

LEADERSHIP COACHING AND MENTORING –PACK

January 2021

(15th Anniversary Year editions)

2006 - 2021

Welcome to this month's edition.

Happy New Year and I hope you had a good Christmas. Everything about this edition is aimed at supporting you to have the best year ever. I have included a personal post about making commitments instead of resolutions.

'Same storm different boats' by Damian Piper. "I was talking to a friend recently and he used the expression "same storm, different boats". I thought this was a good metaphor for Covid. It's important to recognise that whilst the characteristics of the virus are the same (the storm) how they impact us is very individual (our boat)." I mentioned to Damian his piece was 'Powerful' and it certainly helped me when I read it.

'Self-organising teams' by Meike Beckford. This post builds on a previous post Meike wrote about self-leadership and here Meike takes us through an example of how team-level self-leadership (or self-organising teams) can be developed through a model called holacracy. Meike will share the experiences we have had so far in Dosh www.dosh.org in piloting this in 2020 and the benefits Meike has found it can bring.

Further on in this edition I have included: **'The first leadership lesson I learned'**. This happened between the age of 16 and 17.

I highly recommend **'Me and my team'** by Roger Whalley. This is a terrific piece that I have read a several times. Roger shares the work of Douglas Macgregor, from his book "The human side of enterprise" and his ideas look at the type of manager you might be.

"Something's set to start, There's meadow-music in the dark. And the clouds that shroud the mountain Slowly, softly start to part. From Poem 'For A New Year' by Matt Goodfellow (post and primary school teacher from Manchester)

This month's quotes have been taken from my wife's @JoyceRaw1 and @livelikearaw twitter feeds – thanks Joyce. I am also on Twitter: @SteveRaw836 sharing leadership thoughts at 7am, 7 days a week. We welcome new followers!

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It's not about how good you are

It's how Good You want to be

Same storm different boats

Happy new year to everyone. I really hope this finds you as good as you can be in the current circumstances. With yet more covid challenges, 2021 has started where 2020 finished. With the vaccination programme starting to pick up across the UK, at least we can see that light at the end of the Covid tunnel is getting brighter.

I was talking to a friend recently and he used the expression “same storm, different boats”. I thought this was a good metaphor for Covid. It’s important to recognise that whilst the characteristics of the virus are the same (the storm) how they impact us is very individual (our boat).

What kind of boat are you in and is it serving you well? There’s a risk that at times like the ones we are living through at the moment that we compare our boats with others. Or begin worrying about other people’s boats, at the expense of our own. In some cases, we might not even know the people who we are worrying about – reporting in the news or social media are good examples of this.

When supporting people with resilience an early part of the work is to encourage and explain the importance of looking after yourself first. This often jars with people as it conjures up feelings of selfishness. I’d argue that looking after ourselves first is anything but selfish. In fact, not do that is the selfish thing to do. If we truly want to be the best version of ourselves in any aspect of our lives we need to ensure we are making our own foundations a priority.

At a time of so many changes and challenges that could impact us personally, how can we ensure we are prioritising us. Here are four ideas to consider:

- **Create some structure.** With many people handling elements of uncertainty and many of their regular routines disrupted it’s easy to find that our foundations begin to suffer. I have deliberately said some structure. As the amount you need will be personal to you. I can think of times in my own life where I’ve probably had too much structure and that has its own downsides. Experiment and work out what’s best for you.
- **Use a morning deliberate routine.** Putting some thought into how you want your day to begin can really help with bringing the best version of you to the day as opposed to the day coming to you. Common components of many people’s morning routines include some sort of exercise, being mindful or visualising the day you’d like to have and identifying the particular priorities you have for the coming day.
- **Deliberate time to reflect.** Setting aside a particular time each day to reflect how things are going and consciously bring objectivity to the challenges you face. This can really help you spot things that you are grateful for and help you see the day-to-day challenges in a bigger picture context. Of course, this won’t change the particular challenge however, it puts you in a better position where you can begin to make more informed choices about where you put your time and energy to handle it.
- **Have an approach to help you make decisions** which relate to the changing situations the virus presents. Our minds can easily get overwhelmed when we are faced with so many changing variables. This can sap our energy and worse generate worry and stress. Being able to lift up and assess situations in a balanced way can help you become more empowered. Being clear on what your goal is a key first step. Here’s an example of an approach and practical use of it.
 - **Approach**
 - **Goal** - avoid contracting the virus

- **Question 1** – is this thing I’m planning to do going to increase or decrease my chance of getting the virus?
 - **Question 2** – if the answer to question 1 is an increase, is the benefit of what I’m planning to do greater than the risks?
 - **Question 3** – If the answer to question 2 is yes, then how can I mitigate the risks I might face.
- **Practical use**
 - **Scenario** – a need to travel into London for work as a key worker.
 - **Answer to questions 1:** this will increase my chance of contracting the virus.
 - **Answer to question 2:** as a key worker I need to travel for work which means I get to keep my job (and therefore provide financial security and a home for my family) and contribute to the National effort to manage the coronavirus pandemic. So, on balance it feels like the benefit is greater than the risks.
 - **Answer to question 3:** allow more time for the journey to minimise any use of public transport and therefore coming into contact with more people e.g. walk, instead of taking the tube.
 - In reality, the answers to question 3 would explore a broader range of risks.

I hope your ‘boat’ is serving you well and is built to help you weather the storm. If it does not, then take some time to improve your boat. I hope your voyage is a safe one. Bon voyage.

Damian Piper

Change coach and consultant

I've got a personal goal to do what I can to support people with performance development. Please subscribe to receive my thought-provoking updates designed to take your performance to the next level: <https://effectivechallenge.com/blog/>

While I have your attention - if you're more 🧠 than 🗣️ then please listen to the Effective Challenge Podcast. Feel free to share if you think others may benefit from its content.



www.effectivechallenge.com/podcasts

“If we winter this one out, we can summer anywhere” Seamus Heaney

Self-organising teams

This post builds on a previous post I wrote about [self-leadership](#) and here I will take you through an example of how team-level self-leadership (or self-organising teams) can be developed through a model called holacracy. I will share the experiences we have had so far in Dosh www.dosh.org in piloting this in 2020 and the benefits I have found it can bring.

Overall, the principle of self-organising teams is quite a broad one, with the overall goal being for the team to manage, arrange and lead its own work. This ultimately builds on the idea that in our dynamic and fast evolving world, we cannot rely on the traditional approach of everyone repeating the same monotonous tasks on autopilot whilst leaving the thinking to one designated leader or the organising to one manager. As I mentioned in my innovation post over a year ago, no one person has a monopoly on knowledge or talent, and we are stronger when we involve everyone in contributing to the direction of the team. In addition, hierarchies can become slow and stifle innovation as they create an approval lag that means the team has to wait for a decision to go up the chain and pass back down before they can do anything. It therefore removes decision-making from those with the information and 'live' experience who cannot respond quickly to changing circumstances and needs on the ground.

Taking these processes and hierarchies away can raise some alarm bells of course – how do you stop it descending into anarchy, with everyone doing what they like, no overall direction, risk management or business planning? What about the team members? How do you still support, train and develop them if everyone is doing it themselves? It may be quite a scary concept, not only for managers used to telling people what to do, but for team members used to the security of someone else making the decision so they can just show up and carry out the day job.

This is where models like holacracy become useful, through a gradual adoption process that avoids the cliff edge that might risk a collapse into anarchy. Holacracy is an organisational structure based on creating *holons*, or circles (teams). Members document all the roles they hold (not just one overall job) and write the purpose and accountabilities of each one. These roles are visible to all and they are constantly evolving through a bespoke meeting and organisational structure that allows everyone in the team to develop the roles in response to what they and the organisation needs.

Having documented roles makes them explicit, transparent and gives a clear scope of authority to each – it takes away much of the misunderstanding about who is responsible for what and helps roles work together from a clear starting point. The structure (through governance meetings) for processing changes 'holds space' for everyone and ensures they each have a voice, but is skewed towards making changes by using the test of 'will it cause harm' (that cannot later be reversed) as the bar for objecting to a change. Thus, most things are 'safe to try' and the team (or circle) is empowered to give things a go and take responsibility for making (and reviewing) changes that will better enable them to achieve their goals. The system distributes leadership and power across the organisation.

This is something we have trialled in Dosh in the last year, experimenting with the meeting formats and documenting the roles we fulfil. It has taken some adjustment but has brought a number of clear benefits:

- A **'refresh' of roles** by creating accurate role descriptions that reflect what people actually do day-to-day – this is open for all to see and has allowed us to address misunderstandings and discuss where tasks and responsibilities should fall, led by the teams when they spot something that doesn't fit, rather than dictated by the manager.

- **Opening up team data** through our regular tactical meetings. Teams are looking at how they are getting on at a team, not just individual, level, for example monitoring performance and capacity so that they can share workload across the team more effectively and be part of recruitment and work allocation decisions.
- A sense of **shared responsibility** has developed from this, so that they are aware of how they are doing (and the competitive ones can compare themselves to other teams!) and support each other if someone is struggling. If something is blocking them from working effectively, they have a forum and the authority to deal with it themselves.
- **Pilot projects and new roles** have emerged from these conversations, where the team have identified gaps – e.g. ‘we need a better way to quality check our own work’ and have implemented a peer checking project to try this out. Had this been introduced by management it might have appeared an imposition that creates extra work, or even a rebuke for poor practice, but as a team idea it developed into a tool for mutual support and development. This has strengthened our overall practice – showing again that many minds are better than one!

It has of course also brought its challenges, particularly the strange meeting format and terminology. People’s openness to the approach depends on where the team is in itself, so not all are ready to adopt at the same pace or with the same enthusiasm, but these obstacles can be overcome as we work on the system together, tailoring it to our own needs and developing it together so that everyone has a sense of ownership and control over our development. For me, the biggest thing is that it reinforces and supports our existing culture and leadership practice where we all work together to achieve our overall purpose. Whether your own team or organisation is already there, or this is somewhere you’d like to get to, exploring self-organising teams and holacracy might be the tool you need to find a turning point and build towards change.

Read more about Dosh’s leadership practice in Steve’s post here:

<https://leadershipintheraw.org/2014/09/25/leadership-the-dosh-way/>

To learn more about holacracy, try this video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YBMH4HLiSE> or read the founder’s book: Brian Robertson (2015) *Holacracy : the revolutionary management system that abolishes hierarchy*, London : Portfolio Penguin

Happy exploring!

Meike Beckford

Dosh www.dosh.org and Thera Trust www.thera.co.uk

We spend January 1st walking through our lives, room by room, drawing up a list of work to be done, cracks to be patched. Maybe this year, to balance the list, we ought to walk through the rooms of our lives... not looking for flaws, but for potential." Ellen Goodman

GET UP AND GO! TAKE A LEAP FORWARD IN 2021.

Resolutions? Let's face it, often we don't keep them. So, let's change the word to 'Commitments' as in "I am going to make some commitments in my life and in my career". It feels different - using the word Commitment feels like it has a purpose. So.....

After a challenging 2020 with you know what, let's make 2021 your best with a year's worth of commitments for a lifetime of positive results:

1. **Set goals.** Take a good look at what you want in life. Have you committed to these goals by purposefully taking steps toward reaching them? (Write them down – if you don't your goals are just wishing). I am currently working with colleagues on www.dosh.org 10 Commitments.
2. **Get a Mentor.** Seek out people with the knowledge you desire. Find people you want to be like – now ask them and I promise they will be flattered. In 2020 I was incredibly proud to be a mentor for a number of people within my organisation, for former colleagues and as part of the Charityworks <https://www.charity-works.co.uk/> mentoring scheme. I learn just as much from mentees.
3. **Read.** Create a personal reading programme by determining how many books of different kinds (personal development, business, nonfiction) you'll read this year. Don't skip literary fiction; a recent study shows it improves social skills. I have just finished 'Yellowhammer' by James Henry (novel) and just about to started reading 'A Promised Land' by one of my hero's Barack Obama– I recommend both to you.
4. **Improve productivity.** Log your activities for a week to assess timewasters. Make sure you aren't spending chunks of the day on activities that don't drive your business forward or improve your life. My themes for 2021 will be 'Time Management and Productivity'. So, I will look at every part of my professional and personal life and eliminate waste – what am I wasting time on? What am I duplicating? What can I do today that will save me time tomorrow?
5. **Wake up early (momentum).** Get up before your household to contemplate what you want to accomplish – then seize the day. (I get up 3 hours before I officially start work – it has worked for me over the last 49 years, in both careers). Although I must admit I struggle a little (my wife says a lot) after 6pm.
6. **Get an accountability partner.** Check in regularly to review accomplishments areas for improvement and next steps. Meet them regularly, give them your set of goals and then get them to hold you to account.
7. **Do something you've always wanted to do.** After 2020 life has felt precarious so don't wait to live it, just do it. This year I go up an age group for ParkRuns. So, before my competition (who are faster runners than me) reach the same age group, 2021 is the best year for me to come first.
8. **Take small steps.** Whatever it is you seek, just get started. Commit to some easy, feasible activity to move you closer to those goals every day. I have always found that looking for small successes and achievements builds my confidence going forward to achieve something very big! The law of marginal gains!

9. **Journal.** Whether it's an idea, a problem you want to solve or an inspiring quote, write it down. *"And, now we welcome the new year, full of things that have never been" Rainer Maria Rilke*
10. **Practice mindfulness.** You will improve your effectiveness, well-being and longevity. Research shows that by learning how to stop needless ruminating helps to focus on the here and now. Here is something from what I have learned from Bettina about mindfulness: <https://leadershipintheraw.org/2016/03/10/being-bettinas-dad-bettina-transforming-my-life-with-mindfulness/>

In 2021 I will take a step back (often) and I will think about what I have in my life and be grateful for everything that comes my way. <https://leadershipintheraw.org/2015/09/09/being-bettinas-dad-taking-the-time-to-be-grateful-and-showing-gratitude/> If it happens to be a failure, I will see it as my first and second step towards my next success. I will understand that failure is not permanent, and neither is success, so I will prepare for both this year.

I am always excited by the coming of each New Year, it is an opportunity for change, development, growth and reinvention, both in my personal life and my work. So please join me and: **GET UP AND GO! TAKE A LEAP FORWARD in 2021.**

Source: Steve Raw www.leadershipintheraw.org

PS Remember LUCK really is preparation meeting opportunity so I hope you have lots of luck in 2021

"My New Year's Resolution 2020: see the world, meet new people, expand my horizons. My New Year's resolution 2021; really hoping I get to Robert Dyas at some point.' Richard Osman setting the bar lower with his plans for this year

The first leadership lesson I learned – It is about others before you



Passing Out Parade (POP) December 1973 courtesy of J/CSM Walls and Junior Leaders RAOC Association

Standing to attention eyes focused straight ahead, shoulders back, standing up straight. We were formed up on parade at Dettingen Barracks. It was a crisp winter day in December 1973. My brasses on my belt and webbing are shining, my highly polished boots could have been used as a mirror to shave that morning, and the creases in my trousers and sleeves of my jacket were so sharp they could be have been the razor. This was the Junior Leaders Battalion passing out parade. The oldest person on parade, including the drill sergeants, are 17 years old and there are 300 young men carrying out all the drill movements you would normally see at a Queen's Birthday Parade. We had practiced and performed this event for months on end and now we were perfect.

After joining the Army as a boy soldier of 16 years old, in September 1972, the first lesson I had drilled into me was that not everything was about me (I thought it was until I joined up). My only motivation and thoughts that morning was performing at my very best, not just for me but for my platoon, my company and for those who were passing out that day. (it would be my turn to 'pass out' 4 months later). I didn't want to let anyone down; I had a duty and a responsibility to those to my left and to my right.

I was still formulating my leadership philosophy and how I wanted to lead and was yet to read about and hear the term 'Servant Leadership, a leadership philosophy in which the main goal of the leader is to serve others. As I reflect now, thanks to the intense training I received over 18 months, I was already halfway there. To serve others was going to be the cornerstone of my leadership. It was going to be about what I could do for those I was responsible and accountable for rather than what they could do for me.

I was fortunate to be able to crystallise this philosophy over several years during my first career thanks to having some amazing role models. Leaders I could emulate. I had seen proof that this style of leadership would work in the way people responded to, with their loyalty, commitment, achievement and then results.

So, what did this style of leadership include?

- When you have power, you share it
- You put the needs of the employees first – your needs come second.
- You eat last – you sleep last.
- As a leader you help people develop and perform as highly as possible

"If your actions inspire people to dream more, learn more, do more, and become more, you are a leader." - John Quincy Adams

My 5 tips on putting others before you:

1. When someone asks for guidance be sincere and always put their best interests first
2. You do not have an agenda
3. You are always consistent – it is never the case that one day you can put others first and then the next day it is all about you. Otherwise those around you don't know which version they are going to get from you
4. Words are fine but only your actions matter. So be ready to be tested when it comes to putting others before yourself.
5. Ask yourself on each occasion who I am doing this for? Be honest with yourself.

Immediately after my passing out parade in April 1974 we had this picture taken before we all went set out on our (successful) leadership careers. (I am 4th from the right second row).



Courtesy of <http://www.juniorleadersraoc.co.uk/galleries/FB/1973-75/slides/73750044.html>

in memory of Major Stephen J. Foster who passed away on 20 July 2020 and who is featured in this picture. RIP

Summary

Towards the very end of my Army career (in 1995) I was approached by my boss who asked me if I would consider a 'late entry (LE) commission to be an officer. This was incredibly flattering and something I had not expected. I politely declined as it would have meant significant disruption to our family life especially for my youngest daughter Bettina who copes with autism and a learning disability. As much as I loved my army career, **there were others more important than me to consider first.**

By Steve Raw www.leadershipintheraw.org

"For last year's words belong to last year's language.

And next year's words await another voice"

T.S. Eliot

Me and my team

Roger Whalley

I have been writing these articles since April of last year and I have deliberately avoided any mention of the Pandemic. I have thought that it was better to look at "normal" times. However now we are in the second phase of the pandemic and it looks as if it might be considerably worse. This is imposing sometimes unacceptable pressures on managers and of course on their staff. So, please forgive me if I bring a little focus on how to cope with the times in which we now live.

In my previous articles I have introduced you to some of the most eminent people in the field of personnel management. I looked at the work of Blanchard and his "one-minute manager" series, I have looked at the work of Maslow and his hierarchy of needs. There is another guy whose work is

rather academic but maybe in these hard times truly relevant. His name is Douglas Macgregor, and his ideas look at the type of manager you might be.

His book is called "The human side of enterprise" and looks specifically about the type of manager you are and what you think about the people you manage. In the book he refers to "Theory X" and "Theory Y managers. Loosely speaking Theory X managers believe that workers are inherently lazy and must be coerced to work. On the other hand, Theory Y manager believe that their workers like work; they enjoy taking responsibility and can decide for themselves the way they behave.

It would be superb if all managers could be Theory Y as it would demonstrate that they have a very well trained and developed workforce which in turn eases pressure on the manager. Strangely Theory X managers find work harder as they have to interact and control all their workforce because they have a very low opinion of them. To ensure we can become Theory Y managers we have to consider our team and what we need to do to get them to a level at which we all could become Theory Y managers.

Which brings me the main point of this article. There was a Roman General called Caius Petronius who in AD66 wrote the following words about his team and the way they behaved. I cannot claim to be the one who translated this from the Latin, and it may be an apocryphal story, but it makes sense

"We worked hard, but it seemed that every time we were beginning to form up into teams, we would be re-organised.

I was to learn later in life that we tend to meet any new situation by re-organising, and a wonderful method it can be for creating the illusion of progress while producing confusion, inefficiency and demoralisation"

"We failed to realise that it was training and developing our team which would ensure success."

I have spent the last 40 years of my career in training and developing managers at all levels in industry and commerce. I have seen complete duffers turned into competent managers and I have seen arrogant managers completely failing. Training will only work if you have people receptive to change because that is what training is designed to achieve, change in the way we behave and interact with our team. And it's much easier to train people if you are a Theory Y manager and believe that your team want and need training.

When I played rugby, the deal was to turn up three times a week for training and you will get a game on Saturday. Miss one evening's training and someone else would take your place. I was not one of the elite players in my club so I turned up on Sunday, Tuesday and Thursday in the hope that one of the smartie-pants, who believed that because of their talent they could miss a session, would be kicked out of the first team and I would get a game. I learned then that training would not only develop my fitness but would give me a chance for promotion.

As a manager your main duty is training because only by training will you develop a team who you can motivate and manage. Regular training sessions whether it be one-to-one, or in a group will help your team to become more efficient and effective, two different words with vastly different meanings. You *want* your team to be efficient, but you *need* them to be effective.

Each one of your team should have a training and development plan. To plan accurately you need to know from where you are starting. You should therefore identify in each member of your team their strengths and weaknesses. In marketing we refer to a SWOT analysis to know how to plan your

marketing campaign. The letters are an acronym for Strengths – Weaknesses – Opportunities – Threats. The same would apply for what we call a “Training Needs Analysis” (TNA).

In an ideal world we would carry out a TNA every year for each member of the team, again ideally it would be carried out during their annual appraisal because it is part of the appraisal process. If you follow the “SWOT” approach, then not only will you be aware of the strengths and weaknesses you will also be aware of what they see as opportunities for themselves or you see as opportunities for their promotion. You will also be aware of any threats to your team from the point of one of your team seeking enhancement elsewhere.

If you keep close to your team you should have no surprises good or bad. When I was in line management my mantra was “no surprises”. Good or bad keep me posted; if they are good then we can share them together; if they are bad, we can solve them together. I just love that word – together. It’s what we humans seek; togetherness, a feeling of sharing and taking part. It’s why team games are so popular. My rugby team was filled with giants and dwarfs all of whom contributed towards the aim of the team which is to win!

Your team should see you as a Theory Y manager because then no doubt you will get the best from them. In previous articles I have sometimes focussed on a word; respect was one of them. Ending this article, I would like to focus on another word – Loyalty. The loyalty you want from your team is also two-way.

In order to get loyalty *from* them then you must show loyalty *to* them. Make sure your team know you “have their backs”. Make it possible and indeed desirable that their first point of call in any situation is you. If they know that you will listen to them; that you will not fly off the handle; that you will be patient; then they will feel able to come to you.

Loyalty is a two-way word, as well as expecting loyalty *from* your team you are expected to *give* loyalty back to them. In life you generally only get back what you put in. So, if you show loyalty to your team you are more likely to get loyalty back. It can come in several ways, but it usually linked with honesty and that’s a two-way word as well. You should share as much as possible the information about the organisation which will help both of you make the right decision.

Early on in my consultancy career, the firm I was working for was asked by a bank to help one of their clients who was getting into financial trouble. It was a small garage business that was privately owned. The owner worked every day in the business and when we met him for the first time, we realised that he was sinking under the strain of keeping his doors open to customers. We looked at his financial books and assessed his premises and indeed he was sailing into very rough seas.

I asked him had he discussed the situation with his staff and he with horror replied, “If I told them what was going on, they would all leave”. I felt that this was an incredibly sad situation because all their families depended on his business being successful and I told him that we weren’t prepared to carry on with the consultancy unless there was complete transparency with all the staff. With great reluctance he agreed. We called a staff meeting, there were around 30 men, women and boys. He said that he couldn’t face them and left the premises for the duration of the meeting.

We explained to the staff exactly why we were there and what the problem was, and we were going to put in place a plan to save the business. Suddenly there was a voice from the team who said, “we know exactly what’s going on, we’re not idiots, we see deliveries being delayed because of payment problems” Then he said something that taught me a lesson I have never forgotten.

He turned round and addressed his colleagues saying, "I don't know about the rest of you, but I am prepared to work for half my pay for a couple of months if it will help to save our jobs" Quite quickly the rest agreed believing that it was better to take a pay cut for a short time to end up with their jobs than be made redundant. We built that into the plan and two months later with a strict adherence to the plan we were able to reinstate their salaries and as well the company was saved.

The lesson I learned was that honesty and transparency were extremely important in a business as in life. When someone in your team has gone astray or made a boo boo the best way to handle it is to get everything out in the open. Get everyone's understanding of what has happened and commit to finding a solution. If we do not have transparency, then we have secrecy and secrecy is devious and disruptive. The staff at the garage business I visited could have helped the owner earlier if he had been honest and open with them.

Times are hard, everyone is working under immense pressure so if you unite your team and get them working on the problems you face such as staff illness then they might come up with solutions, Covid threatens everyone and decimates all our teams, even football teams! If you unite your team and spread the load, then we have more chance of overcoming our problems. I recently had the vaccine and found that when I went to the location for the jab, I was surrounded by an enormous team of health care professionals and volunteers; Rotary Club members; Lions Club members; Women's Institute and of course the Army. They all pulled together to make sure I was dealt with speed and care.

Finally, remember the Boat Race, two boats with 8 rowers and a cox, if anyone of those does not perform to the best of their ability the race will be lost. We must all pull together and hopefully we will win the race.

"Every man should be born again on the first day of January. Start with a fresh page. Take up one hole more in the buckle if necessary, or let down one, according to circumstances; but on the first of January let every man gird himself once more, with his face to the front, and take no interest in the things that were and are past" Henry Ward Beecher

Think there is something you can't achieve in 2021? Please prove it

Time to read: 42 seconds

Dear Steve

And the only way to do that is to do something and see if it works, or not.

There is no 'right' or 'wrong' way of doing anything – there is only what works and what does not.

Do you have a dream, a hope, an outcome that you want to achieve in 2021?

Great

Now you have a choice.

You can think about it – oh, if only that was enough!

You can talk about it – until you give yourself a headache.

Or you can do something – take one action, and see if it takes you closer to achieving it, or further away.

If it takes you closer, than do more of the same.

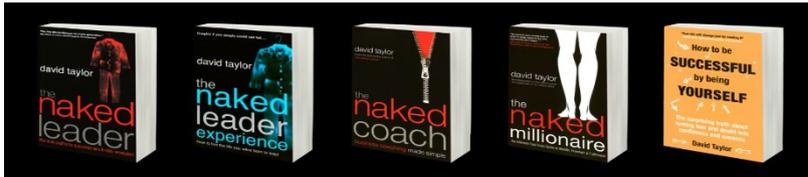
If it doesn't then do something else.

And keep going until you achieve it.

That is not the best way to achieve success – it is the only way.

David

David Taylor the author of these great books I recommend to you. (from the left I have read)



My Top 3 Picks from Ted.com

Each month I search Ted.com for thought provoking and inspiring presentations so you don't have to. Here are my top 3 picks just for you:

Ted 5 secrets to great public speaking – Chris Anderson

https://www.ted.com/talks/chris_anderson_ted_s_secret_to_great_public_speaking#t-95

There's no single formula for a great talk, but there is a secret ingredient that all the best ones have in common. TED curator Chris Anderson shares this secret -- along with four ways to make it work for you. Do you have what it takes to share an idea worth spreading?

The counterintuitive way to be more persuasive – Niro Sivanathan

https://www.ted.com/talks/niro_sivanathan_the_counterintuitive_way_to_be_more_persuasive

What's the best way to make a good point? Organizational psychologist Niro Sivanathan offers a fascinating lesson on the "dilution effect," a cognitive quirk that weakens our strongest cases -- and reveals why brevity is the true soul of persuasion.

Try something new for 30 days – Matt Cutts

https://www.ted.com/talks/matt_cutts_try_something_new_for_30_days

Is there something you've always meant to do, wanted to do, but just ... haven't? Matt Cutts suggests: Try it for 30 days. This short, lighthearted talk offers a neat way to think about setting and achieving goals.

"Hang in there. Today is the tomorrow you were so worried about yesterday. Be bold and mighty forces will come to your aid." Sir Anthony Hopkins

8 Self-Care Do's and Don'ts to Follow in 2021

By Megan Nicole O'Neal

The world has changed in many ways. And as we approach the start of a new year, for many it only brings more unanswerable questions. As we look toward the horizon filled with the

unknowns of 2021, prioritizing and preserving your mental health is all the more important. Here are eight tips mental health experts recommend you follow in 2021:

1. DO recognize feeling anxious during times of uncertainty is normal.

“Humans are wired to dislike uncertainty. It messes with our evolutionary survival strategies and raises our internal level of alert,” explains Dr. Jennifer Love, MD, board-certified in psychiatry, addiction psychiatry and addiction medicine. “We tend to respond the same way to stress each time, so the best predictor of future behaviour is past behaviour.”

In other words, if you reacted strongly to sudden life changes in the past, you’re likely to feel equally as unsettled if a similar situation arises in the future. Dr. Love advises that you pay close attention to how you feel when new stressors present themselves, as it could be a clue to help lower your anxiety.

“If your reaction is ‘hysterical,’ it’s probably historical,” Dr. Love says. “If my stress response is disproportionate to the stress itself, then I’m likely responding to something in the past. Understanding this goes a long way in taming the internal stress-beast.”

However, it’s important to note that not everyone feels anxious by the unknown. In fact, for some it can be somewhat of a good thing, and there’s science behind that, too.

“On the flip side, those who are risk takers and thrive on an element of surprise or love a high-octane pace, might feel enlivened and excited by what’s new or fresh, and might enjoy the unexpected and unknown,” says Stephanie Newman, Ph.D., psychoanalyst, private practice psychologist, and author. “By acknowledging a lack of control and refraining from trying to fix or change what you cannot, some experience relief.”

2. DON’T assume self-care is one size fits all.

Laura Rhodes-Levin, LMFT., founder of The Missing Peace Center for Anxiety, says a big misconception people have around self-care is that it happens just because we hashtag the word occasionally. “Self-care is one of the most overused terms and underutilized concepts. Everything from our physical health to our mental health to our overall good moods are dependent on self-care. Yet unfortunately, in my experience, most of us don’t know what self-care really is.”

Which a simple glance at the interwebs will confirm. Nearly every link on the first page of Google when searching “self-care” is a reiteration of the same question, “What is self-care?”

“People often assume self-care is limited to physical hygiene like combing your hair each morning or showering on a regular basis,” Dr. Newman explains. “But that’s just a piece of the puzzle. The term refers just as much to emotional well-being and mental hygiene as to physical hygiene.”

The reason self-care is hard to grasp lies in the fact that, in order to be effective, self-care will be different for each person. Rhodes-Levin prefers to describe self-care as taking time out of your day (every day ideally) to do something that “fills you up and makes you feel good.” For some this might be journaling, making a gratitude list or a hobby that buoys your spirits. It could even be laying in the grass and watching the sun set. The key is to get introspective and figure out which things bring *you* joy.

3. DO allot just 10 minutes a day for yourself.

Although it’s hard to discern what post-COVID society will be like, it appears some of the changes brought on by the pandemic could actually boost your mental health. Think back to 2019, if you

can remember that far; your free time was likely traded in for busy schedules laden with commitments and appointments that left you running from place to place without a minute to spare. 2020 has forced a stillness that turns out is quite good for you; in doses, that is. And according to Dr. Roseann Capanna-Hodge, psychologist and integrative mental health expert, that dose could be as short as 10 minutes.

“People tend to assume you need a lot of time to help your body relieve stress, but just 10 minutes a day of an activity that helps our nervous system to power down can have a big impact on how we feel physically and mentally.”

She recommends activities like deep belly breathing and progressive meditation, which both help the nervous system be less reactive to stress by teaching it to sync into a calmer, parasympathetic state.

4. DON'T lower your working environment standards just because you're working from home.

Similar to the old saying “you are who you surround yourself with,” as we continue to work from home in 2021, understand that you are *what* you surround yourself with. Studies show a cluttered environment can negatively impact your mental health and is associated to life dissatisfaction, so if you're working from a disarrayed dining table, you may need to make some changes.

“Clutter increases the main stress hormone cortisol,” Dr. Love explains.

The good news? Dr. Regine Muradian, PsyD, a licensed clinical psychologist who specializes in stress and anxiety, says there are quick and easy ways to reduce anxiety around your work-from-home space. She recommends people move around their working space if they are feeling bored or having difficulty concentrating. If you aren't able to swap locations due to a lack of room or others in your household occupying space, try adding new elements to your current workspace instead. For example, add a candle or a new pencil holder and refresh the area often so it feels different.

Dr. Love agrees: “I change my home office, which is actually my dining room, décor regularly. A new arrangement of flowers, adding or taking away a tablecloth—literally just moving accessories around—keeps it feeling fresh week after week!”

5. DO force yourself to take scheduled breaks throughout the workday.

Rome wasn't built in a day, and certainly not from your kitchen table. Productivity in 2021 should be regarded differently, and collectively we need to take the pressure off of high performance during a global pandemic.

“Very few of us are at home curing cancer,” Rhodes-Levin laughs. “Research has shown that workers who take 10 minutes per hour for themselves are much more productive than those who do not. This can be done by simply walking away from your work area. Listen to some music for 10 minutes, do some jumping jacks or even dance around to get your endorphins flowing. Just make your break completely work free.”

However, if the 10-minute method doesn't seem to work for you, Dr. Capanna-Hodge suggests establishing a routine you can follow to bring structure to times of uncertainty.

“If you're sitting in one location for work, teaching, eating, and relaxing, your brain will not be able to switch gears and instead you will feel the cognitive and physical effects of stress,”

Capanna-Hodge says. “It’s a good idea to move around, following a schedule and a routine that incorporates breaks, lunch, physical activity, and in different and designated areas of your home to help your subconscious brain alert appropriately to the task at hand and better switch gears in the future.”

Yet whichever you decide to try in 2021, remember there will be some days when you’re more productive than others and that’s natural. So, cut yourself some slack; all anyone can ask of you is your best, and it’s all you can ask of yourself.

6. DON’T ignore your feelings of grief because someone else’s problems seem “bigger.”

Undoubtedly, 2020 has caused trauma—clinically defined as the loss of feeling safe in the world—for many collective groups: those with pre-existing conditions isolating for nearly a year, people of colour, those who lost loved ones due to COVID and essential workers, just to name a few. But it’s important to understand we aren’t in a Trauma Olympics—there is no gold medal for who endures the most. If needing to cancel your wedding caused you sadness, don’t hold that in because it feels less important than your sibling’s layoff. Your personal pains matter, so give yourself permission to feel them and grieve without judgment.

“Grieving is not attributed just to a physical loss,” Dr. Muradian says. “Understanding the stages of grief is important as we begin to heal, regardless of the type of loss we’ve experienced.”

The five stages of grief follow the acronym DABDA: Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression and Acceptance. You can go through these stages all at once and in no order. And if in 2021 you suddenly find your thoughts meander back to past failures or exes for example, you haven’t lost your mind.

“Trauma has a cumulative effect in which old losses (think divorces or deaths of close family members) get stirred up,” explains Dr. Newman. “As negative feelings are compounded over time, it can cause making it through the day to feel overwhelming.”

When moving through complex emotions, all of the experts emphasize the importance of finding someone you can speak to and share your feelings out loud—whether that be a professional or someone close to you that you can trust. A support system is also an essential element of self-care.

“As we end this year, think about what you would like 2021 to be like for you. Hope is important to hold onto,” Dr. Muradian says. “Remind yourself that 2021 will be different and that positive things are coming.”

7. DO focus on what you can control if things feel helpless.

With millions of people struggling to find work, as we approach 2021 many individuals feel burned out or helpless, which makes setting New Year’s resolutions seem futile. But Dr. Love advises there are still benefits to setting small goals, despite the current climate.

“Crisis often takes us out of the driver’s seat, whether we’ve lost a job or undergoing medical treatment. When this happens, focus on what you *can* control. Make a list of what you can’t control, everything that *is* under your control, and then list some things you can do about the things you can’t control.”

Some practical steps to put you back in the driver’s seat might be:

Make it a goal to submit two job applications per day.

With all of your newfound time at home, make a list of things you always wished to do, like cooking, learning an instrument, knitting—the more creative the better! Try tackling one of these activities per week/month.

Set a goal to meet a certain step count each day.

As you meet these goals, your confidence will begin to bounce back because focusing on what you can control gives you the trappings of a blueprint to help you overcome the feelings of powerlessness. Although understand that your unease won't necessarily fizzle overnight.

“Those who feel helpless should grace themselves with room to grieve, while realizing feelings of loss don't just disappear,” Dr. Newman shares. “Being told we've been let go can make us feel like we're failures or as though we've lost a crucial part of our identity. Processing a termination can take weeks, perhaps months.”

8. DO maintain regular mental health upkeep, even in times of joy.

Of course, in 2021 make it a habit of getting seven to eight hours sleep, eating well, exercising regularly. However, year-round you should also build checking in with yourself into your daily practice. Mental health is more effective when on the offensive; don't undervalue its importance once the world begins to resemble something a little more “normal.”

So what does regular maintenance look like? It can be simple gifts you give yourself that cost \$0.00, or perhaps for you it's something different.

“If you are tired of zooming, overwhelmed by requests for virtual happy hours, but you're worried about declining (since what else do you have to do?), it's OK to say no,” Dr. Newman emphasizes. “Slowing down is a way to be kind to yourself, too.”

Incorporating patterned breathing techniques is a quick way to recenter. For example, the 4-7-8 breathing technique has you breathe in through the nose for four seconds, hold your breath for seven seconds, and finally exhale from your mouth for eight seconds; repeating the cycle at least three times in a row. Dr. Capanna-Hodge recommends people complete this two to four times each day.

“Seven days a week, we need to take a few minutes a day to calm our nervous system and connect to our breath and body,” Dr. Capanna-Hodge explained. “A simple, 4-7-8 breath is a good base to regulate the central nervous system so your body is less reactive to stressors.”

Yet perhaps most poetically, Dr. Love shared one final thought. “If you are holding anger, channel that energy into motivation for change; don't let it seep into your bones.”

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