Talenttalks

Evolving Thinking through best industry reads.

ISSUE # 2

EDITION MAY 2022

BRING BACK THE LOVE TO WORK

ENLIGHTENED LEADERS

FROM BEING AWAKENED TO BEING ENLIGHTENED

WHAT TYPE OF IMPOSTER ARE YOU?

UNDERSTANDING THE TYPES OF IMPOSTER SYNDROME AND THEIR ASSOCIATED TRIGGERS WILL HELP YOU TO MANAGE THEM PERSONALLY AND PROFESSIONALLY.

ACHIEVE SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

FINDING THE RIGHT BALANCE BETWEEN LIFE, WORK & WELLBEING

FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome from the team

The idea of making 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, remains at the heart of Talenttalks just as it has been since it's launch in 2016.

Thanks to our Creative Director, Alistair from Vanilla Rain, and the inspiration and creativity of our varied portfolio of thought leaders who have contributed to this month's edition, we present to you our Talenttalks May magazine edition.

It is therefore appropriate in a time of pressing global circumstances that our theme for this month is "Beauty", the beauty of the written word and the gift of imagination and possibility it offers.
Join us in our celebration of beauty.

PS. Don't miss the chance to subscribe to Talenttalks monthly magazine and forward to your colleagues too.

SUE DE WAAL
Chief Executive Editor

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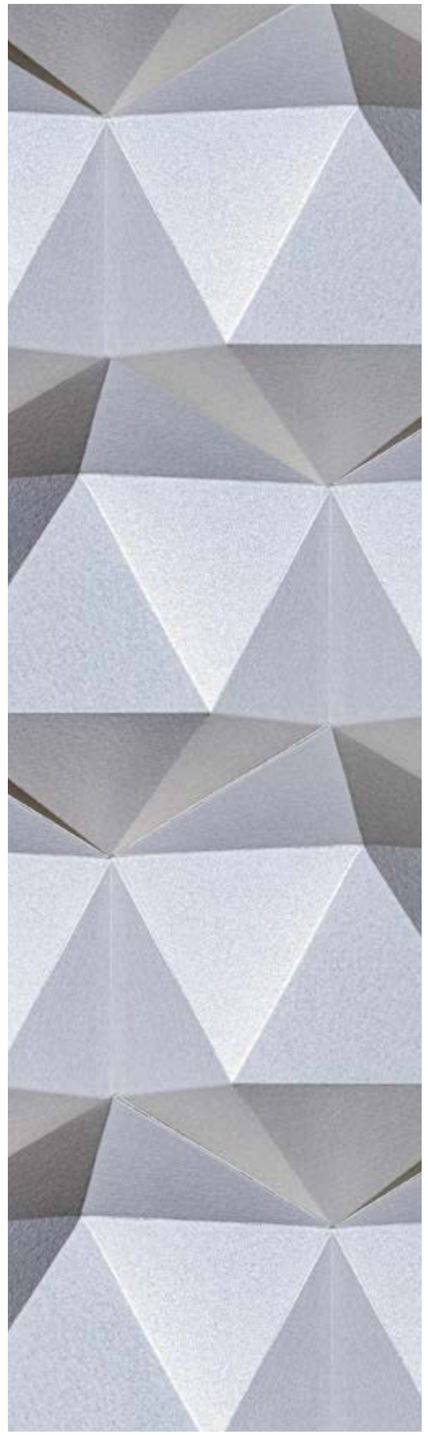

KERRYN KOHL

CULTURE AND ENGAGEMENT

As our values shift and we respond to the changing world of work, it seems that we are embracing a new way of life. We are calling for more compassion, more balance, more appreciation. Organisations are starting to recognise the importance of these values and are making changes to their policies and practices. It is an exciting time as we move towards a more humane way of working.

BRING BACK THE LOVE TO WORK

SOHINI PETRIE

Emotions get a bad rep at work. We are told to manage them. Control them. Hide them. Heaven forbids, someone sees you being an actual human expressing emotions at work. This approach to emotions does not serve us as individuals, nor does it serve our relationships. And it does not serve our organisations in the quest to be sustainably successful.

" What you and I feel at work has as much to do with what we are doing, and what others expect of people in our roles—and of someone who looks like us—as it does with our own inner lives. We readily accept that work shapes how we act and how we see ourselves, that others' expectations subtly corner us. We rarely think the same may be true of our emotions — even private ones — as well. "

Being responsible for our emotions can look quite different from viewing them solely as something to be harnessed or hidden. When we consider our emotions as sources of intelligence, they can give us insight about the work we do, the culture of our organisations, and tell us about how we are in relationships.

Let's take the most celebrated of all emotions, love. And where we can find it at work.

We are love-seeking beings

Brene Brown says that:

" We cultivate love when we allow our most vulnerable and powerful selves to be deeply seen and known, and when we honor the spiritual connection that grows from that offering with trust, respect, kindness, and affection. "

Love is one of the indicators of how well our lives are going. We are happy when we feel worthy of love, safety and belonging.

Love and culture (inclusion)

"Love, the most powerful of human emotions, the source of all creativity, collaboration, insight, and excellence, has been systematically drained from our lives – our work, teams, and classrooms." – Marcus Buckingham, Love + Work

Do you love where you work?

Maybe you are someone who thinks it does not matter much whether you love where you work. You just want to get in, do the work, collect your pay, and leave. And that's fair enough. Whatever your perspective, the culture at your work can affect you emotionally while at work and beyond.

Last month, a cousin called me to talk about the toxic environment she was working in and spoke of how deeply it was affecting her. The advice she was given (not from me) of 'get over it' did not sit well with her and was not an option for her. To 'get over it', meant that she would betray her own values, and that was adding to her emotional distress. The situation was not just a case of clashing personalities and bad behaviour. It was about the abuse of power, sexism, and a psychologically unsafe space.

We spend so much time at work, if the culture does not allow love to grow, then our love-seeking selves are left broken.

We don't need another (patronising) analogy about 'seats at tables' and 'being invited to the dance'. I think it detracts from the fact that behaviours, systems, and processes that promote and perpetuate exclusion impacts us in a fundamental and deep way – our sense of feeling worthy of love, safety, and belonging.
The necessity for creating love-nurturing, inclusive cultures is clear. But not only does it satisfy one of our basic needs, it is as Buckingham states, "the source of all creativity, collaboration, insight, and excellence". The coveted ingredients of success that organisations lust after!

When we let love back into our places of work and learning, we give everyone permission to open their hearts to everyone and to more possibilities. We truly see each other and the strengths we have to offer.

From a practical perspective, you can start by noticing and observing who is involved in certain conversations. Who is missing? Notice what we like and don't like about the culture. What's missing? It's not that the people we have around us are bad. It's about expanding what's possible.

How can we think differently about recruitment, onboarding, and promotion? What if we considered what life experiences might best suit the role we are hiring for, instead of only considering candidates based on previous experience or academic status.

Inclusion is not a corporate buzzword. It is an act of love.

"The underlying values of a culture and its ethics shape and inform the way we speak and act. A love ethic presupposes that everyone has the right to be free, to live fully and well. To bring a love ethic to every dimension of our lives, our society would need to embrace change."

- Bell Hooks

Bell Hooks writes about a love ethic in All About Love. She says:

Love what we do

One of the paths to leading a life of meaning and purpose is in doing work that you love. Start with asking yourself, 'what do you love to do'. This might seem like an intimidating question. I often get the response of 'I don't know'. Or a too general, shallow response like, 'I love to work with people'. As Buckingham points out, love lives in the details.

I see it is an intimate question. It shows how well you know yourself, and how you honour that knowing. It is a necessarily vulnerable curiosity. Last week at a CPD event, I was participating in a strengths activity with two colleague coaches. One of the strengths that was highlighted by a peer from a personal story I shared, was 'organiser'. My immediate response was "Yeah, I didn't think I was much of an organiser...it's not really a sexy strength!" I'm laughing as I type this. You see, I do love getting organised, applying a structure and knowing what the priorities are. It comes naturally to me, and I enjoy being able to see the path from my current position to where I want to get to. I know what sh*t needs to get done! (Thank you, Beth for gently reminding me of this.) But in that moment, I felt exposed and blurted out what my inner critic was nervously muttering, with the usual tune of 'make people love you'. Like I said, we want to be loved.

Doing work that you love is more than expressing your strengths or talents. Our wellbeing and happiness benefits from us knowing what we love to do and finding work that allows us to express it. It is about making a contribution to something you care about, work that allows you to live your values. It is about finding joy in working towards something that may not be easy but is meaningful to you. It is how you stay in connection with yourself. And truly belonging to yourself.

My journey into coaching started with a manager handing me the Strengths Finder book. It was the start of an exploration of who I could be, work that I might love, and what I could do in the world. It set me free from my limiting beliefs and led me to a path of meaning and purpose. Fourteen years on, I still have a deep appreciation for that moment.

Love in our teams

My number one parenting goal has been to instil Speak with Love in my children. I've added Listen Open-heartedly to this. I think these are powerful expressions of love and it creates space for authentic human connection. It is a practice that my family and I remind each other about and even the children call out. Because even though we love each other fiercely, we don't always act in love. I use these mantras as the guiding light in all my conversations. I don't always get it right – another work in progress – but I believe in this whole-heartedly. It is my way of living by a love ethic.

Moreover, it is a practical, actionable way of cultivating healthy relationships in our teams. One of my coaching clients is a young entrepreneur, who is trying to pull a team together. I asked him about what he has been listening out for in his discovery conversations with potential team members, and he was stumped. You see he was so concerned about telling people what he is about and what his dreams and goals are, and only listening to whether they agreed with him or not, that he wasn't really listening to what was important to them or what could be possible together.

Speaking with love and listening open-heartedly are values that are particularly pertinent to giving feedback. Holding these as intentions, we can share advice for development and be open for learning in a way that is kind and impactful. Kim Scott refers to this ethic of caring personally and challenging directly, as **Radical Candor.** This is a foundational practice of high-performing teams.

There is a magical chemistry when you work in a team you love. The creativity flows. The connection between play and learning is present. You build on each other's thinking and ideas and you work in a generative way that leads to sustainable solutions and amazing products. You can argue, disagree, push each other to learn and grow, and bring out the best in each other. And that is the kind of team we should get to spend a third of our lives working in.

My work loves

Personally, I've experienced love at work in all these forms. My favourite is the love in friendships of varying closeness at my different jobs. Friends who I've shared meals, drinks, and personal milestones with. Friends who have come to know my family and home. Friends who I've shared highs and lows, tears and jokes with, working on projects we cared about. Friends who I've started passion projects with. Friends who were just there with shared understanding of what its like to work where we do, under the same manager...much like siblings who are the only people who know what it's like to grow up in your family. Through my friends at work, I've learned about different cultures, nationalities, and languages. **The social connection I've shared with my favourite co-workers has been a source of nourishment, joy, and growth!**

I can't end this reflection on love at work without mentioning the joy of meeting the love of my life while working on a project together. It was a time that I came to realise that I did not want to be software developer anymore, but that I really liked being around them. Well, one in particular!

My wish is that you find a way to bring the love back to your work life.

get your team to
bounce
back better

The world of work is complex and unpredictable – individuals and teams are forced to continuously transform and adapt.

Only **19%** of employees are highly resilient. *1

81% are vulnerable to life's knocks

Luckily, resilience is a power skill that you can develop so that you always land on your feet. With resilience, teams do not only survive life's bumps, but they launch themselves to new heights.

WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT RESILIENCE:

1. Psychological safety in teams is better when members are resilient*2
   - Social support plays an important role in workplace resilience
   - Resilience is higher when team members trust one another
   - Resilience improves when employees are allowed to talk about their stress
2. Resilience is dynamic – our resilience can go up and down:
   - Effective habits and strategies increase our resilience
   - Losing touch with ourselves and/or reality decreases our resilience

HOW TO BUILD RESILIENCE IN YOUR TEAM:

1. Use a strengths-based approach – focus on each team member's skills / gifts / talents
2. Build Emotional Intelligence – Emotional Intelligence increases Resilience; Resilience increases Emotional Intelligence
3. Consciously work towards a healthy work-life balance
4. Make values tangible – how does each employee live their personal values? How closely related are personal values to organisational values?
5. Cultivate mindfulness – be aware of stressors that may trigger specific emotional reactions

Remember, be pro-active: build resilience BEFORE challenges arise!

If you want to take your team's resilience to the NEXT LEVEL BOOK A WORKSHOP with us.

*1 Workplace Resilience Study – ADP Research Institute, 2020).
*2 Cooper, C. 2021 The link between Resilience and Psychological Safety: How resilient individuals create a psychologically safe environment

THE ENLIGHTENED LEADER: FROM BEING AWAKENED TO BEING ENLIGHTENED

RAJESH KAMATH

"Remember, just because you cannot see, hear or physically touch it doesn't mean it's not happening right in front of you, it's just happening at a higher frequency of resonance which our minds can't perceive yet."

One of the most significant occurrences, in the field of medicine and healthcare, in the 20th century, took place in 1967. This historical event was of the first transplant of the human heart. In 2008, this story was depicted and played on the silver screen. Let us consider the event first.

In 1967, on the 3rd of December, a formidable team – surgical, nursing, and technical, led by Dr. Christiaan Barnard, undertook the world's first successful human-to-human heart transplantation, taking Groote Schuur Hospital in Cape Town to global fame. The unprecedented media coverage of this event transformed Barnard into an international celebrity, and it is believed that apartheid politicians exploited this moment of medical history to publicise the then isolated apartheid state of South Africa. At that time, there was little mention of those who had been instrumental in Dr Barnard achieving this milestone. Hamilton Naki, was a black gardener, who went on to work in the animal laboratory at the University of Cape Town and it was he who assisted Dr. Barnard in the research effort that preceded the first human heart transplantation. Naki, who came from rural Transkei, had no access to higher education under apartheid. Then how?

Noticing the Unnoticed

"I stole with my eyes", Naki famously said when asked, how he learned his impressive surgical skills without any formal training. Hidden Heart is a compelling film – about surgeon, Dr Barnard, and technician, Naki and the interweaving of their lives, in the context of this first successful human heart transplantation. Their story, set in the backdrop of apartheid South Africa, is one of both glamour and injustice. The film explores the lives of these two characters through the voices of their relatives and friends. They reflect back on this historic event as also about life during and after apartheid. Hidden Heart lives and breathes not only from these dialogues, but also picturises beautifully, the striking colours of South Africa—street scenes in Cape Town, and the former Transkei.

Naki developed excellent technical skills and in Hidden Heart Barnard is shown to have valued Naki's intraoperative role alongside his expertise at running the animal laboratory and in training a generation of future surgeons. According to interviews with Naki and Barnard in Hidden Heart, Naki was present in theatre during heart and liver transplantations. It was in the post-apartheid era, however, that the Press began to report that Naki was as responsible for the success of the sensational operation as Barnard. Subsequently thus, in 2003, Naki received his honorary Master of Medicine degree from the University of Cape Town, perhaps too late.

To be honest, I never knew about Naki until I watched this film. I remember learning about Dr Barnard in school and then reading about him several times subsequently as the "Father of Heart Transplant", which indeed he was, but what about Naki? His name does not seem to have made it to the text books, reaching the corners of the world. It makes us realize one of the solemn truths about this world –for every person, thing or event which is clearly visible, there are always other contributing persons, things or events which are hidden from us – not visible. Our entire attention is focussed on "that which is seen".

From this moving incident, we move to another story, a story I have narrated several times in my life. In fact, this story also appeared in an article I wrote for Talent Talks, several years back…

Perceiving the unperceivable

There was a famous monastery, which had fallen on very hard times. Formerly its many buildings were filled with young monks and its big church resounded with the singing of the chant, but now it was deserted. People no longer came there to be nourished by prayer. A handful of old monks shuffled through the cloisters and praised their God with heavy hearts.

On the edge of the monastery woods, an old rabbi had built a little hut. He would come there from time to time to fast and pray. No one ever spoke with him, but whenever he appeared, the word would be passed from monk to monk. "The rabbi walks in the woods." And, for as long as he was there, the monks would feel sustained by his prayerful presence.

One day the abbot decided to visit the rabbi and to open his heart to him. So, after the morning Eucharist, he set out through the woods. As he approached the hut, the abbot saw the rabbi standing in the doorway, his arms outstretched to welcome. It was as though he had been waiting there for some time. The two embraced like long lost brothers. Then they stepped back and just stood there, smiling at one another with smiles their faces could hardly contain. After a while, the rabbi motioned the abbot to enter. In the middle of the room was a wooden table with the Scriptures open on it. They sat there for a moment, in the presence of the Book. Then the rabbi began to cry. The abbot could not contain himself. He covered his face with his hands and began to cry too. For the first time in his life, he cried his heart out. The two men sat there like lost children, filling the hut with their sobs and wetting the wood of the table with their tears.

After the tears had ceased to flow and all was quiet again, the rabbi lifted his head. "You and your brothers are serving God with heavy hearts," he said. "You have come to ask a teaching of me. I will give you a teaching, but you can only repeat it once. After that, no one must ever say it aloud again."

The rabbi looked straight at the abbot and said "The Messiah is among you."

For a while, all was silent. Then the rabbi said, "Now you must go."The abbot left without a word and without looking back.

The next morning, the abbot called his monks together in the chapter room. He told them he had received a teaching from "the rabbi who walks in the woods" and that this teaching was never again to be spoken aloud. Then he looked at each of his brothers and said, "The rabbi said that one of us is the Messiah."

The monks were startled by this saying, "What could it mean?" They asked themselves, "Is Brother John the messiah? Or Father Matthew? Or Brother Thomas? Am I the Messiah? What could this mean?"They were all deeply puzzled by the rabbi's teaching. But no one ever mentioned it again. But it never left their minds.

As time went by, the monks began to treat one another with a very special reverence. There was a gentle, wholehearted, human quality about them now, which was hard to describe but easy to notice. They lived with one another as men who had finally found something. But they prayed the scriptures together as men who were always looking for something.

Occasional visitors found themselves deeply moved by the life of these monks. Before long, people were coming from far and wide to be nourished by the prayer life of the monks and young men were asking, once again, to become part of the community.

That is the story of the Rabbi's gift. Do you notice that its again the invisible "vibes" which created the visible positive changes at the Monastery? What lessons do these two stories hold for us as Leaders and Managers of Talent?

Recognizing the Unrecognized

Let's examine some natural phenomena now.

"He is one but the wise call him by different names – such as Indra, Mitr, Varun, Urukram, Agni…" (I.22.164 Rig Ved, considered the world's earliest scripture, roughly 10000 years old)

Here, Urukram – stands for the source of never-ending energy – boundless, infinite. Energies make up our Living world. Even though the total amount of energy is understood to be constant, this Energy has been there before humans arrived on the planet … and will also outlive the human race. It is divine and boundless. **Very broadly, these Energies can be distributed into two main categories – known as energies and energies yet to be discovered (like Dark Matter of the universe).**

Then there is the 3rd category. Energies which we know but cannot perceive through our human equipment – like those light and sound rays, beyond our human vision or hearing. They exist but we are almost unaware. Here is the lesson. Just like visible/ perceivable energy forms – only hitherto noticed qualities of people, get known and get focused on – strengths and weaknesses. Weaknesses, even more, by Managers of traditional mindsets.

Enlightened Leadership

Most Talent initiatives are therefore directed towards enhancing knJ of capability – let's call it unknown – is not even noticed. While potential is at least believed to be present in some people, **"unknown"** refers to the talent of individuals, who are considered to be either mediocre, or unintelligent, and therefore not even deserving of our attention. But the fact is, that this unknown also needs to be gradually nurtured, like seeds below the ground.

Regular Leaders have the knowledge and skills to help organizations to address the first category. The **Awakened Leaders** work harder at unleashing the potential of their promising Talent. But the **Enlightened Leaders belong to a rare breed. They smell out the Talent in the most ordinary people, because they recognize that there are no ordinary people, only lazy Leaders.**

Enlightened Leaders do not seek contentment at work, but meaning. This makes them extend themselves beyond the common place Leaders. They are like the scientists who are constantly striving to discover the energies which exist, but are beyond the limits of our senses. This gives them and their organizations, deeper and enduring character and longevity.

If we have to make breakthroughs in organizations today, of the sort that Dr Barnard achieved with his team (coupled with good infrastructure), then we must stop placing emphasis on merely repeating the practices of the last two decades.

We need to become inquisitive, open minded, large hearted, Enlightened Talent Leaders who have "The Rabbi's Gift" to create magic…and make our organizations, and society thrive….again.

REFLECTION POINT. ACTING WITH COURAGE

Dr Amy Edmondson has said, "Psychological Safety and Courage are simply two sides of the same (immensely valuable) coin. Both are, and will continue to be, needed in a complex and uncertain world."

The last few days have reminded us of the ongoing uncertainty we continue to face, and this uncertainty, by its very nature, threatens our psychological safety. Knowing that psychological safety contributes to performance, innovation and employee wellbeing, what can we need to start doing differently to act with courage?

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WHAT TYPE OF IMPOSTER ARE YOU?

CAITLIN WATSON

Understanding the types of imposter syndrome and their associated triggers will help you to manage them personally and professionally.

Many high-achieving people experience what is known as 'Imposter Syndrome' at some point in their careers and personal lives. Imposter Syndrome can be defined as "the feeling of fraudulence experienced by successful individuals who believe that their achievements are undeserved, despite objective evidence to the contrary" (Chandra, et al.).

I'm often asked questions about how we know if someone is genuinely experiencing imposter feelings, or if they are simply experiencing moments of low self-confidence. My view is that the distinguishing factor in recognising if someone is struggling with imposter syndrome is the persistent nature of these fraudulent feelings – despite evidence that the individual is successful. I believe that understanding the types of imposter syndrome and their associated triggers will help us to manage them on a personal level; we will also be better equipped to identify the systems in our environment that contribute to imposter syndrome – and, importantly, how we can begin to change the imposter narrative in these systems.

Impostor Syndrome Institute co-founder, Valerie Young, has identified 5 sub-groups of imposter syndrome: Young explains that because people who feel like impost[e]rs hold themselves to an 'unrealistic and unsustainable standard of competence, falling short of this standard evokes shame'. Imposters, however, don't all experience failure-related shame the same way. And the reason is that they don't all define competence the same way. Everyone has unconscious rules in their head about what it means to be competent. These rules tend to begin with "should," "always," or "never."
For example, people experiencing imposter feelings would create the following rules: "If I were really intelligent, capable, competent, I…

… would never be confused
… would always understand what I'm reading
… should get it right the first time
How do I know which imposter type applies to me or someone I know?

The Perfectionist

The Perfectionist's primary focus is on how something is done. This includes how the work is conducted and how it turns out. Young highlights that for the Perfectionist, "one minor flaw in an otherwise stellar performance or 99 out of 100 equals failure and thus shame." The quality of work they deliver should be to the highest possible standard; therefore, the Perfectionist does not trust anybody else to deliver the work – if they do, they tend to micromanage people.

Perfectionists can also struggle with high levels of anxiety and struggle to get started with tasks because they fear that the execution and result will not be perfect. When they do get onto the task, they are disappointed to find that no task runs 100% perfectly, and they use the failure to achieve the one point out of 100 as evidence that they are in fact not competent.

The Expert

The Expert is primarily concerned with what they know and how much they know. Any gap in their knowledge leads them to believe that they are not competent.

The Soloist

The Soloist's worst nightmare is to admit that they may need help with a task. For a soloist to feel that they are competent, tasks should be completed by them, and them alone. For them, asking for help or delegating work equates to failure, and ultimately shame.

Yes, Soloists will likely complete all the tasks on their own because they are hardwired to not fail – but at what cost? They end up doing little of what they're good at and what makes them feel valued because they've volunteered to take on everybody else's work, in the hope that the people in their environments will confirm that the Soloist is indeed competent.

Writer, Melany J. Wilding, suggests that "imposter workaholics are actually addicted to the validation that comes from working, not to the work itself."

The Superwoman /Superman / Super Student

The Superwoman/ Superman/ Super Student measures competence based on how many roles they can both juggle and excel in'.

If they are unable to deliver something in any one of their roles (e.g., as a partner, parent, employee, friend, family member, host/hostess, etc.), they feel ashamed because they have failed to live up to the unrealistic expectation that they should handle all the roles with ease.

The Superwoman/ Superman/ Super Student pressurises themselves to work harder than everybody else, because they think that they don't quite measure up to their more competent colleagues.

The Natural Genius / The Great Mind

Natural Genius Imposters base their perception of competence on the speed and ease with which they achieve their tasks. If they take longer than what they usually deem acceptable to complete a new task (the timing of which is, let's face it, unrealistic to begin with), they feel ashamed.

Now that we are aware of what imposter types are out there, how do we start to manage the triggers associated with some of these types?

The Expert

- Even the most experienced expert will need to learn new things because of the pace at which our work environment is evolving and the rate at which new information is being shared.
- All roles require some upskilling – if yours doesn't, then you may want to think about the sustainability of the organisation for which you're working. Any organisation that does not believe their employees require growth at all levels will struggle to keep up.

The Soloist

The African proverb 'If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together' comes to mind…

- Changing the self-limiting 'rule' around delegation in the Soloist Imposter's mind – from one of failure to one of collective success – will help them free up their capacity to do the work that really makes them stand out and allows others to do the work that makes them feel good too.

The Perfectionist

- Regularly asking for balanced feedback on what you have done well and areas for improvement will give you a more realistic view of your actual achievements – specific metrics should accompany the feedback, so that you avoid brushing off the feedback as 'they were just being nice'.
- There are many feedback models available to help guide the sort of feedback you are looking for. You will be pleasantly surprised at how many people see the value of the work that you deliver – and feedback will help remind you that perfection is not necessary to achieve excellent results. You can use the SBI (Situation, Behaviour, and Impact Model) to identify specific situations where you have delivered great work. I'm a firm believer in American Journalist, Steven Levy's, statement: 'You can't argue with the facts…'
- Look at reframing how you define the successful completion of a task. Spend time genuinely understanding your unique strengths, so that when feedback is shared, it is not discounted.

Overall, how do I feel like less of an imposter?

As Young points out: you may want to feel like less of an imposter, but you will not stop feeling like an imposter until you start thinking differently. My view is that to create sustainable change in this area, we should consistently reframe our thoughts – it is something that should be practiced daily. Here are some tips on how to reframe negative thoughts: Regardless of which imposter type you identify with, you have the power to define your own narrative – and by doing so, we create the space for others to do the same.

RIKKY MINYUKU

DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION (DEI)

What does it mean for diversity to be a verb instead of a noun? A culture instead of a principle? A behaviour instead of a thought? That is one of the biggest challenges that organisations face currently, when many have come to acknowledged the value and benefit of diversity. Organisations are beginning to realise that diversity is a skill that must be developed and invested in for talent, leaders and organisations. This is the only way to reap the multiple benefits of diversity - increased profits, greater employee engagement, greater creativity, increased innovation, better decision-making, better problem solving, and more productivity.

A REFLECTION ON INTERNATIONAL WOMENS DAY

THEMBELA NJENGA

International Women's Day (IWD), celebrated globally on the 8th of March is recognised as a special day to celebrate the social, economic, cultural, and political achievements of women. The day also marks a call to action for accelerating women's equality. To draw attention to women's equality, The United Nations adopts a theme each year that is used to mobilize action against inequality across the world. The theme for the year 2021 was #ChooseToChallenge, and was aimed at encouraging people to choose to call out gender bias and inequality. This year's theme is #BreakTheBias and calls on all to call out gender stereotyping, and discrimination and to encourage people to commit to helping forge an inclusive world. Supporters also mark this day with localised events across the world.

Whilst important as campaigning tools, it's questionable whether celebrating IWD through events and hashtags organized around this single day or month is in fact effective. One of the patterns that characterises IWD is public pronouncements made by leaders, pledging institutional support for addressing gender inequality. Despite several pledges over the years, gender equality and women's experiences have not progressed. Moreover, studies indicate that COVID-19 has had a regressive effect on gender equality. A 2020 report by the National Income Dynamics Study – Coronavirus Rapid Mobile Survey (Nids-Cram) revealed that 66% of job losses between February and April at the height of lockdown were suffered by women. 2021 studies indicated that women have regained employment at a slower pace than men, continue to work less hours because of childcare responsibilities and have faced an increasing gender pay gap.

Our online platforms have confirmed the data and deepened the understanding of impacts on women. Over the past 2 years, the #Dare2SeeUs campaign[1], created by Womaniko and The Well Health Company has shown the disproportionate effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on women. Women reported challenges in juggling unpaid care work, remote education and their work responsibilities. Women also discussed the personal challenges, societal and institutional barriers they faced in raising their concerns and needs. Our 2021 Rapid Survey indicated that while 70% of women had experienced gender bias and inequality in the world of work, only 50% utilised workplace procedures and policies to address the incident and 33% did not report at all. Moreover, in a country where domestic abuse, sexual violence and sexual harassment are considered the top three issues that women and girls are facing; only 38% reported incidents of gender-based violence at work with 17% believing that their cases were handled with care.[2]

These statistics are not just numbers. They demonstrate the need for urgent action to address gender inequality and gender-based violence beyond pledge platitudes and social media campaigns. With over 14million South Africans in employment, the world of work becomes a critical context for such change. Initiatives that tackle social norms, break systemic biases and encourage behavioral change in the world of work generate 14million opportunities to filter back into society. McKinsey amongst others have also argued that taking action now, in response to the regressive effects of COVID-19 on gender equality will have quantifiable bottom-line benefits for business and society.

With these push-pull factors, a clear business case, pledges and frameworks and annual global campaigns, why are only 1% of the 1000 most influential companies in the world able to demonstrate a commitment to and reporting on gender equality? We believe that business leaders struggle to operationalise their pledges for a number of reasons including the lack of institutional capacity to support gender transformative work at the operational level, lack of access to tools to navigate the challenges they inevitably face in driving change, the lack of well-documented granular best practice, and the lack of clear accountability and reporting mechanisms. Womaniko Associates has thus developed the Beyond the Pledge Programme to address these gaps; providing leaders with the support and tools to operationalise gender equality and gender-based violence commitments, as well as building a community of practice to share best practice and build accountability. Best suited for leaders who are responsible for driving the strategic direction and agenda around demonstrating commitments to addressing gender inequality and gender based violence, the programme will start in May 2022 with monthly sessions until November.

[1] The #Dare2SeeUs campaign seeks to inspire a workplace culture where women are seen in the context of COVID-19.
[2] Womaniko Associates (2021). Gender Bias and Inequality in the Workplace.

CREATING HUMANISED AND HUMANISING EDUCATION SYSTEMS

In our concern for the state of education, and our efforts to create the kind of education systems that will prepare our young people for an uncertain and rapidly evolving future, perhaps one of the most essential things for us to keep in our hearts and our minds is that education and learning are fundamental manifestations of our humanity.

Our goal should therefore be to create humanised and humanising education systems

DR ROBYN WHITTAKER

USE THE 3.1 COCKTAIL FORMULA DURING 'SEDENTARY' WORK DAYS

3 mins of exercise / movement (star jumps, plank, squats etc) for every 1 hour of work. Sitting for more than 2 hours at a time drops your good cholesterol by 40%. Even if you do 30 mins exercise a day, you SHOULD NOT sit for more than 2 hours (max) at a time.

JONI PEDDIE

ADDRESSING THE GENDER GAP REQUIRES EFFORT ON BOTH SIDES OF THE EQUATION

TSHOLOFELO NKETANE

It is more critical than ever for businesses to reflect the diverse communities they operate in at board level. Women's presence on boards, specifically, is important, not only because there are solid business reasons for more diversity across organisations, but also because women can provide solutions from a different perspective, or as viewed through a different lens.

With that in mind, Tuesday Consulting, as one of the co-founding members of the South African 30% Club – an organisation committed to achieving better gender balance throughout corporate South Africa – partnered again with the 30% Club this year to contribute to the qualitative research for the report into the State of Gender on JSE Listed Boards.

While the results of that report might seem to indicate that the gender gap on JSE-listed companies' boards has not narrowed since 2020, there are some encouraging signs that things are shifting.

In summary, the 2020 research (published in 2021) focused on JSE-listed companies with minimal representation of women in non-executive board positions – usually a single woman non-executive director, or none at all. We surveyed a select few to gain insight into the recruitment, appointment, retention and development practices of their boards, specifically in relation to the representation of women as non-executive directors.

Four main themes emerged:

All of the participating companies either had formal gender diversity policies in place, or were preparing to institute them, and most included targets for their boards. However, there is a preference for keeping boards small to contain costs, which means fewer vacancies, particularly in small to mid-cap companies, where board members often have a long tenure. A few companies indicated they would be willing to consider gradually increasing the size of their boards to make room for new, more diverse talent, provided that costs allowed, and the appointments brought the requisite skills to satisfy shareholder mandates.

Companies appreciate the role that women can play on boards, and see the richness that gender diversity brings to problem-solving and deliberating. Their primary requirement for appointing a new board member, however, would be the candidate's skills – ahead of diversity considerations.

There are common challenges in appointing women to boards: a small pool of skilled candidates, a high demand for women directors, conflict of interest risks, plus the length of time it can take to identify and appoint suitable candidates.

The need to look beyond the traditional talent pool and traditional mechanisms of appointing board members. Some of the participating companies reported that they would consider making use of external service providers such as executive search firms to assist them in achieving a better gender balance.

An interesting – and encouraging – perspective that arose was that it isn't feasible to adopt an "appoint one and be done" outlook towards appointing women to boards. What typically happens is that when a second woman is appointed, it makes it easier for the first one to feel more comfortable, which means she participates more, and uses her voice more.

This demonstrates that even at board level, diversity and inclusion go hand in hand with belonging – regardless of which aspect of diversity is being discussed. Several participants noted that the addition of other women, or a broader diversity of directors, brought a new, productive dynamic to their boards, which further underscores the need for more diversity of all kinds.

Participants noted that prospective board members need to see a potential board appointment as a two-way street. Company boards with low female representation are well aware of the benefits of having women directors as board members and eager to attract more women members, and many say they are also willing to look beyond traditional talent pools, in search of female non-executive candidates with the requisite skills. They are also keen on younger directors.

However, those who hope to sit on a board some day need to do more than just wait to be noticed – that it isn't policy alone that drives the appointment. Board hopefuls have to take responsibility to develop themselves and raise their profiles.

There are several actions they can take to increase their eligibility such as sitting on subsidiary or NPO boards to gain experience, network, and participate in industry organisations to gain experience and skills, and ensure they are front of mind when nomination committees are considering prospective candidates.

Companies and their boards, however, also need to consciously make a mental shift towards diversity, so that when a director's term ends, they consider engaging a black woman as a replacement. In addition, they should find ways to build a pipeline within their ranks, to develop promising talent as future leaders.

There is also great value in partnering seasoned directors with young professionals, as younger incumbents have their fingers on the pulse when it comes to emerging trends, and understand the digital environment far better.

My view, after conducting numerous interviews with the chairs of various boards, is not that there is overt resistance to improving board diversity. Rather it's a timing issue, it's about managing the risk, and about responding to the shareholders' mandate.

Most boards also see the value of diversity, but don't want to institute it as a tick-box or policy exercise. It must be an intentional action from all parties involved to derive the greatest value for the organisation, its board and stakeholders, and the incumbent board members themselves.

MARTIN PROBST

EMPLOYEE WELLBEING

If we don't make time for our wellbeing, we will be forced to make time for our illness.

A business is not sustainable and cannot operate at peak when it forces employees to care more about the products and services than themselves. For long-term success in today's busy and ever-changing world, we need to find the balance between achievements, connection to others, enjoyment and self-care.

LISTEN TO WHEN RESILIENCE IS TAPPED OUT

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

PERSONAL TRANSITIONS

PAOLO GIURICICH

As the world changed through the pandemic, so did our preferences for the meaning that we make in our identity of work. The 'great resignation' has more to do with finding personal purpose, than with work that does not serve us. People are in personal transitions, and we take a closer look at how to navigate these disorientating times.

In the book, 'Managing Transitions' by William Bridges, he contemplates three stages in making transitions in life. The phases are: 'ending, losing and letting go,' followed by the 'neutral zone,' and then finally the 'new beginnings.' Transition in this three-phase psychological process is where people gradually start to accept the elements of a new reality, situation and the resulting changes that transpire. Transition is a slower process than most planned change, which tends to be abrupt.

When we think of transition and 'ending,' being the first phase, it seems paradoxical. The reality is that when we have any change in our lives, there is always something that we leave behind for the transition to begin. A prime example is when you change roles in an organisation, with a new team. You leave colleagues behind; you enter new relationships, and you recontract your old relationships. This may feel very tough, but it is extremely important to acknowledge the boundary and ending, to make way for something different to transpire and letting go of the old.

In the 'neutral zone,' we are confronted by the psychological 'no mans' land,' between our previous reality and what might become our new reality. This stage can be even tougher than the ending, as we have no anchors, and are faced with multiple realities, ambiguities, and feet in conflicting places. By example, this might be a time where little is known about what the future may hold for your career and the passing of time, will align all the right conditions to make a choice on a final direction, team, or role. We must remember to stay in the neutral zone for longer to surface great opportunities and not rush into the 'new beginnings.'

If we have our timing right, 'new beginnings,' will be filled with palpable energy and the excitement of getting going. The anxiety and tension of the previous two phases, will dissipate and free us to be open to new learning, new relationships and thrusting ourselves wholeheartedly into the new world of work we have chosen.

These three phases are NOT linear, and we may vacillate in and out of all the phases through complex personal change. Thinking in this paradigm, at every inflection point, will anchor and assist us to make meaning of where we are, and how we manage ourselves with greater effectiveness to our desired end point.

LEADERSHIP HACKS TO SUPPORT PEOPLE IN TRANSITION IN YOUR ORGANISATION:

Talk about the process of transition and allow people to know that it is normal to feel the way they do.

Dialogue and name the 'losses' that people may be experiencing in the 'ending,' phase.

Over communicate what we know and do not know about upcoming changes openly.

Look for signs of anxiety and loss of motivation and support people in the 'neutral zone,' by teaming and solving for ambiguity together.

FINDING THE RIGHT BALANCE BETWEEN LIFE, WORK & WELLBEING

How can we support ourselves and others to achieve sustainable growth and wellbeing in our workplace and in life itself?

MARTIN PROBST

Let's start by talking about the 'comfort zone'. The comfort zone translates to a mindset of: ***"I know what I know."*** Unfortunately, there is nothing new coming out of the comfort zone. Indeed, it is our comfort zone because we've done things hundreds or thousands of times before. This zone is great to recharge our battery, but what happens if we stay in the comfort zone for too long? Well, we get bored and if we don't do anything about it, we are running the risk of falling into depression!

The outer circle of the comfort zone is what we refer to as boundary conditions of our thinking. If we step outside the comfort zone, we move into the learning zone. This is where the 'uncertainty' and our growth live, as this is the relationship with: ***"I know there are things that I don't know."***

The more curious and excited we are about this zone, the more we will learn and grow. But what happens if we step over the outer line of our learning zone? Well, that's literally when we push ourselves and/or others over the edge, into the panic zone! This is where we experience way too much uncertainty because we expect too much in too little time from ourselves and others. It is neither healthy nor productive for anyone to be in the panic zone because this is where we get stressed and may even start to experience anxiety! If this occurs for too long and too often, we eventually experience burnout and depression. Let me explain…

When somebody is depressed, their body is saying: ***"Don't do that to me anymore! I don't want to (neither can I) be this overperforming person any longer. Because the pressure that I have been (or put myself) under for too long, is too high and unsustainable!"***

We need to see the word 'DEPRESSED' as 'DEEP REST'; for a body that is exhausted from putting much more energy out than it gets in return. Therefore, a 'depressed' person needs a 'deep rest' from the identity their body is tired to play and uphold; this is certainly not where we want to see anybody. However, there is a silver lining to depression. Often, after a breakdown comes a breakthrough where the body can consider new, more sustainable identities; recovering and re-charging the battery within the comfort zone and finding new inspiration to again step outside their comfort zone, but this time within reason (in other words, sustainably).

Embracing the ACES

Sustainable growth, success and fulfilment in life, work and wellbeing comes down to finding balance between:

- Stepping outside our comfort zone to work and study hard
- Recharging our energy within our comfort zone.

What I've learned over the years is that most people completely overestimate what

they can achieve in a day or a week, but also completely underestimate what they can achieve in a month or even a year.

I encourage you to be patient (so not to become a patient) and consistent in your approach! A great acronym to get desired results long-term and sustainably, is ACES, which stands for balance between:

Achievements

Set out to achieve something small every day, and work towards a clear goal, vision and purpose in your career, life and wellbeing. Ask yourself every single day: "What can I do today that gets me one step closer to my goals, vision and purpose?" This provides a great sense of achievement every single day and keeps you going.

Connection to others

Stay connected with other people, work colleagues, family, and friends. We are social creatures after all. This has never been more important than now. Connect with others in person, if possible, check in with each other, and connect.

Enjoyment

Pursuing a hobby, engaging in fun activities, and laughter are all good for our emotional and mental wellbeing. Create opportunities to do what you enjoy doing and do things that give you pleasure.

Self-care

Give yourself permission to spend time with yourself, chill and do things that are restful. Block out time to connect with yourself, have positive and supportive thoughts, and appreciate all that you have, your joys, successes, and progress. This attitude of gratitude strengthens your neural pathways that promote contentment and happiness.

Through these ACES activities, your body's natural antidepressants, the neurotransmitters in your brain which help with balance, are being stimulated:

- **Endorphins:** The runner's hormone that assists with pain relief, relaxation, and great achievements
- **Oxytocin:** The connection hormone that supports us with bonding, love, trust and belonging
- **Dopamine:** The motivational molecule in our brain's reward system for pleasure and enjoyment
- **Serotonin:** The feel-good hormones in our gut, which are our mood stabiliser, the happy hormone for wellbeing and self-care

We have a choice; it is entirely up to us to let negativity and aversion allow to bring us down, or to confidently steer our ship through rough seas by looking at the horizon with courage, strength, hope and positivity.

I used to say, ***"If you take care of me, I take care of you." Now, I say, "I take care of me*** for you, if you take care of you for me." Therefore, I encourage you to implement ACES activities into your every day and treat yourself like a family member or close friend.

Thank you for choosing self-care over self-sacrifice and remember:

- You are worth it
- You are lovable; and
- You are enough!

We all are!
"Dare to make a difference!"

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CAITLIN WATSON

LEARNING AND PERFORMANCE

The links between learning and performance are clear: we cannot create sustainable performance and engagement in a business without cultivating a culture of learning. Given that 55% of the global workforce is not skilled for their current environment, let alone their future environment, organisations should be thinking about how to put learning at the top of their to-do list. Some of the elements of a learning culture include employees driving their own learning, encouraging others to do the same, and leadership not only supporting their employees' learning journey, but leading by example by prioritising their own learning. The process sounds difficult to achieve, but if incremental changes are made to how learning is integrated into the daily activities of employees, coupled with some sound learning frameworks, the shift will happen soon enough.

YOUR MINDSET IS HOLDING YOU BACK

LITA CURRIE

The Growth Mindset

My son (15) is doing maths tutoring at a local school as part of a community service project for his studies. Last Saturday he was taking a couple of students through ratios and basic sums while I was sitting in the back re-reading Carol Dweck's book **"Mindset"** in preparation for a webinar. Dweck, a psychology professor at Stanford, found through her research that people display one of two mindsets:

1. A **fixed** mindset, where they believe that talent is rigid and cannot change or improve; or
2. A **growth** mindset, where people believe in talent and natural ability, but also believe that it can improve vastly with effort and hard work.

In the room was the math teacher. She came over to see what I was reading, and I explained the premise of the book. I told her that it had changed the way I looked at talent and performance – both my own and my children's. Instead of praising their natural ability by saying "Wow, you are so good at math!" I would say "Well done on getting 95% for the math test! Your hard work has really paid off." I praise effort and progress, not just the achievement. And never, ever do I praise natural talent. I'll explain why in a moment.

The teacher was really interested and vowed to buy the book for herself. Then she turned around, checked the work of one of the girls and immediately exclaimed: "Clever girl!" I cringed silently in my seat. A perfect display of the fixed mindset.

Why is that so bad, you ask? Shouldn't we praise the achievement? Shouldn't we tell kids that they are smart in order to build their confidence? The answer is no. This is what they hear when you praise talent or characteristics: ***I am good at math. I am clever. But that means that if I make a mistake in a calculation or fail a test, I'm not so good anymore. So, I can never make a mistake. Because mistakes mean that I'm not clever. And I cannot risk that. So, I just won't even try.***

This type of thinking – a fixed mindset – fosters doubt and a fear of performance. People with a fixed mindset don't like to compete because if they fail, it means that they are worthless. If they make a mistake, it casts doubt on their ability. History is riddled with examples of people who were great and couldn't sustain it.

In contrast, a growth mindset still believes in natural ability and talent. But it ALSO believes that effort and hard work are critical. They see mistakes as an opportunity to learn and improve, not as a threat that can expose you as a failure. People with this learning mindset love challenges because they can learn from them. It doesn't mean that they don't care about winning or achieving, it just means that if they win (or lose) it does not define who they are.

In my experience people don't want to hear that effort and progress is more important than talent. We seem to want to believe the fable of the "natural", someone who can do something seemingly effortlessly. I experience this in my work constantly. Here's how the fixed mindset shows up:

I'm a graphic recorder, which means that I listen to talks and speeches and then capture these in pictures. Usually, my clients are blown away with the beautiful graphic I create for them in real time. I often get people saying things like "Wow, you are so talented! I can't even imagine how you can listen to everything and create a picture like that at the same time." When I say: "Thanks, it's the result of years of practice." they look at me with a sense

of almost disappointment. They don't want to hear that it takes hard work and effort. They want it to be easy and effortless – a gift from the gods. Sometimes they disagree with me by saying that they're sure I have some natural ability that allows me to do it. When I insist that it's mostly practice, they smile uncomfortably as if they're thinking "Ok, maybe she's not that special after all…"

I believe that we need to change this fixed mindset. It's probably the element that held me back for most of my life, stopping me from trying new things and learning from mistakes. Because I was stuck in a fixed mindset for so long, I know how dangerous it can be. Ask yourself the following questions:

- Do you have some natural ability that sets you apart from others and makes you a bit more special?
- Do you fear your mistakes will expose you to not be as good as other people think you are?
- Have you stopped trying new things because you're fearful of failure?
- If you answered yes to these, you might be stuck in a fixed mindset.

But don't despair – you can change your mindset. In the next article I will give some pointers on how to change from a fixed to a growth mindset.

VITAL SKILLS FOR THE FUTURE – PROBLEM-SOLVING AND CRITICAL THINKING

NATALEE HOLMES

We all experience problems in our lives. Issues to solve. Decisions to make. Options to weigh up. Some are big problems, some are small. Some take time to resolve, others are quick. Whether our problems are big or small, we need to deal with them constructively and properly.

Having the necessary skills to identify solutions to problems is one of the future skills employers have tagged as vital.

Problem-solving and critical thinking refers to the ability to use knowledge, facts, and data to effectively solve problems. This doesn't mean you need to have all answers immediately. It means you have to be able to think on your feet, assess problems, and find solutions. The capability to come to a well thought out solution within a reasonable time frame, is a skill that employers value greatly, and one that we need to develop in the youth from early. The rate at which the world is changing and the speed at which we need to adapt, means that we have to be able to make decisions, and solve problems quickly and effectively.

By now you know that this series of articles has focused on vital future skills. Employers say we need a workforce fully equipped with skills beyond the basics of the traditional three Rs (reading, writing, and 'rithmetic) to have successful and competitive businesses.

Critical thinking and problem solving are the vital skills I am going to highlight today. We know that employers want employees who can work through problems, individually and in teams. "Perfect" employees can think critically and creatively, share thoughts and opinions, use good judgment, solve problems, and make considered decisions.

Employers want fresh perspectives and ideas on problems. They appreciate finding new, better, and more efficient ways of doing things. Unfortunately, for various reasons, not everyone can make decisions and solve problems easily. Fortunately, it is a skill that can be developed.

Traditionally, old schooling methods did not encourage this at all. Learners were passive receptors of information, and taught to spew that information back, verbatim. Nowadays we have an excess of information available to us, and unless we know how to critically appraise the material presented, we will passively drown in the sea of incorrect, inaccurate, and often downright deceptive information that has exploded out there.

So how do we nurture this skill?

Critical thinking involves questioning. We need to teach people to ask good questions. When my children throw some bizarre new information at me that they found online, or were told by a friend, I ask them to consider the source. Heaven knows there are enough fools out there who can now create a digital platform to spew verbal vomit at the world. (And enough foolish followers to believe it and make it seem true.) I challenge them to question the information.

Critical thinking involves research. Gather data, organise it, question it, analyse it. Being passive is no longer an option. You need to do the work. You need to find the valid sources and reliable information.

Become observant. Take notice of your surroundings, pay attention to potential problems and opportunities and solutions.

Have discussions. The sharing of information is powerful. Communication of your own ideas, as well as receiving information from others is an invaluable part of developing critical thinking. Discussions open our minds to other opinions. They are important.

Be open to new things. New ideas, new experiences, new genres, new languages, new foods, new cultures, new concepts. Exposing yourself to new things helps you gather unbiased research which is crucial for effectively evaluating situations and problems. You don't have to like or agree with the new information, but exposure is so great for critical thinking and problem-solving. It opens your mind.

When you don't know, ask yourself what you would do if you did know. Sounds daft, I know, but it encourages deductive reasoning, where you can learn to make inferences and draw conclusions from other information that may be similar. This agility is a helpful skill to have.

Ask. Consult with others. Learning is continuous. If you need more information to make decisions and solve problems, ask. You can ask others in the know, professionals, peers, teachers. Asking others is a great way to understand other points of view or gain more information and increase your critical thinking.

Critical thinking goes hand in hand with good problem-solving. People with good critical thinking skills tend to have a methodical approach to problem-solving. They ask good questions, use data they have gained, analyse it, form judgments, and make decisions based on rational information.

When problems are tackled using this step-by-step methodical critical thinking , good decisions are often reached.

In today's fast-paced world, people are faced with new challenges and problems every day. There is so much information available to us, and not all of it is accurate, so to be able to actively work through problems on our own and to come to clear-cut, efficient decisions and sensible solutions are the ideal in every environment and aspect of our lives.

VITAL SKILLS FOR THE FUTURE – INTEGRITY

NATALEE HOLMES

Integrity. It's a big word. I remember doing the play "A Man for All Seasons" (Bolt) in high school and learning about integrity. Sir Thomas More was the ultimate man of conscience. I remember admiring that about him and deciding that I wanted to live my life with integrity.

It is a big goal.

The dictionary defines integrity as:

**in·teg·ri·ty | \ in-ˈte-grə-tē **

1: the quality of being honest and fair

2: the state of being complete or whole

The practice of being honest and showing a consistent and uncompromising adherence to strong moral and ethical principles and values.

Synonyms include strong words like character, decency, goodness, honesty, morality, rectitude, righteousness, virtue

Big, BIG word.

For me, the definition of integrity, is doing the right thing even when no one is watching. That is the definition I give to my own children. It is the standard by which I try to live. I say try because living with absolute integrity is sometimes not that easy. Sticking to your values and morals in a world that is increasingly permissive and amoral is no mean feat, but without integrity, you would just be bowing to the standards of the world and compromising yourself. Your true self. Without integrity, you will lose your real self because you no longer know what you stand for or believe in.

That is why integrity is important. And in business, it is becoming increasingly essential. Businesses are expected to be transparent. To be honest. To do the right thing.

As a human, and a business, integrity is essential for the following reasons:

TRUST:
When you have integrity, people can depend on you, and you develop trust. People will believe that your word is your bond. Your reputation for being trustworthy will be without doubt.

AUTHENTICITY:
When you live by your morals and values, you are who you are, regardless of judgement or approval. People will respect that.

EXHAUSTION:
Compromising yourself is exhausting. Dishonesty is a burden. It creates anxiety, stress, and sleepless nights.

CONFIDENCE:
comes from being secure in who you are. Living with integrity makes you feel more secure in who you are, and more confident in yourself.

LEADERSHIP:
Integrity is admirable. People admire people who live by their moral code and value system. And when people admire you, you become a natural leader.

INSPIRATION:
Having integrity inspires others. When people see your sincerity and ability to stand up for your morals, they want to be more like you.

Personal and professional integrity mean you need to be sure of, and comfortable with, who you really are. Knowing your values and morals is the key to having integrity because then you know what you stand for. It also means being strong enough to withstand peer pressure, to be brave and courageous, regardless of the pressure to disregard your morals and values.

In corporations, building integrity is a challenge, but a necessity, because it relates to building trust, building a reputation, and ultimately, growing your business.

While integrity is a vital virtue to have, full stop, going forward it is becoming a more integral part of interacting in the world, and in business it has become a more important skill for the future. It is undeniable.

In a world full of social media fakeness, people want authenticity. They want to know you, as an individual and a business entity, are real. That you have integrity.

But how do we teach integrity?

I believe that first and foremost, you need to model it. People watch what you do more than listen to what you say. You can talk about these things, but the best way to teach is through modelling, and the way to model integrity is to:

- Be considerate of others.
- Be truthful and trustworthy.
- Be responsible and accountable for your actions.
- Have decent morals that you live by.
- Be dependable and committed to your responsibilities.
- Not make false promises.
- Make good decisions.
- Be respectful and compassionate to others.

The youth, well all people really, understand that no one likes dishonesty, and no organisation likes dishonest employees. Companies want trustworthy staff – staff with integrity.

We all automatically gravitate to people who are authentic, honest, and trustworthy. The same goes for employers. The same for organisations. I personally don't mind paying a little extra at a store or company that 'does good.' Within organisations, integrity facilitates better relations, and better working environments, which leads to improved productivity. Externally, organisations with a reputation for integrity are more likely to be successful and have more clients.

In general, the world is becoming more conscious of social obligations and responsibilities, and integrity is going to become an even more transparent, necessary trait. Organisational (and personal) success is best achieved with integrity. In life, we tend to stick with the people who are good to us, who care about us, and who do what they say they are going to do. It all boils down to trust and integrity.

Learn to live with integrity. Cherish your integrity. And (try) never compromise it.

GAYLIN JEE

THE HYBRID WORLD OF WORK

To attract the right people and keep the ones we have, we need to think about what hybridity means for people as individuals. There is no one size fits all approach - models that meet the needs and preferences of all workers all of the time are hard to find.

According to a Future of Work Study by Accenture, 63% of high-growth companies had already adopted a 'productivity anywhere' model in 2021, and 83% of workers preferred a hybrid work model. But a variety of factors influence the ability to thrive, onsite or off. Hybrid working can set up power

MIKE MIDDLETON

IT'S TIME TO CULL PERFORMANCE REVIEWS AND OTHER TOXIC PEOPLE PRACTICES

In 2003, the film "The Corporation" was launched posing the very provocative question "if corporations are considered by law to be legal persons, what type of person would they be?" The conclusion was that they would be classified as psychopaths because they impose economic, social and environmental costs on society in the pursuit of commercial profits, and the rules of the game allow it.

A key characteristic of a psychopath is that they are extremely egocentric, and their world revolves around them. They engage with people who will further their cause, manipulate them when there's a spark of dissent, milk them for all they've got, and then dispose of them when they're deemed to have no further use.

Whether or not corporations are psychopaths is not for me to say, and quite frankly, I have had some amazing years working for various corporations where I have made some amazing friends, stretched myself way beyond my comfort zone, and had a lot of fun. But they weren't all so good and often the ones that tried the hardest to portray an external image of being a "great place to work" were in fact the worst place to work.

I recently wrote an article about "lifetime employment" where I discussed "Next Jump", a company that offers their employees lifetime employment based on the premise that you should treat employees as your family. Charlie Kim, the company founder, believes that parents would never dismiss their kids if they misbehaved or under-performed and would move the world to give them every opportunity to be the best they can be. He says "despite how much we may fight, we can't get rid of family. We have to make it work".

The article hit a chord with many readers, which I found rather intriguing. It's not that they want lifetime employment but rather the security that it brings. In the current business climate where employees are treated as disposable commodities, and discarded when their deemed usefulness comes to an end, I can understand why the article piqued interest. If corporations are in fact psychopaths, it makes even more sense.

Gallup International releases an annual employee engagement survey which has been highlighting for years that 75% of employees are disengaged at work and that many of these are actively disengaged. Quite scary statistics.

So can this be fixed?

Yes, but corporations need to be stop focusing on self-interest and start focusing on human growth. They need to stop caring about themselves and start caring about others.

They need to shift from being psychopaths to empaths.

This means that instead of telling people what to do, they need to define the playing field and allow everyone to use the power of their creativity to figure solutions out themselves. Instead of forcing employees to be pattern followers, they need to foster a culture of being pattern generators. A workforce that is made up of people who can see what needs to be done, and can creatively make it happen, is far more powerful than a workforce that depends on one-way delegation to tell them what to do.

The very structure of corporations is setup to foster an environment of control over ownership, from goal setting to performance reviews, feedback systems and reward and recognition programs. It's a system that breeds uniformity and inhibits diversity, creativity and innovation, all of which are necessary to enhance employee engagement and step change company performance.

I turned to Carol Sanford, author of "The Regenerative Business", to get some alternative ideas on how corporations could foster a culture of motivated and engaged employees. She suggests that if corporations truly want to unleash human potential, they must commit themselves to developing it, not just utilising it, and that the highest source of motivation comes from longing to live a meaningful life to make a significant contribution to something important. To this end, she says that most people practises within corporations are solely for the self-interest of the corporation and not motivating to employees, making them inherently toxic. With this in mind, I thought I would delve into some of these practices and discuss how they might contribute to a lack of employee engagement.

Job Descriptions:
Job descriptions are based on a pre-conceived idea on what a company thinks they need and are corrosive to initiative and personal motivation. They don't take into account what an employee can bring to a company, or the human ability to adapt to a changing world.

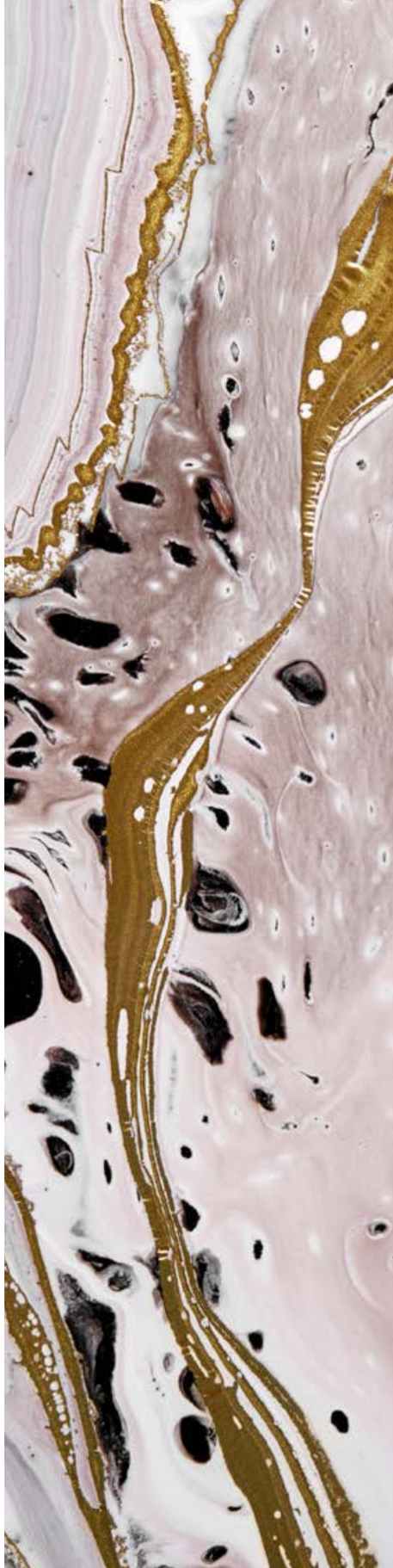
Goal setting:
Goal setting is rooted in a self-centred view of what a company thinks it needs to accomplish and dictates what each person needs to do to get there. It seldom follows an empathic approach of understanding what motivates and excites employees, or their inherent creativity and initiative, and how this can be of benefit to the corporation.

Feedback:
Feedback is often personal projection of the person giving the feedback, encouraging conformity and a single minded perspective on what the right way of doing things is. It also makes people increasingly dependent on others to determine how well they are doing and undermines self-belief, self-motivation, self-management, and an individual's potential to grow.

Performance reviews:
Performance reviews are the pinnacle of the people evaluation process, and often the most destructive to employee engagement. They start with the assumption that employees can only get accurate perspectives on how they are doing from others, which takes the locus of control away from themselves. They are mechanical, static and one sided and steer workers closer to standardised ideals, behaviours and results. They force people into a box which inhibits their ability to creatively and innovatively respond to changing conditions. And they often focus on an employee's weaknesses, rather than celebrating their strengths, which has the ability to shut people down by being demoralising, diminishing & disengaging.

A while back I was involved with a company where most of the people discussions at board level centred around whether or not people were a good "cultural-fit". The leader of the organisation had a very clear view of what type of people he felt were a good cultural-fit and your future in the company was largely determined by whether or not he felt you were congruent with this culture. Skills and competency played far less of a role in determining future success, which was always of concern to me because top talent is hard to find, and they aren't always the easiest people. I am of the opinion that if you celebrate the good that people bring, and make them feel welcome, they will naturally become a cultural fit. We have all had experiences in our lives where we have not felt welcome, which hasn't brought out the best in us. And experiences where we haven't felt welcome and someone has taken us under their wing and unlocked our magic.

This evaluation process posed a number of challenges, the most problematic being that many people didn't really understand how they needed to behave to "fit-in", other than being really nice to the CEO. In addition, the culture was defined at the top of the organisation and filtered down which didn't take other perspectives into account, inhibiting the celebration of diversity and alternative views and opinions. And finally, because the culture wasn't rooted in empathy but rather psychopathy it was always viewed through a one-sided mirror. The CEO couldn't see that he had a duty to motivate and energise people, as much as they had to impress him. For him to do this meant that he had to be able to stand in their shoes and understand the world from their perspective, so that there could be a meeting of minds, creating unified and diverse perspectives, that could change the world.



ORGANISATIONAL INERTIA
WHEN WE JUST CAN'T SEEM TO CHANGE

SARAH BABB

How is it that we can see so clearly what we want to change, and even commit to the new change, but somehow find ourselves stuck in the same ways? Two financial services firms come to mind. They both have a clear stated vision of transformation to be future ready and adaptable in these turbulent times.

Yet they continue, despite their stated and affirmed paths of change. They are both performing well against their financial targets and commitments. And so the success indicators remain fixed. And so there is no urgency to change. An inevitable failure in the tide against digital and faceless competitors is seemingly not sufficient drive to turn these organisations around. The immediate gratification of stakeholders and clients keeps the organization from changing. The transformation journey is unknown, uncertain and could lead to failure. And so ironically a vested self interest in the current 'success' remains the drive to stay the same. Even if this means an imminent decline.

According to Kegan & Lahey (2001) this immunity to change comes from having a competing commitment. This is a subconscious, hidden goal that conflicts with the stated commitment.

I see this play out with leaders grappling to devolve authority to remote cross-functional teams. On the one hand the manager states the need for diversity, inclusion, empowerment and innovation. But this means the manager loses control and potentially of the quality of the output, and hence tarnished reputation is at stake. The manager stands losing his/ her/ their reputation of high standards, exemplary work and being the 'go-to person to solve deep technical problems. And this commitment is enough to keep the leader in the traditional mode of command – and- control leadership and even to micromanage the work of their teams.

Not only do leaders have this inertia to change, but so do executive teams and boards. Boards are key to compelling firms adapt to environmental discontinuities, in advising and supporting new strategies. Yet even this presents a dilemma to boards. Being critical of the very board one serves on runs counter to a board members' self-interest (Hoppmann, Naegele, Cirod & Zurich, 2019). The board may be evaluated critically and deemed to have not been successful should the changes be too disruptive, let alone fail or be received critically by the shareholders.

Even in the face of losing key staff and key customers, organisations remain inert. This begs the question then of how can change be prompted, particularly when the organization is not broken, and when the leaders and board remain inert or at least comfortable in the status quo, at least until their term comes to an end. This runs counter to the old adage 'if it ain't broke, don't fix it. When firms have a good reputation it has been found that managers spend an inordinate amount of time defending them and avoiding potential 'extreme threats' rather than responding to them (Parker, Krause & Devers, 2019).

I recall being shocked when part of a core team facilitating future scenarios and the one scenario looked particularly bleak, and being told by external parties to adjust it so that it would not come across as so alarming. We did not. It demonstrated to me though the power of denial. Denial of a current state and the denial of the future trends holds people and organisations ransom to their current situation, inert. We may be so convinced by what we do not want to see that we do not address the issue facing the reality of an unfolding situation or scenario.

It follows then that to start change does not start with holding a glass ball to the future. But rather with an intense look at the present. Discover what the deeply held assumptions are of leaders that compete against the future direction. Inquire as to the golden metrics that shackle boards and executives. Most of all explore what the levers are that drive the organization, both those that drive it to stay the same and those that drive it to change.

Whether a leader or a board, invite the 'anthropologist' of yourself self to observe without judgement, to be curious about the patterns you observe. There are patterns of behaviours that serve the current commitments and there are beliefs that underpin these. Identify these and examine their underlying assumptions. Note the contravening patterns or pockets of difference. Make sense or 'sensemaking' is a key capacity of all leaders to be able to gain insight from the current context and to see the signs of emerging or counter patterns with clarity of mind and heart.

There are always seeds of the desired change in the system. If these are seen they can be amplified. One firm for example wanted to bring about digitally enabled customer centricity and treated it as if they had never had this before. Yet one division in particular had a proven customer base and growth trajectory that spoke of excellent customer centricity and with the right systems backing this could be amplified. The emerging trends can be better understood to see what the forces are that can sustain the desired change. And use the kernels of insight to build the desired future and to quell the outdated assumptions that compete against it.

The more each leader and each group can witness the desired future and experience it, the more the old assumptions that keep the organisation stuck dissipate. Bring in learning journeys to viscerally see the possibility, build in a futures orientation with leaders and enable learning across teams. Have the conversations not only about the future but about raising awareness of the current patterns. Too often the 'messenger gets shot', the one that mirrors back to the leaders, teams and organisations where they are stuck, as the self-protection instinct kicks in. Therefore build the capacity of sensemaking of leaders and teams, have the conversations about the current – both the desired and the stuckness, to be able to make a choice about the changes to reinforce and bolster.

Most of all enable pockets to try out and prototype new ways. Enable action against the new desired behaviours. Change only happens in action. So these need to be safe-to fail experiments or pockets of experiences, so as to overcome inertia. The inertia gives valuable insight into the forces that keep the board, leader or team stuck. But it is in the testing of these assumptions and setting new guard rails that free up new ways. No future is guaranteed but the most we can do is light up new paths and new possibilities.

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THE DISCIPLINE OF INNOVATION

GAYLIN JEE

Innovative cultures have a high degree of tolerance for risk and failure. They are marked out by their non-hierarchical structure, psychological safety, collaboration and experimentation. And this all adds up to successful innovation. Right? Maybe not so quick.

Gary Pisano from Harvard Business School* surveyed hundreds of managers at seminars across the globe. The common perception of innovative cultures is that they are 'pretty fun', as Pisano puts it. A culture good for innovation is beneficial to the company's bottom line and valued by employees. None of the managers said they didn't want to work for an innovative company. But Pisano believes that innovative cultures are largely misunderstood. Just like creativity, innovation can be messy.

So what is missing in terms of how we perceive them? And why are they tricky to create and sustain?

> "The easy-to-like behaviors that get so much attention are only one side of the coin. They must be counterbalanced by some tougher and frankly less fun behaviors."
> – Pisano

Necessary counterbalances

In essence, innovative cultures are paradoxical. Counterbalances to the 'fun' aspects are what make innovation possible.

For example – around novel tech and business models exists a high degree of uncertainty. We explore what we don't yet know, or think we might know, and learn as we go. A failure in this sense offers us insights to move forward. But failure could also be the result of designs or plans that that are not thought out, a lack of transparency, or simple disorganisation. A high tolerance for the failure that offers learning must be backed up by high competence. The two seem like opposites but really go hand in hand – a paradox.

Four paradoxes for effectively innovating

- Tolerance of failure must be backed up with intolerance of incompetence
- Psychological safety requires radical candour
- Willingness to experiment needs to be underpinned by rigorous discipline
- Effective collaboration is liberated by individual accountability

The climate dimension

In addition to these paradoxes, the climate must 'work'. This in itself takes experimentation, focus and discipline. So what could we work with? Here are a few ideas around climate characteristics.

- Anti-fragile: Energetic, optimistic, curious, and determined, leans into chaos or messiness, core belief that things can be different and better
- Purposeful: imaginative, visionary, anchored – appreciates that we need 'just in time' and 'just in case' thinking for the longer-term benefit of business, people, planet
- Dynamic: brings analysis and action together, is decisive, transparent, can move on when needed
- Has high social capital: respects and nurtures a diversity of contribution, activates, and liberates it.

We can capture people data to help set up these kinds of climates, using frameworks such as The GC Index that identifies preference for impact within an eco-system such as a team or unit, all against a larger cycle of change and innovation. Margaret Heffernan, Dan Coyle and Nassim Taleb also provide such rich input through their extensive work and thinking.

The shining fifth paradox – the leadership dimension

The last counterbalance is the strong leadership required for flatter structures. This deserves its own space, and a lot more then we'll give it in this post.

Tensions can, will and possibly should arise through differences of view, uncertainty, confusion and changing circumstances. As tech entrepreneur Margaret Heffernan notes: 'For good ideas and true innovation, you need human interaction, conflict, argument and debate'. Leaders need to successfully ventilate and hold these tensions to prevent a failure of the system. And sometimes, people who can't adapt need to be ushered out. Managing the paradoxes with decisiveness and transparency is not always recognised as the easiest or most fun job (depending on what energises you and how you like to make your biggest impact), but it's critical.

If you want to innovate – get disciplined. Set high performance standards for your people. Recruit the best talent you can. We can support experimentation with risky ideas that may ultimately fail, but accepting mediocre tech or management skills, sloppy thinking, poor work habits and low levels of commitment is never going to bring us that so-called zero to one 'luck'.

Navigating these paradoxes and setting up exploratory climates are not so pie in the sky. We just need to get started.

* The Hard Truth about Innovative Cultures, Gary Pisano, Professor Harvard Business School. Harvard Business Review, Jan – Feb 2019.

MARISA WOLLHEIM

INSPIRE

To be inspired we must risk surrendering to the unknown,
To be inspired is to become humble, admit there is more than just this perception, belief, or attitude Ro experience and allow inspiration to reveal the possibilities.
To be inspired is to trust in a Divine or Supernatural Being within or outside of us to inspire us and expand into possibilities.

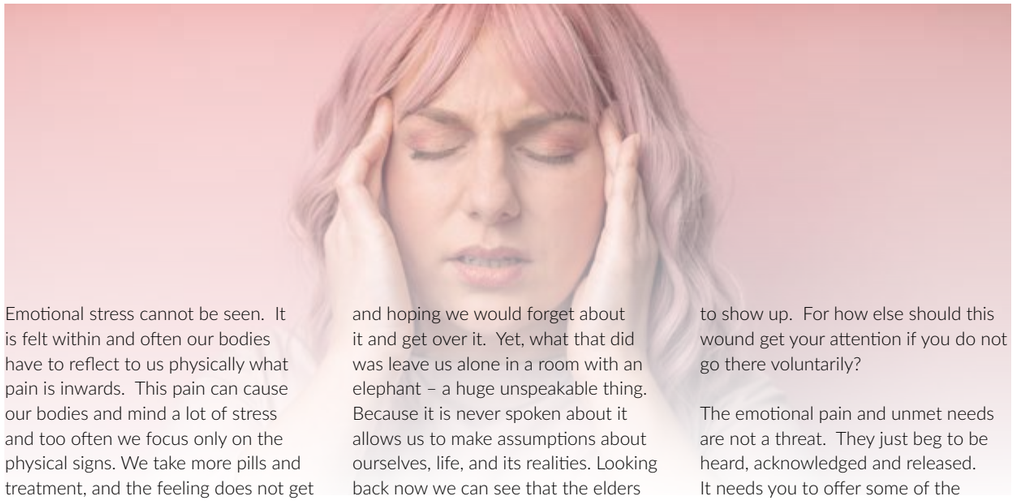
To be inspired is to breathe life into new possibilities.
Be willing to question yourself – “What else is possible?”
“How else could I be seeing this?”
And allow the inspiration to flow through and open a portal of possibilities, change, growth, and evolution.

LISTEN TO PART ONE OF SLEEP YOUR WAY TO THE TOP WITH JONI PEDDIE

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

EMOTIONAL STRESS

MARISA DA FONSECA WOLLHEIM



Emotional stress cannot be seen. It is felt within and often our bodies have to reflect to us physically what pain is inwards. This pain can cause our bodies and mind a lot of stress and too often we focus only on the physical signs. We take more pills and treatment, and the feeling does not get better until we choose to explore what is on the inside. A Holistic approach is needed so we can find a pathway within. Often the adult intellect cannot understand why the feeling is there for it has achieved certain material goals. Nothing major has happened of late yet this feeling within stays around.

As children we do not have the intellectual knowledge and understanding to process life and its realities, yet we feel it all. Our minds are threatened by the amount of pain on the inside and because it is not equipped to understand it, it either fabricates a story or adopts a belief about self and life to validate the amount of pain we are feeling inside. Thus, we start believing something about ourselves or life which is not always true but causes us a lot of emotional stress. The belief we adopt at that time attracts a pattern of events into our reality. Or we find a behaviour that soothes the pain or blocks off the pain whilst we carry within us unmet needs for a long time.

Long term emotional stress could come from our childhood, from a loss or trauma experienced but never acknowledged or explained. In the past our elders thought it best not to discuss loss, death, or grief with us thinking that they were protecting us and hoping we would forget about it and get over it. Yet, what that did was leave us alone in a room with an elephant – a huge unspeakable thing. Because it is never spoken about it allows us to make assumptions about ourselves, life, and its realities. Looking back now we can see that the elders were actually protecting themselves as their pain was never acknowledged and perhaps they did not know how to deal with it and thus rather avoided the subject.

When we are adults, we start recognizing certain patterns in our lives that we keep bumping into. These similar patterns drain us and leave us feeling lost and confused. Some of us may start a journey of self-awareness to understand self more deeply. As adults we have gained more intellectual knowledge and experience about life. We can compare the beliefs we have about ourselves to what we believed about self and life as a child, and recognize that there is a gap. Identifying emotional stress can empower us to start a healing journey by meeting those unmet needs.

By recognizing an emotional immaturity because of a lack of acknowledgement, understanding and re-assurance, we rather recognize survival thoughts, beliefs and behaviours which are now outdated and need to be unlearned.

The adult mind may resist going back as it justifies how far it has come and refuses to entertain the past. So it continues avoiding it. Yet, that pain and those unmet needs will find any little crack or opportunity, whether it is convenient for the adult mind or not, to show up. For how else should this wound get your attention if you do not go there voluntarily?

The emotional pain and unmet needs are not a threat. They just beg to be heard, acknowledged and released. It needs you to offer some of the intellectual wisdom you have gained to it. It needs your reassurance, understanding, compassion and love. It is true you have gained a lot of insight, knowledge, and wisdom since your childhood. Yet you have never offered that innocent child within any of it. I always tell folks the longest journey you will ever take is the one from your mind to your heart. Yet, the moment the mind can see that inner child and its wounds of innocence and ignorance, and we allow the mind to offer its strengths and compassion, the healing is powerful. We can reclaim the power we have invested in those unresolved areas and become whole. The holistic route starts with the body, yet it recognizes emotional, mental, and spiritual pain too and allows room for integration and holistic healing and balance.

As a Holistic Counsellor my role is to create a safe space so you can get to look within and start the Journey within with compassion, understanding and no judgement, a space to acknowledge, allow and release. To empower yourself with life skills to reconnect to parts and power forgotten. Guiding you in creating a Holistic Care Plan for Self toward Wholeness.

Start that Journey today...

REFLECTIONS ABOUT REFLECTION

CHANTAL DAWTREY

I have journaled most of my adult life. I have found it useful to process thoughts, ideas, concerns and to record the events of my life. I have been surprised, however, at how many people I have met, coached or supervised that don't journal or reflect formally and even find the concept intimidating.

David Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory describes a learning cycle that comprises four stages: concrete learning, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization and active experimentation.

Concrete learning is the first stage, where we have an experience, either a new one or a reinterpretation of an existing encounter. In the next stage, reflective observation, we take time to reflect on the experience from our personal perspective. Based on our reflections we enter the abstract conceptualization stage where we are able to now shape new ideas, or revise existing thoughts. Finally, we are able to apply the new ideas in the active experimentation stage. The outcomes here result in an experience and concrete learning which starts the process all over again.

It's a great theory for adult learning and one that I share frequently with my clients. Basically, reflection is key to learning and growing yet for many there is a view that reflecting is difficult. It can be and it doesn't necessarily have to be either.

Reflection happens all the time, not only when we sit down to ponder and write about our experiences. Every time we think or talk about key happenings and consider what we could have done differently and how to approach it the next time, we are reflecting. This is one of the reasons why coaching is so impactful.

Writing things down, though, does help to get the ideas and realizations to stick. The written reflections allow us something concrete to return to at a later date to review and remind us of our learnings. Writing also assists with encoding the information in our memory banks for storage and retrieval. Although studies have shown that handwriting is even better than typing, any form of writing, be it keyboard or by hand is better than trying to manage all the data in our heads.

Despite reflection being an important aspect to learning, what gets in the way of us being able to reflect adequately? Quite a bit, it may seem. Time, the environment, motivation, skill and ourselves are some of the barriers.

It does take time to reflect properly and time is something that slips through our fingers like butter on a hot day. Finding the right environment to introspect can be a challenge. Not all of us can focus in a busy coffee shop and some find silence too quiet. Reflecting takes energy and effort and at the end of the day there may not have much of that left and motivation to put pen to paper or fingers to a keyboard may be low.

Journaling as reflective practice is a skill that can be learned but often isn't. There is an assumption that it should be easy. Well, yes, driving a car is easy, swimming is easy, but not until you have learnt how to. The anxiety around not knowing where to start or about getting it right can be alleviated by following a model.

Many newcomers to journaling begin by focusing primarily on the content, what happened, the idea, the event, the outcome. This is a start but telling the story does not necessarily lead to new insights. Borton's reflective model, one of several reflective models, and a fairly simple framework, can help go deeper. In this model three questions are asked: "What?", "So what?" and "Now what?".

"What?" covers the content part. "So what?" gets one to analyze why the content is important. Finally "Now what?" focuses on what the experience means for future practice or change. It's an easy model to refer to when we find ourselves rambling on about the story or going in reflecting circles.

The biggest barrier to reflection, however, is ourselves. Reflecting requires a certain level of self-awareness, an openness about our failings and shortcomings that may feel unnerving to explore. I've had clients that feel uncomfortable just seeing their thoughts on the page. It makes them feel exposed and vulnerable, not only at the messiness of their ruminations but what if someone else gets a look in on their inner workings? Horrors!

No really, it can be shocking to bear witness to the disorganized, scruffy, sometimes chaotic workings of our minds. One way to gently exercise the reflecting muscle is by using morning pages. A technique developed by Julia Cameron, author of The Artist's Way. Morning pages involves committing three pages of stream of consciousness writing every morning (or other time of day), not to be edited, not even reread. They can be ripped up, burned or thrown away to prevent any judgmental eyes venturing near them.

There is no one way to reflect or journal. Journaling is a very personal exercise, not meant to be shared or published, although some are. For those more creative souls, using drawings, post-it notes, coloured pens, diagrams and mind maps can free them of the constraints of the page and the need to work within the lines.

It is not so much what one journals and reflects on or how. It is more about giving ourselves permission to reflect imperfectly, to write badly and to play a little. In the letting go of needing to do it right a doorway is opened to possibility, to discovery and growth.

THE FIVE LOVE LANGUAGES: HOW DO WE RECONNECT WITH OUR LOVED ONES?

CAITLIN WATSON

Understanding how we communicate and receive love is key to building connected relationships.

I recently found my copy of The Five Love Languages by Gary Chapman, and I was reminded that some of our most fundamental needs as human beings include the need to feel connected, accepted, and loved. Given the events of the last two years, people have been experiencing the exact opposite: many continue to feel disconnected, isolated, and fearful.

I have spent time thinking about ways to reconnect with people in my own life, and have found the love language principles a good reminder of how to do just that. It is important to note that this is only one piece of the puzzle to figuring out how to connect with your loved ones (spouses, children, siblings, etc.) deeply and meaningfully, but it is a practical start to better understanding how they feel appreciated and loved, and how they communicate love and appreciation to you.

The thinking behind the love languages is that we each express and receive love in five ways – i.e., five 'emotional love languages'. Chapman says: "Your emotional love language and the language of your loved one may be as different as Chinese from English, and no matter how hard you try to express love in English, if your loved one only understands Chinese, you will never understand how to love each other."

Here are some tips for understanding what the five love languages are, and how to make use of them.

Love Language	How to communicate	Actions to take
Words of Affirmation	Verbal acknowledgments	You can say these things to your loved one to help them feel loved and acknowledged: • I really appreciate you when you do... • I am proud of you because... • Thank you for making me feel safe & loved
Physical Touch	Non-verbal – you can use body language and touch to express love	• A hug can show that you care about them or that you empathise with their situation • A hand on the shoulder indicates that you acknowledge them
Receiving gifts	Give visual symbols of love it's not about the cost of the gift but the thought behind it	• Acknowledge special occasions with a gift – your loved one will feel seen, cared for, and prized • Small, unexpected gifts are powerful symbols that you are thinking about them
Quality Time	Uninterrupted, focused conversations and one on one time is important	• Practice active listening when you are with your loved one (eye contact, acknowledging what they are saying) • Give your loved one your undivided attention while talking to them (NB: avoid looking at your device)
Acts of Service	Actions speak louder than words, so it is important to show your support by physically completing an activity or task for or on behalf of your loved one	• If you see your loved one feeling stressed or tired, alleviate their burden by completing a task on their behalf. This will show them that you acknowledge the pressure they're under and that you support them • Doing something for your loved one shows that they can rely on you and trust that you will be there for them

Table adapted from source:
https://www.mindbodygreen.com/articles/the-5-love-languages-explained

Don't forget to use this information to ask your loved ones to show you love in a way that speaks to your love language