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Kurt Ewald Lindley

The Captain of this ship

Choosing where to sail this vessel based only on the gift of people's words; their stories of learning are wind in our sails.

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Rebecca crafts the stories of those that choose to share them in this space. Everyone needs a good wordsmith to bring messages from the page into people's minds.

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07.2020

ISSUE THREE

The
Learning Scientist

Well, we are here - Issue 3 of the #LearningScientistMag. By the time this is out there for the world to read it will have been a year since the idea arrived into my cluttered head.

As ever we are overwhelmed by the generosity of people choosing to share their stories. We are grateful to our contributors - not just for taking time out of their busy lives to write, but more for the honest and open insights being shared. All free, freely shared for you to read without any financial outlay.

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.

Whilst you may see adverts in this issue, as in others, we are not sponsored or swayed in any way by external sources. What you see here are the stories of good people, sharing what they wish to be heard without any political editing. Honest, true and theirs. I 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 readership continues to grow through the world of sport, business and education, which is great given that we are all working with 'people' and therefore much of the learning within is transferable.

Sharing the stories of practitioners who both understand the theories/science of learning, but also apply them in their practice is important to us. Ultimately, we want 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.

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.

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: <https://www.learningscientistmag.com>

Find us on Twitter at @LscientistMag #StoriesOfLearning, #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.

TIME OUT: BACK TO BASICS

Laura Watkin

TIME OUT! Are you taking the right sort of break to unlock high performance? Laura Watkin, specialist in evidence informed people development explains why it's time to go back to basics and start practicing the deliberate time-out.

I've been reading again. I love reading because I love learning, but there was a period when I couldn't pick up a book. The stack of non-fiction books by my bed only got bigger and the pages remained stubbornly undisturbed. Like many, I was working long hours and doing lots of travel so perhaps, being tired in the evenings, I needed to read on the go, while commuting for example. I downloaded some books for my smartphone, then added audiobooks for driving. Useful, but for me it didn't help much. That's when I deliberately stopped, fully stopped, and took a proper look at my routine. I realised that it's never, if I'm honest, a lack of time or accessibility to a text that disrupts my reading. I'd been avoiding my books because of a lack of 'headspace' and in jumping for the technological solutions I'd missed the real issue. To make room to contemplate new ideas I needed to re-balance my priorities and my workload.

The solution for me was going back to basics. Setting a handful of SMART objectives immediately gave me back a focused and sustainable workload, something that had been eroded by the day-by-day firefighting. Most importantly, by being more focused and working smarter I gained the headspace I was missing. So what? You're not wrong if you're thinking that work planning and project management isn't rocket science and what's new about someone ignoring the principles and experiencing lower productivity? But you've also missed the point. The key here is not solving a problem but the nature of the time out that I took to

get there.

I'd deliberately and purposefully put the brakes on. I asked myself the right questions and then reset to a much more productive path. Then I took another critical step. The action that is likely to make a long-term difference to my performance is that I've scheduled another reset in 4 weeks' time.

I've even scripted some questions to ask myself:

- How productive are you? How do you know? What's niggling?
- Top three wins (to-done list)
- Top three priorities (to-do list)
- What are my SMART objectives?
- What needs to stay the same for me to achieve them?
- What needs to change?

If this is already part of your routine, then chances are you're incredibly productive. Have you ever shared your approach with anyone else? Could your team, colleagues or clients benefit from understanding what helps you work at your best? Not convinced? If you've not yet experienced a 'reset' of this nature and the resulting performance gains it can bring, then you don't have to take my word for how powerful a purposeful time-out can be. In 2009, the World Health Organization (WHO) published the Surgical Safety Checklist (SSC) as part of their Safe Surgery Saves Lives campaign(1). The checklist was adapted from the field of aviation, where safety checklist use is standard practice. Daniel Pink describes an

application of this work in his book When(2) using the term "Vigilance breaks; brief pauses before high stakes encounters to review instructions and guard against error". Following WHO advice, in 2010, Dr. Kevin Tremper introduced pre-induction verification checklists and pre-incision time outs with all his teams. At the time he was chairman of the University of Michigan Medical School's department of Anaesthesiology and responsible for 300 residents and medical students. His time-outs required the entire surgical operating team to pause at various stages of their work and fully engage in a deliberate series of checks. Tremper's findings echo that of the WHO; a decline in complications, a rise in quality of care, and patients and doctors more at ease. The impressive part is that the routine took less than three minutes start to finish and has virtually zero cost. Similar approaches have since been replicated in over 4000 hospitals worldwide and implemented in many other sectors (1).

Pre-Inclusion time-out

- Introductions (lead by faculty surgeon)
- Patient ID/Procedure/Consent
- Side/Site/Laterality/Spine Level
- Allergies
- Correct antibiotic(s) administered
- Special drugs plan discussed

What surprised me is how it's only relatively recently that these strategies have been introduced systematically in sectors like healthcare. I bet you can think of other examples; as a scuba diver my mind went to the 'buddy check' routine completed before entering the water. Perhaps you're wishing more car drivers took a vigilance break to remind them of 'mirror, signal THEN manoeuvre!' As educators you probably also know that evidence tells us that the use of high-quality scaffolding, of which checklists are one example, are effective in raising achievement in novice learners(3).

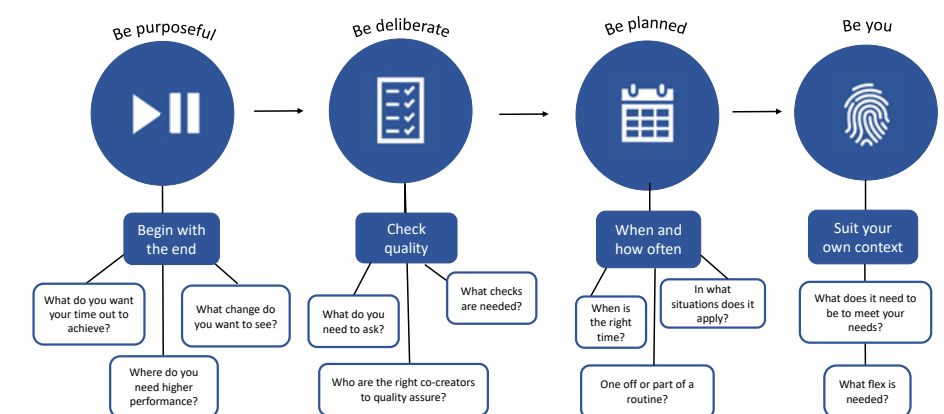
Which got me wondering, where else might we be missing out through a lack of structured time-outs? So, here lies the opportunity; my hunch is that we are more likely to reserve this type of scaffolding for new or unfamiliar situations, or as we've seen from the examples I give, only in high-stakes environments. Yet by doing this, we're missing the potential performance gains that adding a 'vigilance break' could bring.

Contrary to Pink, I prefer to call them a 'deliberate time-out' to remind us that it's more than just taking a break; it's planned and purposeful. Deliberate rather than vigilant, because it's valuable not only when guarding against high stakes errors. Deliberate because it's relatively easy to take a break, what's more difficult is to make the time-out work hard so that you receive the performance gains in return. By following the principles in the diagram you can construct a high-quality pause and reset to a higher performing state.

Laura Watkin – Laura's passion is bringing together the science of Learning and all things 'Talent' in the world of HR. She loves nothing better than to connect people with evidence-informed practice to enable and empower the development of great people. A self-confessed learn-it-all, Laura has worked in secondary education, public sector social enterprise and privately-owned business and the variety of experiences have been rich with opportunities, lessons and reward.

The features of an effective Deliberate Time Out:

Taking a Deliberate Time Out



Perhaps you are looking for a new opportunity or you find yourself on extended furlough leave. Maybe you're still juggling home schooling, adjusting to a new situation or feeling dissatisfied with your existing routine. Perhaps you want to achieve a better introduction to a training session, a more productive first consultation with a potential client, secure a new job or simply ensure you establish a productive routine for your 'new normal'. Whatever your current situation, working or personal context, the chances are you can benefit from a deliberate time out.

Is it time to press pause?

Always up for a new conversation, if you're also interested in the nuance behind the soundbites, you can connect with Laura on Twitter: @_TalentEd2.

References:

- (1) Pugel et al. (2015) Use of the surgical safety checklist to improve communication and reduce complications, *Journal of Infection and Public Health* 8, 219–225 [Online] Available at: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1876034115000076>
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- (3) Kang et al. (2014) Creating Opportunities for Students to Show What They Know: The Role of Scaffolding in Assessment Tasks, *Journal of Science Education*, 98, 4, 674–704 [Online] Available at: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/sce.21123>

Discovering the imposter in me

'Coach Curious' Derek O'Riordan talks tackling imposter syndrome through the lens of self-compassion

Derek O'Riordan – Developer of coaching systems, coach developer practitioner, and coach of humans. Insatiably curious, eternally unfinished, and blissfully unsure of what I want to be when I grow up.

Have you ever had a thought, an ideation, a gnawing feeling that eats away at you; devouring the scraps of what used to be your self-worth, your self-esteem, your reason for being? The recurring whispers that echoed in my mind consisted of four words, “you’re not good enough!”

I arrived at my fourth year as Head Coach having only lost a handful of games along the way. We had been promoted to the Premiership as champions; riding a crest of consistency in a swell of confidence. The club, players and supporters were buzzing, but not me – I couldn’t take credit or comfort from what we had achieved.

We turned a serial losing team into one of the winningest teams in the country on the turn of a six-pence. Our success, I would have said at the time, was through luck, recruitment, money. It was, I believed, because of anybody but me; I was simply waiting

for them to find me out, realise I’m a fake and the façade of competence would collapse in on itself.

Do you have a story similar to mine? Do you run a successful business or manage a team that’s thriving? Have you been crippled with a similar sense of self-doubt?

I lacked the emotional literacy to describe what I was experiencing at the time.

I needed to make sense of these thoughts and feelings, so I began to do my research and learned I could be a victim of “Imposter Syndrome”. Suddenly having the words to describe how I was feeling enabled me to explore its underpinnings and begin the process of understanding how best to navigate these feelings of imposture.

Sufferers, like myself, display generalised anxiety, lack of self-confidence, depression and frustration due to their inability to meet their own standards of achievement (Clance & Imes, 1978). In my case, I used humour and self-deprecation to make light of my self-doubt while my reality was somewhat more tragic. I found myself caught in an internal battle that controlled my life with an irrational fear of failure bearing down on me despite all the contrary evidence all around me, and coaching became a burden.

According to Kets de Vries (2005), the trigger for Imposter Syndrome is often perfectionism which has been linked to various negative outcomes including characterological feelings of failure, guilt, indecisiveness, procrastination, shame and low self-esteem (Hammachek, 1978; Hollender, 1965; Pacht, 1984; Solomon & Rothblum, 1984; Sorotzkin, 1985).

I had never considered myself to be a perfectionist but reflecting on the manifestation of my feelings (high personal standards, concerns over mistakes, doubts about actions, and concern over criticism) spoke to self-evaluative perfectionism as a construct and emerged as self-handicapping behaviours such as rumination and indecisiveness.

Imposter syndrome had me so tightly in its grip I began to lose control of my own performance, my self-efficacy, my effectiveness as a coach. We began losing, a lot, and this episodic accumulation of losses week after week contributed to a series of stressful events which only served to perpetuate experiences of IP and compounded the innate fear of failure, deepening my lack of self-worth.

It led to my stepping back from front-line coaching and taking a more managerial style. For someone who thrived at the pedagogical interface this was clearly an avoidance tactic, fear of being found out and overwhelmingly concerned with making a mistake. I developed a misguided sense of success and failure: we win therefore we are successful; we lose therefore we are a failure. So, if my self-worth became contingent on success and failure then I was facing an uphill battle to recover from the trauma this season was beginning to dish out.

When you consider these feelings were magnified with my need to physically present a certain image or put a brave face on it you begin to appreciate how multifaceted, complex, and energy sapping perfectionism was for me as a lived experience.

Hewitt et al. (2003) proposed three facets to what they dubbed Perfectionistic Self-Presentation: perfectionist self-promotion, concerned with a self-proclamation of one’s own perfection; non-display of imperfection, concerned concealing behavioural displays

of one’s imperfection; and, non-disclosure, concerned with a verbal concealment of one’s imperfections.

Having established a higher sense of awareness of what it means to suffer from IP, how it impacted on how I think, feel, and behave, I needed to adopt an approach to moderating my perfectionist traits and manage my sense of self to in turn improve my self-efficacy.

So, what can we do to address the maladaptive thought cycle at the heart of self-evaluative perfectionism, its subjective and emotive nature within the individual’s sense of self, and their lived experience?

Research into the neurophysiology of emotion suggests that we can distinguish at least three types of emotion regulation system (Depue 2005): threat, drive and soothe. As human beings we transition between these three affect systems to manage our emotions. Each system is situated in different regions of the brain and are therefore associated with different brain chemistry. Stress and distress are as a result of an imbalance within these affect systems and it is predominantly due to an under-developed soothe system.

Should we possess a dominant threat system we can often feel on edge, defensive, perpetually anxious; dialling up our dominance in drive we may be distressed and self-critical when we feel we are not achieving a goal or succeeding in a task, therefore pushing us into our threat system. Should, like me, we possess a dominant soothe system we may struggle to achieve anything due to its suppressive nature.

People in the main possess very active threat and drive systems but rarely activate their soothing system as a means to moderate their overall emotional state.

The drive system is most associated with self-criticism, self-evaluative perfectionism and therefore Imposter Syndrome. Consequentially and symbiotically it activates our threat system leading to concerns over mistakes, fear of failure and feelings of shame.

When these feelings, as they often are, are internalised because of our perfectionism and self-presentation orientation and leans towards non-display or non-disclosure or both, they are perpetuated due to the sufferer’s inability to activate or deploy their soothe system to rebalance their emotional state.

Armed with new knowledge and the vocabulary to express how I feel, I had the choice to do something with it, or not. The first thing was to show myself some compassion, not be so hard on myself, and recognise that all of the “what if” thoughts which were floating around inside my head needed to be cognisant of the “what is”.

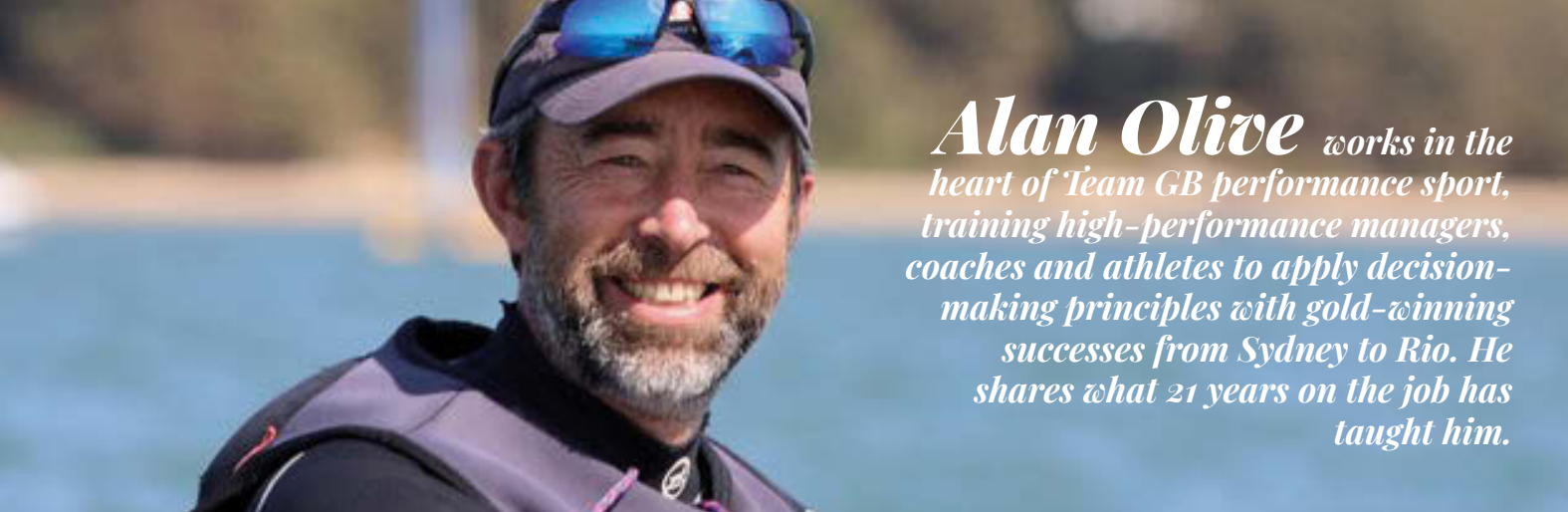
I learned to not take my thoughts literally but instead look at each thought through the lens of self-compassion.

Returning to the echoes in my mind I may have considered not being good enough as a binding truth, considering how I may achieve “good enough” but that may have served to cloud my consciousness with perfectionist thoughts and consequently influence self-handicapping behaviours.

I chose a different path, recognising my thoughts as passing events that may be responded to with kindness. Appreciating these thoughts of imperfection and failure as normal; just because I have them, it doesn’t mean I need to be defined by them.

And neither do you!

Find me on twitter @coachcurious



Alan Olive works in the heart of Team GB performance sport, training high-performance managers, coaches and athletes to apply decision-making principles with gold-winning successes from Sydney to Rio. He shares what 21 years on the job has taught him.

Alan Olive

has spent a lifetime working and training specialists to operate in unpredictable environments. When not in work you'll find him racing a hydrofoil sailing dinghy, hanging off a rock face or adventure racing with his daughter and dog in tow.



21 Years as a coach Developer

In 1998 The Royal Yachting Association, under the leadership of Rod Carr, submitted their World Class Plan for the development of British Sailing and their bid for medals at the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens. In their plan they identified a new permanent position of Coaching Development Manager aimed at developing the quality and quantity of coaching in the performance pathway.

I had left the Royal Navy as an officer and had just joined the Territorial Army, while qualifying as a sport psychologist. My second interview for the job was on Rod's yacht in Torbay marina and, to everyone's surprise (mostly mine), I got the job. My career has now spanned 21 years, five Olympic cycles, 16 sports, three countries, over 500 coaches and supporting 32 medals, 19 of them gold. I've been able to design and initiate a variety of different types of development programmes across a range of sports and National agencies, the highlight being working alongside the inspirational Pat Duffy.

I feel very humble to have done a job I've loved and to have worked with some amazing people, so I guess I'm qualified to identify some of the things that have made a real difference to my journey as a coach development manager.

Personal traits and values

I've got to be honest, I'm an argumentative git at the best of times but not, despite rumours to the contrary, because I'm grumpy but because it's often how I make sense of the world and it seems there is a need to challenge if you really want to create robust learning programmes. A single perspective rarely solves everything. In addition, there is a lot of rubbish out there if you don't understand how people learn and behave. I had a head

start because I was already a scientist but I also had a drive to make the programmes I created or supported as effective as possible and make a difference to medals. Consequently, curiosity is an absolute essential to understand the principles that underpin learning and human behaviour. If you're not fascinated by the real science, you are going to get distracted by fads and the latest shiny learning programmes. It's about knowing how to learn, if for no other reason than remaining ahead of the coaches you are developing.

Stealing ideas

The first coaching course I ever ran, I included a number of models and ideas from an NCF course I'd previously attended. We don't always have to reinvent the wheel. Coach Developer Andrew Gillet bought me a book called 'Steal like an artist', which looks at the art of creativity and how we recognise and use other people's ideas, which again is essential for anyone designing development programmes because they always have to be tailored to the needs of the learner or the sport. I've always been inspired by fellow developers when looking for new ideas and methods for developing others, provoking learning or engaging coaches. The use of a police negotiator from Andrew Gillet, Bob Muir's coaching model, survival courses by the SAS and of course I've added my own slant to them too. Many of these ideas have been slightly crazy, from laying in the water with a mouth full of beans to simulating a sailor with a head injury ready to throw up on the coach rescuing me and recreating police firearms teams rescuing hostages using paintballs. This thieving process requires you to expose yourself to different styles and ideas for training, and again I've been lucky with my influences; flying, infantry, SAS, magicians, MSc, first

aid, sport, etc. As well, reading has always been an exciting series of heists, with the likes of 'Blink' and 'Perfect practice'. Being held spellbound by the possibilities of trying these ideas and sharing them with the coaches I've been working with is a bug I hope I've passed on.

Become an expert learner yourself - optimise your personal skills

I've noticed that we tend to develop others in the way we prefer to learn ourselves and so it's vital to be aware of your own biases, skills and blind spots. Honest and detailed feedback from the coaches has always kept me on the right path, even though it was pretty blunt at times. When one coach fell asleep in an early coaching course I ran, I vowed I would stop just presenting information and make courses practical and engaging, providing skills that people could learn to use. Coaching the learner to become their own coach became a personal mantra which I'm still pursuing today.

Part of the pursuit of expertise is learning how to use your strengths too. My natural tendency is to lead from the front; for those that know the Insights Discovery profile model, I have a strong red and yellow energy, which means I love challenge, am goal driven and always want to be doing and pushing forward. If I'm honest, I struggle with my green energies that relate to connecting with individuals in a respectful way. I'm a bit blunt and don't suffer fools gladly, so when I became a mentor it took a lot to recognise my strengths just didn't always support learning and to start to explore how to overcome this barrier. The Insights profile was extremely useful to raise my awareness but the mental tipping point

was during a different session with a frustrated coach who was getting annoyed that I was giving him all the answers. I suddenly realised that it wasn't about getting the right answer in the coaching session, it was about getting the coach to think for themselves. It seemed in contrast to my personal preference until I realised that if the coach's thought processes and reflections were the goal, along with creating a trusting and respectful relationship, then once again I could engage my goal-focused brain. Suddenly it became all about great questions, working from where they were, walking a mile in their shoes. Okay, I still have a tendency to tell, but no one's perfect. The point was that now I had a clear goal for my 'red' energy brain to follow. My 'green' energy is still consciously competent, but at least I don't dominate my coaching sessions with me solving their problems.

Get good at selling stuff

Everybody has to persuade someone else to adopt their idea at some stage in their life, even if it's what to have for dinner. The reality is that coach development managers are change leaders in sport. Often more than their bosses. We have to introduce ideas and concepts that may change the way coaches work or the culture of the organisation. Therefore, we have to know the theory but we also have to understand how to influence and inspire others to follow this different path.

I remember introducing four days of training per year to GB Sailing's performance coaches. Almost to a man, they paid lip service to the process, until the day that one of them got replaced by a less experienced coach who had engaged in the programme. People don't change just because you ask them to.

My selling skills got a severe kicking working in Saudi Arabia, where my CEO completely dismissed my strategy because I'd completely overlooked the fact that he had been fasting for Ramadan and that he thought coach development was about running courses. People only buy things they think they need and they have to recognise the product to buy it. Always sell from their perspective, not yours.

Emotional Intelligence

Fundamentally, development is all about people; connecting with them, supporting them, challenging them and nudging them in a direction you're not always sure about. This can only ever be achieved with trust and respect. I believe that good developers are able to support and challenge and can match it to the needs and styles of their learner. If someone is brilliant at this with everyone, please let me know. I'm still working on it.

We often provoke change in others when we can dislocate their expectations from reality and show another perspective or concept that allows people to be themselves with more skill. I've watched some great sport psychologists be able to generate respect and trust in a 5 minute conversation. The skill to connect with someone and effectively challenge them is a complex process that requires self-control, self-awareness and the ability to emphasise (stealing from Dan Goleman there...). Feedback is therefore essential to getting this right and setting up the learning relationship you have requires clarity of approach, your intentions and the role you're going to take. Contracting therefore becomes a key element to connecting and supporting their learning. Emotional intelligence is at the heart of the coaching process.

Final words - Celebrate your achievements

The job coach developers do is really hard to effectively measure. The advice we give today may not hit home for days, weeks or years, and sometimes with only the gentlest of influences. But in our heart of hearts we know when we have made a difference, when we watch our teams wave their medals, when athletes excel against the odds. To know that you were there and supported in some small step is enough to warm the heart. I know I've blubbed watching medal ceremonies as colleagues and friends achieved great things and raised a glass in celebration.

What a bloody great job we do! We make a difference.

Carry on the conversation, get hold of me here:
alan.olive@thpc.com

Victoria Clark – Curious about people, learning and adventurers. Heart is in the Highlands. Passionate about creating positive opportunities to empower people and their communities to achieve their potential.

A tweet. A conversation. A dance on the street. Home baked banana loaf and scones to prepare for the journey to explore what this seed could become. A walk exploring new paths, through stunning yellow fields with beautiful blue skies. Following the excitement and wonder of new ideas, down new paths. We followed our instinct, where the path would lead us and now beyond.

Colourful scribbles across the length of wallpaper, concepts coming together. The #ShareCommunity was born. Growing since 2016. Established 2017. The purpose: sharing tribal wisdom for the benefit of self and others.

Our manifesto: The Share Community is a collective of individuals who choose to commit to the development of themselves and others through the sharing of human capital.

Our approach:

- The focus is set by the community
- The intention is on sharing for development
- We are all teachers and we are all learners
- We learn together
- Deliberate investment in each other for no gain.

You shape your own experience. We invite you to:

- Come as you are, come as you want to be.
- Create your experience. Come willing to share.
- Bring a friend
- Share in the truest sense: share your stories, experience, journey, and lunch
- Make a donation to the charity of

your choice. There is no fee for the Share Community sessions.

The content of each session is co-created by those who join us. A volunteer conversation starter supports the team to navigate the journey; each with their own style. Core to our approach “we are flexible, emergent and follow the energy in the room”. We are “welcoming, flexible, responsive, current, and alternative”.

We trust in ourselves, others and our journeys. We trust the right people join us. We trust we all have a positive intent: each committed to their personal development and the development of others. Free from time: we finish when the time feels right, within the boundaries agreed.

The people who join us are from a range of backgrounds including sport, education and business. The common thread is a focus on people development.

The conversation starters share their thoughts and expertise in an area in which they believe the energy will flow from the group. Sharing for around 20 minutes before engaging the group in discussion. Recent sessions have focused on:

- Towards Safer Uncertainty with Matt Lock @mattlock_uk
- The Balance of Em(power)ment with Owen Cook
- Embedded Cultures: Helping or Hindering with Judith McCleary @McClearyJudith

People who have joined us have commented:

“I definitely come away from these days reinvigorated from listening to others talk about their journey.”

“The best use of time I make”

Fuelled by nervous energy and supported by my co-founders (Adrienne Hunter @seeconsultants1 and Kurt Lindley @coachdeveloper) I headed to the first session. With excitement came uncertainty, which turned to curiosity when people came along. Now, I look forward to the sessions, and leave feeling relaxed yet energised.

I am grateful to those who listened, engaged in conversation, and joined us at that first session. I’m grateful to those who have since joined us and I’m grateful to those who will join us that I am yet to meet.

You will now find us on tour around Scotland (although virtual at present), ensuring we are as accessible as possible to those who join us.

You are welcome to join us, virtually or in person when we once again have the opportunity. Or you may want to chat about the opportunity of setting up a local share community group to you. We really look forward to meeting you. Get in touch to join us @ActiveVictoria on Twitter.

Stay safe.



The #ShareCommunity

Victoria Clark discusses the manifesto behind the Share Community; tribal wisdom shared for the benefit of self and others

Guiding: A treasure there for the taking

Stephen Rollnick PhD

*Is a guiding style
a hidden treasure
that enables people
to thrive in change
and improvement
therapy? Stephen
Rollnick PhD
explores the concept.*

Way back in my home town of Cape Town, a young man walked out of a therapy group and shot himself. It kick-started a confusing few decades of trying to understand how best to speak to people about change and improvement. This search through the world of therapy interviews, academic journals, book-writing and training others finally led to a breakthrough of sorts. There's a treasure to be found inside us in the form of guiding people.

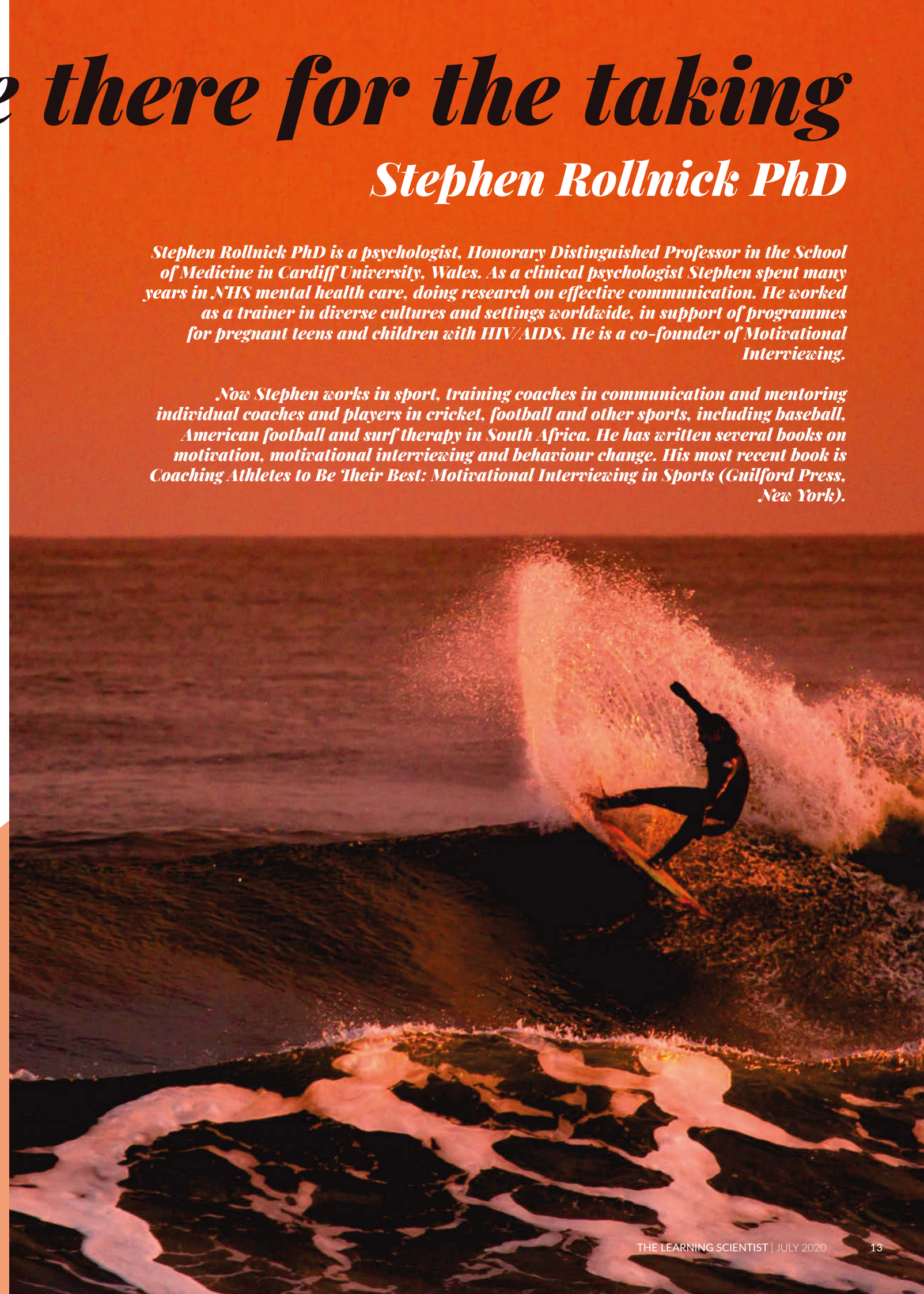
That young man was faced with well-intended people trying to persuade him of the folly of his ways. Let's call that more or less a "directing style". The full weight of professional helpers circled around him with talk about why he should stop drinking and how he should go about this. He resisted in the only way he knew how. It gave rise on my side to a 30-year friendship with William R. Miller and the development of motivational interviewing (MI). This was based on what's called client centred counselling, which can easily be called a "following style". You give the person time and listening space to work things out for themselves. Yet MI went beyond merely following our clients. We used questions and empathic listening to steer the person in what felt like a healthy direction. Then the penny dropped: this MI was really based on a style that sits between directing and following – guiding.

The more we ventured into fields like healthcare, education, sport and parenting the clearer the pattern became: we often get stuck in a frozen polarity or dilemma: either tell people what to do (direct) or let them make their minds up for themselves (follow). Yet within the talented teacher, parent and sports coach sits this third way, guiding, in which you come alongside the person, champion their strengths and abilities, and encourage them to develop and progress, offering information and advice, but never imposing it on them. Watch a skilful parent helping a child to complete a puzzle. They don't take over (directing), or simply leave the child to do it on their own (following). They engage and remain alongside as a supportive guide. Looking back, MI is really a refined form of guiding.

The Canadian doctor Oliver Wendell Holmes apparently said more than 100 years ago: "I would not give a fig for the simplicity this side of complexity, but I would give my right arm for the simplicity on the other side of complexity." Is a guiding style a hidden treasure and a good example of what he was talking about? It starts with an open mind and curiosity about what will help someone to thrive.

Stephen Rollnick PhD is a psychologist, Honorary Distinguished Professor in the School of Medicine in Cardiff University, Wales. As a clinical psychologist Stephen spent many years in NHS mental health care, doing research on effective communication. He worked as a trainer in diverse cultures and settings worldwide, in support of programmes for pregnant teens and children with HIV/AIDS. He is a co-founder of Motivational Interviewing.

Now Stephen works in sport, training coaches in communication and mentoring individual coaches and players in cricket, football and other sports, including baseball, American football and surf therapy in South Africa. He has written several books on motivation, motivational interviewing and behaviour change. His most recent book is Coaching Athletes to Be Their Best: Motivational Interviewing in Sports (Guilford Press, New York).



Towards Safer Uncertainty

Matt Lock

Leadership coach and developer, Matt Lock, explores why change and uncertainty have always been the new normal

The planetary pandemic has caused an unprecedented, heightened and shared experience of uncertainty. Yet, in the work I do as a Leadership Coach and Developer, constant change has always been the new normal.

I came across the notion of Safer Uncertainty a few years ago via a fellow consultant, Sue Holland. She shared an article entitled 'Moving Toward Safer Uncertainty' by Jeremy Keeley. It has become something of a container for a lot of my own learning and knowledge.

This article shares my simplified version of Towards Safer Uncertainty. It also makes some observations that emerged during the lockdown experience.

The Premise of Towards Safer Uncertainty

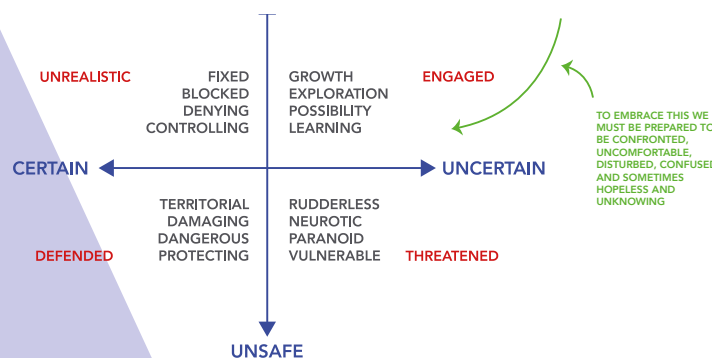
We often confuse safety with certainty. We can assume they are the same thing.

When we assume safety and certainty are the same thing, we attempt to move towards certainty to feel safe. Certainty is unrealistic and does not exist in any sustainable way. So, we find ourselves defending, denying and controlling to maintain our safety.

As we become aware of our flawed approach, we distinguish between that which genuinely keeps us safe, and our drive for certainty. This allows us to move towards safer uncertainty. Safer uncertainty is a domain of possibility, exploration, learning and growth. It is a more realistic space, but can also be vulnerable, uncomfortable and confusing.

The Towards Safer Uncertainty Quadrant highlights some behavioural insights.

Towards Safer Uncertainty Quadrant



Safe and Certain: Doesn't exist but we may fool ourselves into believing it does. Behaviour turns up as:

- Fixed on a position, a belief, a perception
- Blocked to new thinking or evidence
- Denying reality and what is obvious to others
- Controlling of people and functions

Certain and Unsafe: Certainty does not exist. Feeling unsafe, while trying to maintain a front, can elicit dangerous behaviour. Turns up as:

- Territorial of position and functional control
- Pushing a belief or a way of doing things
- Protected and unavailable to new thinking or evidence
- Damaging, both to others and as an inhibitor of business progress

Unsafe and Uncertain: This can be a reality. It is a threatening experience that requires care and support. The consideration here is whether feelings of 'unsafety' are real or perceived. Behaviour turns up as:

- Rudderless with a lack of clarity or decision-making
- Neurotic and jumping from one task to another
- Paranoid of others and possible future events
- Vulnerable, fearful, irrational

Safe and Uncertain: This can exist and is a worthy goal. Embracing this quadrant is a choice of active engagement with reality. Behaviour turns up as:

- Enabling learning and growth in self and others
- Curious and interested exploration
- Open to possibility and emergence
- Engaging with challenges as opportunities to learn and grow

What is, IS

Life changes, that is a certainty (the paradox is not lost on me). Thus, uncertainty, the unknown, impermanence, and change is reality. Control is an illusion. The Towards Safer Uncertainty approach makes being in uncertainty and change easier. Even exciting and enjoyable.

Key principles of Towards Safer Uncertainty

Keeping it real. Recognising that if your sense of safety is dependent on being certain, you are playing a losing game.

Learning from life. Seeing life and its challenges as a key source of learning rather than as problems.

Getting comfortable with insecurity. Accepting that control is an illusion. Surrendering to the need for control is an important breakthrough in personal development.

Managing mindset. Recognising that your attitude to uncertainty could lead to creativity and possibility. Or it could lead to fear and paralysis.

Understanding suffering. Suffering is the difference between how you think life should be and how it actually is. It is your attachment to expectations (thoughts) that cause you to suffer.

Knowing yourself and your purpose. The more you know about who you are at your core, the stronger your rudder for navigating stormy waters.

Staying present. There is a release and relief in opening up to life and its teachings which allows you to be more vital and alive.

A framework for practice

As a framework for practice these five focus areas are a useful guide. They are only headings within this short article. For ideas on deepening the practice and how to apply them in work and life : <http://mattlock.co/blogs.html>

1. Being curiously awake: Noticing your thoughts, feelings and behaviours. Noticing what you are attached to.

2. Consciously create safety: Building safety across your physical, emotional, psychological and emotional life.

3. Embracing uncertainty: Actively, deliberately, curiously and joyfully embracing uncertainty.

4. Letting life be life: Living in the present and accepting life's occurrences as gifts. An openness to what you can learn about yourself, others and the world around you.

5. Connecting to the wider system: Operating with a wider purpose and longer-term view.

Mindset

Your attitude to uncertainty can lead to creativity and possibility. It could also lead to fear and paralysis. Your mindset determines which.

Psychotherapist Barry Mason created a framework for seven mindset positions of Towards Safer Uncertainty*.

1. Authoritative doubt

Hold your beliefs and knowledge with 'authoritative doubt.' This is about balancing your expertise and your uncertainty.

2. State of flow

Nothing is fixed. Everything is always in a state of flow. 'This too will pass.'

3. Respectful, collaborative and evolving

The narrative of your life is respectful, collaborative and evolving. You are in a constant state of impermanence. You look for what is required now, and then adapt and respond.

4. Alongside

New explanations are considered with curiosity. They add to, rather than replace existing thinking. Your thinking is 'As-Well-As.' You look for 'And-Both' possibilities.

5. Enquiry

When unexpected things happen, you get curious. You choose enquiry over grasping for definition.

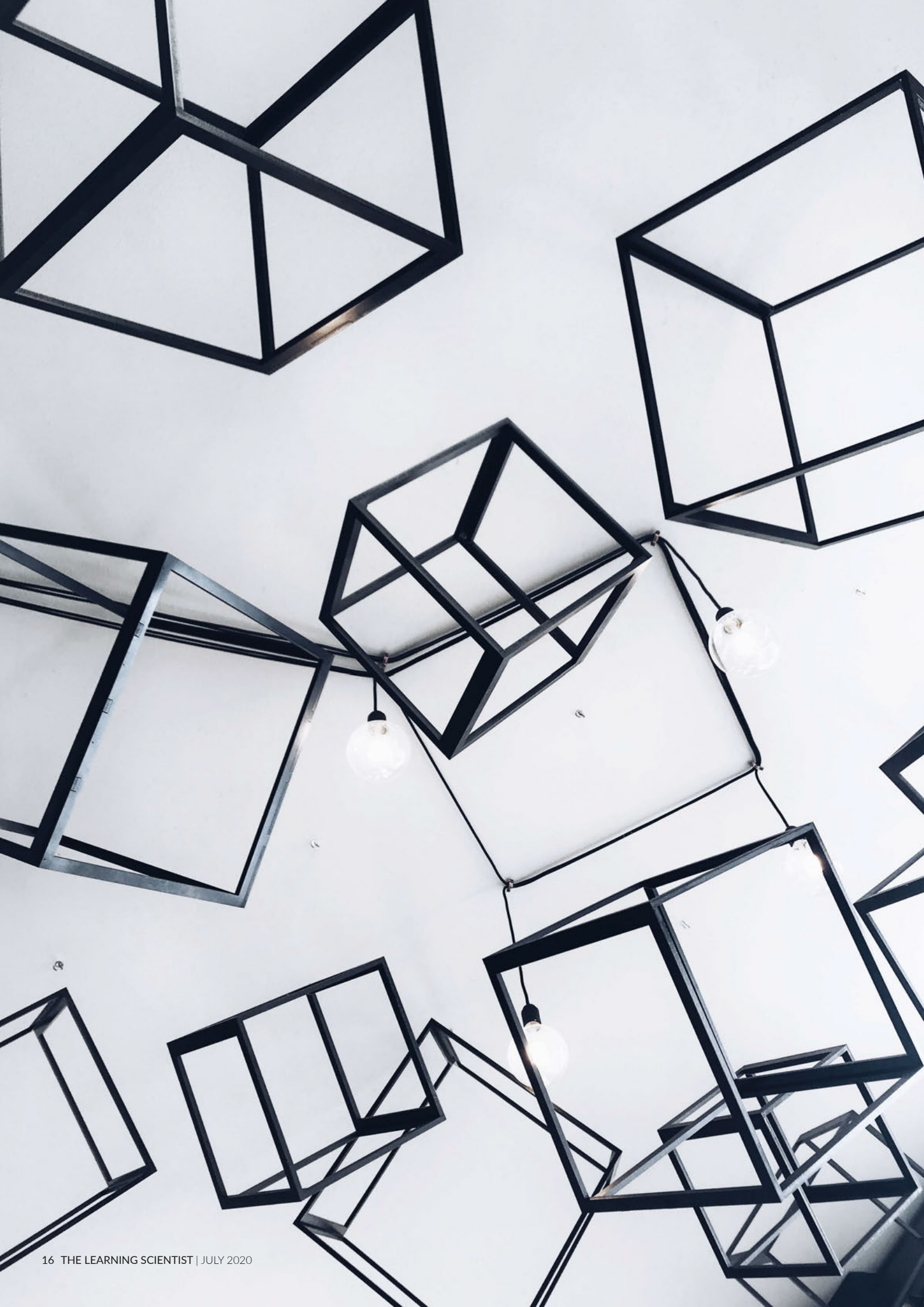
6. Meaning

You explore meaning and messages rather than argue about facts. You see dilemma's not as problems to be fixed, but as messages to learn from.

7. Dilemmas

You see 'solutions' as dilemmas that are simply less of a dilemma than you had before. You know that a problem often doesn't have a simple resolution. You know that there doesn't always have to be an answer.

*From Towards Positions of Safe Uncertainty: Barry Mason: Human Systems: The Journal of Systemic Consultation and Management. Vol 4. 1993 189-200



Towards Safer Uncertainty Continued

Matt Lock – is a Leadership Coach and Developer. His career spans education, sport and business in both the UK and his native NZ.

Observations from lockdown

At the time of writing the preceding 70 days had a focus on Towards Safer Uncertainty. What stands out to me is that Towards Safer Uncertainty is a practice.

It's an aspirational way of being that is difficult to maintain. In the same way as mindfulness is difficult to maintain. It's a game of hide and seek between knowing what is real and what is illusory. Noticing how the illusory world triggers the need for denying and controlling. We have it, and then we lose it.

I have had a love-hate relationship with lockdown, but mostly love. It has been the gift of deepening self-awareness. An opportunity to take stock, and getting clearer on preferred ways of being in the future. It has also been the pain of noticing all my addictions and habitual patterns of defence and escape. This is a gift too.

The temptation for control is correlated to the size of the challenge you are going through. The bigger the challenge the more likely your desire for certainty.

In my work as a leadership developer I hold psychological safety as paramount. It is the cornerstone of progress and performance for leaders and teams. This is true in life and being human as well. When people feel safe with each other wonderful things occur.

Our communities, organisations and planet seem to be asking for a shift. This shift requires next tier leaders who have made the transition from independence and competition, to inter-dependence and collaboration. Towards Safer Uncertainty describes attributes of such leaders.

Quantum theory explains that uncertainty is part of the fabric of the universe (Heisenberg Principle). It also explains that every act of observation has an impact (Observer Effect). At our current stage of human development, Quantum Theory is part of a group of things we can't see but believe to be true. A little (or a lot) like faith. What if we create our own realities through what we believe? If this were true, it matters what you think about and how you engage with your reality. The implication for leadership (and life) is profound.

People development matters more than ever. Next tier leadership requires expansive knowledge, high self-awareness and consciousness. Leaders need help and guidance on that journey.

It takes humility, courage and curiosity to be open and challenge-able. It takes humility, courage and curiosity to move Towards Safer Uncertainty.

Towards Safer Uncertainty describes the practice of being human, and of a human being. Being human is full of vulnerability so we seek safety. Sometimes we confuse being certain with being safe, and the game of hide and seek continues. When we are a human being, we are in the dance of life. We are alive, present, and noticing. We embrace life and uncertainty as a teacher and a guide.

Join the conversation: **#TowardsSaferUncertainty**
Knowledge, tools and resources to support the journey:
<http://mattlock.co/blogs.html>

Discover An Easier Way – Making Life Easier with Marketing Insights

James Barrass-Banks makes the case for the magic that happens when marketing insights and L&D collides.

As a marketer I can tell you that L&D has it tough. We know that there are a lot of similarities between the two sectors. Primarily that both are seeking to engage audiences, to convince them to take action and, to do so, we're ultimately interrupting the audience's flow of work.

Just like there are learning designers in L&D, there are graphic designers, video designers and website designers. Learning thinks about user experience, marketing pours millions into the area. Marketing analytics are scrutinised, websites gone over page-by-page to look at what's converting to leads. L&D is left scratching at feedback sheets and LMS analytics trying to get a handle on if learning actually worked.

It's this reason and so many others that L&D has it so tough. The first that comes to mind is the lack of insights into effectiveness. With marketing you can point to buckets of new leads, assess their quality and determine their value. L&D not so much. Because each person is taking the learning back to their own environment and putting it into practice in a very different way, there is no singular metric to be judged and evaluated on. Like I say, tough.

L&D is also up against it in terms of breadth of work. As a marketer you'll have a small range of products. L&D's scope can literally cover anything, from onboarding to leadership, change management to technical engineering skills. L&D is expected to be able to have knowledgeable conversations with their colleagues about all these things, so that they can understand the requirements. Then it's either a case of finding an expert, developing a programme or further questioning.

To tackle this breadth the first step of most marketers would be simple. Check out the competition. See

what's worked for them and use that learning to full advantage. This is another hurdle that L&D has to jump. You can't see the competition, at least not easily. It's hard to get your hands on someone else's first time manager programme, let alone multiple so that you can take the best bits and make it work.

As a result L&D has to start from scratch, unless you find some lovely people within the sector who are willing to share! Note: there are lots of lovely people in the sector so helpful advice isn't far away.

This leads onto another area where L&D has it tough. The audience is the same. What I mean by that is if a company consists of 500 people, that is the entirety of your audience. In marketing I can run email marketing A/B tests to 1,000 people on a database and it would barely scratch the surface. By having broader audiences in marketing I'm able to constantly test and because people are getting bombarded by marketing messages daily the bad stuff will be quickly forgotten by your audience. Not so for L&D, every initiative will be scrutinised and your audience is more likely to remember. This means credibility is easier to obtain but also easier to lose.

With all these challenges though it begs the question: "Is there any way to make life any easier for L&D?" The answer I came upon was simple. Marketing. With so many similarities, L&D can easily lift from the marketing playbook. Learning from the constant testing, the digital revolution and sheer volume of content created.

Looking to create engaging video content? The following comes from a respected social media tool which consistently produces fantastic video content:

In the opening seconds, you must give clarity to what your video is about and

give the viewer confidence that what they're about to watch is worth their time.

Think about how (you) can create a compelling story without the need for audio. If users can pick up a story without the need for sound then you can certainly boost the effectiveness of your content.

Looking to fill places in a course that you're offering? Create exciting email headlines so your learners open your messages and find out more.

"Everything you wanted to know about email copy but were too afraid to ask" was used by a copywriting service to clearly demonstrate the value of what they were offering but also provoke your curiosity. I'm certainly interested to know what questions others were too afraid to ask!

If you want people to sign up there and then, add a meaningful call to action at the bottom. Saying 'Register here' will fall flat, but 'Start your journey to better leadership skills' will have learners excited and thinking about how they want to develop.

With all these things marketing has done experimentation on audiences far greater than yours. The good stuff that led to people taking action has risen to the top. The bad is lost and never to be spoken about.

It's time to learn from a similar industry. One with greater reach, bigger audiences and deeper pockets. That time is now. Start with smaller actions. Simple actions. Actions that are easy to do, such as the ones I've curated for you here:

<http://www.jamesbarrass-banks.co.uk/>

Then dive deeper into the theory and develop your own marketing skills to elevate your L&D practice. If you need a guide, a little direction or have questions feel free to reach out!

James Barrass-Banks is a marketing guy with a passion for learning and six years' digital marketing experience. An attendee of over 50 L&D events, his knowledge spans both sectors. Committed to helping the sector learn from marketing's mistakes, he offers marketing skills training and consultancy. Read more on his website: www.marketinglnd.co.uk

Get Out of the Way!

Don't Be an Obstacle to Empowerment

Owen Cook is Head of Programmes at management consultancy theculturebuilders.com, co-author of 'Bank of Me: The Remote Working Edition', Founder of thehonouredproject.com and a chatty whisky lover who'll talk to anyone about pretty much anything.

DIFFICULT
ROADS
LEAD TO
BEAUTIFUL
DESTINATIONS

I once heard it said that communication isn't just the imparting of information. It's both the successful sharing of an idea and the feelings that idea inspires. It's an idea that's stuck with me through the years.

It explains why **communication is critical to empowerment**. We must understand the worries, needs and priorities of those whom we're seeking to empower. And we must be in agreement on the aims and the importance of empowerment before it can be a success.

Next to communication comes engagement. I often hear people talk about engaging their community, their people, their customers, when the activity they describe would barely meet my definition of a survey. So how would I describe engagement? For that I need to tell a story.

When I worked for a Scottish charity, running education, service and community-based change projects with disadvantaged young people and communities, we used a 'project question' to focus everything we would do. On one occasion we asked a mixed group how a local service could better 'engage' with young people like them. I began by asking them what they thought of the question. Did it make sense to them? Did it feel relevant? They instantly pulled out the use of the word 'engage': "What does 'engage' even mean?" "Yeah, what's that all about?" "Why do they want to 'engage' with us anyway?"

If you look at the etymology of the word, it comes from old French, meaning 'a pledge', later coming to mean a formal promise or commitment. We had a golden rule in our work: never provide an answer where a question might allow someone to work it out for themselves. So I asked the group where they'd heard the word before and what they thought it meant. They responded by talking about getting engaged to be married, about being in a relationship with someone, a relationship you both want to be in, one that's equal and committed. They didn't

need the etymology or my own answer. By thinking about the word and what it meant to them, they already knew that the goal of the service in question was to create a more meaningful relationship with them – one that they would want to be in. A two-way street with mutual communication and respect. That's what engagement means to me, too.

Engagement is critical to empowerment because it's about the relationship we foster between us. We need to believe in each other's intentions, roles and responsibilities. Would you get 'engaged' to someone you didn't trust?

Empowerment is the final step on this journey, and as a process that nurtures cooperation it's one I think is vitally important for future generations and the future of our planet. True empowerment will make people like me semi-redundant: when the people we support no longer need us, we'll know our work is done.

When I was young and fresh-faced in the business world, I was told by a mentor: "Make yourself indispensable!" At the time, I thought it was good advice. Only later did I realise how toxic it was.

Think about it. What would make me an indispensable part of an organisation? I'd need knowledge, skills, relationships and confidence shared by no-one else, enabling me to do things no-one else can do. That sounds alright, until you look at it a little deeper. If I'm the only one with that knowledge, I'm not sharing it, spreading it, helping others understand what I do.

If I'm the only one with those skills, I'm not teaching them to others around me, growing our reach and impact. If I'm the only one with those relationships, I'm not bringing in my colleagues, peers and direct reports to build a wider support base. If I'm the only one with that self-belief, I'm not nurturing it in

others so they can achieve more. (Remember that confidence is contextual. People aren't 'confident' or 'unconfident'; they have different levels of confidence to do different things, under different circumstances.)

Making yourself indispensable is an ego-driven goal. The person who would behave in these ways does not sound like a teammate I'd want to have, or a leader I'd want to follow. But what if we flip this on its head? What if the people who work with and for us do so not because they have to, but because they choose to?

For the best part of a decade at that charity, across hundreds of projects, my ambition with each group was to make myself unrequired. The charity's aim was to empower young people and communities to shape the change they needed and to own that change. My favourite moment on most projects was arriving to be told: "We know what we're doing and we've already started. We'll let you know if we need you!". When my groups reached the point at which they felt equipped to say that, I knew I'd done something right.

So how do we empower people? In my experience, it's through a combination of things:

Removing the systems, structures and obstacles that stop people from flourishing or dictate how they should develop.

Sharing the knowledge, skills and approaches which people need to help them grow and thrive.

Imparting and creating self-belief and self-confidence in people to choose and drive their work, their approach to it, and the outcomes that are important.

If someone is really empowered they know what's important to them and what they're interested in. They know they can figure out what to do, and they don't have to be given permission to do it.

So why aren't empowered people everywhere in business and society, taking things on, doing important work, owning projects and making change happen? Well, one big reason is the systemic side of things: there are systems, structures and obstacles everywhere, and knowledge, skills and approaches aren't widely shared or taught without sizeable payment, excluding a lot of people instantly.

But another reason is fear.

We're afraid that, if we help people develop then they won't need us, we'll lose our value.

We're afraid that if everyone knows what we know, they won't be dependent on our knowledge any more.

We're afraid that if we challenge or remove familiar systems and structures, we'll lose our edge, our understanding, or our standing in other people's eyes.

We're afraid that if we empower others, we'll lose the power we've been working for and accumulating throughout our own lives.

This way of thinking often stems from a scarcity mindset – the idea that there's only so much of anything to go around, and that it can't be shared without someone losing out. But empowerment doesn't have to mean a loss of status, focus or leadership. If anything, it helps build a sense of mutual respect.

Imagine that you and I are working in the same space – be that in the realm of business, education, charity, culture or society – and that I have a lot of power. You're comparatively powerless (think teacher vs. child, CEO vs. junior manager, curator vs. assistant). Either you must fight tooth and nail to claim the right to be heard (which I can take away at any time); or I can choose to give up some power to you, and help you to

find the right way to use it.

One of these paths leads to damaged trust and foundering relationships. The other leads to empowerment, increased trust and stronger links between two independent parties. I'm sure you can guess which produces the best results.

By having the humility to act as a support mechanism or resource that can be drawn on by the people around you, you can paradoxically create a bigger, wider impact on the world. Become someone who leads by getting out the way of others. Someone who creates the space for others to step into. And someone who helps them develop the skills, knowledge and confidence to do so effectively – in a way that benefits you too.

Here are a few words of advice for anyone who wants to start empowering others – whether students, direct reports, or members of your community.

1. Be ready to fail.

You will. I did, repeatedly. You'll catch yourself, either in the moment or five hours later, in the realisation that you gave approval where encouragement would've worked better, or permission where none was needed. It takes time to shift your approach from one of answering queries and giving instructions to one of asking questions. But these moments will help make you ready next time.

2. Be ready for them to fail.

They will, repeatedly. With project groups, especially young people, I used to set them to work unsupervised to see how they dealt with it. Although it instilled a productive sense of responsibility, that 'freedom' was usually abused at first, requiring several iterations of the exercise.

1. Be clear on everyone's roles and responsibilities.

Work together to agree who is responsible for what, how they'll wield that responsibility, and how they'll negotiate respectfully with each other. This will create expectations, ownership and permission all at once. You can make this into a 'contract' that everyone signs up to, ensuring people feel free to praise and challenge each other.

2. Be curious and challenging, not directive and correcting.

Ask a lot of questions, all the time. Not leading, closed questions that communicate your point of view more than exploring theirs. Stick with open questions that explore the 'why' behind behaviours and choices, and encourage people to 'tell you about...' whatever they're working on. Challenge unhelpful behaviours by asking why they are happening rather than simply correcting them.

3. Get out of the way and stay out of the way.

I once set up an exercise with groups of students and their teachers, the teachers being asked to 'observe only'. Within moments I noticed the teacher who had paired up with the 'difficult lads' was doing all the talking, directing, asking questions, suggesting ideas. I respectfully asked him to hold back and let the group attack the problem themselves. Afterwards he spoke of the moment I'd metaphorically 'gaffer-taped' his mouth shut as being the single biggest learning point of his year. Having stayed quiet for more than a few minutes, the lads took it upon themselves to carry out the task without any further input. The teacher adopted the approach into his classroom teaching, calling it 'resisting the impulse to rescue'.

PS – If you are new to this, not every situation is one where you should try to empower others. If the risk of failure is too great, or you don't have the time and energy it takes to properly prepare and support people, maybe this isn't the moment. But find one soon and use it!

Activating and listening into lived experiences built collective connection

‘Because the Covid-19 pandemic has shaken us to the core – the way we do life – the way we are in relationships – with ourselves – with each other. We have an opportunity in this and through this to co-create something different – something special – to reshape our relationships moving forward.’

This was the invitation I extended in early April that brought together folks from different parts of the UK and Canada to explore our relationships B.C. (before Covid), D.C. (during Covid), along with our aspirations for our relationships A.D. (after dis-ease).

To facilitate these conversations, I leaned on my learning as an ORSC™ systems coach and the powerful tools and skills in this methodology. While I knew the group’s learning would be rich, I quickly became amazed (and yet not surprised) by the depth of connection that formed and developed between us through our five conversations. We formed a new relationship system that continues as you read this article. As much as I would love to share details of our story together, I fear it would make about as much sense as showing up to a party well in progress at 2am, so instead I will share what I witnessed as the keys to such powerful co-creation and invite you to engage on your own reflection along the way, in the hope that you’ll identify one way to activate and listen into your connections more deeply. Oh, and all of this happened using Zoom – who knew technology could be such a wonderful initiator and incubator for building deep connection!

Metaphor evokes and generates new reality

Throughout our conversations and experiences together, metaphor proved to be a doorway to discovery and development of new insight. I invite you to reflect on questions as we did when exploring our relationships B.C. (adapted from the ORSC™ ‘My Land’ visualization):

Imagine you are visiting a land – a land of your relationships B.C. You are new here, so you see everything for the first time with fresh eyes:

- What is the climate like? What is the energy or pace? What kind of music do you hear? What activities or interests are especially important here? What are the



By Pam August – learner, facilitator, systems coach, consultant, yogi, wife, mom and fellow explorer on this messy journey of being human together. Pam connects the potential – within teams, organizations, groups of all description and within the amazing humans that co-create them!

rules here? What is so unique here that people want to visit it? What kinds of people feel welcome here? Who is not?

Take a moment to reflect on any new insights that arose because of these questions. How was your experience different than if the question had been ‘what was your life like B.C.’? (Many of us would have just stopped at the word ‘busy’!)

In our Collective CNX conversations, metaphor afforded ‘fresh eyes perspective’ that brought new insights, appreciations and discomforts, planting seeds for the next conversation on relationships D.C.

The story of relationships necessarily shifts and changes

Our conversation D.C. focused on what ORSC™ calls the ‘myth change’ – the shift in the story of our relationships and how such shifts or changes are essential and yet difficult in our continued development. Being with this shift helps us move forward with greater intention and resilience. I will ask you to reflect now as we did.

Thinking of your relationships now, how are they different? What needs to be grieved, acknowledged from the story before?

Choose an object or image that represents something that matters most to you now – ‘object of mattering’ – why did you choose it? What new possibility exists now?

Our experience with this reflection and sharing of insights provided us an opportunity to exhale together, making way to explore hopes and fears A.D.

Connecting to our hopes and fears empowers forward action

We see the leaves move on the trees, but not the wind that moves them. We see the waves crashing on the shore, but not the forces that move the water. Arnold Mindell likens these hidden forces in nature to the ones that shape our reality in relationships as well – framed as high dreams (hopes/aspirations) and low dreams (fears/anxieties). Harnessing these often-unconscious aspects and making them conscious empowers us to move forward with intention.

Our Collective CNX exploration of our hopes and fears started with this 5-minute free-writing prompt: ‘Relationships in A.D. evoke both hope and fear...’ (I encourage you to stop reading right now, get a blank

piece of paper, set a timer for 5 minutes and start writing – you may want to do some finger warm-ups first as we don’t use these hand muscles like we used to!) What voice or voices emerge from your narrative? From there we used a method called ‘Metissage’ (woven narrative) to weave together our diverse voices. This method involved a ‘structured and yet organic’ way of speaking what was in our free-writing while weaving one narrative. Please reach out to me if you would like more information on this amazing process. An example of one of our narratives is below:

An authentic examination of human value
Hope and fear of falling in love
Freedom to choose, choose what and choose who
Being together in person will take a relearning
An exercise in trust
Allowing ourselves to be held
Who decides the value of connection
Who decides
A hope for good and frivolous fun-filled chat
Celebrating the ability to share close space in real time
Mutual value is relationship

What value do I lead with
Perhaps this will allow us to feel free to go deeper
A fear of realizing who I am and it’s not who I thought I was
Return to the safe
A reckoning
It will take time to overcome the fear
A fear of people shutting down

What is ORSC™?

Organization and Relationship Systems Coaching is a model, methodology and toolset that focuses on the relationship that exists between members of a group. It leverages the intelligence and creativity that exists there to build stronger and more resilient relationships in families, communities, teams, and organizations.

For more information: <https://www.crrglobal.com/orsc.html>

Once spoken, the way was clear to commit to action – which we each did.

‘Technique is what you use until the teacher shows up’

While in this article I shared some techniques and inquiries to build collective connection, the amazing magic we experienced is best captured in the above quote by Parker Palmer, author of The Courage to Teach. In our case, the teacher was the relationship that developed between all of us – a relationship that embraced difference and looked for common thread, that was both safe and discomfoting – one that said ‘thank you for being you and for letting me be me’. The more I let go of what I thought I should do next as facilitator and listened into what the relationship was saying and needed, the deeper we went together.

My wish for you is that you too let go and listen into – one conversation, one connection at a time.

With gratitude,

Pam

If you would like to connect and learn more together you can find me on LinkedIn: Pam August, Connecting Potential.

4D Learning Experiences

Lorna Reeves

Learning isn't just a state of mind, it's a multi-sensory experience. Lorna explains how MyOhMy Events adopt a 'no more grey walls approach'.



Lorna and her team at MyOhMy Events – are committed to their mission of no more grey walled learning events. Using forensic details (ask Lorna about her previous life as a CSI in London) they excel in event experience for the speaker/facilitator and the participant. No more average sessions.

Ali Carruthers-Illingworth at Purple Pebble People “Think carefully and write down five things that inspire you.”

That was my instruction as I sat in a basement conference room, harsh fluorescent lighting and battleship grey walls.

It was right then, I had a lightbulb moment.

“This speaker has amazing content, an incredible business, but my goodness, this room does not say ‘inspiring’, ‘motivating’ or ‘high level’.”

I decided things could and should be so much better. MyOhMy Events was born out of a want to give delegates a 4D experience.

For years now, businesses and entrepreneurs have used events to elevate their brand, demonstrate expertise and thought leadership. Companies deliver training to other companies in exchange for thousands or hundreds of thousands of pounds. But are trainers and event planners really planning the best learning experience for their participants?

The term ‘learning experience’ was one I adopted early. It really communicates the goal. I work with those delivering to build an event where people have a multi-sensory experience.

Why is this important?

As humans, we are multisensory beings and our brains process information and learning on different levels and speeds.

The senses plus emotions together are a powerful combination and either ensure your participants learn, develop and grow from your delivery, or have you inadvertently affected them to such an extent that they will not retain any information, no matter how amazing your content.

Various studies have been released over the years, exploring the effect of music in restaurants on the ordering choices of diners; fast paced, loud music invokes choices of burgers and unhealthier options, eaten at speed. Relaxing, quieter music promotes mindful selection based on taste-exploration and healthier choices, plus a lingering meal. The same is true of learning events; playing dance music at the beginning of an event will liven your participants, quicken their heart rate and make them daring, but not always considered in their choices. Relaxing music with familiar chords will welcome and build quick relationships in the room.

The sense of smell is the most powerful, evocative and tying heavily to memory. How can a smell trigger a memory of childhood, say Granny’s baking or gym at school? Working with the aromatherapy principles can heavily affect the mood of your learning event and also the memory retained by the participants. Comforting sandalwood and black pepper soothes participants and are a shortcut to community building. But use these cautiously, as you need a punch of citrus in there to keep minds sharp, interested and engaged.

Tying together sound and smell in a learning room can have a huge impact on the mood of your participants and their engagement and what they take from the sessions. Emotion also has a huge part to play – how you make someone feel ensures what they learn. None of these tools can be used alone and one must always consider the emotional state of the participants when they arrive and the intentional mood.

By nature of emotion and sense, remember that the negative can also be true. If the room is grey, smells a little suspicious, the mood is already negative. You could produce the most perfect secret for generating £1million in 10 minutes, but it is unlikely anyone will take up your suggestions or remember what you actually said – the negative emotions and experience have caused the brain to file the content in a negative ‘brain-filing’ cabinet, so as not to access it easily again.

One of the key elements of our E.V.E.N.T.S processing is V – vision. How do you want participants to feel when they leave the session? How do you want them to think about themselves and what work are they required to do in the session? Reflective, self-viewing work? Business, driving entrepreneurial learning? Empowerment and self-building? The objective is as important as the content of your session.

How does this work in practicality?

Let’s imagine you are a performance coach and you are running a course for new managers. How do the participants feel on entry? Nervous, full of trepidation, fearful and sceptical?

How do we want them to feel? Empowered, capable, building a peer group that can support each other over the course.

Remembering that participants probably have a few nerves, high cortisol and a touch of adrenaline depending on the personalities, we want to create a soothing but positive space.

I would recommend a space with natural light and light walls for elevated thinking and bright ideas. Limit the colour pops – there will be lots of learning and too much colour can overwhelm. Soothing, positive musical notes – limit the lyrics as this is information overload. Powerful, positive, instrumental. Loads of G/C chords to hit the gut in a way that feels safe (think Disney music!)

We want to have soothing scents of coffee and sandalwood in the reception area. Comforting scents of vanilla and orange in the work space – a warm, encouraging hug for the new group.

During breakout sessions and breaks turn up the music, consider well-known pop classics to build bonds, conversation and familiarity in the room.

What have we done here?

Using these tools we have soothed nerves, calmed and welcomed. We have optimised the visual space for learning and inspiring.

We have promoted bond-building, peer support and conversation. The emotional is inspired, empowered and lively – these positive inferences ensure that information is retained and filed in the brain in an easy to access way.

The continued benefit?

The body is a magical being. By recreating those scents, aural and visual cues the next time this group meets, nudges the brain right back to the mental state last experienced as a memory of the last session – you shorthand the settling in and almost pick up where you left off – like coming home!

If you would like to explore these concepts further, carry on the conversation via:
<https://www.myohmyevents.com>
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Instagram @myohmy_events
Facebook @myohmy events
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