few years, 'collaboration' has become a buzzword and a hallmark of today's business environment. And whilst I am a big supporter of appropriately utilised collaboration, I observe that many businesses push collaboration beyond its usefulness. It can reach a point of joint decision-making, copy-all email, fancy collaboration tools and all-inclusive meetings, where nothing ever gets done because there is an expectation of everybody getting along and working together on everything. Since that is quite an unrealistic target, it often achieves the opposite and destroys vital productivity and independence of individual employees within an organisation. This type of collaboration

puts many individuals into 'collaboration overload', leaves them feeling upset and excluded, forces them to work overtime, and too often negatively impacts their wellbeing. This is clear evidence that less collaboration would be more.

There is no doubt that collaboration is the key to efficiency. But, clearly, as with everything else, balance is key. Collaboration is about working together, sharing ideas and resources, to achieve a common goal. It's about creating efficient processes and systems that allow for each person to contribute their best work. It's about being able to do a task or part of a project without having to ask permission from anyone else. And it's about being able to trust that everyone involved is working towards a common purpose - not just their own individual goals or aspirations.

Coming together is a beginning, staying together is progress, and working together is success.
Henry Ford

When we work together, we can accomplish more than we could if we were working alone. But collaboration means being able to contribute independently, too. With the fast pace of work these days, we simply don't have the luxury of time to consult with everyone about everything we're working on. Doing so would mean an incredibly slow approach to everything and thus fast-track the end of our organisation.

To ensure organisational success in today's busy and ever-changing environment, we need clearly defined roles and individuals who can autonomously, swiftly, and effectively complete their responsibilities and projects, without wasting everybody else's time. Each employee plays a vital role and must be able to work independently as well as building and fostering strong collaboration with others if required. They must have the skills and knowledge to know when to go alone, and when to work together to successfully complete tasks or projects most effectively.

This raises a fundamental question: when to collaborate and when not to. Here are my top tips.

Collaborate? Nope!

We must stay clear of collaboration when:

- The cost of collaboration outweighs the benefits, i.e., the collective outcome produces lower results than working independently.
- Individuals are equipped with the necessary tools to successfully complete the tasks on their own.
- Tasks are simple, small, and straight forward.
- A fast execution is crucial to achieve the outcome.
- Something is not a priority and doesn't align with the organisational vision and mission.
- We have a toxic organisational culture.
- Others within the team are lazy and take advantage of others.

Collaborate? - Yup!

On the other hand, collaboration is incredibly useful when:

- Brainstorming fresh concepts, new ideas and service and product offerings.
- Planning strategies and gaining buy-in from all stakeholders involved.
- Coordinating, planning, and carrying out difficult tasks.
- Learning from each other's experiences and plan a way forward.
- Handling ambiguous and complex challenges.
- Improving workflows that affect quality, efficiency, or customer service.
- Making key decisions that can impact the overall business and affect the entire team or workforce.

Often the greatest contribution to a team or organisation comes from individuals who follow clear workflows, have well-defined roles, and can complete their own work independently

within an agreed timeframe that is aligned with the vision and common goals of the organisation. Fostering an independent mindset of excellence gives us empowerment to position ourselves in the best possible emotional state, helps us to step up and be proactive rather than being affected and conditioned by others and reactive to their actions and problems.

And if we create a high-performing team or organisation consisting of independent people who are working in collaboration with each other, where everyone is on the same page and has ownership of the task at hand, mistakes are far less likely to happen, deadlines will be met, and the sky is the limit for the organisation as a whole.

WE ARE BETTER TOGETHER

As social beings, we are hardwired to live with and be with others. It is vital for our mental health and emotional fitness. Isolation and loneliness can literally be deadly. But dealing with others, especially in the work context, can be difficult. Communications misfire, land badly, and this inevitably results in conflict. The very thing we were trying so hard to avoid.

Bessel van der Kolk, in his book *The Body Keeps the Score* points out that our brains are formed to operate as members of a community. Our most significant survival strategy, and what has made us successful as a species, is the ability to collaborate in social systems. So why do we find it so hard?

In order to connect with others we need, first and foremost, to feel safe. When we feel safe, we make eye contact, get physically closer, are more expansive with our body language and use a tone of voice that is modulated and steady. At the same time we regulate the emotional state of all of those in our immediate environment too.

Our adeptness at and type of social connections are established when we are born. Our very earliest relationships, those with our caregivers, and more importantly, the coping strategies we developed to preserve them, lay the foundation for all our significant relationships going forward. This is attachment theory, something most of us are unaware of and even if we are, we possibly think it doesn't apply to us. We just get on with making or messing up relationships unconscious of the deeply embedded drives developed when we could barely speak.

So in order to connect and collaborate we need to feel safe, and our ability to do so adequately is stuck in past, often unconscious, experiences. Is it no wonder that many of us find it challenging being part of a team in a work context that is often alien and complex?

Who can say with absolute honesty that they feel safe in their work space? Safe here meaning, being comfortable to trust and be open and vulnerable with others. There are many obstacles, traps and hurdles, real or perceived, that make life in the work world quite intimidating. Not that we would ever admit to this, though. That would call for us to be vulnerable.

Diversity, which used to mean race, religion and culture, now has so many layers and is so much more difficult to deal with, especially when we don't feel comfortable talking to each other openly. Every time we open our mouths to say something, have an opinion or, heaven forbid, disagree, it has the potential to blow up - badly.

The economic and political climate has drawn the strings of tension even more taut. Stress and anxiety levels are ramped up with concerns about job security (an oxymoron in current times), ever increasing prices of everything, and the roller coaster energy and power worries.

With all our competing interpersonal and personal concerns feeling safe is not an easy box to tick. When we don't feel safe the antennae are up, the mayday signal starts to beep, and our entire system is on alert to fight or flee. Or freeze.

Conflicts will occur in this situation. It is

CHANTAL DAWTREY

almost inevitable. It is also human, useful and can result in deeper connection once the misunderstandings have been cleared. If, of course, we are open and aware of what is really going on.

If we can remember that we really do need each other, that we are better together, and that how another person reacts is more often about them and therefore not to take it personally, relationships will improve. Being able to take responsibility for our own actions, behaviour and responses and to be okay with getting it wrong sometimes. A sense of humour is a real advantage that goes a long way to support a more robust relationship space.

Smiling more. Yes, even if you are a lawyer, or an accountant, or just part of a staid, stuck up, stuffy corporate. Smiling tells your body and anybody else that can see it, that things are okay. Laugh more, not at, but with, others. Smiling and laughing connects us, relaxes our nervous system and allows us to play a little. An energy of play allows for better collaboration, keener communication and conflict is dealt with on a lighter, less personal level.

Life doesn't allow for us to stick only with those we are familiar and comfortable with. Work demands we engage with others, lots of different others. Having a spirit of curiosity rather than contractedness, and a willingness to see the humanness in all, could result in some surprising connections, a deeper understanding of our differences and an appreciation of what that diversity offers. After all, we really are better together.



CONFLICT, COMMUNICATION AND COLLABORATION IS CHILD'S PLAY.

NATALEE HOLMES

Children can teach us a thing or two. They are born with a deep-rooted sense of justice. Just ask them to share a biscuit. "You cut, I choose," used to be the mantra in my house if ever there was something to be split between my boys.

There is nothing more exasperating to a child than unfairness. It brings on the sulk faster than a child hears a sweet wrapper crinkle. In the wise words of our purple dinosaur friend, "sharing is caring," and that is the unspoken rule in the toybox.

When my youngest was in nursery school, they had a talking table. Not an actual table that talked, but a peace table where children who were fighting had to go sit and talk through their disagreements. It was here they learnt about the role of the peacemaker and the role of the peacekeeper. It was here they learnt to regulate their emotions and behaviour. It was here they learnt to listen to others' plights. It was here they learnt how to put themselves in the other person's shoes. It was here that they learnt to be accountable and responsible for their part in the resolution of the problem.



To let the child do as he likes when he has not yet developed any powers of control, is to betray the idea of freedom... Real freedom instead, is a consequence of development..."

MARIA MONTESSORI

At home, we spoke about a win-win. My 2-year-old used to howl at his brothers

if something was unfair and say, "we do win-win!" He grasped the concept before he could speak properly, and he grasped it because our desire for justice is ingrained in our DNA. No matter how old we are.

Fast forward to adulthood. We grow up, we become opinionated, we develop egos, but that desire for fairness is still rooted deeply in our DNA. Perhaps we need to go back to the talking table and take a leaf out of those children's books. Here are some lessons we can learn from the little ones...

- Fair is fair – what is right is right. It is not always easy or convenient to be fair, but deep in our gut we know what is right and what is unjust. When you treat people fairly, they respect you for it and then relations become easier. Do the right thing.
- Do a win-win – there is no winning in compromising. We need to learn to come to an agreement where all parties are happy. This may seem ideal, and perhaps you are thinking unrealistic, but true negotiation is a skill. When we feel our needs are heard we are more open to hearing what the other party needs to, and when there is respect and true comprehension, there can be true communication and collaboration.
- Listen – with the intention of hearing, not the intention of responding. Often, we are so busy formulating our own argument in our own head that we fail to hear what the other person is really saying. Perhaps adults need a

talking table too. The rules were one speaks one listens, and then you get to swap. When we are forced to actually listen, we can be more creative in our solutions and negotiations – that is when true communication takes place

- Don't throw tantrums. "It's not fair!" is probably not something we actually stomp our feet and say as adults, but it doesn't mean we don't feel it. Truth be told, sometimes I would love to stomp my feet and hurl myself on the floor and shout at the injustices of adulthood. But we teach children from little that there is no value in throwing a tantrum. Learning to regulate our emotions and behaviour is a grown-up skill that we need in our personal relationships and in boardrooms. Unfortunately, it is not simply one we master with aging – I have seen many an adult tantrum – but real communication and collaboration can only happen when we know how to regulate ourselves.

To summarise, managing conflict, learning to communicate, and collaboration then, are child's play. Get yourself a talking table, remember your nursery school rules, and let's all act like grown up kids.





WENDY NAGEL

CONFLICT AS A MEANS OF DEEPENING AND STRENGTHENING RELATIONSHIPS

Where does conflict arise? I have been considering this question for a while now. It feels like a chicken and egg situation in terms of what comes first... is it a reaction to an external stimulus or does an internal stimulus create the external conflict?

I am leaning towards it being primarily about the quality of the internal relationship held with the self and then it's about how we relate to others in different situations.

The issue at hand is that as individuals we are often experiencing incoherence between our cognition, our feelings, our actions and our souls yearning. We generally feel ill-equipped to deal with conflict skillfully and so we avoid it at all costs...and it costs us dearly as it creates further fragmentation within ourselves and distancing from others.

Let me share a personal example of what I mean by this.

My entire life, all I have ever wanted

is to be understood, to belong and be loved for who I am.

Seems simple enough...right!

Here's the rub; I am an incredibly sensitive person and I learnt very early on in my development that when I revealed my true thoughts or feelings it created an environment of anger and aggression. I believed that I had to find a way to internalize and contain those big feelings and opinions. The problem is that the feelings don't

go away. Containing them creates an internal experience for me that becomes volatile and highly reactive which activates my nervous system and places it on high alert to the external environment in an effort to ensure that I do not upset or trigger anyone else. This I have discovered has made me guarded and is not an authentic way to live as relationships are built on the premise of keeping the peace in place of using conflict to deepen and strengthen relationships. Never mind that this has only taken me 50 years of my 53 in existence, but at least it has finally dawned on me.

The way we deal with our inner conflict becomes key.

The truth is, we are all constantly negotiating within ourselves and struggling to put the necessary boundaries in place to ensure that we are in a conscious way of being and not at the mercy of the demands from outside. The reason for this from my observation is that our socialization has us believing more often than not, that the needs and expectations of others are more important than our own.

This feels like the birthplace of conflict in this human experience, which in essence is a place of varying degrees of being able to assert our needs versus varying degrees of cooperation.

Depending on how grounded a person is in terms of their own sense of belonging and value, will determine the degree to which they are prepared to assert their needs and be able to remain cooperative with others. This is the space of collaboration and it falls within the conflict matrix because real collaboration means creating win-win scenarios which requires a space for negotiation in place of compromise where everyone loses. It requires of us the ability to hold our own and not feel threatened when someone else needs something too. The work then is what each of us needs to do to shift the limiting beliefs around our being worthy of being here and therefore be able to assert ourselves in the world with greater competence and confidence and an ability to cooperate with others to ensure benefit for all.

Coming back to my issue of incoherence

when I'm feeling triggered and whether to speak up or contain it. If I am to be more collaborative internally, it requires deeper cooperation and honesty with the feelings that are showing up for me, creating space and time to appreciate what they are revealing to me and being able to sit with them while asserting a more conscious soothing mechanism, in place of my habitual strategy, which is absencing. In avoidance or absencing I gain nothing as I am not asserting what I know I should be doing or cooperating with the feelings and so I remain embattled with myself.

The lesson from this internal conflict is that I open up and speak more truthfully about my feelings regardless of how they might be received by others. I still experience a real rush of energy whenever I am about to speak my truth, and I am learning to read this as my souls rejoicing in my honesty and bringing more of myself into relationship.

When we are engaged in internal conflict, it shows up in the world around us because it manifests in the way we behave and relate to the world. For me, if I do not communicate truthfully and choose instead to internalize, I become distant, absent, resentful and inaccessible to myself and those around me. Not exactly the ingredients to foster real connection.

Consider for a moment the source of conflict in your life?

I observe people struggling with saying no, with overwhelm, with anxiety, with hyper activation of the nervous system, with needing to be a certain way, depression, fatigue, burnout, and constant crisis management.

These are all symptoms that indicate conflict between our ego and our soul essence. There is an unreasonableness about the expectations that people are placing on themselves and having placed on them. It is as if we have forgotten that we are human and find ourselves in a constant battle between the external demands of life and the internal requirements to enjoy the experience of being human. The beauty is that the soul is intrinsically wise, it is not bothered with comparison games and chasing unreasonable demands or living in limiting beliefs. Unlike its

counterpart in the ego mind which is all about belonging, being valuable, successful and important which points to extrinsic motivation.

And so again I return to my source of conflict as a great teacher and the battle to stay present with the intensity and sensitivity of my feelings. Having observed my pattern of absencing/numbing, I am now implementing ways to stay attuned and connected with my experience during the day, so that I can be responding in place of reacting to the triggers. This allows a greater internal coherence in place of the conflict and out of coherence there comes greater capacity for self-worth, self-esteem, courage and ultimately deeper connections. It also means that I focus on what I might need to address within myself or in relationship with another to ensure my internal coherence and alignment; which in turn allows authenticity in all relationships. The upside of this is that we are open and honest about our experience, it creates the opening for others to be the same.

Ultimately what I am proposing is that conflict of any kind and scale represents the internal world of the collective individuals in any system. If we can develop the capability and capacity to notice the symptoms as an invitation to explore our inner conflict as a contribution to the state of the environment in which we find ourselves, then we can create spaces to collaborate and heal our own and collective conflicts instead of avoiding, accommodating, compromising or competing which ensures escalation of the conflict and remaining trapped in the limitations of ego instead of our unlimited essential soul.

The ultimate conflict it appears to me is the battle we engage internally that questions our right to be loved and to belong to this human race. If only children could be taught that they are love and nothing separates them from love, then perhaps we can move out of the current fear-based construct which has us questioning our worth and fighting for our space out of a scarcity mindset into a space of love and abundance.

BUILDING COLLABORATION AS AN ESSENTIAL INGREDIENT

NOT AS A TEMPORARY FIX

SARAH BABB

There is a trend emerging amongst organisations that have new structures, or new leaders, or new markets, that the leaders are aiming to reconsolidate their teams and align them in this new direction. On the one hand this is refreshing to facilitate as the leaders and their teams seek renewal around a shared purpose and shared values. There is such a calling to reconnect and rebuild the team on a safe foundational space to work from to craft this exciting future. This brings a renewed belonging and sense of meaning to work, which has oftentimes been absent for so many during the desolate lockdown and turmoil years of the pandemic. On the other hand many people are feeling bruised and battered from the harshness of these changes imposed on them. Trust has been broken in many cases as organisations could not keep their promises and people turned to their own survival, taking their eyes off of their teams.

On a team level we need to rebuild collaboration and this requires spending time and energy on rebuilding trust.

"In the organizational context, trust is most often defined as **an interpersonal relationship that forms when a person shows consistent proof of competence, benevolence, and integrity**. This kind of trust takes a long time to build and is easily broken."

Intuitively we can all relate to this, we need to build relationships to build trust which is based on consistency and mutual understanding and care.

The rub comes in that most often collaboration is required in organisations from people working across functions and on projects based work. This means teams come together temporarily and find it difficult to build relationships and trust in such a short space of time. The difficulty in these temporary connections at work is that team members focus on reinforcing their professional identity of being trustworthy. This dynamic often leads to face-saving behaviours in which we want to be perceived as being competent and do not want to reveal when we might be wrong or when we might not know. The irony is then that in our attempt to be trustworthy we actually break trust. So we cannot build trust as a precursor to collaboration - we need to build capacities to equip these teams to make high quality decisions, whilst building relationships.

Hugander (2022) argues that these organisational ingredients to support collaboration in these contexts are to build:

- Information sharing
- Perspective taking
- Effective turn taking

Teams can collaborate if they have the relevant and timeous access to accurate and necessary information and information flows. There would also need to be a balance of contributions and a respect for the diverse perspectives in the team. These capacities are actually key to the future survival of businesses in these

complex times. For organisations to be adaptive and dynamic there needs to be a symmetry of information flows, that the right people have access to and that they share the right information to enable devolved decision making. And mostly there needs to be insight into multiple perspectives to enable better decision making. The organisation is flexible if the work ebbs and flows between all team members too. So the trust is built when team members feel they are included (they are privy and share all required information), they feel listened to (perspective taking) and they feel respected in their contributions (turn taking). These ingredients build effective collaboration and when members feel a sense of belonging and of meaning resulting in effective outcomes, so the teamwork and trust is built.

The neuroscience of trust backs this premise. We build change through our behaviours and new neural pathways. Build in the patterns and systems for teams to collaborate with these ingredients and so we build the habits and way of being of trust. "Joy on the job comes from doing purpose-driven work with a trusted team" The organisational way of working becomes one of collaboration when these dynamic capabilities are embedded alongside connecting with the purpose of the collaboration and a care for each other.

The intrapersonal capabilities to fostering collaboration that underpin this are:

- Capacity to listen, be curious and to respect multiple perspectives
- A balance of humility to learn with a boldness to share openly
- A drive to create a better outcome together (moving beyond a desire for only personal status and success)

Some argue that some of these capacities cannot be taught and so the recruitment process ought to consider what profile of a person will build the fluid and collaborative organisation moving forward. Individuals do need to manage their own collaboration load and focus on those opportunities that help them move toward their purpose.

In addition to the individual effort so too is collaboration a skill that must be taught in order to embed this as a way of work and culture across an organisation. Collaboration cannot simply be tacked on as a dimension of work only required temporarily with additional projects. It is an ingredient for building dynamic organisations needed to survive and thrive into the future. Spend time with your teams and build these capacities to be collaborative.

"Efficient collaborators draw people to collaborative work by conferring status, envisioning joint success, diffusing ownership, and generating a sense of purpose and energy around an outcome"

(Cross, Taylor & Zehner, 2018)

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BRAVING THE WILD WHITE WATERS COLLABORATION AND CONFLICT

DR ROBYN WHITTAKER

For some time, I have been profoundly interested in understanding what lies at the heart of genuine, generous, and generative collaborative work. Along the way, this has led to some amazing conversations, initiations into like-minded spaces such as The Weaving Lab, The Presencing Institute, Deep Democracy work, and Time to Think, and the development of networks that have provided seriously rewarding insights and shifts in perceptions.

Recently, I was privileged to have been able to spend a week on the shores of Lake Victoria in Entebbe, Uganda, attending the Africa Philanthropy Network's 2022 Assembly, as well as to meet with colleagues and friends from the Africa Voices Dialogue network in Uganda, some of whom travelled for more than 12 hours so that we could be together. Aside from the fabulous new relationships built, and the deepening of existing relationships formed entirely online during COVID, this visit afforded

us the remarkable opportunity to have some discussions about the nature of shared work and how to navigate some of the challenges that we are faced with in sometimes seemingly intractable systems and issues. We did this while sitting next to the same body of water which gives rise to the River Nile, the longest river on the planet Earth, formed by multiple tributaries, and following an extremely tortuous course across half the African continent. This remarkable river nurtures and supports



multiple complex living systems and many human settlements.

This led me to think about the confluences and fluidity of our living connections, the courses they take, how beautiful and tricky they can be, and how they can better serve the spaces they reach...

Like the flow of water, collaboration and co-creative work cannot be forced. When they are, we sense in our bodies and in our spirits that the shared work being referred to as "collaboration" is, at best, really only a form of skills contracting, out-sourcing or service provision, and at worst, a form of coercion enabled by some form of "power-over" – whether this is financial, positional, or emotional. Generally, this is because the intention in forming such collaborations is determined by a specific outcome, project, or piece of work. In this way, we are asked to "collaborate" to achieve a pre-determined outcome. Our gaze, energy and effort are then primarily focussed on the project we are undertaking, and on the specifics of the work being done by each party. Team building initiatives and the attention paid to the people in the mix has the primary motivation of facilitating relationships amongst the team members, because "this will help us get the work done quicker/ better/ more efficiently".

There is nothing inherently wrong with this – it is just that we should call it by its correct name (project management) and understand that the focus of our drive and attention is on projects and outcomes, not on people and relationships. With this kind of approach, when the project goes pear-shaped, there is often very low resilience within the relationships to weather negative outcomes, and it's easy for blame and withdrawal of emotional energy to occur.

When we are fixed on a specific and pre-determined outcome for our shared work, it's really easy to find ourselves pushing upstream, losing the energy of flow, and dissipating our sense of collectivism.

Genuine collaborative and generative work has at its heart a subtle (but profound) shift in focus, which is

determined by the conscious and intentional commitment to relationship first. This gives rise to a vastly different experience for all involved.

When we are intentional and conscious about retaining our focus on the human beings with whom we are engaging, even when there may be NO INITIAL convening force around a specific project or piece of work, but where some form of shared purpose or passion is present, we create the substrate in which deep creativity, a better understanding of our shared and differing experiences, and ultimately, a vastly improved capacity to visualise, sense, interpret and understand the environment (or system) within which our relationships are taking place can emerge. Almost inevitably, shared work and projects that are responsive to the real needs of these environments or systems follow.

These projects are emergent, responsive to real, not perceived needs, and are usually very powerful in terms of their outcomes. This pattern becomes even more powerful when a clear focus and intentionality is retained around repeatedly returning to the relationships between those involved in order to reflect and sense together. In such conditions, the failure and setbacks in a specific approach or effort do not precipitate relationship breakdown, but rather form the catalyst for reuniting, co-reflecting on what happened, and deepening a shared understanding of what the sticking points were – which mostly results in creative thinking about how to circumnavigate, re-imagine or completely transform the initial approach. This is possible because in an environment where you know that your relationships matter more than your work, there is high psychological safety – and in psychologically safe environments we can be brave, experiment, innovate, create.... These kinds of co-created collective efforts follow the topography of the shared landscape. They lean into each other to understand where the barriers lie, where the water wants to flow, and they remain intentional about returning to each other even where their flow may be disrupted by obstacles.

This all seems rather obvious – but like many obvious things, it is not at all

common. Operating in this way requires a very clear (and genuine) sense of intentionality. Connections like this cannot be faked or manufactured as a means to an end – they need to BE the means AND be the end. The work, therefore, is always secondary. If you like, it needs a revolutionary shift in our thinking to understand that we are not in relationship for the sake of the work – but rather we work together for the sake of strengthening the relationship. This can (and if this is the kind of environment you are after, must) be practiced. It's not complex, but it is difficult – difficult because it requires the surrender of our learnt behaviour that outcomes and deliverables are what matter most and are what validate us and give us meaning. Difficult because it requires personal, as well as collective, vulnerability.

How to start? Examine your intent (not once – repeatedly), become brave, open, transparent, and vulnerable – and dive into the water.... And make sure to do lots of human things together – eating, dancing, joking, talking, hugging, telling anecdotes, playing...long before and in between talking about the work aspect of things...

This is perhaps how we can best assess whether teams and groups are truly functioning in collaborative flow – do the white waters of the work – the setbacks, conflicts, challenges - throw them apart, or do they draw them together? Can they trust each other in challenging times because they have intentionally and continuously invested in their relational bonds and sense of safety with one another?

"As the quality of relationships rises, the quality of thinking improves, leading to an increase in the quality of actions and results."

Daniel Kim
The Core Theory of Success

"The quality of everything we do, depends on the quality of our thinking.

And the quality of our thinking depends on how we are being treated while we are thinking - it depends on our relationships"

Nancy Kline
Time to Think

LIKE MAGIC

HOW TO SOLVE ANY PROBLEM

LITA CURRIE



Magic... The idea of magic has been around for a long time. Our ancestors used it for any phenomena that they could not explain but in this scientific era no-one believes in magic anymore. But still, it exists...

Don't stop reading. I see your sceptical look! I hear you scoff! It's true, I see magic almost every day. It's in the things we do, the tools we apply and the results that we see. In a course on coaching the other day I encouraged the participants to apply **John Whitmore's Grow Model**. One participant, Sam, was feeling hesitant because it would be the first time that they would be coaching anyone. "Just apply the model," I assured them and opened breakout rooms.

Upon returning after 15 minutes, Sam

exclaimed: "It was like magic! I just asked the questions in the model, and it worked!" Sam's partner, Agatha agreed that it was a pretty good session. In the next round they had to switch roles and upon returning to the plenary, the feedback was even more enthusiastic. Sam said "In the first round I asked Agatha what she could do to turn the situation she was facing with her stakeholder into a win-win. And in this round, she asked me the same question. The magic was that even though I had asked her in the first round, the question never entered my mind in the second round until she asked it! It was brilliant!"

This comment led us into a discussion on whether there were "magic questions" that will work for any problem and situation. And the more

I thought about it, the more I realise that there just might be. So, this is the list of my five magic questions and why they work.

What is the real problem you need to solve?

In many of the coaching sessions I do, this question is pure gold. A coachee will start the discussion by talking about many different problems, and the more they talk, the more problems they come up with. Sometimes this becomes overwhelming – for the coachee and the coach! Forcing them to identify what the real problem is that you're trying to solve focuses their thinking and compels them to critically evaluate the situation. And usually, they get to just that one critical problem that they really need to solve.

In some of the team meetings that I attended, I found that it's easy to get distracted by everything that's going wrong. The team then gets caught in a downward spiral between problems, solutions and ideas and it becomes confusing. Asking "What is the real problem we're trying to solve?" is a great way to get everyone focused and ensures that their energy is spent on the correct issue.

What will make this a win-win?

It was the day before Halloween. A primary school teacher wanted to buy pumpkins for her class to carve in a fun activity. The grocer had 16 pumpkins available, which was perfect because there were 16 kids in the class. However, he would agree to only sell her 15. No amount of cajoling would persuade him to sell all 16. That would mean that one poor kid would not have a pumpkin to carve. If the teacher had compromised, she might have left with the 15 pumpkins and made the best of the situation. But instead, she considered a win-win. "Why can you not sell me the 16th pumpkin?" she asked the grocer. "I need that for the seeds," he replied. "I plant them in order to have pumpkins to sell next year." Well, that changed the conversation completely! They took out the seeds from all 16 pumpkins, which means that it's a win-win.

This story from Boaz Keysar from the Chicago Booth Business School clearly shows how compromise is a dirty word. So often we might think that it's the best solution when, in fact, there might be a win-win available if only we would look for the opportunity. Asking "how could this be a win-win?" and looking at the problem from the perspective of each person's interest, rather than their position, is a creative problem-solving technique.

What are the obstacles and how can I remove them?

Very often I am flummoxed by people and their decisions. People do things – or don't do them – that leave me wondering what they were thinking. (I'm sure you do, too, so don't judge!). I had a conversation with a colleague where she confessed that she's having trouble with a critical stakeholder. "I just cannot get him to do what I need him to do!" she complained. "Well," I said, "what's stopping him from doing it?" She gave me a wide-eyed look indicating that she had never considered that option. We talked about the obstacles in his way and how she can help remove them. It was a critical insight.

Whose voice is not being heard?

I attended a team coaching workshop with the brilliant **Prof Peter Hawkins**. At one stage he put an empty chair in the middle of the room. Everyone stared at the chair, mystified. The chair, he explained, embodies the stakeholder whose voice is not being heard. It is this voice that, if it's included in the conversation, can lead to the key to solving a problem. It could be the voice of future generations, or the "silent majority" or a critical role player that you have not considered. He recommended to always have an open seat in team meetings so that the presence of that silent voice is felt. And before solving a problem or taking the final decision, ask the crucial question about whose voice you should be listening to.

If you know that the [positive opposite] was true, how would that change the situation?

This question, coined by Nancy Kline as the "incisive question" is true magic. In her 1999 book **Time To Think**

she explains that this question can help unearth limiting assumptions. Assumptions are beliefs that we hold about the world or our situation and these could be true or untrue. Examining them is critical to reveal untrue assumptions that might restrict our ability to solve problems.

In a coaching session with a client, he mentioned that he found it difficult to speak up in meetings. He lamented that the team does not want to hear what he has to say. Because of his silence he worried that his impact and performance would be diminished. "What if you knew that they want to know what you're thinking, how would you behave in team meetings?" I asked. His face lit up as he realised that his limiting assumption (they don't want to know what he thinks) might be untrue. "That will change everything!" he exclaimed. Months later he had changed his behaviour was an engaged and productive team member.

The incisive question turns the negative limiting assumption into the positive opposite and then links it back to the goal. For example: "They don't want to hear what I have to say, so I don't speak up in meetings." The incisive question will be "If you knew that they are interested in what you have to say (the positive opposite), how will that help you to speak up in meetings (the goal)?" Try it. You'll feel like you have to wave a magic wand theatrically in the air because it will feel like magic!

The world is complex and changing. There is much value in solving problems faster and better for teams, organisations and humans. Use these 5 questions and test them for yourself. If they work for you, please share them widely.

