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ISSUE FIVE

The
Learning Scientist

Editorial

Please let us know your thoughts. Get in touch with us at thelearningscientistmag@gmail.com and share your 'it could be even better, if...' ideas.

If you would like to contribute or subscribe, let us know here:

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#LearningScientistMag.

The bit we should say:

We are not funded in any way and no money has crossed hands to make this happen, just the investment of people's time; we are powered by our own drive to get stories out there, showcasing the thoughts, research and results of theories and practice with independent contributions from across the education, learning and development, and performance sport environments.

It's a place to show up and celebrate each element of the magazine, from its contributors to our editor, designer and tech support, all of whom have gifted their time to allow this magazine to exist beyond an idea.

The opinions expressed in each story of the magazine are those of the respective authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of those at the Learning Scientist (editor, designer and production team). We accept no responsibility for the opinions expressed.

With thanks:

Issue 5, who would have thought it? Who would have thought we could get here? Even with the pressures of a lockdown, reduced income, challenges in homeschooling or just life, we have still managed to conjure a great read.

I am, as ever, blown away by the investment of our authors, some known to us and others new to our world. They have been kind with their thoughts, ideas and time, fuelled by a desire to share freely. No money has crossed anyone's palm, just the kindness of an ever-growing community (one day we shall gather).

Everything in the magazine is gifted, time and skills. Our team of Rebecca, Kelli and Aaron all put in the hours to turn people's narratives into accessible reads. I am so proud of what we have achieved and the trust writers have put in us.

The Stories:

What you will see here are the stories of good people, sharing what they wish to be heard. Honest, true and theirs. What we ask is that you skip through them and dive into ones you least expect to give you something - I know you will be happily surprised. This issue particularly brings a strong mix of views from performance sport, business and education, all connected to 'people development'.

I also urge you all to touch base with our authors in this and previous issues. They are real people doing great work. They are accessible and open for conversation.

Our ultimate mission is to become a trusted source for all things learning and people development within Education, Corporate Learning, People Development and Performance Sport.

Your go to place for #StoriesOfLearning.

This magazine is created on the principles of a social enterprise, we are powered only by the investment of our growing community and the kindness of our contributing authors.

Emotional Experience in learning

Sarah Sniderman discusses how emotion and vulnerability can impact and influence the learning process



Conflict. Codependency. Addiction...When I signed up for a two-month program of self-reflection, I had no idea the work would be so intense. At the end of each week we would meet, a group of seven strangers, to talk about what we had learned about ourselves and our relationships with others. The first week was a complete below-the-belt emotional debacle and I wasn't looking forward to the debrief session at all. But then as each person took a turn, I realised this meeting was in fact the safest part of the experience: after each challenging week, we could offer each other some sense of refuge, a secure space of understanding and acceptance, because we had all contracted to remain open, without judgment.

That really got me thinking about the emotional experience of learning. Because in some ways, as professionally trained instructional designers, we have been set up to fail learners. Let's start with objectives, which establish the focus and tone of every learning event. Bloom's Taxonomy, which we are taught to use as a framework for defining objectives, focuses on intellectual content only: facts, concepts, procedures, and processes. We lose sight of the emotions that are always at play when we learn, whether we address them explicitly or not – things like awareness, motivation, commitment, and confidence. Bloom and his colleagues did do some work in this area, but nothing compared to their rigorous analysis of the cognitive domain. So for historical theoretical reasons, emotions are often left out of design, right from the start.

Then let's look at what happens as participants engage in the learning process. I've borrowed some ideas from disciplines that deliver great physical and visual design, including architecture, graphic design, and urban art. These practitioners are expert at structuring the physical environment to evoke emotional response, and so I was interested to see what we could apply to the design of conceptual learning spaces.

Here are three principles that can give us some insight into the emotional experience of learning:

- Prospect-refuge
- Framing
- Friction

Prospect-refuge is about the balance between having opportunities to explore, while also feeling safe from threat. In the design of a park, for example, prospect might be represented by a lookout on the highest point of land. There is also a chalet close by, where the view may not be as good but people can take refuge from the weather. And importantly, we want to be able to move from one state to the other, from prospect to refuge and back again, depending on the context and how we are feeling in the moment.

Sarah Sniderman - Working in the field of learning, performance, and change. Reading as much as I can. And writing to try and make sense of what's on my mind.

The idea of framing will be familiar to anyone who has considered how advertisements drive behaviour by focusing on certain aspects of a phenomenon while hiding others. The reality is that there are always multiple ways in which to understand and present content. We need to choose which perspective to prioritise, and in doing so we necessarily conceal or at least downplay others.

And finally, friction. Nothing ever really happens in our lives without a little friction. It's a tool designers can use to encourage us to question, to compare, to consider changing something about ourselves, whether it's where we're standing, what we believe, or how we feel. The intention behind a lot of street art is to provoke us into recognizing and challenging our beliefs by projecting an alternative vision of the world.

Let's see how these principles might play out over the course of a workshop. We show learners what's possible by setting expectations through learning objectives (prospect), then guide them toward achieving these objectives by developing materials and activities that highlight key content (framing). At any point during the workshop, the gap between where a learner is and where she wants or believes she should be can become stressful, even painful (friction). At this point, increasingly vulnerable, she would benefit from a safe space to reflect and refocus (refuge) before determining next steps toward her goal (back to prospect).

There's nothing new about this overall flow of the learning process itself. But by looking at it from the perspective of these three principles, the impact on the emotional experience of the learner gains more prominence. There are many lessons we can take from this, but let's focus on one: providing opportunities for participants to take refuge.

We tend to focus learning events on achieving objectives; we develop activities to drive participants, oftentimes in lockstep, toward the goal line. What we don't talk about much, if at all, is the importance of offering learners a chance to take time out when they need to, without feeling like they are falling short of expectations. It's so important to be able to do this well. We all know for ourselves how it can feel when we're stretching to learn something new and begin feeling vulnerable, worrying we might not get there. Maybe we receive disappointing test results and realise we didn't understand as well as we thought. Or we compare ourselves to others and come up short. We become anxious, afraid, losing confidence, motivation, and momentum.

If learners begin to experience too much friction, what might refuge look like? It could be encouragement to reflect individually on lessons learned so far, or a pair activity in which partners are given guidance on gaining each other's trust and offering meaningful feedback, or the chance to check in with a mentor.

Consider the last learning event you developed, delivered, or attended. Did you notice any participants who may have needed an opportunity for refuge? Was it available to them, whether designed intentionally or there by accident? What could have been done differently to ensure learners had access to safe spaces when they were feeling vulnerable?

Continue the conversation: I'd love to hear your thoughts and reactions to what I've shared. Please reach out to me at sarahsniderman@gmail.com and check learningcodes.ca for updates on the book I'm writing about all of this, as well as details on my podcast series **Vulnerability in Life and Art**.

LEADERSHIP IS ABOUT KNOWING WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO

I don't remember exactly when I first heard the phrase "leadership is about knowing what to do when you don't know what to do", but I do remember how it resonated. It was during my headship, and it summed up clearly for me that, although we often look to leaders for answers, especially in uncertain times, no one has a monopoly on the right responses.

I remember, as a head, having days where I thought, "I'm actually doing OK at this job," followed by days where I felt, "Who am I kidding? I'm barely getting away with this, and someone is going to find me out!" Having spoken to different leaders in a range of contexts, I think this experience may be more common than we realise. Some leaders are more prepared to admit to it than others! I have always felt that a degree of humility makes for a stronger leader, and that those who never concede their moments of self-doubt aren't necessarily the most confident, or the leaders in which we should place our faith. I recall the outgoing General Secretary of the union ASCL, John Dunford, saying when he stepped down from that role in 2010 that leaders at all levels need four Hs: hope, humanity, humility and humour. That sounds like a reasonable summary of what matters most.

Thinking about what schools have had to navigate since the arrival of Covid-19 in early 2020, it seems to me that leadership has been tested as never before. As the ground has kept shifting, not knowing exactly what to do has perhaps become the default position. Although some have been repeatedly asking for 'clarity', for structure and a plan, the truth is that no one could accurately anticipate how the situation would evolve, what we would learn, and what would be required of us. And this is true of politicians, of medics, and of scientists, as well as educators. One of the most frustrating things, I think, is that much time has been spent taking action and making arrangements which have turned out to be redundant - as the goalposts move once again, and what we thought was the right thing turned out not to be.

I can see how some find 'U-turns' destabilising, but, in fact, they are inevitable in a context such as the one we now find ourselves in - and even a sign of reasonable adjustment in the face of a changing landscape. It would be far riskier to insist on sticking to a course of action when new evidence indicated that the route initially decided upon was unwise, and even dangerous. Adapting, being nimble, being prepared constantly to evaluate, to gather information from those we lead and to rethink and recalibrate where necessary is something that educators have become adept at in the past year.

So what has the best leadership in our schools and colleges looked like this year, and where have we had clear evidence of leaders "knowing what to do when they don't know what to do"?

1. Taking it day by day and keeping going...

When the picture changes so frequently, the best we can do is to recognise that we have to focus on what is in front of us now, do the best we can and then move on. As long as we feel we are generally moving in the right direction, this is a real accomplishment, and something we should give ourselves credit for. Sometimes it's about recognising what is within our control - where we have agency - and what isn't, concentrating on the former and finding a way to accept the latter.

2. Having strong underlying principles to inform our decisions

Being clear about 'what matters most', and ensuring that there is an understanding of this across our organisations, is especially important in the most challenging times. What can we set aside for now? What must we prioritise? Reflecting, discussing, deciding and following through on our commitments seems to me to be the essence of strong, principled leadership.

3. Sharing, supporting and learning together

Recognising that when you don't know what to do one of your first steps must be to talk to others who may be able to guide and advise you may seem obvious, but, paradoxically, it takes a degree of confidence to admit you lack confidence. The willingness to ask for help, and to offer help, has reinforced the powerful sense of community across the education sector. Benefiting from others' experience, and sharing our own, has made us collectively stronger.

4. Looking after each other

The current General Secretary of ASCL, Geoff Barton, was quoted in The Guardian last year as saying: "It's the human stuff that matters in education". This year has shown, as never before, that caring for and strongly supporting our pupils, their families, teaching and support staff, leaders, governors and the wider community is an imperative. We must never forget the "human stuff". Strong leaders at all levels have shown their commitment to this.

5. Building resilience

And as 'rough seas make the best sailors', this test of leadership calibre has provided an opportunity to build skills and to develop even greater resilience. Educators may be exhausted and drained - and there will certainly be dips and troughs and darker days - but there has also been talk of the energising effect of rising to this challenge, of how much has been learnt, and the hope that this can be built on in the future, for the good of our educational institutions and all those within them.



Jill Berry shares her thoughts on how the strongest leaders are built upon an ability to step up to the mettle when the chips are down.

I'm Jill Berry and I am now in the 'post-career' phase of my life, having taught in six schools across a 30-year period and stepping down from headship in 2010. I'm still fascinated by education - leadership, in particular - and enjoy reading about it, writing about it, talking about it.

Sally-Anne Huang, the head of St Paul's School and current Chair of the headteachers' organisation HMC, said in her conference speech last October: "If you haven't run a school during a global pandemic, you can't know what it's like to run a school during a global pandemic - that's a badge of courage owed to every headteacher in this country right now, whatever their setting." As a former head, I am very aware that I haven't lived through what serving heads have navigated in the past year, and that makes me feel humble. But I have seen what heads have addressed and achieved, what teachers leading learning have accomplished in their

classrooms, and how Middle Leaders, Senior Leaders, CEOs, governors and all those with leadership responsibility in educational establishments of all types have stepped up and shown their mettle. They may not always have known what to do, but they have done what they needed to do, with compassion and with courage, and I feel proud to be part of the education profession.

Continue the conversation: I blog at jillberry102.blog and spend a ridiculous amount of my time on edu-Twitter [@jillberry102](https://twitter.com/jillberry102)

MY TAKE ON WHAT IT TAKES TO BE AN AWESOME COACH DEVELOPER

Sarah Green on staying curious and being authentic, always.

My first reaction to this is 'I don't know!' But I can share what I think works for me, which by the way doesn't mean that I think I'm awesome...

Curiosity feels like a buzzword at the moment, but it is what has led me into this space. My role at England Netball is the first true coach development role I've had; all my previous roles have also been linked to educating coaches on formal qualifications. Being in a position where I'm just here to support coaches and help them thrive, whilst knowing that I don't hold all the knowledge and power, is fascinating. The coaches know way more about netball than me and I have never tried to pretend otherwise; that allows me to just be constantly curious about what they are doing and why. It creates an opportunity for the coach and me to have a real shared experience. **Stay curious, it expands the possibilities. Everything and anyone is welcome within that curiosity.**

I am fascinated by people and their behavior. I am also really passionate about supporting and encouraging people, it gives me energy and purpose. When I am working with coaches, I commit to supporting them as best as I can. I invest time in getting to know them, where they work, who are their important people, and what are their goals and dreams? I make developing people a priority. I make time for it and strive to stick to those commitments. I previously spent a lot of time getting to know myself and I like to think I've got a good level of emotional intelligence. This helps me be aware of other people's emotions as well as my own, it helps me lead with myself, which helps me connect with others more genuinely. To feel heard and known is so important, and goes a long way when building strong relationships. I want the people I work with to be able to trust me and know that I'm invested in their journey, whilst also understanding that I can't do it for them. **Pay**

attention to what makes people happy, anxious, nervous. Look, listen, ask how you can help.

In this role, it is a fact that every coach I work with has more netball experience than me and I am ok with that. At first, I never wanted to share my football coaching experiences, and as a result I might tend to talk generically about my coaching. But, in honesty, everyone knew where I had worked before, so I quickly got over that hurdle and just owned my experiences in my environment. Approaching a coach in this situation, you can be worrying about their expectations or the value they believe you can add and that can cause you to lead with what you know, rather than listening to what they need and/or want. I think I've settled into my environment now and spend most of my time seeking to understand. It's my job to create experiences for coaches that make them question why they do what they do, without always providing the answers. It's about them finding their way, understanding who they are and what works for them. I don't have those answers, but I can create environments and give them experiences that will ask those questions and challenge their thinking. **It's about empowering and inspiring, bringing out the best in people. Showing them how great they are.**

By nature, I am a pretty structured and organised person but with some of the programmes I've set up, I've had to learn to let some of that relax a bit. I wanted to be able to give the coaches what they needed and to do that I had to learn to adapt to the nature of their wants and needs. I created a structure to guide us, but I have been flexible with that if it meant it would give us a really valuable experience. **It's like a detour notification on Google Maps - we are still heading for the same destination, but we've recognised we now need to take a different route.**

'Let no one come to you without leaving better and happier' Mother Teresa



A part of developing people is giving them feedback. Those conversations are important for learning, growth, and creating a strong meaningful relationship. It's about building confidence and ownership, but also about being honest. Sharing thoughts and feelings in a way to seek to understand feels more comfortable for me than just giving my opinion. Voice noting has been a really useful tool for me when observing coaches and I record all my thoughts, so that as part of reflecting together we can explore those thoughts and what happened. We can see how the session and my thinking evolves, which feels more dynamic in reflecting the situation they are in, rather than the alternative for me which would be making notes that feel static and don't always enable us to create a picture of what happened before and after. **If you have something important to say, don't be subtle! Focus on growth, you'll often find the greatest potential for that in someone's strengths.**

Being a great coach developer requires patience and relationships take time. It takes time to build trust. Leading with who you are is the best advice I could give anyone in this situation; when you genuinely care, people will connect with that and the possibilities for your journey together are endless.

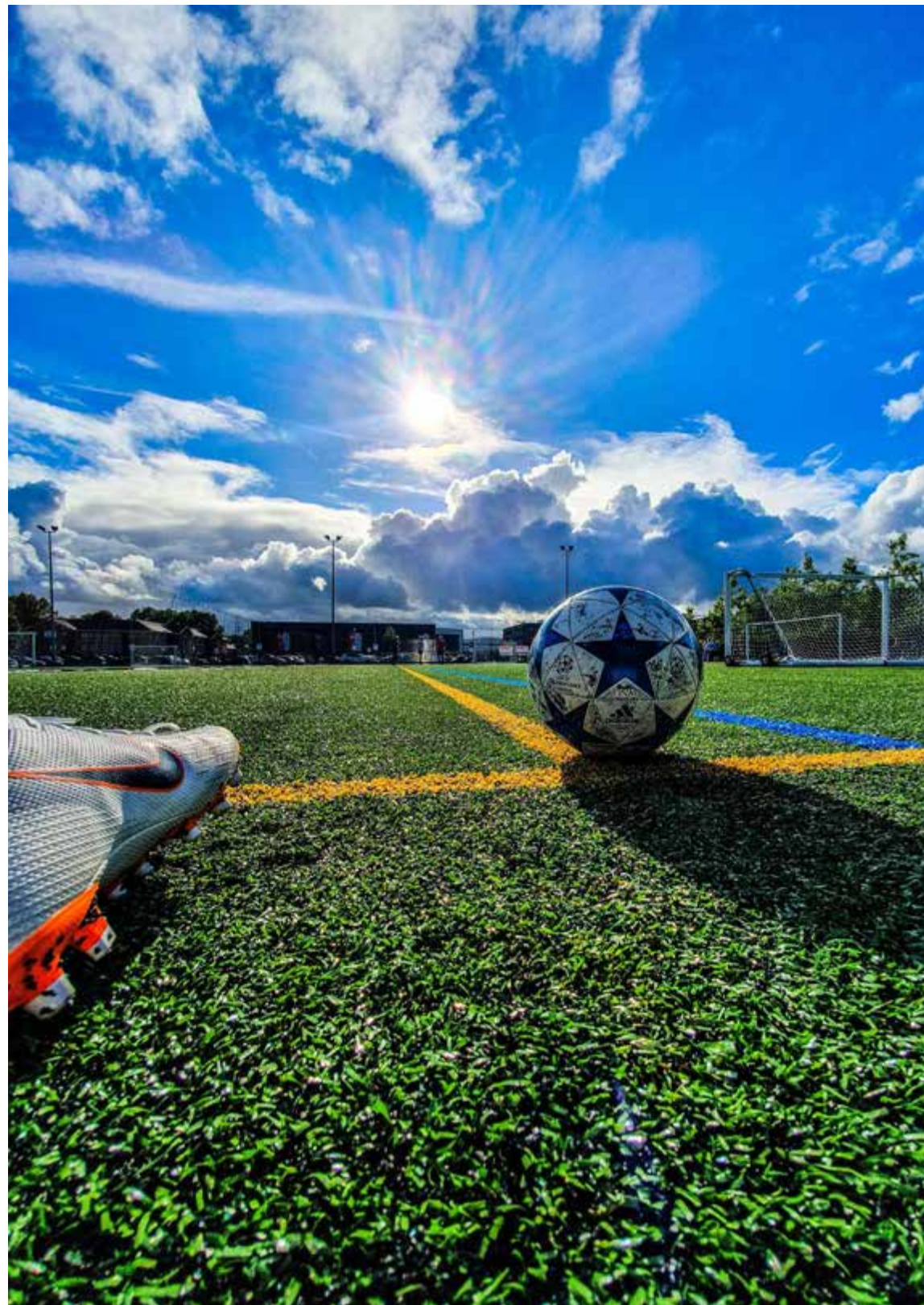


Sarah Green is a Performance Coach Developer at England Netball and Coach at Derby City FC Women. Passionate about developing people, curious about everything. With over 20 years of experience in coaching and still contagiously curious. Her favourite drink is Prosecco and her idea of TV heaven is Gogglebox.

Continue the conversation: @SGreen_1 on twitter

What Polyvagal Theory Taught Me

Sally Needham shares her personal experience in the lessons found through relationships and neuroscience in sports coaching.



Polyvagal Institute has just been formed: <https://www.polyvagalinstitute.org>

In 2012, my journey in the emotional and social landscape started. I was chosen to be on the pilot course of The FA Advanced Youth Award (AYA); this is where my curiosity and interest in the psychological and social elements of coaching within football was evoked. The course was split into 5 blocks: core, social, psychological, physical and technical, and purposefully in that order. It was also split into age phases, which consisted of 5-11 years, 12-16 years and 17-21 years. At the time, I was working as a skills coach for 5 to 11 years on The FA Skills Programme. This course was a game changer for me and the following years resulted in me acquiring a greater understanding of these areas through various courses. I started to become frustrated, as I wanted to know how and why this approach to coaching young people seemed to help them flourish as children and players. The traditional route of psychology wasn't giving me the answers that I wanted or needed.

I came home from coaching one day in tears with regards to a player that I was struggling to connect with, she was causing me issues and making problems in the session, affecting and influencing the other players negatively. One day, I was chatting to one of my best friends who worked within a school setting supporting children whom they felt needed extra support with emotional and social development. She talked around the approach and it provided me with a different lens to look at the player and behaviour. I knew that this was something that could possibly help me to understand more about children's behaviours and possibly give me the how and why the application of the Advanced Youth Award learning was working.

The course focused on understanding stages of children's brain development, using the latest neuroscience and social attachment theory. It allowed you to experience the different stages of right time development and what behaviour may be presented when there has been some interrupted development. From there, you could determine what activities, through play, arts and music, you may use to help support some neurological changes. The course was designed for school practitioners, therefore the past couple of years have consisted of me trying to understand my new knowledge to a significant depth whilst applying it into the football context.

The main game changers from this course have been creating safety for the children, reframing our lens on behaviour, the impact of language and the Polyvagal Theory, which I will explain in more depth later. In January 2020, the journey went full circle when I was asked to present the workshop that I have constructed to coaches on the Advanced Youth Award on the 5-11 age phase psychological block. It enabled the coaches to get the science, but also application, into the football context which had been missing

before. I knew this was what I wanted to do day-in, day-out, to deepen my knowledge through theory and application. Therefore, I took a big leap of faith last October and left The FA after 13 years to set up my own consultancy company, 4 Growth. I have not looked back. I am working three days a week in a boy's academy implementing my work and delivering bespoke CPD workshops to other football clubs, different organisations, different sectors, whilst still tutoring for The FA. I'm loving every minute. Oh, and I have just started my Professional Doctorate to gain research into the application too. Let the fun times commence.

Polyvagal Theory

The polyvagal theory was proposed in 1994 by Stephen Porges and only came to fruition in 2009. For me this theory is a preamble for the psychological and social corners within football, social attachment and pro social behaviours. Along with understanding how the brain and the body is connected, it has helped me to reframe the way in which I look at teaching, learning, behaviours and connections. I talk about the 'green zone' and when we are in our green zone we are up for relationships, we give eye contact and can plan, problem solve, make good decisions and reflect. When we are out of our 'green zone' we are in fight/flight or freeze response, where we are not learning or in connection, simply surviving. When I am working with coaches, players or people, noticing the bodily cues of what state another person is in is massively helpful. The work by Mustafa Sarkar within resilience states that 'team resilience rests fundamentally on relationships', therefore understanding the brain and the nervous system and how this impacts our pro social behaviours is imperative for me. That is why I am so curious around this theory and where it can go and evolve. The theory has not been applied into the sporting arena that much at present, used more instead in psychology, medical and health.

Neuroscience could be a game changer in the world of sport, and advances in science and technology are now giving us new and exciting things to think about and explore. When I look back at the early days, the content, my uneasiness with still trying to deepen my understanding whilst delivering, to where the content is now and how comfortable I am with sometimes not being comfortable with the delivery, I am excited. The other day, someone said to me 'you will look back in 5 years and won't believe where you have come as you emerge in your field'. Hopefully this will be the case. This is why I left a stable, well-paid job at the National Football Organisation and I can't wait to embrace the journey.

Continue the conversation: @sallyneed3 on Twitter

“When you see a child differently you see a different child”
- Dr Stuart Shanker

SALLY NEEDHAM IS A BARNSELY GIRL TRYING TO GIVE A DIFFERENT LENS AND EVOKE CURIOSITY IN THE WORLD OF FOOTBALL THROUGH THE FIELD OF NEUROSCIENCE. A DAUGHTER, SISTER, AUNTY AND FRIEND WITH A FEW QUALIFICATIONS IN FOOTBALL AND SOME LETTERS BEHIND HER NAME.

Managing Difficult Conversations in Uncertain Times

Stefan Rollnick explores the roles of acceptance and self-reflection in negotiating differences in opinion.

While Covid has brought with it much to be hopeful for, it's also brought with it a toxic mixture of grief and anxiety that has produced a kind of diffuse irritability. This, combined with an already hostile political culture, has made terse and often upsetting political conversations with friends and loved ones a more common occurrence. It seems as though our divisions are growing and can only grow further as social media pulls us deeper into our political tribes.

While this is true, and concerning, it is only part of the picture. We all have agency, as individuals, to show up to difficult conversations about politics and politics-adjacent issues in a way that starts to heal these divides.

Research from the think tank [More In Common](#) – which was set up by a political speechwriter and close friend of the murdered Labour Member of Parliament Jo Cox in the wake of her death – points to a more hopeful story. In just a few examples of many, they've found that [uniting around protecting the environment](#) has the potential to heal political divides in France, and that Britain is not divided into two unmovable political camps but a [complex tapestry](#) of overlapping and often complimentary ideological groupings.

This is enough for us to say that our divides are not unbridgeable, but then why does navigating them often feel so difficult? Why does it feel like the people we love are fading away, replaced by a barely recognisable simulacra that simply parrots misinformation? The stakes are high, too. Those who spread conspiracy theories and work to radicalise people online prey on the social isolation and fear of their victims, and so one of the biggest bulwarks against radicalisation is our [love for the vulnerable people around us](#).

But the best place to start, is not with the person we're "trying to fix", but with ourselves. I spent most of the pandemic working on an anti-misinformation campaign for the [Center for Countering Digital Hate](#), which involved me spending a sizeable chunk of my working day developing an intimate knowledge of some of the biggest misinformation sites in the world which serve as superspreaders for the most damaging conspiracy theories.

I discovered that there are not two kinds of people: "people who are vulnerable to conspiracy theories" and "us". They are us, and we are them. As the pandemic spread and my life took a new, uncomfortable shape, I could feel inside myself, as I trawled these sites, not just a professional analysis but a more fearful, personal response. Populists exploit uncertainty by satiating this desire for certainty with bad information.

I also felt another feeling, as I saw content that was designed to dehumanise people based on the colour of the skin: not just anger, but an anger fuelled by a desperate desire to exert some control. How can people say this stuff? And how

can people believe it? Of course this surprise was a function of the fact that – apart from some relatively light, ignorant teasing about my Jewish heritage as a child – I'd never been on the receiving end of systemic racism.

So as best as we can, we must be mindful of our impulse to "fix" these people, acknowledging that our desire to control them is based on a lie that we have much control whatsoever. The key is to be wise enough to see what we can control and conserve our energy to where we can move the needle.

The evidence from [Deep Canvassing](#) – a conversation technique with voters that's being rolled out by progressive groups in the U.S – suggests that by being disciplined in how we show up to these conversations, we can really move the needle. It's not just limited to political conversations either, these techniques can be applied to any difficult conversation in our personal lives. The techniques of Deep Canvassing are loosely based on Motivational Interviewing, a counselling technique that has had huge success in helping ambivalent people make positive health behaviour changes by working with that ambivalence, not against it.

To start off with, when faced with a difficult conversation, see if you can play the role of an investigator. Try to bring a genuine curiosity to understand what's at the heart of what the other person is saying, while being mindful that the goal is not necessarily to try to "change" them. Don't just listen passively either, in order for the other person to feel like they're being listened to in a non-judgemental way we need to show them. Practice making "reflective listening statements": summarising statements of what the person has just said, demonstrating you've been listening and giving them the chance to elaborate further.

Another key component of this is self-image. We all like to consider ourselves to be good, smart people, and if we threaten someone's self-image when we have these conversations then they're going to resist that, producing what Motivational Interviewing experts call "sustain talk": a defence of their character that tends to reinforce their original position. See if you can use affirmations – statements that recognise something inherently good in the other person – to show them that you are working with the "best version" of themselves. The evidence shows that [if we make people feel like there is a "social threat"](#) to their beliefs or position (i.e. that they'll be excluded or rejected for them), we can entrench them further. Deep Canvassers also attest to the benefits of stories in building mutual empathy in difficult conversations. Stories help us to make sense of the world and are more likely to get our point across than statistics.

Deep Canvassing and Motivational Interviewing can sound a bit technical and slightly overwhelming approaches to a problem that is often dictated by emotion in the heat of

I try to communicate complex ideas simply to create a better world. This means empowering the public with key information on subjects from health to public policy, big tech to democracy. Long-suffering football fan (Arsenal & Cardiff) and political history nerd. A recovering pessimist and a believer in people and our ability to do good things. A Welsh, Irish Catholic, South African, Russian Jew and proud of it.



the moment. We can't exactly break them down into their constituent parts, bullet point them, put them on sticky notes and stick them to the foreheads of our loved ones. But in Motivational Interviewing, practitioners often talk about something called "MI Spirit" or the "spirit of MI", and this is a much softer and realistic way of incorporating these lessons into our lives.

It's described as a "way of being" that involves the values of collaboration, evoking change, giving people autonomy and

bringing a compassionate mind to conversations. Now, before we reach for the sticky notes, instead, perhaps try a different approach. If we were to create an MI Spirit 2.0 designed for individuals committed to learning and development, it might have a fifth value: embracing getting it all wrong and starting all over again.

Continue the conversation: via <https://www.stefanrollnick.com> or find me on LinkedIn

The Learning Journey

What might a lens on ‘the journey’ offer us when we are considering how we best support others’ learning? Elliott Newell offers his reflections on people development within a high-performance context.

I am fortunate in my life to have found work that I find exciting and meaningful. This work takes place within what is commonly referred to as the ‘high-performance sporting system’ here in the UK, which involves publicly-funded Olympic and Paralympic sports. Whilst there are certainly aspects of the way things work that are comparable to a system, I prefer to use the phrase “high-performing community”. This is because the intentions, interactions and outcomes of my work are people focused and relational. Perhaps I may connect with the idea of ‘system’ a little more if I worked within investment, data or technology; but I don’t, so I don’t. I work with coaches, leaders and athletes where our work is focused on development of professional practice to enhance performance. Performance is a challenging context for learning. The process is wrapped up in tightly held cultural norms that centre on being THE best and – in order to achieve such a feat – being YOUR best.

People who choose to pursue the limits of their performance potential are not ordinary people. Whilst everyone has the capacity to discover where their potential lies in a particular domain, many do not have the opportunity and even fewer have the inclination. Performance is a call to adventure. It is an invitation to explore the boundaries of our potential and to explore the question “what might I be capable of?” This provides the context for learning in a high-performance setting, which is important to grasp as it distinguishes it from learning that is more necessary, functional or externally driven. It is for these reasons that I see parallels with the monomyth described by Joseph Campbell that is captured so eloquently in The Hero’s Journey. I cannot do the Hero’s Journey justice in this format, so I do encourage readers to do their own research on this work to gain a better appreciation.

The monomyth lens provokes me to consider the place of our learning encounter within a broader narrative of the learners’ performance journey to date. This approach to learning has enabled me to achieve five important things in my work with leaders, coaches and athletes:

We humanise the learning experience.

A common barrier I face working with learners is a perception of learning as transactional inputting-based activity as opposed to focused on transformational change. The latter is important because it humanises learning to the point that you cannot remove yourself – or indeed parts of yourself – from it. The Hero’s Journey framework necessitates having a central protagonist to the story.

We keep things in perspective.

The Hero’s Journey narrative facilitates a number of helpful cognitions

that help to keep things in perspective with regards to the broader learning journey somebody is on. For example, it opens the door for questions such as how far have you come? What led you here and what is it that you need from this encounter to continue your journey? The Hero’s journey is also highly individual, so it also serves to highlight that there is no one way to travel the path and that each journey will be unique.

We normalise challenge and emotional disturbance.

Having a Hero’s Journey framework helps to normalise challenge and emotional disturbance in learning because those are essential ingredients to the typical narrative. Despite being common features of our favourite books and movies, we often don’t fully appreciate the role of challenge and emotional disturbance in our learning experiences. There is a growing body of evidence that periods of challenge and encountering difficulty are important in learning. We also know that negative emotional experiences can facilitate more effective learning cognitions (such as deeper reflection). It therefore becomes important to factor this into the learning experience that someone has.

We bring to life the personal narrative.

An underappreciated aspect of learning involves getting to grips with the story in the learner’s head. Our brains are programmed to firstly make sense of an experience, and then to apply meaning to this. This enables us to integrate the learning from an experience into our existing view of the world. The stories that people tell themselves about their learning experiences and what they mean for them is important to consider also. For example, a person who considers a failure to adopt a newly learnt strategy means that they will never be “good at this type of thing” will have a very different learning experience and outcome to one who believes that this failure means that they have not yet found the right approach and this experience means that they need to explore new avenues.

We embed ideas of curriculum design into our work.

As learning designers, we have the opportunity to shape the journey that people encounter. This is a significant part of my thinking when supporting somebody’s learning. To support me in this I often refer to the seven principles of curriculum design offered by Dylan William (i.e. balanced, rigorous, coherent, integrated, appropriate,

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focused and relevant). This helps me to determine (and often co-create with the learner) what type of experiences would be most helpful in moving them forward in their journey.

In my work, the Hero’s Journey provides the base narrative for a development journey for those seeking to develop their practice in elite sport, be that as a leader, coach or athlete. It taps into our innate drive to tell stories and find meaning in our endeavours. Far from just being a philosophical or analogous tool, the Hero’s Journey has offered me some tangible ways to frame and guide learner support. Specifically, paying attention to the ways in which the learner makes sense and meaning of the experiences they encounter on their journey, capitalising on the role of challenge and negative emotional experience in learning, and using curriculum design principles to enhance my role as a pedagogue has added value to my practice.

I share these reflections in the hope that they represent value to you as you travel on your own journey of learning. Safe and happy travels to you all.

Continue the conversation: Elliott.newell@eis2win.co.uk on email @ElliottSportPsy on Twitter

Carl Konadu shares how, foiled by his own overconfidence, he learned a humble lesson in the power of character.

LET'S TEACH CHARACTER, NOT JUST CONFIDENCE

HERE'S THE STORY OF MY WORST TALK EVER.

I was asked to speak at City Hall (the beautiful/weird looking egg building near London Bridge), as part of a conference to help build Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) leaders in the organisation. The speaking engagement I had been invited to was a panel style event, in which each panellist was asked to share their story and particular insights from their career. I was the youngest person on the panel and found myself speaking alongside professors, doctors and some pretty senior people in the Civil Service and Academic space. I was the last one to speak, and as I listened to everyone tell their life story and give their opinions on how we could create more opportunities for people from BAME backgrounds, I eagerly anticipated my opportunity to get up and speak. Now if I am being totally transparent, I was not sitting there listening to what the fellow panellists were saying, because in my head I was arrogantly thinking 'hurry up and finish so I can get up and be the star of the show'. It's shameful to say, but it was the truth. At this point, my experience as a two-time Tedx speaker and the co-founder of 2-3 Degrees, coupled with all of the times people had told me how "gifted" and "talented" I was, meant that I genuinely believed what I had to say was what everyone needed to hear, and they just needed to skip everyone else and get to my part because it was more important. This night would be a truly humbling lesson for me.

The brief that I had been given was to simply share my career journey and then answer questions, but since I branded myself as a 'motivational speaker', I was convinced that aggressively telling people they need to work

harder was what they needed from me. I thought, 'forget the brief, I know what they need and I'm going to do my own thing'. So, I stood up and started off by thanking them for having me, I then went on to disagree with everything that had been said so far, and after I had disregarded what all of the professors and senior people before me had said, I began my spiel about how if you're only doing what your job description says and you're not going above and beyond, you're a failure. Bear in mind that the majority of the crowd are middle aged experienced professionals, who came to hear about a range of people's careers and share insights on how to solve genuine issues of race, opportunity and increasing diversity in leadership positions, not be told by someone half their age wearing a tweed blazer that they were failures.

I knew the talk was going wrong when my mouth began to get so dry that it was difficult for me to pronounce my words properly. Looking back, I have no clue why I didn't just pause, gather my thoughts and drink the glass of water that was next to me. But again, my arrogance foiled me. I just continued even though I could feel that everything was going wrong, my pride making me think that pausing would be considered a sign of weakness. There is this moment, when you're utterly failing your talk, that you look at the audience and you can tell by the confused look on their faces that they are just as disappointed as you are. To add insult to injury, at the time my business partner also worked at City Hall and had invited her senior manager to come and watch me speak at the event. So not only was I misrepresenting myself, I was also making her and our business look bad! As soon as I sat down after finishing my talk I wanted the ground to swallow me up and transport me to my bed, so that I could cry. I would have preferred to just forget what I was supposed to say, then at least I could put it down to nerves or stage fright, but on this occasion I massively flopped this talk



because I was arrogant and didn't stick to the brief.

So, what has this got to do with prioritising character over confidence?

Lesson number 1 - Before you tell people what to do, show them who you are.

Looking back on my journey, when I first started speaking in schools, youth clubs and at conferences, a lot of the things I would speak about would be things that I had read in a book and not necessarily what I had lived and experienced myself. When you teach someone what you've read, you can motivate them for the moment, but when you open up your heart, when you're vulnerable and when you speak about who you are, you give people license to accept you for who you are and empower people to be who they truly are. On reflection, I also wasn't confident enough and I clearly didn't believe my story was worthy of sharing, so I just resorted to doing what I see speakers do on YouTube and said a bunch of quotes. I had all the confidence in the world, but not the character to back it up. Your character is about who you are, not just what you've learnt. How much more powerful would our learning, teaching and connection be if we showed people who we truly are, not just what we've read?

Lesson number 2 - Your confidence can take you to rooms where your character cannot keep you.

When you are given a brief to speak on, do what they have asked you to do, not what you feel is right. My arrogance and feeling as though I had something special to give instead of sticking to the brief was what foiled me that day. They asked me to share my career story, and if I didn't want to do that for whatever reason, I should have declined the invitation and/or spoken to the client and asked if I could change the brief. This was a beautiful lesson because it humbled me, made me realise that

even though I may have 'talent' as a speaker, it's important to be professional and to use that talent with wisdom. Being confident when teaching, speaking or facilitating is good, but being professional, honest and reliable is more important, and that is character!

Lesson number 3 - confidence can get you started, but character will keep you in the game.

I meet young people all the time who are great at posting on Instagram, editing incredible videos and posting consistently. But ask them to respond to an email or turn up on time and they can't do it. I should know, because this is me! Confidence is a great tool to get started and it means that people will compliment you on your energy and enthusiasm, but if that cannot be backed up with integrity, honesty and simple standards like good timekeeping, people can't rely on you. Telling people to be confident is good advice, but teaching people to be integrous and honour their word is priceless.

It was a painful experience, I felt as though I had let my business partner down, and I also felt as though I let myself down. But I wouldn't exchange my experience in City Hall that day for the world. It humbled me and helped teach me the value of character, not just confidence.

My parting question to you is, before you tell people what to do, how can you show them who you are?

Continue the conversation: Stay in touch with me and all we do at 2-3 Degrees, a social enterprise that inspires and equips young people with the personal development skills they need for the future:

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I'm Carl Konadu and in my role at 2-3 Degrees, I'm a speaker, mentor and facilitator and I do a lot of work with young people on topics such as building confidence, communication and leadership skills. When I'm not doing that I'm eating chocolate, watching Marvel movies and trying to relive my football dreams on a 3G pitch somewhere.

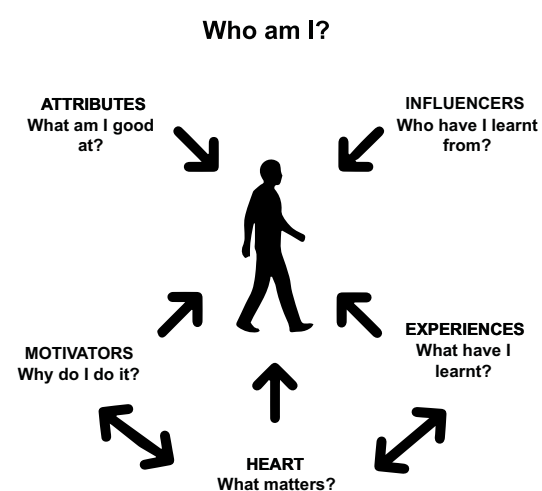
Who Am I?

'What is the most important question a leader can ask themselves?'

I would expect there to be a wide range of responses, ranging from those relating to leadership styles, vision or culture. However, for me the answer is simply 'How well do you know yourself?' Knowing who you are, where you have come from and what makes you tick is essential to succeeding in leadership. This is particularly relevant in education, where the complexities of leadership arise on a day-to-day basis.

The song 'Who am I?' from the well-loved musical Les Misérables tells the audience of the moral dilemma the main character Jean Valjean faces before he decides to change his identity. As leaders, we all question our identity, role and purpose and often have difficult decisions to make which impact not only on staff, students, governors and parents but also on ourselves. It is at these times the loneliness of leadership is clear or to echo the words of another artist Stormzy (stay with me!) 'Heavy is the head that wears the crown'. These are the times when those 3 o'clock in the morning moments arise, during which decisions are pondered and scenarios see-saw back and forth in your mind. Whilst I can't claim to know how to make these moments magically disappear, knowing who you are can certainly help to clarify the decision making process.

So how do you answer the question 'who am I?' To answer that, you could complete a long course on existentialism, but I have found the answers lie in five main areas. May I point out that this is not based on anything more than my own thoughts and experiences through my 25 years or so in school leadership and my own personal leadership journey.



Adam Dale explores why asking yourself this question can help to develop effective leadership

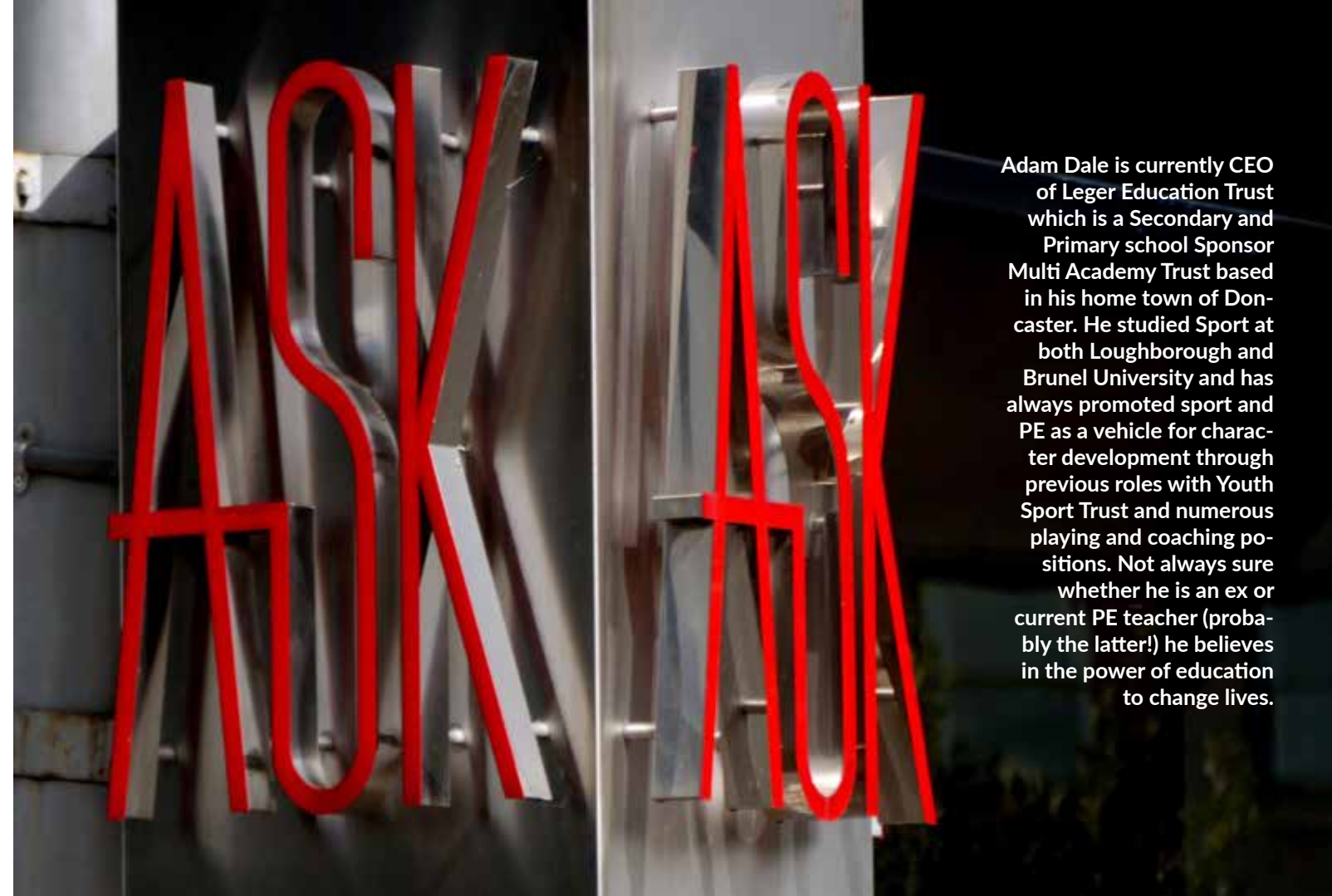
One of the first steps you can take to knowing who you are is to recognize your own attributes. Knowing what you are good at is crucial as it provides the foundations of high performance. Yet how often do we talk down our positives and talk up our weaker areas for fear of coming across arrogant or even a charlatan? (One of my favourite bands by the way, to continue the musical theme!). Like a footballer knowing that they are fast and good in the air, it is important you play to your strengths and use them most when you really need to.

Also, really knowing what or who motivates you in your life means that as a leader you can ensure these motivators are used constructively. A person's experiences, both positive and challenging, are often the driving force to determine their actions and interactions. Leaders who do this are often the ones that are most successful. I have sat through so many presentations from leaders who refer back to moments in their life that have truly shaped them and often credit the motivators for being the inspiration for their careers.

Without doubt our experiences shape us and pave the way for the future. Connecting both aspects of attributes and motivators is the heart, and what really matters to you. This is often referred to as your values, but I think it's deeper than that; it is your North Star, your purpose or what gives you 'the fire in your belly'. Truly great leaders use their heart to go beyond the ordinary, to push the boundaries and develop innovative ideas and strategies.

Being an influencer is now regarded as a profession and you may have observed the increasing number of (often maligned) young people sharing their holiday photos on social media or dominating our television screens on the latest dating show. However, for me influencers are the people, either professionally or personally, who have shaped you and your life, and might also be those who have impacted on you virtually through books, articles or vicariously through their own experiences and achievements.

Knowing who you are therefore is having an awareness of who your influencers are. For many leaders, the people in their formative years, usually their parents, are often the biggest influencers on their life and careers. This is certainly true of my own story as my parents instilled in me to aspire to, what Stephen Tierney referred to in a presentation recently, as 'a life well lived'. Often some of our most important heart aspects and indeed our most crucial attributes come from the interactions with our parents. I would say my parental influencers taught me loyalty, commitment, positivity (I have never ever heard my Mum say anything negative about



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anyone!) and a determination to do my best. One of my most important professional influencers, a headteacher who I worked under for my early leadership career, would say these characteristics were 'caught and not taught', something I have always tried to promote as a leader myself.

As we all go through our leadership journey we are influenced by those people and professionals around us who make us think and reflect on our own practice. It is true to say that we then often model these behaviours and even ask ourselves what would X do in this situation? I have always enjoyed listening and observing the leadership skills of others and have had no reservations about passing on their particular words of wisdom or a particularly effective strategy. I often refer to this as 'followship' which highly effective influencers have in huge amounts. A former leader of Pixl (an educational organization) had huge followship and to this day I often use phrases such as 'public face of optimism' learnt from listening to their own unique communication style.

We are also influenced by what we read and best practice we observe. Evidence based learning is very popular in education at the moment and the need for leaders to be lifelong learners, always looking for research opportunities, collaborative practices and have a thirst for knowledge. One of my most important leadership moments came at 6.08am on a train to London. I was reading an article by Mathew Syed called Black Box Thinking and it completely changed the way I approached my leadership of a school and to this day, over

six years later, I still refer to it in the strategies that we use to develop our organization.

In terms of Influencers, we should reflect on five key principles:

Listen – Listening to people is a very underrated skill. Leaders who listen well often are able to accurately measure the temperature of an organization.

Question – Ask why, what, how and when to ensure that you learn from others.

Model – Use great practice from others, often what has worked for them COULD work for you.

Diversify – Look for examples from outside your usual professional world.

Stop – Give yourself reflection time on what you have observed during the day, even if it is in the car on the way home. The power of truly knowing yourself can be transformative on a leadership pathway. Thinking about 'who am I?' and having a true picture of yourself is a crucial element in your success. I believe all leaders should take the time to reflect on themselves and what really shapes their lives.

Continue the conversation: @adalearning on twitter

A Long Way From Home

Hayden Humphrey explores how the idea that we are animals has the potential to bring us home to ourselves.

I read a book in 2017 that changed my life.

The book was *Sapiens* by Yuval Noah Harari. In it, Harari chronicles the timeline of our species, Homo Sapien, from our origins, living in small tribes as mostly hunter-gatherers, to the present day, living in modern society in groups of millions (if not billions).

While there were fascinating facts and anecdotes about the introduction of language, how agriculture techniques changed the way we congregate, and the rise of city states and nations, the idea that rocked me to my core was a simple one:

We are animals.

We might be the only species of human still around, but fundamentally, there is little difference between us and other animal species.

Just like lizards, monkeys, fish, birds, dogs, and deer, we are a (complex) biological organism that has evolved over hundreds of thousands of years to exist and flourish in a particular environment and under a particular set of conditions - we evolved to eat in a certain way (fasting regularly and scavenging a wide variety of seasonal foods when available), sleep in a certain way (with the cycles of the sun and for at least eight hours), relate, connect, play, emote, all in a certain way.

What's more, this idea of the Human Animal was made even more profound to me because of how little I had heard about it previously.

Nowhere in my education or in my upbringing, had anyone ever sat me down and said:

"Now Hayden, you have to remember that underneath everything - where you come from, what your personality is like, how you identify as a person, your likes, dislikes, strengths and weaknesses - you are an animal."

The more that I meditate on this idea, the more I understand why our world functions the way that it does. And, more importantly, I understand more about how we can use this understanding to change things, to alleviate a great deal of suffering and dramatically improve the quality of people's lives.

The way I've been thinking about this opportunity for change is through the analogy of a zoo, and more specifically, wild animals that have been born into captivity.

When you look at the research published, on the whole, it is very difficult for domesticated and human-habituated animals to successfully return to their natural habitats when released back into the wild. National Geographic, for example, shared

in a 2008 article [that most captive-born predators will die when released back into the wild](#).

So, why is that?

Why is it that an animal, full of instincts and wildness, when returned to its natural habitat, wouldn't be able to survive?

It's because they don't know anything but captivity. From the moment they're born, they're conditioned to survive inside of a "simulated" world.

How they learn about themselves, their relationship to the environment, and more broadly how life works, is through a set of manipulated, artificial conditions - a plethora of cages, a carefully controlled environment without predators, sufficient food brought on a strict schedule.

Their upbringing does not equip them with the skills they need to be healthy, functioning animals. They're unable to return to their natural habitat because they matured and grew up under a set of conditions different from what's natural for them.

We are no different.

From the minute we're born, our conditioning begins. How we learn about ourselves, our relationship to the environment, and more broadly how the world works, is through a set of manipulated, artificial conditions.

How do we learn about best taking care of our physical health, how to nourish and move our bodies in a way that prolongs our lives?

How do we learn about emotional regulation, and expressing our emotions in a healthy way?

How do we learn about relationship building and intimacy?

How do we learn about creating an empowered and loving self-image?

What about relating to our sexuality? Or how to find your purpose? Or how to build a relationship with Spirit? Or how to be really, actually, truly happy?

How do we learn to function as the healthy, well-balanced, aligned, wild human animals that we're meant to be? It's not by growing up in our natural habitat.

Instead, either: 1) we don't, 2) through our parents or teachers or communities who also didn't learn these things, or 3) through mass media whose interest lies in their pocketbooks.

We are captive-bred animals living in a zoo of our own creation.

Hayden Humphrey is an uplifter, out to help people craft unscripted lives.

Hayden empowers people to break up the script of how life is "supposed" to go, so that they can build lives and careers that are authentic, aligned, and joyful.

He also founded Lift Apparel, a conscious clothing company that spreads love and supports mental health by donating 10% of profits to mental health advocacy organizations (www.WearLift.com).



Continue the conversation: Learn more about Hayden at www.HaydenHumphrey.com

And this misalignment, between our true nature and the methods by which we learn about ourselves, has real consequences.

When we're not in touch with our physical bodies, we eat poorly, our muscles and bodies atrophy, we live with stiffness and soreness and sores.

When we don't know how to regulate or identify our emotions, we struggle with depression and anxiety, we feel disconnected from other people, and emotional repression leads to illnesses.

When we don't know how to build healthy relationships with other humans, we struggle with loneliness, feeling like we don't fit in, and when pushed to the extreme, suicide and self-harming behavior.

With so many humans fundamentally out of whack, larger issues start to make sense - why governments don't operate efficiently, why obesity is so rampant in so many countries, why so many people report being unhappy and unfulfilled.

Now the call here isn't to return to pre-historic living conditions, that's obviously impossible.

But I do think there's so much value in realizing how many of our issues exist fundamentally because we are a long way from home.

In very few ways does modern life mimic the dynamics of what's natural and healthy for us. In even fewer ways are we invited to think about our animal sovereignty, and how to build a life that reflects that sovereignty.

But this recognition also offers opportunities.

The opportunity for more holistic and compassionate understanding - we're trying to function in unnaturally large groups in the best way we know how.

The opportunity for grace and forgiveness - your loudmouth neighbour or narcissistic grandfather are products of a system that didn't teach them how to access and live from their true nature.

The opportunity for improvement - to realise and honour the conditions under which we first evolved, and to infuse those into how we're currently living and how we educate future generations.

There is no going home. But there is the opportunity to create a new one.

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