

LEADERSHIP and ENGAGEMENT

March 2020

(Established 2006)

Welcome to this month's edition.

One of the highlights of putting together the 'Leadership & Engagement' pack is when I receive articles written especially for the monthly edition by Damian and Meike and this month is no exception so thank you both for the contributions. Our first article is from Damian Piper.....'**Helping yourself to handle the Coronavirus**' Damian writes this month: "large parts of the world are preparing for or managing the impact of the coronavirus. Despite all the challenges this is throwing up (and will continue to throw up) it provides many opportunities to recognise what we are grateful for.

Meike Beckford, as part of her series 'Highlights from an MBA', writes about Authentic Leadership Meike shares something from the beginning of her MBA that helped her to reflect on her leadership journey so far.

I have, as always, included a number of articles I've sourced from various messages I have received, which I hope will help you become the best version of yourself e.g. John C. Maxwell: '4 Ways to Reach Your Personal Best' and 'How Your Words Impact Your Success' by Jim Rohn

With COVID 19 in our thoughts, I have tried to keep to a theme of 'mindfulness' and 'gratitude' throughout this month's edition, as we cope with the challenges and the way it may change our lives in the short term. I thought it appropriate to include a post I wrote four years ago about: Being Bettina's Dad: Bettina transforming my life with mindfulness (this is the last article in this month's edition)

Mindfulness means paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, infused with qualities like kindness, curiosity and acceptance

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

Take care and Stay Well

Steve Raw FirstLM, FCMI, GCGI

Email: steve.raw@thera.co.uk

Blog: www.leadershipintheraw.org

Instagram: @thera.leadership

Twitter: @SteveRaw836

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/steve-raw-72454721/>

It's not about how good you are,

It's how Good You want to be

Helping yourself to handle the Coronavirus

As I write this the UK and large parts of the world are preparing for or managing the impact of the coronavirus. Despite all the challenges this is throwing up (and will to continue to throw up) it provides many opportunities to recognise what we are really grateful for.

Take care to not take things for granted. Our general health, travel plans and social plans are just some examples of the coronavirus impact. It's hard to know how far that impact will stretch. When we are busy dealing with daily life we can overlook or take for granted the things we have and do. When they are threatened or taken away it can make us appreciate them more.

We don't have to wait for things to get taken away to appreciate them. Getting into the habit of practising gratitude has many benefits. From bringing perspective to calming our minds down. Getting into the habit of practising gratitude regularly might just help us handle the challenges and reduce the stresses that come our way of over the coming months.

Here are three observations that can help with developing a gratitude practice:

- 1) **Make people a part of gratitude.** Think about who has done something for you or is in your life that you are grateful for. Resist the temptation to get too fancy here. There are likely hundreds of examples you'll be able to reflect on, of people who have done things for you. Just the act of reflecting will have positive benefits. Here's an example of something that happened to me yesterday. I'm grateful that James trusted me to discuss the challenges he is experiencing with a work relationship.
- 2) **Get definite about the thing you are grateful for.** Here's an example of what I mean, instead of saying or writing I'm grateful for my health, dig a little deeper, with something like, I'm grateful for my health as it allowed me to run for and catch the train today when I was late.
- 3) **Influence your positive emotions.** Tapping into the positive elements of why your grateful is a powerful element of gratitude. Just by doing this you're likely to generate that feeling again. And as a result, reduce the production of unhelpful hormones and increase the production of helpful hormones. To be clear here when I say unhelpful hormones, I'm assuming your life is not under threat. The cancellation of a football match is not a threat to your life. It can be hard for your mind to make that distinction though. Practising gratitude can help bring this perspective. The unhelpful hormones I refer to are super helpful when we are genuinely under threat.

Have a go at developing a gratitude practice. If daily feels like too much, how about every other day? And if that's too much how about once a week? You might just find this deceptively simple exercise helps you navigate the coronavirus challenges or any other challenges that come your way.

As always, I'm interested to hear your thoughts and observations.

Drop me a line at damian@effectivechallenge.com

PS. If you are finding you're spending time unhelpfully worrying about the Coronavirus you may find a recent episode of the Effective Challenge Podcast of use. [ECP 026 Getting in Your Own Way](#)

Damian

Damian Piper

Change coach and consultant



“We have all a better guide in ourselves, if we would attend to it, than any other person can be” Jane Austin

Highlights from an MBA ... Authentic Leadership

This month, I wanted to share something from the beginning of my MBA that helped me reflect on my leadership journey so far. First, an approach to documenting and unpacking your experience so far and then some more general reflections on authentic leadership.

Learning from your lived experience

1. Start by writing your personal definition of leadership. Not the dictionary definition, but what it means for you.
2. Next, draw your leadership timeline. Start with a simple line across the page to represent your timeline and start adding significant leadership experiences, whether your own, or ones you've observed. These could include positive and negative experiences and range across family, education, professional and other community experiences that have shaped you and your view of leadership. Note what you took from each one, such as values, mindsets and good/bad practice.
3. Find a friend/mentor/coach and talk through your leadership timeline. Ideally you would both do one and can then share each other's. They may help you draw out themes, underlying values and turning points – they're not there to 'judge' your timeline but help you make sense of your experience.
4. Write your 'rules of thumb' (heuristics) for leadership. What rules have you set yourself to guide you as a leader?
5. Review your definition of leadership from step 1. How has this been shaped by the experiences in your timeline and the rules of thumb you follow?

This approach acknowledges that we have both an experiential self and a narrative self – the experiential self is there in the moment, feeling and reacting to what is happening, but very quickly the narrative self-intervenes to review and re-write the experience in order to make sense of it. This will be influenced by your previous experiences, values and views of yourself and others and may well be some way off the 'truth' (if that can be objectively defined).

It will be edited to fit into the stories you tell yourself (like the 'I'm clumsy' story Damian from [Effective Challenge](#) shared last month) and may reinforce positive or negative assumptions,

behaviours and views (have a look at the [Chimp Mindset](#) from Prof Steve Peters for more of this, including your goblins and gremlins!) Working on our own timeline and definitions may give us an opportunity to make this more conscious and reflect on what is and isn't helpful so we can make a choice about how we use that to go forward, perhaps allowing us to adopt more of a growth mindset for the future (try this [TEDx talk from Carol Dweck](#) for more on that).

Authentic leadership

This the first step in Bill George and colleagues' approach to 'discovering your authentic leadership', which is:

1. 'Learning from your life story' and conscious of how you 'reframe' this
2. 'Knowing your authentic self' – being 'willing to be vulnerable'
3. 'Practicing your values and principles' in your actions as a leader, even under stress
4. 'Balancing your extrinsic and intrinsic motivations' (from outside, e.g. praise and recognition, or from inside, e.g. your goals and life story)
5. 'Integrating your life by staying grounded' – being consistently yourself in different areas of your life, building resilience and managing stress
6. 'Empowering people to lead' at all levels in a long-term, sustainable way

Their approach (which you can read more about in the [Harvard Business Review](#)) requires self-awareness, reflection and emotional intelligence. It is not about finding a narrative/style and sticking to it, but an overall mindset based on an awareness of where you are coming from and your core values/priorities alongside an openness to growth, to give you the best chance of ongoing development and effective leadership in a genuine, authentic way.

What is authentic leadership for you?

With thanks,

Meike Beckford

My thanks again to [Lancaster University Management School](#), in particular in this piece to Steve Kempster, Chris Saunders, Neil Ralph and Robyn Remke.

You can follow me on [@MeikeB88](#) and find out more about my organisation: [www.dosh.org](#).

My sources:

Bill George, Peter Sims, Andrew McLean and Diana Mayer (2007) 'Discovering your Authentic Leadership', Harvard Business Review.

Steve Kempster (2009) 'How Managers Have Learnt to Lead: Exploring the Development of Leadership Practice'

The secret of change is to focus all of your energy, not on fighting the old, but on building the new.
Socrates

How Your Words Impact Your Success

by [Jim Rohn](#) | Feb 15, 2017

Sometimes the subtle difference in our attitude, which can make a major difference in our future, can be as simple as the language we use. It's the difference in even how you talk to yourself or others. It's consciously making a decision to quit saying what you don't want and to start saying what you do want. It's faith—believing in the best, hoping for the best and moving toward the best.

Instead of saying, “What if somebody doesn’t respond?” start saying, “What if they do respond?” Instead of saying, “What if someone says no?” say, “What if they say yes?” Instead of saying, “What if they start and quit?” say, “What if they start and stay?” Instead of saying, “What if it doesn’t work out?” say, “What if it does work out?”

When you start thinking and saying what you really want, then your mind automatically shifts and pulls you in that direction. And sometimes it can be that simple—just a little twist in vocabulary that illustrates your attitude and philosophy.

Our language can also affect how others perform and behave around us. A teenager says to a parent, “I need \$10.” The parents say, “No comprende. That’s not how you get \$10. That kind of language doesn’t work here. But ‘How can I earn \$10?’ might.”

There is plenty of money here. There is money for everybody—but you have to learn the magic words to get it. To get everything you could possibly want, you just have to learn the philosophy. How could you earn \$10?

You can’t go to the soil and say, “Give me a harvest.” You know the soil smiles and says, “Who is this clown that brings me his need and brings me no seed?” And if you say to the soil, “I’ve got this seed and if I planted it, would you work while I sleep?” And the soil says, “No problem. Give me the seed. Go to sleep and I’ll be working while you’re sleeping.” These simple principles are sometimes just a matter of language.

It is easy to stumble through almost a lifetime and not learn some of these simplicities. Then you have to put up with all the lack and all the challenges that don’t work out simply from not reading the book, not listening to the lesson, not studying your language—not being willing to search so you can then find.

But here is the great news. You can start this process anytime. For me it was at age 25. At 25 I was broke. Six years later, I was a millionaire.

You might ask, “What kind of revolution, what kind of change, what kind of thinking, what kind of magic had to happen? Was it you?”

No.

Any person, any six years you go on an intensive, accelerated personal development curve, learning curve, application curve, you can learn the disciplines. Now, it might not take the same amount of time, but the same changes and the same rewards are available for those who pay that “six-year” price. And you might find that whether it’s in the beginning to help get you started or in the middle to keep you on track, your language can have a great impact on your attitude, actions and results.

“When you arise in the morning think of what a privilege it is to be alive, to think, to enjoy, to love ...” — Marcus Aurelius

My Top 5 Picks from Ted.com

Each month I trawl Ted.com for presentations which I think may inspire you. I hope these 5 hit the mark:

The Habits of Happiness – Matthieu Ricard

http://www.ted.com/talks/matthieu_ricard_on_the_habits_of_happiness

What is happiness, and how can we all get some? Biochemist turned Buddhist monk Matthieu Ricard says we can train our minds in habits of well-being, to generate a true sense of serenity and fulfilment.

The Art of Stillness. Pico Iyer

http://www.ted.com/talks/pico_ier_the_art_of_stillness

The place that travel writer Pico Iyer would most like to go? Nowhere. In a counterintuitive and lyrical meditation, Iyer takes a look at the incredible insight that comes with taking time for stillness. In our world of constant movement and distraction, he teases out strategies we all can use to take back a few minutes out of every day, or a few days out of every season. It's the talk for anyone who feels overwhelmed by the demands for our world.

All it takes is 10 mindful minutes. Andy Puddicombe

https://www.ted.com/talks/andy_puddicombe_all_it_takes_is_10_mindful_minutes

When is the last time you did absolutely nothing for 10 whole minutes? Not texting, talking or even thinking? Mindfulness expert Andy Puddicombe describes the transformative power of doing just that: Refreshing your mind for 10 minutes a day, simply by being mindful and experiencing the present moment. (No need for incense or sitting in uncomfortable positions.)

How to build your confidence and spark it in others. Brittany Packnett

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

"Confidence is the necessary spark before everything that follows," says educator and activist Brittany Packnett. In an inspiring talk, she shares three ways to crack the code of confidence -- and her dream for a world where revolutionary confidence helps turn our most ambitious dreams into reality.

3 Tips to boost your confidence. Amy Adkins

https://www.ted.com/talks/amy_adkins_3_tips_to_boost_your_confidence

When faced with a big challenge where potential failure seems to lurk at every corner, you've probably heard the advice, "Be more confident!" But where does confidence come from, and how can you get more of it? Here are three easy tips to boost your confidence. [Directed by Kozmonot Animation Studio, narrated by Susan Zimmerman, music by WORKPLAYWORK and Cem Misirlioglu].

Never give an order that can't be obeyed. - General Douglas MacArthur

Control Your Negative Thoughts (Before They Control You)

By Steve Rizzo

I was just at JFK airport, and the place was packed. The weather was acting up and everyone seemed stressed out. I was standing at the gate, waiting to board, when the airline announced that my flight was cancelled. It was obvious that the guy in front of me was not a happy camper—because the first words out of his mouth were, “Here we go again!”

That was it. That’s all it took. The spell had been cast. Let the curse begin.

Without ever realizing it, this guy opened the door to the negative zone. It opened the moment he shook his head and said those magic words. He was now vulnerable and defenceless.

Related: [To Be Successful, Do What You Do Best](#)

That one statement and the negative resolve behind it might seem like no big deal. Who *hasn't* expressed frustration in a situation like that? However, it is the one little pebble shift that leads to an avalanche of similar, more dangerous thoughts... and that's exactly what happened next.

He took out his cell phone and proceeded to call some guy by the name of Jack. I don't know who Jack was, but I sure felt sorry for him. (The following is very close to what spewed out of the angry guy's mouth.)

"This is absolutely ridiculous! I just can't depend on this airline anymore. In fact, I can't depend on anyone anymore! Here I am waiting at the end of a long line and there's only one agent at the counter. If they cared, they'd have more people trying to accommodate us. Why do I give them my business anyway? Now I'm going to lose the account because I'm going to be late. I'm probably wasting my time anyway."

Seconds after hanging up the phone he turned to me and started complaining about the people who were in line to speak to the beleaguered gate agent. "Look at this guy! What an idiot. Doesn't he know he should have his ID ready before he gets to the counter? No wonder this line isn't moving. No one knows what the hell they're doing!" He paused for a few breaths, looking around. He saw a little boy struggling with his mother. "I wish that kid would shut up. If parents can't control their children, they shouldn't bring them to the airport! Why is it that every time I'm in line somewhere I'm surrounded by idiots?"

This guy was falling fast into the dark hole of the negative zone. He was well on his way to believing that every aspect of his life was in total chaos, that things were stacked against him.

Have you ever felt that way? How do we stop the "woe-is-me" stories when bad stuff really is happening in our life? How do we keep ourselves from feeling victimized every time some situation in our life doesn't turn out the way we want it to?

If at some point in his meltdown this guy became aware of what he was doing to compound a bad situation, if he were to acknowledge that his negativity was feeding upon itself or if he were to come to understand the consequences of remaining in that negative emotional state, he could have chosen to shift his way of thinking and create thoughts that would make him feel better. Anyone can make that choice.

Here's what he could have said to himself instead: *Wow, I have to calm down. I'm making this worse than what it really is. I have a meeting today. It's important that I'm in the right frame of mind. I know from past experience that being upset won't get me what I want. The cancellation is really out of my control. So is that kid who won't shut up. The good news is that I was smart enough to get here early and I have enough time to catch another flight. That poor ticket agent is doing the best she can. When it's my turn, I'll do it with a smile and understanding. Not only does she need a break, but so do I. I can handle this.*

Does that sound like the most unrealistic dialogue ever? Maybe. But just one of those thoughts could be enough to get the situation under control. This shift in thinking could very well have brought creative solutions to his current situation. Why? Because the more attempts you make to think positive thoughts, the more positive your reality will become. Even the slightest shift in thinking will give you a feeling of relief and start you on your way to a more productive day.

How do *you* get yourself out of the negative zone?

Related: [Say This, Not That: 7 Responses for Common Negative Thoughts](#)

Let the expert be the expert

Time to read: 2 minutes

Dear Steve

For this month's Leader Feature Clive Barrett has interviewed Sean Leahy, an experienced HR Director, in the public sector. Read on for some fantastic tips:

AS an Executive Director of People and Culture, engaging leader Sean Leahy is well placed to give his thoughts on how to create a business focused HR agenda.

Now with the Essex Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust, Sean has 20 years' experience as an HR director, specialising in employee engagement, learning and development, compensation, talent management, recruitment and employee relations.

Hugely successful in his field, Sean is the very definition of a people person and prefers to be a kind-hearted boss who leads by example – a strategy that has obviously paid dividends.

His aim is to allow and encourage every person he interacts with to fulfil the potential they already have and to flourish in their roles for the benefit of the company.

How has he achieved this? Well, in his own words, by 'being true to myself – and by letting others be true to themselves.'

Asked to give three values which have held him in good stead during his career, Sean's first example shows that he is happy letting individual flair come to the fore while honing it into an effective team unit.

'I am naturally quite a polite person who resists conflict,' he says. 'That in turn has helped me hugely in stakeholder management. Operating at board level with accountability for people, you must understand everyone's individual needs while supporting them to be part of a united vision.'

Secondly he adds: 'Let the expert be the expert. Know them and trust them even though that may need a level of bravery. I have always believed that individuals are called experts for a reason. They normally have more experience and knowledge than you so don't waste time trying to ask them to deliver your version of their expertise.'

While some bosses lead by throwing their weight around, Sean's third tip is to do the exact opposite. 'Set an expectation that Leadership and Management is not a competition,' he says. 'Great people managers make great employees and they create fantastic businesses.'

'Kind, compassionate leadership, and that does not mean being a pushover, is the only way your organisation will achieve its objectives.'

Sean has previously been HR director of the Post Office, International HR director at Key Criteria Group, group HR director and chief people officer at Netstore and head of global recruitment at Fidelity International Investments.

He champions the importance of collaboration and partnership and team working, saying, 'a one-man mission is normally his demise'.

One such fruitful partnership is with Naked Leader. He has worked closely with Naked Leader founder David Taylor and adds: 'David and Naked Leader effectively articulate the most important rule of leadership, which is to be yourself and true to your ambition. David supports me to excite my organisation about what they are capable of as individuals and collectively.

'I trust David to deliver, so I rarely give him a brief. We experience the journey of enablement together.'

David adds: We love partnering with Sean, his Board and The Trust. Sean is totally focused on and dedicated not to HR, but to patient care. Every day he asks the question - 'how does what we are doing help our patients?' He and his Board are the very example of why the NHS is such an amazing organisation.

Thank you, Clive and Sean, for an insightful interview.

David

(David Taylor author of the Naked Leader series which I personally recommend to you)

John C. Maxwell: 4 Ways to Reach Your Personal Best

By [John C. Maxwell](#)

Look in the mirror—that's your competition.

Related: [John C. Maxwell: Are You Stretching toward Your Goals or Just Coasting?](#)

Thinking about that adage the other day, I remembered a talk by swimmer Diana Nyad. Turning 60, Nyad was driving and saw her eyes during a glance in the rear-view mirror. The moment prompted introspection on what she calls "the one that got away."

Her most coveted goal was swimming nonstop from Florida to Cuba. In her 20s, she had attempted it after conquering several other long-distance challenges, but the 111-mile stretch through shark- and jellyfish-infested water defeated her.

While many of us would be enjoying our newly acquired senior discounts, Nyad was returning to the water. She hadn't swum in 31 years, not a stroke, she told her audience. But that face in the mirror was determined. She spent hours at a time in the water training—eight, 10, 12—to regain her strength, stamina and technique. She finally thought she had reached 15 hours, but her trainer clocked her at 14 hours, 58 minutes and told her not to worry about the two-minute shortfall. Nyad would have none of it. She jumped back in and swam until the stopwatch hit 15:00:00. That's commitment!

To reach your personal best, you need to learn how to challenge the person the mirror. He or she is your toughest adversary. Discovering how to overcome your limitations, fears, self-doubts—and the tendency to write off those last two minutes in the pool—will do more for your development than defeating a dozen competitors. Here's what to do.

1. Be growth-minded, not goal-minded.

I love to win, and you probably do, too. It's natural to make winning your ultimate goal, like a sports team hungering for a championship ring or a swimmer wanting to set a record. But you have to be careful about directing too much energy into one goal, like Nyad's late-in-life swim.

If you obsess over a singular event, what happens if you lose? Or for that matter, what happens after you win? Ever heard of a Super Bowl hangover? A lot of times, the champs flounder the next season.

That's why I like to concentrate on growth rather than goals: That game is never over. We're not distraught if we've lost, and we haven't peaked if we've won. There's always room to improve.

Nyad's career was actually a succession of accomplishments: She had broken the women's world record for a 22-mile swim from Capri to Naples, Italy; shattered the top time for swimming around Manhattan by an hour; and trounced the open-ocean world record for men and women in a 102.5-mile swim from the Bahamas to Florida. She grew, setting new marks time and again.

Would anybody have thought less of her if she never again put on a swimsuit? Of course not. But she saw an opportunity to grow further and set a new standard—for swimmers and for all of us worried about the limits of aging bodies.

She met that goal and set another: Nyad and her Cuba swim expedition leader Bonnie Stoll have founded EverWalk, a campaign to improve health by walking. Nyad and Stoll call it the "biggest walking initiative in American history."

2. Emphasize gradual progress.

Anyone who has tried to lose weight knows fixating on the big number is a sure way to fail. Twenty pounds is intimidating—and discouraging when the scale seems to barely budge; 2 pounds is manageable. Achieve a 2-pound goal 10 times, and you drop two sizes and earn a shopping trip.

Yes, emphasizing growth over goals is critical, but goals do have their place in competition. I think of them as milestones on the journey of growth. Set incremental ones—as with the weight-loss example—and celebrate each time you achieve one before moving to the next.

Developing small disciplines helps. As part of my daily work routine, for example, I read or listen to someone else's teaching with a goal of capturing at least one quote to use in future speaking opportunities. Salespeople make phone calls daily, touching base with past clients and reaching out to prospects; the most successful ones have the discipline to make a set number of calls daily, with an occasional challenge day in which they push themselves to dial a few more.

Big success tomorrow depends on the little things you do today.

Related: [3 Daily Habits of Very Successful People](#)

3. Develop your strengths.

When I was growing up, my parents encouraged me to find the one thing I did best and channel my energy toward it. This was incredibly liberating. I didn't have to worry about being all things to all people. I could simply grow my given talents, pushing myself to be better and better.

Countless athletes play multiple sports as kids. But the ones who go on to play in college or professionally almost always give up a sport they play well to focus on one in which they can become great. The same applies to you: Identify your natural strengths and pursue them with passion.

Research bears this out. For years, Gallup has studied the advantages of developing strengths instead of trying to fix weaknesses. One finding: People who use their strengths every day are six times more likely to be engaged on the job. You won't push yourself to new heights if your heart isn't in your work.

4. Partner with other winners.

Learning to push yourself is critical. But it's easy to lose sight of how well you're doing or pinpoint your weaknesses if you depend only on your own perspective.

The solution? Get a mentor. I've had the privilege of being coached by some of the brightest people in their fields. It is amazing how much difference their insight and advice make. Years ago, while working on my first book, I was lucky enough to partner with publishing professional Les Stobbe. I sent him samples of my work and asked for his opinion because I was worried about the quality. I appreciated his writing tips (and I'm sure my readers did, too!), but what I really valued was his encouragement. Largely because of him, I pushed myself to write and write and write. I can reach a far greater audience in print than I ever could as a speaker.

Back to Nyad: Her quest initially failed. Jellyfish attacked. Their stings felt like fire, and their poison started to shut down her respiratory system. At the time, she said her dream was crushed.

Only it wasn't. Those slimy critters didn't extinguish her competitive flame. In another attempt in 2013, at age 64, she swam from Key West to Havana—the first person to do so without a protective cage. Nyad had vowed to find a way, and for her triumphant effort, she wore a suit and mask that protected her from stings.

"Never, ever give up," she said in interviews following her feat.

We can all live by those words.

Related: [10 Steps to Achieve Any Goal](#)

This article originally appeared in the September 2016 issue of *SUCCESS* magazine.

Being Bettina's Dad: Bettina transforming my life with mindfulness

by [STEVE](#) • MARCH 10, 2016

Mindfulness means paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, infused with qualities like kindness, curiosity and acceptance



(Bettina on the beach at Frinton on Sea a couple of weeks ago)

I am looking out to the North Sea from the beach at Frinton in Essex with Bettina. My hands are cold and so are my feet and I am squinting because the wind and sea spray (not to mention the rain) is blowing in my face. Yet, for me, this is as close to heaven as you can get. I am with Bettina.

Yesterday Joyce (my wife) said that Bettina had touched Joyce's jaw to move it in time with Bettina's speech; "beach tomorrow with Dad". There was not going to be any negotiation with Bettina on what she wanted to do on Saturday. I couldn't wait!

I had had a tough week with lots of driving across the country; being on my feet (a lot) whilst delivering training and presentations so I knew what was coming from spending a morning together – peace, elation, tranquillity and contentment. All these emotions felt by just spending time with Bettina on a deserted beach on a winter's day.

So many people who have been part of Bettina's life have described the effect she has had on them just by being in her presence, so it isn't just her proud parents who feel this way. We have described her as being "spiritual" without coming up with a profound understanding of what this means and what it is that she gives out. Until now!

I had heard of 'Mindfulness' without really knowing what it was, until I saw the agenda for the next Managing Directors Meeting for my organisation. We have a presentation on Mindfulness, so I thought that as I am the current Chair, I had better read up on the subject beforehand.

Reading these chapters, I thought this is Bettina! Crikey, I reckon she was a Buddhist Monk in another life, and this is why I always feel peaceful, elated, tranquil and contented when we are together – especially when she is doing something she loves.

So how does Bettina act with Mindfulness?

- Bettina lives in the present in an enjoyable way. There is no past or future for her, only the here and now
- I often observe Bettina standing or sitting quietly thinking. Recently there was no noise coming from her bedroom and it was very quiet. We are used to hearing noise, usually laughter, so we were worried. Bettina copes with epilepsy so had she had a seizure? Joyce asked if she was ok (from outside her bedroom) she responded with "I am thinking"
- Experiencing Nature. She explores her life with the intention of experiencing the unity of life: the sky, earth, trees, grass and flowers and the whole sense of life. With her ears she experiences the sounds of nature, whether it is birds singing or the breezes rustling her hair (which she loves).
- Bettina demands nothing from this world. I believe this reveals to her an extraordinary dimension of wonder. She practices being content with what she has. It is a sign of her inner wealth

- Bettina expresses her creativity through her body in so many ways, such as music which she moves to and I think gives her inner peace and which she finds uplifting and affects her mood. Bettina is also at one with the harmonious movement of Tai Chi which she loves and practices to a high level every week.
- Walking mindfully. I don't think Bettina is thinking about her destination when she is walking. She is in the moment as she walks. Bettina feels the breeze and enjoys the steps she makes and feels the sensation on her feet – that's mindfulness. Bettina's mind is in the moment meditating as she walks.

So how does Bettina transform my life through her Mindfulness?

- Changes my relationship with daily life so that I feel more in tune with myself and others
- Leaving behind and not worrying about the future. Being happy and content in the present (previously I have been obsessed with things and events, past, present and future). I make the intention to stay calm and conscious throughout the whole day
- Instead of hurrying from one thing to another, trying to do too many things at the same time, I now focus on the activity at hand. This is what Bettina does.
- Just as I have learned from Bettina, I too practice being content with what I have in my life. I feel so fortunate and have a sense of appreciation.
- I practise achieving stillness. I have observed that when Bettina is waiting to go out with her Personal Assistant, she sits still therefore not expending any energy. She is calm. I now try to be like Bettina not fidgeting, changing position, crossing and uncrossing my legs or fiddling around with a pen. This will help me before my next Board Meeting!
- Developing an Attitude of Gratitude. Please see [“taking the time to be grateful and showing gratitude”](#) on my blog. You are grateful when you're aware of what you do have rather than what you don't.
- I carefully select music in my car on my journey to an important meeting, or to deliver a workshop, that is spiritually uplifting. I choose music that will give me waves of positive energy as I approach my destination and music that provides my inner peace after the event

“That doesn't surprise me about Bettina – that focus on the here and now and thing in hand is I'm sure what you see Bettina being great at every day. She has something to teach us all”

Karen Boyce – Dawson

A person's ethics are known through spending a long time with that person and through not being inattentive.

A person's fortitude is known through the way that person handles adversity.

A person's wisdom is known over a long time through discussing with that person matters of importance. The Buddha

Bettina is a woman who copes with Learning Disabilities, Autism and Epilepsy. Just like her big sister Jennifer, she is as beautiful on the inside as she is on the outside.



Bettina finds her own mindfulness by looking for seashells

And Finally remember.....

