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ISSUE TWO

The Learning Scientist

EDITORIAL P 3

DIVERSITY OF THOUGHT P 4 - 5

DEFYING DEATH AND
KEYNOTE SPEAKING P 6 - 7

TECHNOLOGY: IT'S THE
TALENT THAT COUNTS P 8 - 9

DO YOU KNOW YOUR CUSTOMER P 10 - 11
AND ARE YOU PUTTING THEM
FIRST?

THE FIVE WAYS TO A LEARNING P 12 - 13
SCIENTISTS WELLBEING

SUPPORTING THE NEXT P 14 - 15
GENERATION

SHOUT - WE CAN BUT DOES P 16 - 17
IT MEAN WE HAVE TO?

THINK LIKE A DYSLEXIC P 18 - 19

VULNERABILITY AS A KEY P 20 - 21
DRIVER TO SUCCESS



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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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01.2020

ISSUE TWO

The
Learning Scientist

Issue 2 of the #LearningScientistMag is yet another moment for us. What was simply an idea, dream even, in June of 2019 has now become a regular reality. We are overwhelmed by people's interest and it has been lovely to watch the readership grow. The world of sport, business and education all dipping into the same resources and gaining learning that is transferable and, most importantly, valuable.

Our wish for the magazine continues to be of one which is focused on sharing the stories of practitioners who both understand the theories/science of learning, but also apply them in their practice. We set out to share their reflections and start conversations between reader and author.

We are for anyone working in a learning and development capacity across Education, Corporate Learning or People Development and Performance Sport. We look to share insights and principles in a way which is easy to digest, a practical read that adds value to your work.

Ultimately, we want to become a trusted source for all things learning and people development - 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. A massive 'thank you' must go to Rebecca, Kelli and Aaron for all their time, effort and energy in turning an idea into a reality. This is a place for all involved to experiment, showcase, share and connect...

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 and on LinkedIn, all under the #StoriesOfLearning and #LearningScientistMag hashtags.

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.

DIVERSITY OF THOUGHT

Deena Blacking

Deena Blacking asks: How frequently do you choose to read, listen to and engage with ideas which challenge your own?

I was recently at a social gathering and had the opportunity to observe a dialogue unfold between three strangers on the topic of women's underrepresentation in performance sport. All three appeared to have a well-founded view on the matter and could provide a silver bullet to address the problem – one believed that it was caused by inadequate sponsorship and investment; another believed it was due to women being more risk-averse than men; the third believed it was due to patriarchy and unconscious bias.

Each person acknowledged the views of the others, but it was cursory. Rather than engaging with each other to unravel the facts and ideas on the table, the conversation appeared to be a series of mini speeches in which each person took their turn to provide more evidence to reinforce their view.

As I reflected on the conversation afterwards, I contemplated the following questions:

How often do we enter into a dialogue with a willingness to put our knowledge to the test i.e. to have it prodded, poked, and perhaps even disproved?

How often do we enter into a dialogue with a willingness to give equal regard to the views of others, even when their views may contradict or undermine our own?

How often do we genuinely go and seek out those kinds of conversations

in the first place i.e. conversations where we might encounter a diversity of views and ideas which may be likely to contradict our own? Reflecting further, I then realised that I could summarise all of the above with the following single question:

How often are you entering into a dialogue with a genuine intent to learn?

Based on the assumption that learning and development is the process of discovery and the acquisition of new skills and ideas, it appears logical that we need to encounter diversity of thought and ideas to advance our learning. A good analogy can be drawn with Darwin's process of natural selection, whereby the evolution of a population demands variety in the population. No variety, no evolution. Returning to dialogue, what happens if there is no diversity of thought in the conversations that we have? It feels safe to suggest that we need to seek out diversity of views which test our own ideas if we are to develop (and improve) our knowledge base.

How often are you seeking out a diversity of views?

Unfortunately, despite the indications that diversity will serve us well, more often than not, we appear to seek out homogeneity. Refer back

to Issue 1 of the Learning Scientist, and Lucy Wake's excellent article on 'The Trusted Ten', which highlighted that we mostly seek out people who speak like us, agree with us, talk like us, and, even more profoundly important, like us. On social media, this is magnified by algorithms which seek to show us more and more of the things that we like, until we have a very narrow view of the world (often referred to as the 'echo chamber'). Although reinforcement and likeness is great for feeling warm and cuddly inside, it is unlikely to help us with our learning and development.

What gets in the way of seeking out the kind of diversity that is most likely to help us learn?

An obvious answer is that most humans get mentally fatigued from continually questioning things. One of the few vivid memories I have from my undergraduate studies is sitting in an Organisational Behaviour lecture listening to the lecturer explain how our brains process new things. In essence, he explained that we stop questioning a thing as soon as we have made sufficient sense of the thing, at which point we file it away in our mental archive (brain). Sadly, although this provides some explanation, I believe that our lazy mental filing system is the least of our problems.

Deena Blacking – Deena Blacking has been coaching and driving for collaborative working in performance sport since late 2015. She brings a smorgasbord of previous career experience to the table, including human rights law, hospitality and education. She is passionate about the power of teamwork, the importance of inclusion, and leading with authenticity.

What does your 'knowledge' mean to you?

Knowledge is power, and the memory 'bank' of knowledge that we keep in our heads is currency for a myriad of things that we value in society. For example, knowledge can often lead to status and respect; knowledge can dictate income and power in our place of work; knowledge can enable one person to exert control over another. In short, knowledge is much more than just 'information'. All of a sudden, the invitation to upturn your existing knowledge base and have it called into question appears to have much more weighty consequences for ourselves, our status, and even our self-worth. As such, it may not always be an invitation that we wish to accept, never mind actively seek out.

So what?

Around the world, people across industries talk a lot about their commitment to learning and development, and their belief in growth and learning mindsets. Despite this fact, I believe that the majority of us will approach conversations with less of a learning mindset than we would like to think. Both as a learner and a learning designer, I hope this article can inspire you to think more deeply about how you can learn from diversity of views, and how you can guard against the tendency to reinforce and defend your existing views rather than open yourself up to new and novel ideas.

How much are you putting yourself in conversations which truly enable your ideas to develop?

Whatever your answer, I challenge you to go and seek it out more often.



To continue the conversation, get in touch via LinkedIn [deenablacking](#), Twitter @ [deenablacking](#), or email deena.blacking@gmail.com



Anthony Bennett's Journey: defying death and keynote speaking

Anthony Bennett— A mass audience emotion-extractor, flipper and giver—backer in a new and heightened, positively glowing kinda way guy... Also known to some as an Inspirational Speaker...Oh and he's died 12 times too!

After returning from a school trip to Disneyland Paris in 2006 I was rushed to Great Ormond Street Hospital and placed on an ECMO life support machine for three weeks. I had contracted multiple infections, including Influenza B, Strep Pneumonia and Sepsis to which medical experts thought may have come from the air conditioning within the coach, as 95% of the class fell sick.. but recovered after a couple of days.

I was given a 10% survival rate, my white blood cells reduced to zero, I had a seizure in an induced coma and my heart stopped a shocking (no pun intended) 12 times.

I then went on to relearn the very basics such as touching my finger to my nose, learning how to sit up without toppling over, how to stand and walk unaided.

After going through what I thought was the worst thing I had ever experienced, it all changed when I received a phonecall from Great Ormond Street Hospital Children's Charity, asking if I would like to share my story with Morgan Stanley. May I add that I had no clue to who Morgan Stanley were (global investment banking firm) but I thought it was just two people...Morgan and Stanley, so I said yes.

It ended up being a talk to 400 people at charity event! After biting the bullet and going ahead with the talk, even though public speaking was my biggest fear...ever, I received a big round of applause at the end....and that right there was when I felt the life-changing 'body buzz' feeling I began to chase after. Here are a few lessons I've learned along the way.

It's a puzzle

The more opportunities I was given to share my story, the more I fell in love with the art of story-telling and it made me want to advance my speaking skills to connect with my audience on a deeper level. Although my presentation is about me, I wanted it to be as little about 'me' as possible. I didn't want people paying attention to the patterns on my jumper or the colours I wore so I decided to wear full black so the attention can stay on the story and not my outfit and I began to explode myself and examined every piece of 'Anthony the speaker' and tried to figure out ways to improve each area of my speaking

The first to go was, erm

I was the erm guy, erm, this erm that. I didn't like it. So I focussed on getting erms out of my system. It took me about 5 different speaking opportunities to get them out but once I did, I got another buzz and wanted to see where else I could fine tune my speaking.

Stop staring at me!

I would then have one or sometimes two people in the audience who I would find myself staring at throughout the talk, man they must have felt so awkward having me stare at them throughout the session. I didn't like this either so I encouraged myself to keep looking around the room and connecting with many different people and not just one. Now I found I was able to relax my mind and concentrate on more than one thing, making sense speaking, and sharing eye contact with as many people in the audience as I could.

The power of laughter

At many events there are usually more than one speaker throughout the day. As the next speaker walks onto stage the audience makes their decision of what level of engagement they will give to the speaker. When an audience laugh together it creates a shared positive energy which includes feelings of being intrigued, wanting to hear more, permission for the audience member to let their guard down and warm to the speaker.

Now, when I get on stage and before I take the audience on a journey, I give a few fun facts about me and end the introduction to who I am with a video of me getting dragged along the floor by a stunt kite, it creates a wave of laughter which is my signal that the audience is now engaged as a collective and ready to be taken back to the year 2006, where I can start to detail the events that resulted in me falling extremely ill.

An energy playground

I tend to see my presentation as more than just a 'patient experience' story. My aim is to bring to the surface and extract a range of emotions from the audience, having people laugh, cry, thinking deep, reflecting on their lives and ending feeling on a high and buzzing from the experience.

I see my role as that similar to a musical conductor, controlling the energy in the room, lowering the tone in my voice and speaking at a slower pace when I see I have the audiences full attention, so I can have them on the edge of their seats hanging... off.. every.. word. Using micropauses when I want the audience to really digest a message and using humour in areas the audience would not expect a joke to emerge from, to keep the energy in the room from falling flat. I think having dyslexia has also benefitted me as a speaker as my imagination is very emotionally aware and I overly obsess with perfecting all the smaller details and I see speaking as an exploded puzzle where I am figuring out how to click all the puzzle pieces together to create a beautiful image...or in my case a beautiful journey to walk the audience through.

Teamwork makes the dream work.

During my school talks I ask students to shout out the number of the hours a day they spend on social media, video games etc. I found this would excite the students and it would take a while for them to be quiet again and sometimes a teacher would step in one had held high with the whole 5.4.3.2.1 shhhh!! I didn't like that, so I exploded that area of my talk and tried to figure it out.

The next assembly I explained to the students that there are two groups in the room, group A and group B. Group A have been enjoying the talk and want to get to the end and have a great time. Group B like to talk a bit, so I'm going to need help from group A. I say that I would like people in group A after 3 seconds of shouting out numbers to then turn to anyone in group B and to say 'shhhh'. 3,2,1

go! I cup my ears to listen to all the numbers being shouted out and then I put my hands by my side. If by magic a sea of 'shhhh' happens and within 2 seconds the hall is silent. "Thank you group A, you guys are awesome"... guess who now feels extra involved in the session.

Give yourself time

When I hear "Oh, I can never do what you do" it genuinely hurts me because I too once could never do what I do. To any aspiring speaker reading this, It took me 11 years of saying yes to opportunities. It took me constantly stripping apart my talks, making lots, and lots of notes, jotting down ideas where I can improve and deep diving into every area of my talk, coming up with new ways to improve bit by bit, from the words I use, how I pronounce them, to the clothing I wear. My biggest fear became my biggest passion and my greatest learning of all for me was "When you say the word yes, amazing things can happen".

Follow Anthony's journey On Instagram and Twitter @IamAntBennett and for more info head to AnthonyInspires.com

Technology: it's the talent that counts

Siobhan Rhodes

- an analyst, coach, mentor and champion for inclusivity and diversity. Siobhan has worked in the corporate environments of banking and energy, before moving more recently to the third sector. She is currently working as a business analyst for Action For Children. She is a huge geek and gamer. She lives in Nottingham with her husband and two children. Siobhan is also the joint director with her twin sister of Create You, a charity which provides therapeutic support for families who come together through fostering and adoption.

In Technology we need diversity. If we want to design solutions that work for everyone in society, then we need people who reflect the whole of society at the table working the problem. Right now in our industry, we can't hand-on-heart look around in our team meetings and say this is what talent looks like. So let's do something about that.

So how do we improve diversity in Tech?

It starts in the toy aisle

My 7-year-old recently threw her maths homework across the room. "I can't do it!" she yelled and she sank to the floor in angry tears. The pressure to perform in Year Two and some unpleasant playground bullying had left her confidence at an all time low. The blessing (and curse!) of making a miniature version of yourself is that you see the little girl you used to be standing in your kitchen every day. As a dyslexic kid who found academics hard, I've been there and stood behind 'the wall of awful' trying to tackle my school work. I wanted to scoop her up

and tell her it'll be okay and that there is so much to learning outside the traditional classroom environments. We started her on coding and it really captured her imagination. Very soon she was making a Tamagotchi using Raspberry PI and creating blocks of code in Scratch Junior. It gave her confidence in her learning in a way school never did. We built a little robot recently. It was supposed to follow you around the house, but erm...it sort of just spun around in the vague direction of our hands. It was fiddly and a bit of a pain, but would she let our dog or her brother anywhere near that thing when it was finished? Never. She loved that little robot! We have to get our young people into Tech in a range of contexts and settings. Trust me, if you don't know what you're doing, that's fine, neither do your kids. It doesn't have to work all the time or be perfect. Explore and learn together.

Eliminate elitism

There is so much focus on qualifications. Do you have a degree? Where is your Infosec qualification? Can you write SQL or Python? What I say to everyone I mentor is I can teach anyone Technical

skills, whether that is coding, database design or app building. But I can't teach as easily the analytical mind that makes a great analyst.

We need to stop focussing on degrees or Tech-related qualifications if we are to improve representation in our profession. We know that women and BAME applicants are underrepresented in STEM subjects in higher and further education. So when we put in the essential or desirable criteria of 'a related undergraduate degree', at best we are unthinkingly not designing the job with diversity in mind. At worst we are saying we would rather have a white man in this role.

Demystify Technology

We Technical people need to get our butts out from behind our databases and get talking to the rest of our business and organisations. We can't just work in a bubble anymore if we want our solutions to land. And more often, Technical literacy is required at all levels of an organisation, as systems become better integrated into ways of working.

A classic example is with information and cyber security. No longer is this just the role of Tech teams. If we develop security controls in our little Tech silo, without the understanding from the subject matter experts in the organisation, they are going to fall flat on their face. They might impede workflow, which might stop business critical work. Also systems don't keep data safe, people do. So the minute we walk through the office door (literally or figuratively), we all have a cyber security obligation and the whole organisation needs to be upskilled. It's our role as Technical people to demystify Technology. It's not big or clever to bamboozle colleagues with Technical BS. If our colleagues are switching off to our technical babble then we need to find a more accessible way to explain it. The truth is we aren't wizards and this isn't a mysterious dark art. Let's open up Tech to the widest audience we can.

Letting talent flourish

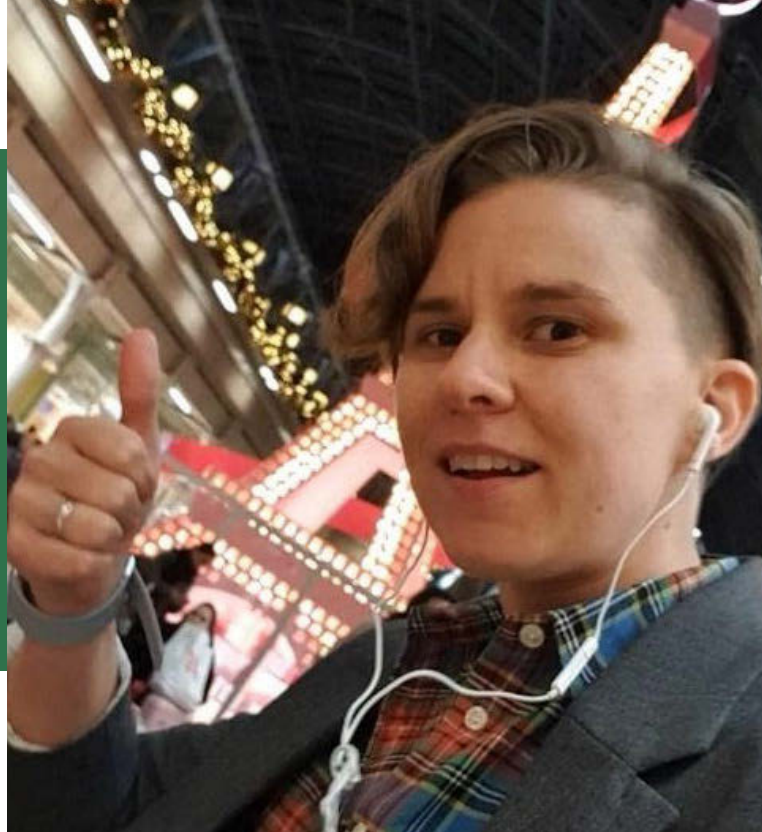
Mentoring plays a really big part in improving the cross functional movement of talent in an organisation. But mentoring can be a bit of a scary thing. I've mentored loads of people about interview skills, coaching and developing as an analyst and they actually weren't formal mentoring relationships at all. It's about sharing ideas, working through problems with people who might have experienced something similar. It's going for a coffee and talking about how your work crosses over and what you could learn from each other.

We need to create safe environments for inclusivity in Tech. And that comes from the top, with clear actionable diversity and inclusion monitoring and policies. From leaders by role modelling the right behaviours and from peers who call out inappropriate behaviour disguised as banter. We need to create a culture where all people can come to

work and be free from discrimination, bullying and harassment. Finally, let's give that platform and voice to diverse people in Tech. Because right now they are having to work harder to have their voices heard. We should raise them up, advocate for them and create opportunities where they don't exist. Then Tech really can be a place where all types of people and minds can thrive.

*Find out more at
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Sharron Tonkin asks: ‘Do you know your ‘customer’ and are you putting them first?’



I spent the early part of my career in marketing roles for fast-paced retail organisations, where I cut my teeth on designing data led content and campaigns to influence the behaviours of customers. Then, in 2015 I had a change of career and decided to apply my design skills to learning programmes when I started working in a small learning and development department of a blue-chip organisation.

The first project was a roll out of a mandatory compliance e-learning module to the entire workforce of over 1000 people. As a team we discussed the importance of the roll out to insurance premiums, audit trails, performance metrics and legal compliance but not the importance to our learners. And so, the roll out commenced. We enrolled, we emailed, and we explained to learners about the importance to the business but continued to receive the same responses “Why should I – it

doesn't affect my job.”

What became clear after six difficult weeks of pushing out the programme with limited success is that the “What's in it for me?” question is as relevant in learning as it is marketing. The lessons of that roll out have stayed with me ever since.

In L&D we have great power. Being aligned to or part of a HR department, as most L&D functions are, means we can and do enforce our solutions and approaches on people. But as a certain arachnid-based superhero said, “With great power comes great responsibility”. L&D has a bigger role to play. We need to act as the gatekeeper of learning experience, the defender against boring learning solutions, the destroyer of painful learning journeys.

Of course in L&D we need to take a partnering approach and cannot ignore the needs of our organisations, but as we try to reposition L&D as a strategic enabler rather than a service function, there are challenging conversations to be had when the needs of the learner are being dismissed in favour of the needs of the business. This is where we can all learn a lesson from the world of marketing.

In marketing the customer is king and regardless of their views the customer is always right; their needs and wants are at the centre of every promotion and every campaign. You can't force a customer to buy your product or service, you can't tell them to be loyal to your brand, instead you work hard to influence their behaviours and habits by showing your value at each and every interaction.

So, what can we as learning professionals take away from our marketing colleagues?

The first is the importance of data in engineering solutions. Nearly all marketing you see will be based on data held about you; the cookies from the website you visited, the purchases recorded on your loyalty card, the link you clicked in an email. Data can be turned into insight and insight enables us to create learning solutions that are relevant, interesting but most of all answer the “what's in it for me?” question.

The world of learning is already starting to move in this direction. xAPI tracking in learning management systems gives us the ability to measure a whole host of new metrics and get a far better picture of the impact of our learning experiences. The use of Learning Record Stores (LRS) continues to grow, helping us to slice, dice and manage our big data to get to the heart of our learners and understand them in a way we've never been able to before.

This leads me to the next insight we can take from marketing: make it personal. Recent research has suggested that the average person is exposed to over 5000 adverts a day. Marketeers use personalisation as a method of cutting through the ‘noise’ to achieve better results.

Our learners feel the impact of a different type of ‘noise’. In the fast paced, ever-changing world of work, everyone has competing demands for their time and making learning a priority can be difficult. Personalisation gives us the best chance of doing so.

Picture this, you open your news feed and see an article saying there has been a house fire in your nearest city. Obviously upsetting, but once you've read the story you will probably move on with your day. Okay, same scenario but imagine the article says there has been a fire in your street. What would you do? Possibly reach for your phone to call your neighbours or jump in the car to check your home is safe? This is the difference personalisation can make.

As learning professionals there are lots of opportunities for us to include personalisation in our learning design:

Visual personalisation – Create the look and feel of your learning materials based on your learner

Content personalisation – Tailor your solution to include

specific content such as scenarios specifically relating to your audience.

Programme personalisation – Create personalised learning journeys that have flexibility to allow for different prior learning or experiences.

Another marketing concept we can use in learning is the loyalty ladder. Closely aligned to behavioural science theories such as Nudge theory, marketers use the loyalty ladder concept to plan their strategy for building loyalty in their brand and move their customers from prospects to advocates.

The model can be used in learning too. Learning solutions should not be thought of as individual transactions but as part of an ongoing relationship with a learner. As is in marketing, we should see each intervention as an opportunity to nurture the relationship and grow the loyalty and engagement of the learner to the point where they become advocates of L&D. Your advocates will not only prioritise learning, they will act as role models and encourage engagement in learning from others helping to create an overall culture of learning.

There are many other places where the worlds of learning and marketing align. If anything in this piece has struck a chord with you, my advice is to get curious. Reach out to colleagues, peers, friends who work in marketing. Share what you do, listen to what they do and look for alignment and opportunity in the space inbetween.

Listen to others from outside of your everyday, search for experts on social media who can broaden your understanding or listen to podcasts to get a different perspective

(Clicksuation Labs is a personal favourite)

But most of all, try and put yourself in the shoes of your learner and use that as the starting point for engineering your learning solutions. Ask yourself the question ‘Would putting the customer first change what you are currently working on?’ If the answer is yes, then there you have found opportunity. Opportunity to make your solution better, opportunity to provide a more engaging learning journey, but most of all, opportunity to deliver behavioural change and performance improvement on a deeper level than ever before.

Written by Sharron Tonkin, freelance learning and engagement solutions designer @ Little Mouse Learning.

50% Learning Designer – 50% Marketeer – 100% learning tech geek – Passionate about creating people first solutions that engage learners and deliver value for organisations.≠

The Five Ways to a Learning Scientist's Wellbeing

Liz Burkinshaw

Helping people to be a better version of themselves, to progress and develop new skills is a rewarding thing to do. That said, developing relationships, investing ourselves into the process and supporting people to flourish can be all-consuming. It can be draining of your energies and at times negatively impact on your own wellbeing. So, what can you do to recharge and improve your own wellbeing, so that you are able to be the best version of yourself and in turn be able to provide great learning experiences for the people you work with?

When talking about wellbeing, I include physical health, spirituality, financial health, nutrition and sleep habits, as well as the more obvious mental health elements. A simple place to start with considering your own wellbeing and what you might be able to do for yourself is with the **Five Ways to Wellbeing**, a set of evidence-based actions as is used at Mind and throughout the NHS. Just so you know that the suggestions are not just virtual warm hugs or magicked up from a cauldron of sparkle and woo, all of the suggestions are inspired from a review of the most up-to-date evidence, suggesting building the five actions into our day-to-day lives. <https://neweconomics.org/2008/10/five-ways-to-wellbeing-the-evidence>

In its simplest form, the 'Five Ways to Wellbeing' (without a Learning Scientist twist) are:

Connect... With the people around you. With family, friends, colleagues and neighbours. At home, work, school or in your local community. Think of these as the cornerstones of your life and invest time in developing them. Building these connections will support and enrich you every day.

Be active... Go for a walk or run. Step outside. Cycle. Play a game. Garden. Dance. Exercising makes you feel good. Most importantly, discover a physical activity you enjoy; one that suits your level of mobility and fitness.

Take notice... Be curious. Catch sight of the beautiful. Remark on the unusual. Notice the changing seasons. Savour the moment, whether you are on a train, eating lunch or talking to friends. Be aware of the world around you and what you are feeling. Reflecting on your experiences will help you appreciate what matters to you.

Keep Learning... Try something new. Rediscover an old interest. Sign up for that course. Fix a bike. Set a challenge you will enjoy achieving. Learning new things will make you more confident, as well as being fun to do.

Give... Do something nice for a friend, or a stranger. Thank someone. Smile. Volunteer your time. Join a community group. Seeing yourself, and your happiness, linked to the wider community can be incredibly rewarding and will create connections with the people around you."

https://issuu.com/neweconomicsfoundation/docs/five_ways_to_well-being

Each action does not need to be practised in isolation. You can mesh them together, mix them up and find your own way to wellbeing that suits you. For example, people could be learning

a new skill, whilst being active and connecting with new people in your learning session.

As part of looking after my own wellbeing, I started Sketchnoting. I have found it incredibly useful in calming my mind, slowing it down to a less frenzied pace, organising my thoughts and finding sources of inspiration. I taught myself a few techniques through reading a book and watching some YouTube videos, as well as following some Sketchnoters and Visual Notetakers on Twitter. I connected with lots of people; some encouraged and advised me, some were happy to experiment and play around with ideas with me, and with others I was able to share and pass on my new found skills. I have been active in nature with the intentional purpose of finding landscape and seasonal inspired imagery. I have a journal that I keep all of my sketchnoting ideas in and I find it reassuring and confidence-boosting that I know I have a place to go that is full of fizzy ideas for my ongoing wellbeing. Consider my Sketchnote for 'Ways to a Learning Scientist's Wellbeing' as a catalyst for your own ideas.

So now I encourage you to take some time to consider your own wellbeing. It might be that you reflect on how you have looked after yourself this past year. Potentially you could build a plan of what you would like to keep doing and try new in 2020. For me, 2020 isn't just the start of a new year with all the usual expectations of setting resolutions; it's an opportunity to set some new intentions for the decade ahead and to dream a little about what the new decade could bring.

Consider these questions for yourself:

- What do you do to look after your own wellbeing?
- Have you found something that works for you when you need a bit of a recharge?
- Do you have a plan for the next week, month or year that has a positive intent to look after your wellbeing
- Who or what do you need to recruit into your service that will help you will your wellbeing aspirations?



Let's continue the conversation via Twitter
@liz_burkinshaw and @LscientistMag

Alex Stacey explores how the young people of today and tomorrow are different in their outlook, behaviours and needs from previous generations, providing us, as those supporting their development, with a variety of opportunities but also challenges.

With longer life expectancies and a rapidly changing society, we have seen the emergence of distinct generational groups all cohabiting the workplace and in our case the sporting environments. It is not unusual now for performance pathways in sports to have individuals working across a 30-40 year age range. For example, a young athlete entering a programme as a 15-year-old may work with a coach who is 30-40 years their senior and supported by practitioners who are 10-15 years older. In seeking to best understand how to support young people, it is therefore important to first acknowledge the world young athletes are growing up in.

The world today: the context for young people

The current generation of young people have grown up with events such as the launch of Facebook and the iPhone, the 07/07 terrorist attack, the financial crash of 2007/08, the London 2012 Olympic Games and the EU referendum in 2016. Importantly, these experiences coupled with a ready access to huge amounts of information, not to mention the topics covered in education differing wildly from previous generations, has implications for identities, values, perspectives, attitudes and therefore behaviours.

For example, young people today are likely to have (1) a higher IQ in part due to the volume of online information easily accessible, (2) an improved short term memory given the opportunity to retain it via constant engagement with smart phones and handheld devices and (3) a heightened sense of curiosity and creativity, owing to the ability to explore many different avenues and connections. However, they are also likely to be less literate, have less empathy and be struggling with their personal identity, all factors that we may observe at certain times and will impact upon young people at different stages in their development. A number of leading researchers and thought leaders have explored the impact of this changing socio-cultural climate on emerging generations and highlighted several important themes.

Alex Stacey is Head of Talent and Succession at UK Sport and her focus is on supporting GB performance systems with attracting, recruiting and retaining their workforce. There are several strands to Alex’s support, understanding what staff transitions have occurred to inform future planning, recruitment and exploring different pools of talent. Her specific areas of expertise in athlete development are the instrumental role of parents in athlete development and sharing insight on the ‘next’ generation of athletes and coaches.



Table 1. The five generations informing the world now

	Builder 1929-45	Boomers 1946-64	Busters 1965-83	Millennials 1983-2000	Generation Z 2001-18
Life Paradigm	Grateful to have a job	You owe me (post war)	Relate to me	Life is a cafeteria	I’m coping and hoping
Attitude to authority	Endure them	Replace them	Ignore them	Choose them	Do it yourself
Technology	Hope to outlive it	Master it	Employ it	Enjoy it	Hack it
Market	Goods	Services	Experiences	Transformations	Reinvent me
View of future	Stabilise it	Create it	Hopeless	Optimistic YOLO*	FOMO*/ FOLO*
Identity	I’m humble	I’m in charge	I’m sceptical	I’m awesome	I’m fluid

*YOLO – You only live once FOMO – Fear of missing out FOLO – Fear of living offline

The table highlights the different generational characteristics that we may see or observe in our environments. It is important to highlight that these are not ‘fixed’ but are a guide in terms of what that person may have experienced or been exposed to in a wider context. **Builders** are defined by two World Wars, whereas **Boomers** were able to celebrate the future given the huge loss of life experienced by

the Builders. Whilst **Busters** were more inwardly focussed and sensitive to the social and political landscape of the 1970s (e.g. Bloody Sunday, the three day week, the resignation of the Prime Minister) which reflected a turbulent time leading individuals to look pessimistically towards the future. We now move to one of the biggest generations in society today, the **Millennials**, who adopt an exciting (yet

often perceived as self-obsessed) approach of ‘I’m awesome’ and ‘you only live once’ which is in stark contrast to the risk averse and sceptical **Generation Z** born into a time of heightened terror threat and economic instability (driven largely by a wealth of images and information).

What research underpins our exploration of this area?

Tim Elmore, a former teacher who now educates coaches, teachers, parents and leaders on how best to impart practical life and leadership skills to young people commented:

***“Today’s emerging generation is introducing new rules of engagement in our culture”
Dr Tim Elmore (June 2017)***

If at one end of the spectrum there are several nations exploring the legalisation of two-year marriage contracts, at the other end leading organisations such as ATOS

are enabling employees to choose how to shape their working week and actively promoting ‘no email days’. We are living in fluid and evolving times. This means we have to connect with future generations in different ways. Their expectations are higher, they are more engaged with what they want (and need, although these are sometimes mutually exclusive) and how they are going to get it. However, this is not a new phenomenon and on reviewing the research there are several leading authors, both historically and currently, who provide insight and guidance.

Renowned cultural anthropologist, Margaret Mead stated:

***“For the first time in human history, youth will know about the world in which they live than do their elders.”
(Margaret Mead, 1960)***

Emphasising that there are three distinctive eras that we have to progress through, from (1) **post-figurative**, which is strongly past-oriented and whereby

life is figured out for you (largely through transference from elders), (2) **co-figurative**, where life was figured out together (between contemporaries) and present-oriented and now our current era which is (3) **pre-figurative** and very much future oriented as the rapid introduction of new media begins to figure out life faster than we can, and cultural transmission is predominantly from the youth to their elders.

US Professor Jean Twenge, who has been researching and analysing generational differences for over 25 years, commented:

***“Typically, the characteristics that come to define a generation appear gradually and along a continuum. Around 2012, I observed abrupt shifts in teen behaviours and emotional states. The gentle slopes of the line graphs became steep mountains and sheer cliffs, and many of the distinctive characteristics of the millennial generation began to disappear. One possible cause was the moment when the proportion of Americans who owned a smartphone surpassed 50 per cent and this is replicated across other nations.”
(Professor Jean Twenge, 2017)***

However, that is not to say that all generational changes are negative. For example, today’s teenagers are likely to be physically safer than teens have ever been. They are less likely to get into a car accident and they have less taste for alcohol than their predecessors. Psychologically, however, they are more vulnerable, and rates of teen depression and suicide have increased since 2011 (Twenge, 2017). It is not an exaggeration to describe young people today as being on the brink of the worst mental-health crisis in decades, given their access to a significant volume of online information. This is certainly an aspect that we need to pay attention to and acknowledge in developing young athletes. Yet we should also be mindful of the wealth of opportunities to engage and meaningfully connect with young people that are within our influence.

Carry on the conversation via Twitter @AlexStacey1

Shout – We can, but does it mean we have to?

I vividly remember sitting nervously at the beginning of every year as a young teacher, listening to the motivational messages from the head, ready for the new academic year. It never varied, and I suppose that was the point. In the education sector we are continuously drowning in 'new' messages about how to be a 'good' teacher, but to be honest, the core values remain the same – and so they should.

His message was one that has stayed with me throughout my entire career. He reminded us all (whether support staff, SLT or teachers) that we have the ability to make a child's life happy or, more importantly, miserable. He didn't use any fancy words, he didn't need to. It is the most simplistic message that anybody working with children should know. Throughout my career, I still keep this vital message at the core of absolutely everything I do. Yet in education as a whole, there is still a distinct and distasteful lack of focus on the concept of the child's happiness and mental health during their journey of learning, and of course, so much more on the kind of progress that will allow 'somebody' to get a pat on the back (and ironically I'm not talking about the child, or the teacher for that matter).

But for me this simplistic, humanitarian message is the main reason that I refuse to use the power given to me as a teacher, to exert fear or to lose control. Of course I am not suggesting that many teachers enjoying belittling and reducing children to tears (although I have met some), but I simply mean the everyday screaming and yelling you often hear amongst our school corridors. Whether that is because the students 'need' it (allegedly), or just because 'that's how I teach' is irrelevant. The shouting will still have the same impact regardless, and unfortunately that impact isn't always the positive one that we were originally aiming for.

And it is because of this, that I will aim to use every single classroom management tool available to me, before I resort to shouting. Ok admittedly, inside I may have lost it, but I refuse to let anybody, be it staff member or student know. Why? Because it is my craft! Whilst it is my job to educate, sometimes the journey to getting a student to engage starts well before any learning can even remotely begin. So, whilst inside I may be trembling with anger and upset, it is all part of the journey that we are on together. And the journey to learning will be over, if I too begin to stoop.

Now don't get me wrong here, that is not to say I haven't. Of course I have. My first year of teaching was more or less spent curled in a ball on my bedroom floor sobbing, whilst trying to work out how I was supposed to apply the complex pedagogy of teaching and learning to a roomful of year 9s, who couldn't have cared less if I had ceased breathing in front of them. So they definitely didn't care

about the metaphorical interpretation of a play that was written hundreds of years before their time by some bloke in tights. But it was those very students that taught me the key difference between teaching through fear vs teaching through respect.

This particular class had pushed me beyond the realms of coping mechanisms and shouting was part and parcel of my teaching toolkit back then. If I am honest with myself though, I didn't shout because I needed to gain control, I shouted because I had absolutely lost it. I guess the expectation was that it would at least achieve a silenced classroom, but I couldn't have been more wrong. They truly loved it, thrived off it even. They got exactly what they had wanted (it was all part of their crafting process). They had reduced the young teacher to an absolute wreck, and they were basking in their success. Ah well, did it at least make me feel better for a short time? Absolutely not! My heart was racing, my throat hurt and if truth be known, I just wanted to cry and retreat to the safety of the staff room. But of course, instead I had a further 50 mins of uncomfortable navigation with not the slightest chance of teaching them a thing.

Those students had absolutely no respect for me, and I realised even in the times where shouting would achieve the silenced classroom, had I really achieved the end goal, of which surely is – to further promote and encourage learning? Of course I hadn't. Let's start with me, the adult in the room, the one that above all, should model and encourage the kind of behaviour they expect to see. By the time I had to shout, I couldn't even remember where I was on my lesson plan, I was wasting precious teaching time and now my focus was on the lecture I was going to give them for the next 15 minutes in order to make them understand why post shouting I was physically shaking and had no idea how to continue the rest of the lesson. That evening I would drive home sobbing, because no part of me enjoyed watching the quiet kid in the corner (taking no part in the class mob riot) tearing up because rather than the calm positive atmosphere he 'really' needed that day, he was instead facing World War Three.

And then there are the students. Of which you have two kinds during this kind of incident. You have the children who are easily affected. Who are not necessarily desperate to learn but are certainly out to keep their head down and to not draw any attention to themselves, and of course there will be varying factors for that. But whatever the reasons are, the fact is, they are vulnerable, not because they need protecting, but because they need nurturing. I'm not suggesting that they have any deep-rooted issues or SEN needs that we should be seeking further support

About Angela – Teacher, business owner, author, mother and wife. I set out many moons ago with a desire to educate the masses in order to help learners achieve their full potential, whatever that may be. But I quickly realised that this learning journey was not for the learners alone, but just as much for me. And what a Journey it has been over the last two decades.

for – I am simply suggesting that they are young! That like most humans actually, they simply need to be dealt with in a non condescending, non threatening way so that they can keep their brain focused on the task in hand. Our brains are complex and we are easily distracted. So how easy is it for them to re-focus on mathematical equations once a spectacle of teacher outburst has taken place? Or will their minds now be preoccupied with the whispering conversations that will follow, or with wondering why the teacher always looks at them like that, how is the rest of the year going to be, will the teacher start being absent because they can't cope, is there any point in trying when the class is in chaos?

But of course, you have the students who are the master of 'their' craft. Carefully manipulating you into breakdown mode so that they can relive their victory well into adulthood, 'Remember when we made Ms Cousins cry – best day of school ever'. The argument could be that of course they deserved their public atonement, and maybe they did – but should we be trying to seek punishment in the form of atonement, or should we simply be focusing on the end goal and steer them back to learning? Well, the sad truth is, as soon as you have screamed, they are the ones in control and not you as the teacher, as they led you down this path for exactly that end goal. Regardless of 'why' they are testing our boundaries (and let's not pretend that in some cases there aren't more than justifiable reasons why), we really must ensure that we still walk out of that room like the professional grown up masters of 'our' craft that we are too.

But please don't misunderstand, this isn't about avoiding discipline – not at all. A well-run classroom is absolutely vital in order to create a secure learning environment where everyone, including the teacher, can learn. But let's face it, there are so many different ways of keeping control and so many factors (and students) to take into consideration as to why we shouldn't just take the easy option of 'shouting'. My view is as simple as the message my headteacher delivered year after year. Once the teacher has shouted/lost it/screamed (whatever phrase you want to coin), the learning environment is broken by the person who had the responsibility of keeping it together in the first place. You have a toolbox full of techniques, ideas and professionalism – just make sure you use the 'right' tool.

*Find out more about me at <https://www.linkedin.com/in/angela-cousins-a4536043/>
Follow Angela's blog <https://theempatheticeducator.school.blog/>*

THINK LIKE A DYSLEXIC

“Nine out of 10 people can’t, but perhaps wish they could...” says Kurt Lindley.

“Dyslexia influences at least 1 in 10 people and is a genetic difference in an individual’s ability to learn and process information. As a result, dyslexic individuals have differing abilities, with strengths in creative, problem solving and communication skills and challenges with spelling, reading and memorising facts”.

The above is a quote from a report by Ernst & Young (EY) – The Value of Dyslexia: Dyslexic strengths and the changing world of work.

If I told you that the single greatest contributor to innovation and with it the evolution our society was ‘dyslexia’, would you believe me?

I’m paraphrasing the ‘Game Changers’ panel of Jeremy Fleming (Director of GCHQ), Nick Jones MBE (Founder of Soho House), Steve Hatch (VP Facebook Northern Europe), Richard Addison (Partner at EY), Laura Powell (Global Head of Human Resources at HSBC) at the #MadeByDyslexia Global Summit held at the amazing ‘Science Museum’ London in October 2019.

There is truth in this statement. Listed below are just a few people instrumental in the evolution of our world, the way we work and the technology we use, all of whom had or have dyslexia:

- Leonardo da Vinci – inventor, sculptor, mathematician, oh and awesome painter
- Albert Einstein – physicist, E=MC² and all round good guy, so I’m told
- Alexander Graham Bell – without him there would be no iPhone...
- Thomas Edison – who brought us light in the form of a bulb

And more recently

- Maggie Aderin-Pocock – space scientist and communicator
- Dr Carol Greider – Nobel prize winner for medicine
- Jessica Watson – youngest person to sail solo and unassisted around the world
- Erin Brockovich – legal activist who has won millions for her clients

And of course Richard Branson, who amongst many things started Virgin Airlines after getting stuck in Puerto Rico because his flight home was cancelled. He simply booked a plane of his own, then sold seats to others in the airport to cover the costs.

So I ask you to imagine that you could think like a dyslexic. From the off, your superpowers would include:

1. **Reasoning** – dyslexic individuals exhibit the ability to understand patterns, evaluate possibilities and make well informed decisions
2. **Connecting** – dyslexic individuals exhibit the ability to understand self; connect, empathise & influence others
3. **Exploring** – dyslexic individuals exhibit the ability to be curious and explore ideas in a constant and energetic way
4. **Communicating** – dyslexic individuals exhibit the ability to craft and convey clear and engaging messages
5. **Imagining** – dyslexic individuals exhibit the ability to create an original piece of work, or give new ideas a spin
6. **Visualising** – dyslexic individuals exhibit the ability to interact with space, sense, physical ideas and new concepts

The above is summarised from the Ernst & Young (EY) ‘The Value of Dyslexia: Dyslexic strengths and the changing world of work’ report: <https://www.ey.com/Publication/>

vwLUAssets/EY-The-value-of-dyslexia/%24FILE/EY-The-value-of-dyslexia.pdf

Now imagine if there was a course for the 9 in every 10 people who don’t have dyslexia. A course that could give you these six thinking skills or rather superpowers. Would you sign up?

Obviously – rather unfortunately – there isn’t such a course, at least not one I know of. If there is, please tell me and I will book my mates on it. What there is however, is real value in looking at dyslexia through an asset based lens in this way, as opposed to a deficit based lens. Using the latter means we miss out. Using the former means we increase the chances that our society will become better, sooner, and that less people with the diagnosis of dyslexia will be treated as a lost cause. The thick ones in the class. The misunderstood.

If we listen to those on the ‘Change Makers’ panel, dyslexics, along with many other neuro-diverse thinkers such as those with dyspraxia and/or autism, should be valued and nurtured, and with it their talents unleashed for the world to see and benefit from.

“The world of work is changing. The often talked about ‘skills gap’ shows a need for creative, different thinkers to make sense of the rapid change and the disruption we’re facing in the world today. Dyslexic individuals have a range of natural strengths that make them ‘hard wired’ to step right in and fill this gap.”

Kate Griggs Founder and CEO of #MadeByDyslexia
<http://madebydyslexia.org>

Maybe we should all #ThinkLikeADyslexic or – dare I say it – businesses may wish to actively seek out those with dyslexia.

Kurt Lindley– As a dyslexic and the father of a child who may well have the same learning challenges (which later become powers for good) I am actively exploring this area. If you are interested, get in touch on twitter @CoachDeveloper and let’s carry on the conversation.



Vulnerability as a key driver to success

THINK
OUTSIDE
THE BOX

Helen Marshall is a Senior Learning Designer at Brightwave Group and works closely with clients to deliver bespoke learning solutions across a range of sectors. Interested in building strong relationships, most things L&D, new tech, knowledge sharing and has a new-found enthusiasm for coaching. Budding leader and vulnerability advocate.

I recently attended the eLN Connect conference, where the keynote speaker, Nicole Bradfield, discussed the eight essential qualities of 21st century leaders. There were some difficult words to swallow amongst the concepts – love, courage, empathy. Not terms commonly or even easily

associated with leadership. But the one that stuck out for me most was vulnerability. Being vulnerable was defined as “being who you really are, open to uncertainty and emotional exposure.” At work?! I can almost feel people shaking their heads, raising their hands and putting their guards

up. One of the things that makes vulnerability challenging is the fact that it’s often associated with weakness. As the *“Western world has largely been shaped by an admiration of logic versus emotion”*, traditionally focus would fall on

the former as more favourable in business. Logical, rational decisions are favoured over those instigated or driven by emotion, and vulnerability means letting all those emotions show. It’s the antithesis of what we would commonly associate with a leadership trait because we have been conditioned to hide it. Aside from the multiple mental health and wellbeing issues that arise from that, it’s resulted in an attachment of hard-faced, no-nonsense, straight-talking leadership, where if weakness, doubt, or imposter syndrome are felt, it’s very much behind closed doors and never openly spoken about. As Brené Brown has pointed out: “Perfect and bulletproof are seductive, but they don’t exist in the human experience”. So why waste your time waiting until you’re perfect to step into the arena?

I think we can all agree that the best leaders speak at a very human level and don’t bullshit their way through conversations. There’s a raw honesty that I personally value in leaders who have made a difference to me (and I’m thinking both inside and outside the workplace), and the courage to be that open, I think, stems from a place of vulnerability. Reflecting on the most successful working relationships I have developed, they all seem to have one thing in common: we’ve been ourselves and been open to the uncertainty of investing parts of ourselves in the work we created. Being open, honest and willing to challenge (and be challenged!) all feed into that – and respecting different opinions plays a part too. I’d actually say that these relationships have all nurtured a high level of emotional intelligence; understanding emotions, managing relationships and often seeking the compromise. I think this is especially true working in an agency environment.

We’ve all seen the stats about the workplace of the future – and with the rise of AI jobs for humans begin to focus on the creative, emotional human qualities that AI/machine tech just can’t replicate. Graham Brown Martin’s keynote speech at Learning Live 2019 ‘Leading innovation in times of exponential change’ focused on just that. Graham’s personal

interest in anticipatory research, including political, societal and technological trends to try and anticipate what might happen in the learning field, has fed into that. There are key human behaviours, such as creativity, imagination, social and emotional intelligence, that just can’t be replicated by AI. Again, we’re back to the human-centred concepts that ultimately drive great leadership, and it’s no surprise these are the predicted focus of future roles. Our response to digital disruption will be to humanise jobs – playing on our own human-traits as definite strengths.

**PERFECT AND
BULLETPROOF
ARE SEDUCTIVE,
BUT THEY DON'T EXIST
IN THE HUMAN
EXPERIENCE.**

Brené Brown

Let’s for a moment consider the opposite of ‘vulnerability’ – being tough, resilient, and unwavering. I imagine they sit more neatly with how a lot of leaders would describe themselves. In some instances, these words are used on a daily basis to describe respected leaders – particularly in the sports arena where resilience is often stated as a key driver for success. Let’s take Andy Murray as a recent example of where the shift from resilience to showcasing vulnerability has not only changed his personal mindset but the general public view of him as a sportsman. In a recent interview he said “You’re always putting up a bit of a front and a brave face, because you’re not supposed to show emotion in sport... it’s always been seen as a bad thing to show weakness.” In sport you can’t let your opponent’s see your weakness, whilst in business you can’t let your competitors exploit your present vulnerabilities.

In a recent episode of Garry Turner’s podcast ‘Value through Vulnerability’, Heather Younger discussed being vulnerable in the present – thinking about how we can be more open and have those honest conversations in the moment, as opposed to only reflecting on times when you were vulnerable in the past (therefore indicating that your current self is free of vulnerability). Only focusing on past mistakes or lessons that were key moments for you as an individual creates an almost mythical sense of great leadership stemming from bad mistakes in the past, and not every-day changes in direction, barriers, or difficult conversations – or learning as you go. Owning your past is great, and learning from pivotal, life-changing moments is obviously brilliant, but it shouldn’t be the only reference we look for when someone asks, “how have you coped with or in a difficult situation/what did you do when...”. The reflection Heather offers here is invaluable.

Leadership also means different things to different people and we’re all at different stages of that journey. I think it’s also important to recognise that the leaders of the future may not be leaders today and the more commonplace it becomes to focus on human-centred concepts such as vulnerability, the better. Another of Heather’s comments was: “It’s not always leaders based upon title, everyone gets to choose how they make anyone around them feel”. This is a lesson anyone can take back into their work. What was it Ghandi supposedly said: “Be the change you want to see in the world”? Well, actually he didn’t, he said: “If we could change ourselves, the tendencies in the world would also change. As a man changes his own nature, so does the attitude of the world change towards him. ...We need not wait to see what others do.” And that works here, too.

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