

LEADERSHIP, COACHING AND MENTORING –PACK

May 2021

(15th Anniversary Year editions)

2006 - 2021

Welcome to this month's edition and here are the highlights:

Earlier in May I was invited by my organisation's Communications Team to put together a daily E-Wellbeing Newsletter for Mental Health Awareness Week. For Mental Health Awareness Month, I would like to continue this theme for May's copy of the Leadership Pack.

'Gaining a higher perspective - the weekly review and plan session' The first article from **Damian Piper our Resilience coach:** 'For many of us the range and frequency of new things coming into our lives significantly outstrips our capacity. Just think about the last five years alone and consider the number of routes new 'things' can enter our world'

'Managing My Mental Health - Landlord and Tenant' by Joyce Raw. This is Joyce's take on managing her own mental health. 'My mental health, and consistent good nature, normally elicits two responses from others. I am either a) faking my ability to cope with all that comes my way, or b) I clearly do not fully understand what is going on. Neither is the case. To begin with, I come from a large northern family (four sisters and five brothers) where coping mechanisms, problem solving and taking care of yourself are the order of the day.'

Look after yourself first, by Roger Whalley 'As leaders we can often find it difficult to prioritise our well-being because we are so involved with prioritising the well-being of our team. If we fail, then our team will possibly fail also. So, it behoves us to protect and take care of ourselves. Whatever your political persuasion, it did hit the country at the start of the pandemic when the Prime Minister was struck down. All of a sudden, his team had to step up to the plate and take responsibility for decisions that he might have made'

And a final article from me Do you suffer from nerves? If so, I am hoping my article will help you in the workplace and before your next big event. **'Supporting you with some tactics to control your nerves'**

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It's not about how good you are

It's how Good You want to be

Gaining a higher perspective - the weekly review and plan session

For many of us the range and frequency of new things coming into our lives significantly outstrips our capacity. Just think about the last five years alone and consider the number of routes new 'things' can enter our world. I guess I need to define what I mean by 'things'. I mean anything that has potential impact on you and requires you to make some kind of decision about what the thing means. This really is the big and small. A ping on your phone with a message in one of the many new 'inboxes' you've acquired. A conversation over breakfast about what to do at the weekend. The team meeting where you picked up actions. The realisation you need to have a 'difficult' conversation with a colleague or family member. The fact you need to buy milk. You get the idea.

In the April newsletter I discussed a range of options to help manage the above. One of the areas which feels like it needs a closer look is something I call the Weekly Review and Plan session. Here goes.

For as long as I can remember I have been interested in the subject of productivity. There's a substantial industry to help people get more of what they want achieved. For some the allure of 'being productive' becomes quite addictive. One of the more common elements within many of the approaches is dedicating time to step-back and assess your world from a higher-perspective. The frequency you need to do that will depend on you and your circumstances. For most people this works out to a weekly activity. This of course needs to be coupled with the more tactical daily and in the moment assessment of what to do next.

So what is the weekly review and plan session?

In short, a time to pause, step back and consider your completed, on-going and future commitments and ensure you are content you have your arms around them in a way that means you are better prepared to deliver and handle what comes your way. Final point by way of introduction. You have a choice to make about personal and professional here. I'd say if you can include both at the same time is best or at the very least do two versions. Over the years of working with people on this subject I've observed no one size fits all. If the Weekly Review and Plan session is something you believe could help you, I'd encourage you to experiment. With that in mind here's an approach on which you could build upon.

Approach to the weekly plan and review

Step 1 – Capture

Most of us have at least 8 to 12 'inboxes'. And by inbox I don't just mean email. I mean anywhere you have inputs that have potential unclarified things you need to do or action. This includes the digital sources such as task managers and calendars but also the physical sources: notebooks, counters, bags etc. Oh, and also let's not forget the inbox in our minds – those thoughts that so often swirl around. It can be helpful to review the past week and look forward for the following two weeks. That way you capture things you may need to follow up on and things you might need to prepare for or commission to make the coming period more effective.

Step 2 – Clarify

This is a super important step. Often the reason we struggle to make progress with things is because we haven't clarified what the thing actually is and what it means. Typically, the clarify step has three broad categories, actionable material, reference material (no action but useful information) and junk.

Step 3 - Organise

This step involves putting things that you clarified into appropriate places that you can then engage with when you need to. This involves a series of questions for each of the categories of things from step 2. Here are some common examples. You will no doubt want to customise these for yourself.

Actionable material:

- Is this quick – less than a couple of minutes? If yes, do it.
- Is this date specific? Be really disciplined on this. So often people add dates to things that are just not date specific. If it is date specific – put it on your calendar or put it in your task manager with the appropriate deadline.
- What's most appropriate for the non-date specific actions? For example, if there's a question you have for your line manager put it in a place you'll see when you are next with your line manager. Some people create rolling agendas for the key people they have in their lives for this purpose.
- Is the item actionable for someone else? We may capture things that are best handled by someone else. Often people are way too narrow on who the 'someone else' is. Have a good list of people to hand to trigger your thinking about who is best placed to help.
- Do you need to be reminded of this at some point in the future to take action? Have part of your system that brings forward the item to an appropriate point in the future.

Reference material

- Where do you need to put this item that you can find it in the future? Often reference systems get way too complicated. Get your reference material into the simplest version possible. And like your garden weed your reference material regularly to weed out the no longer relevant stuff. That way you'll be more attracted to use the system as opposed to creating small stacks ready to file – that ultimately you ignore.

Junk

- Use your delete key or bin effectively. So often people hang-on to things and pollute their worlds with things that should just be binned. You will have your own threshold as to how much to ditch. It's worth bearing in mind though that your brain will use energy every time it skims past that stack of papers from the last month's meeting you've been keeping or unruly email inbox to ascertain meaning. In isolation this is not a big deal. However, your brain is doing that hundreds of times a day. It all adds up and adds to brain tiredness.

Some other elements of the weekly review and plan

Here's a few other items that some people find useful in their sessions.

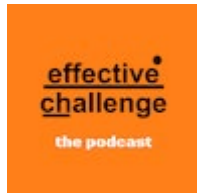
- Using this time each week can be useful to reconnect with your bigger picture goals. Are they still relevant or do they need updating?
- Reconnect to your values and assessing how well you are living them.
- Triggering items that you have delegated but you've not heard about progress.
- Renegotiating personal deadlines with yourself. What is and is not important changes frequently. Stepping back each week to confirm or change what's most important to you will help you handle the day-to-day challenges with a grounded confidence.

If you have not got something like the weekly review as part of your productivity approach, why not give it a go? It does take some effort and discipline to achieve however the peace of mind and effectiveness that can come as a result of doing it, is well worth it.

As always, I'm interested in any questions and or observations you may have.

damian

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When you get into a tight place and everything goes against you, till it seems as though you could not hold on a minute longer, never give up then, for that is just the place and time that the tide will turn. Harriet Beecher Stowe

‘Managing My Mental Health - Landlord and Tenant’ by Joyce Raw.

This is Joyce's take on managing her own mental health

[Managing my mental health – landlord and tenant – Leadership in the Raw](#)

When discussing with my husband Steve - www.leadershipintheraw.org - the fact that May is Mental Health Awareness Month, I offered to write an article for Steve's Wellbeing post on my own mental health and how I manage it.

Over the last year Steve, like many others, has been spending all his time working from home which has included many hours on Teams meeting with colleagues. This has meant that many "other halves" like me have been making regular guest appearances in the background - although this has mainly been a supporting role providing copious amounts of tea and cake! Whilst I have tried to make my presence as unobtrusive as possible, I have been caught out many times with people spotting me sliding in with cups and plates and I must say I have detected a slight tinge of envy from some quarters that Steve is being spoilt - sorry! However, now that I am a "face" rather than just "Joyce" I thought that you may be curious as to how I keep it all going as many of you have read our posts on the "Being Bettina's mum/dad series, and the fact that I also have our eldest daughter, Jennifer, working from home full time and Bettina and her carer popping in and out. As our home is normally my "office" during the day, having to share the premises with other tenants can be tricky, but I think I have found a good way forward and it is a system, or tool, that I have used for years.

However, I do feel that some background, or point of reference, is important before I explain what I mean. My mental health, and consistent good nature, normally elicits two responses from others. I am either a) faking my ability to cope with all that comes my way, or b) I clearly do not fully understand what is going on. Neither is the case. To begin with, I come from a large northern family (four sisters and five brothers) where coping mechanisms, problem solving and taking care of

yourself are the order of the day. Whilst older siblings would look after the younger ones, you still needed to be guarded about any weakness or chinks in your armour that would give you away. Having spats with siblings, even over trivial issues, trains you to find solutions to situations rather than all-out war - negotiators rather than aggressors - absorbing emotional intelligence and psychological tactics along the way. These tools have shaped who I am as a person and are the essence of my mental health. When you are taught from infancy that you are not the centre of the universe you develop an enviable self-sufficiency and (hopefully) a good sense of humour and the ability to see through a situation to the other side.

This is not to say, however, that I do not suffer from the same worries, anxieties or feelings as anyone else; it just means that I am able to cope better than most as I adopt a "Landlord and Tenant" attitude to any issues. First, I see my brain as the "Landlord". My brain is the property and I have rooms to let. I am looking for good tenants, or at least tenants who will become good tenants with a little training, I am not looking for timewasters, bad debtors, squatters or property vandals. I want tenants who are going to add value to the property and give me a good return on my investment. Second, the "Tenants" are my emotions. This lot are tricky to say the least! As their Landlord, it's in my best interest to ensure I get the best tenants I can, not the anti-social ones who would prefer to live rent-free, cause chaos with the neighbours, devalue the property and rack up debt. Additionally, I do not want tenants who are going to invite their friends to live in my property without permission, or sublet empty rooms

The theory sounds good, so how does this work in reality you ask? Let's imagine that we have a very eager tenant who wants to move in. Their name is "anxiety". Anxiety has a long record and well-known reputation for being a bad tenant but is persistent (sometimes relentless) and is looking for somewhere to live on a long-term let, hopefully leading to permanent residence. Now, you recognise that you should be polite to Anxiety - we don't want to live in a cruel world do we? - listen to their problems in finding somewhere decent to live, acknowledge that they may have had a personality clash with their previous landlord but there the sympathy has to end. Anxiety is an imposter and an identity thief and eviction may take some time! By all means, remain on good terms with Anxiety just don't let them live with you for free. Anxiety will rob you of your peace of mind and your ability to cope with your other tenants, so acknowledge their existence politely, wish them well and send them on their way

Anxiety also likes to get one of their friends to move in if they can. This one is called "Night-time terror". Night-time terror, or NTT as I call them, is a party animal with no respect for your sleep or the sleep needs of other tenants. NTT likes to appear at your door at the very moment when you want to sleep. NTT is looking for somewhere to crash and rings the doorbell constantly until you answer it. The minute you open the door, NTT will insist on turning on all the lights and will make as much noise as possible so you do not sleep, and nor will the other tenants. NTT has no emotional intelligence therefore no amount of pleas will get them to be quiet, nor will NTT understand that you have work the next day. NTT is persistent and belligerent, so turn off the lights, keep the property in darkness and do not let NTT in under any circumstances.

Of course, there are some tenants we want to encourage to move in and stay as long as possible. A really good tenant is "sense of perspective". SOP is a great steady, responsible and calm tenant who will ensure all bills are paid on time. SOP will not allow Anxiety and NTT to move in permanently, nor wreck the property or invite their other anti-social friends to move in. SOP likes to get a good night's sleep and recognises the importance of keeping on an even keel at all times. SOP is great friends with "Mind and Body" - who is actually very trendy and is always spouting on about the link between

healthy mind/healthy body and, whilst technically not an emotion (and therefore a tenant) SOP does not see any harm in letting MAB use the spare room from time to time!

So how is this all going to work for you? These are my five top tips:

1. Assert your right to be the Landlord of your brain. You are in charge, you have legal rights, you do not have to let the tenants run riot and wreck your property.

2. Learn to recognise your emotions by name and hence their right to live in your property. Do not be afraid of evicting unwanted tenants. You are not being cruel; you are being realistic. If you need external help from another Landlord or mediation services (mental health support) do not be hesitant - go and get it! This is your property

3. Understand that bad tenants do not always go away permanently. Sometimes they reinvent themselves and call themselves something different. Be prepared for this eventuality and know that it is not your fault if they try moving in again.

4. Accept that no matter how hard you try, some tenants will not go away just like that. This is when you call on your "good" tenants to come to your aid and see if, together, you can get an eviction. SOP is always willing to help but very often keeps a low profile so you may have to search in the locality a little harder to find them, but they will be there.

5. Never ever apologise to anyone if you are, or become, the best Landlord in the area. If you are a great Landlord it will put you in the position of being able to help other, and possibly less able, Landlords who may be under attack from rampaging tenants.

Over the years I have been told I am: optimistic, good natured, mature, humourous, full of beans, calm, strong and many other things - I have, of course, been called some uncomplimentary things too but let's not dwell on those! - but the truth of the matter is that I am just one kick-ass Landlord! My tenants come and go but I am always in charge of who crosses the threshold.

As always with my posts, I add the disclaimer that I am not a qualified therapist, psychologist or medical practitioner of any kind, but my wellbeing speaks for itself!

Regards

Joyce



"It's a wonderful piece of writing"

David Taylor bestselling author

'We stumble,' said Dr Macgregor.

We try our best in this life, but we stumble.

Then we pick ourselves up again, and the dance continues.'

From Bertie's Guide to Life and Mother's by Alexander McCall Smith

Look after yourself first, by Roger Whalley

I've written loads of articles and lectured all over the world on Leadership and Management, I've sat in lectures and seminars lead by people much more knowledgeable than me but what I've missed is how do I lead myself. So, I thought it might help all of us if I looked at how to look after and lead yourself.

As leaders we can often find it difficult to prioritise our well-being because we are so involved with prioritising the well-being of our team. If we fail, then our team will possibly fail also. So, it behoves us to protect and take care of ourselves. Whatever your political persuasion, it did hit the country at the start of the pandemic when the Prime Minister was struck down. All of a sudden his team had to step up to the plate and take responsibility for decisions that he might have made.

If I could give you a little case study that broadly follows the opening of the book, "Leadership and the One Minute Manager. You might remember that I loosely explained this in an earlier article.

In this case our team leader is called Harry. He is a senior team leader in his organisation. He constantly micromanages his team and they respond to his requirements for accurate reporting. He ensures that they take proper breaks away from their desks and provides facilities for their rest and relaxation. They think Harry is a good boss. He encourages them to spend quality time with their loved ones. If you asked him, he would say that the well-being of his team is his highest priority.

What he doesn't realise is that he does not apply these ideals to himself. Harry rocks up at the office or logs on at home before his staff so he can ensure that they can hit the ground running. He works through the lunch break and is always on-line or in the office long after his guys have gone home to their loved ones. He does this partly because he believes it sets a good example. There's no doubt that it does, but....

He is burning himself out. He gets over-tired and forgets things. He becomes a little bad tempered. He gets earache at home and his kids don't recognise him and as a result his management of himself and his well-being deteriorates. So how can we avoid this, all too common, failing of even the best leaders.

- Here are some simple strategies that can help managers to prioritise their own well-being and as a result be in a better place to manage, enthuse and control their teams.

How they can Identify their own stress triggers and early warning signs that well-being is being affected.

- Encourage them to notice changes in their thoughts, feelings and behaviour.
- Make sure they take regular breaks throughout the working day and try to manage tasks so that they can finish work in time to unwind with their families.

- Make sure that they plan their day to allow for a formal lunch break. Away from the desk and if possible, the office. Maybe a short visit to the shops, or a stroll in the park, having an off-line or out of touch period.
- Making sure they monitor their health and taking days off if they are unwell. Avoiding the feeling that they are indispensable, and that the world would stop spinning if they didn't control it.
- Building a support network of folk who take over the reins in their absence. We are all not indispensable in the end.

Just as one would look around, notice, talk and act in relation to those around you, you need to do this for yourself. Looking after yourself is a priority not a luxury.

What you should be noticing?

It's not easy noticing stress in oneself. It's too easy to hide it and blame other things, but stress can be a killer. I have seen many cases of managers burning themselves out. This is especially happening in these times of Zoom and Teams. My own daughter who is a Chartered Accountant has been working at home pretty well for a year. She does need to keep contact with her clients and work colleagues and so can have up to 10 or 12 online meetings in a day. She claims that this is more tiring than the face-to-face meetings she has been used to. She is seeing the stress develop in herself after a day of zooming around.

You may notice the physical signs of stress; difficulty getting to sleep; snacking instead of proper meals; pouring too many glasses of vino; upset stomach, more headaches than usual and maybe biting nails.

You may also notice emotional signs such as feeling overwhelmed, losing your temper and more ups and downs than usual. You may also experience mental signs such as indecisiveness, being forgetful, having negative thoughts and difficulty concentrating. You may postpone important decisions and not answer emails or letters. Particularly you may feel completely overwhelmed when you open your email inbox and wonder how on earth you are going to reply to them all. When I open my inbox in the morning, I firstly quickly delete any that are irrelevant and just leave the ones that are important, then I religiously answer everyone, sometimes with a short "holding" note for later.

I also try to handle each piece of paper only once. Any invoices or bills get paid on that day. For example, I set aside a day each month which is my day for paying all my credit cards. I have a pad beside my desk on which I make notes for "Action today" and I usually find that I can complete them by prioritising those which are "Urgent and Important" and leaving those that are merely "Urgent" or "Important". It's not too hard to keep control of your workload.

Finally, there may be signs of social problems such as withdrawing contact from others, locking oneself in the toilet is a good example. You may lose confidence and start to avoid friends and colleagues, using irrational behaviours such as shopping on the internet for things you don't really need. People may also start to gamble.

All these stress indicators may be different from one to another. When you think you are spotting signs or worse still if your colleagues draw your attention to these signs you may need to get help.

So, where can you get help? Who can you talk to? It's very hard to admit to another person that you are failing. You may need professional help. The first thing is to admit to yourself that you need help. You may perceive talking to someone about your problems is a sign of weakness, this is not the case

recognising you need help is showing strength. So, remember that asking or seeking help does not admit failure. Help will probably stop you failing.

Remember the information you get when you get on an airplane. Put your own oxygen mask on before helping others! It may be that by putting yourself first for a change you might improve the help you give to others!

“The art of statesmanship is to foresee the inevitable and expedite its occurrence” Talleyrand

Who are you to be successful?

Time to read: 1 minute

Dear Steve

A question frequently asked, perhaps not directly, often by those who care about you - who don't want you to take risks - and sometimes by people who wish they could be as ambitious as you.

There are many variations, of course:

‘Please be careful, I wouldn't want you to fail’

‘How are you going to achieve that?’

‘You? Come on, in your dreams’

I have never been a great believer in comfort zones – most people in these are as uncomfortable as hell.

I think we have familiarity zones – in times of fear we will always retreat to what is most familiar.

And one of our greatest fears, as Marianne Williamson brilliantly puts it, is success:

“Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure”

As indeed, you are.

Ask yourself this – is there anyone else on this planet – or any team, or organisation, who has achieved what you want to achieve?

The answer is yes – many with less resources than you.

This is especially important now, when the world really needs you – your strengths, your passions and your superpowers - to help guide us out of this Pandemic and forge a great future for each other and our world – while helping those who continue to suffer.

Who are you to be successful?

Who are you not to be?

And remember, all those people who secretly, or openly, doubted you, will be the very first to say, “I always knew you would do it”.

David

David Taylor (author of the Naked Leader books and Broadcaster)

When day comes, we ask ourselves,
Where can we find light in this never-ending shade?
.....when day comes, we step
Out of the shade aflame and the unafraid.
The new dawn blooms as we free it.
For there is always light. If only we're brave enough to see it.
If only we're brave enough to be it.

From the Hill We Climb by Amanda Gorman, read at the inauguration of President Biden

(in full) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LZ055illiN4>

LEADING WITH COMPASSION

According to the Dalai Lama

Be Mindful

Fear and anxiety easily give way to anger and violence. The opposite of fear is trust, which, related to warmheartedness, boosts our self-confidence.

Be Selfless

We are naturally driven by self-interest; it's necessary to survive. But we need wise self-interest that is generous and cooperative, taking others' interests into account.

Be Compassionate

When it comes to human beings, compassion can be combined with intelligence. Through the application of reason, compassion can be extended to all 7 billion human beings.



THIS MONTH'S PICKS FROM Ted.com support you with your Mental Health

[Sangu Delle: There's no shame in taking care of your mental health | TED Talk](#)

When stress got to be too much for TED Fellow Sangu Delle, he had to confront his own deep prejudice: that men shouldn't take care of their mental health. In a personal talk, Delle shares how

he learned to handle anxiety in a society that's uncomfortable with emotions. As he says: "Being honest about how we feel doesn't make us weak -- it makes us human."

[Sophie Andrews: The best way to help is often just to listen | TED Talk](#)

A 24-hour helpline in the UK known as Samaritans helped Sophie Andrews become a survivor of abuse rather than a victim. Now she's paying the favor back as the founder of The Silver Line, a helpline that supports lonely and isolated older people. In a powerful, personal talk, she shares why the simple act of listening (instead of giving advice) is often the best way to help someone in need

[Guy Winch: Why we all need to practice emotional first aid | TED Talk](#)

We'll go to the doctor when we feel flu-ish or a nagging pain. So why don't we see a health professional when we feel emotional pain: guilt, loss, loneliness? Too many of us deal with common psychological-health issues on our own, says Guy Winch. But we don't have to. He makes a compelling case to practice emotional hygiene — taking care of our emotions, our minds, with the same diligence we take care of our bodies.

"Happiness is not an ideal of reason but of imagination" Immanuel Kan

How to accept a compliment – genuine and otherwise

Time to read: 65 seconds

Dear Steve

How to accept a compliment that you believe is genuine

First, look the person who paid you the compliment directly in the eyes with warmth, kindness and gratitude, and say very simply "Thank you."

Those two words are very important and play a big part in your life. Just by saying them to yourself in silence, "Thank you," can make you feel warm and glowing with sensations of tingling that run throughout your entire body. These are entirely natural feelings to experience right now. You will find you feel altogether more at ease, more comfortable, more yourself, than you did before you said it.

Strangely enough, accepting a compliment will have a similar profound effect for the person 'paying' it as it does for you.

If, on the other hand you don't accept it, you are in effect saying –"Your opinions don't matter to me, and I don't think you are being genuine."

How to accept a compliment that you do not believe is genuine

This is a very clever and cunning technique for dealing with a compliment that you do not believe is genuine. Look the person saying it right in the eyes, smile and say very simply "Thank you."

In both situations, the "Thank you" is a win-win:

If the compliment was genuinely meant, all is well with both of you.

If the compliment was not genuine the person who 'paid' it will look very confused. Well done, you have managed to play with their head and given them something to think about without hurting them at all.

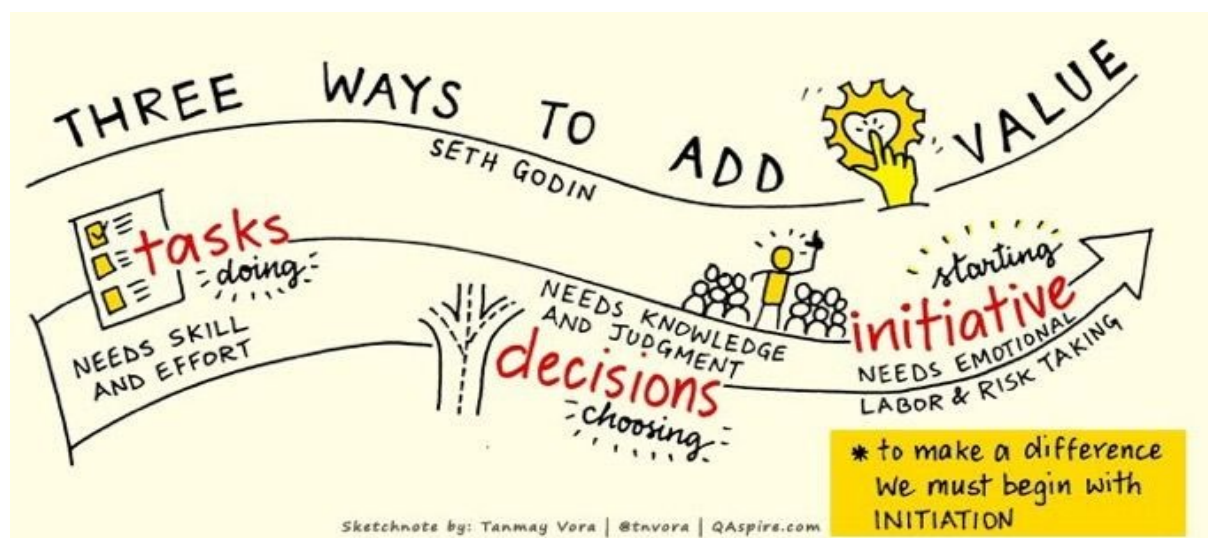
David

David Taylor

"Your beliefs become your thoughts, your thoughts become your words, your words become your actions, your actions become your habits, your habits become your values, your values become your destiny"

Mahatma Gandhi

THE WAYS TO ADD VALUE



DEAL WITH CRITICISM

Ask for it. Avoid an ambush by having regular performance catch-ups with your manager. The truth may hurt, but the sooner you hear it, the sooner you can fix it.

Keep calm and quiet. Don't interrupt critics with excuses (you'll look defensive) and don't glower (you could stop them sharing a crucial insight). Instead, be neutral and encouraging and focus on hearing and memorising everything they say.

Reframe. See criticism as proof the other person cares. Why else would he spend time and energy telling you how to improve?

Clarify. The more specific criticism is, the more helpful it is. If you don't agree or understand, delve deeper with questions. Find out exactly what you did and how it caused a problem, then summarise back to show you've taken it all in.

Pick your battles. Criticism is rarely groundless but often exaggerated. From the hyperbolic overview ('your client meetings are never successful'), select the elements you have the power to change ('you're often unprepared').

Say thank you. Welcoming feedback not only means you'll receive more (and so improve faster) but your popularity will be boosted. It shows confidence, dedication and grace, too.

Ask critics for advice. If you can stomach the home truths, turning your critic into your coach will fend off future attacks.

Switch on your filter. If a critic's comments seem irrational or emotional, ignore them. You are not a punch bag

Bounce back. Spend time with someone who thinks you're great, whether it's an old client, colleague or adoring partner.

Learn. How will you handle criticism next time? Write down three things you have learnt. Remember them. Move on.

The Mind Gym. Relationships is published by Little, Brown

FOUR SKILLS THAT ALL GREAT INNOVATORS SHARE



Sketchnote by: Tanmay Vora | @tnvora | QAspire.com

3 Ways to Improve Your Self-Image

By John C. Maxwell

The great Mark Twain was quoted once as saying that humour is the good natured side of truth. That's why we can't help but laugh sometimes in the toughest situations.

Gallows humour has a place. It can be a teacher. I am especially fond of the one about the man who went to see a fortune teller to see what she had to say about his future. She looked into a crystal ball and said, "You will be poor and unhappy until you are 45 years old."

"Then what will happen?" the man asked hopefully. Maybe a windfall was on the way.

She gazed into the crystal ball a little longer and then, looking up, told him what would happen next. "You'll get used to it."

Now, that's not a true story—at least I hope not! But couldn't you just see it working out that way for the poor young man? If he feels so unsure of himself that he would seek out a fortune teller for reassurance, I would have to envision him turning her prophecy into a self-fulfilling one.

Related: [4 Keys to Building Your Confidence](#)

The learning item from that story is that too many of us tell ourselves similarly unfortunate prophecies, then go on to live them out. We've all met the woman who won't quit smoking because she tells herself it'll be too hard, or the man who stays in a dead-end job because he doesn't believe he can make more money going it alone. Mistaken leaders may fail to ask more of their people out of fear that they won't be liked, only to have their teams eventually become disenchanted with the lack of leadership.

People are never able to outperform their self-image. If you put a small value on yourself or your abilities, rest assured that the world will not raise the price.

I must admit that self-image has never been a problem for me. I grew up in a very positive environment, and I've always believed I could succeed. But I've worked with a lot of people who didn't, and I've been able to help some of them turn the corner and believe in themselves the way I believe in them. And I hope to be able to help you, too, if that's your situation.

It's so vital that, when you look in the mirror, you value the person staring back at you—that you see someone worthy of success, respect, happiness and love. Your view of yourself is the first key building block in attaining any of those.

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If you've had a difficult time and you don't feel good about yourself or your abilities, I want to tell you that you do have value. Your life can change and you can make a difference, no matter what background you come from. No matter what traumas you've suffered or mistakes you've made, you can learn and grow. You can become the person you have the potential to be. You just need to have a healthy belief in yourself to get started.

Related: [15 Quotes to Overcome Your Self-Limiting Beliefs](#)

I want to give you three strategies to help you appreciate all that you have inside. Put these into practice, and every time you take a step, think a positive thought, make a good choice or practice a small discipline, you'll be moving your reality closer in line to your self-image.

1. Make a list.

Jot down all your best personal qualities. Don't be too modest! If needed, spend days or weeks to make the list, but don't stop until you've said every positive thing you can about yourself. Now think harder and find more. This should be comprehensive. This exercise will inform part two of this step: If it took you a long time to create your list, then you need to take time out of every day to review the list and let all these positive qualities sink in, reminding yourself of your value. Remember, if you don't value yourself, you will have a hard time adding value to others. Once you are deeply familiar with all these positive qualities you have, choose the one that best represents you. Make it the North Star of your character as you begin to build on it.

2. Speak kindly to yourself.

Few things impact a person's self-esteem more than the way they talk to themselves on a daily basis. Are you aware of how you talk to yourself? Keep track of your self-talk in your smartphone. Make a tally each time you think positive or negative about yourself. When you realize just how hard you're being on yourself, refer back to that list of personal qualities you've created.

3. Reflect well on others.

If you really want to feel valuable, you've got to share your gifts with others—be these your interpersonal qualities or your talents. How much time every day and every week do you spend focused on adding value to the people around you? Do you serve through a volunteer organization? Do you mentor people? Do you give assistance to others less fortunate than yourself? If you aren't doing so already, find a way to serve others by utilizing your strengths, especially that North Star you identified. If you're already serving, then do more. It's the surest way to improve your self-image, which is the surest way to improve others' images of you.

Never ever allow yourself to become used to feelings of mediocrity. When you look into the mirror, you should see someone who matters to you, first and foremost—someone you believe in.

Related: [5 Positive Ways to Build Your Belief in Yourself](#)

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John C. Maxwell, an internationally respected leadership expert, speaker, and author who has sold more than 18 million books, has been named an inaugural SUCCESS Ambassador. Dr. Maxwell is the founder of EQUIP, a non-profit organization that has trained more than 5 million leaders in 126 countries worldwide. A *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal* and *BusinessWeek* best-selling author, Maxwell has written three books that have sold more than a million copies.

Supporting you with some tactics to control your nerves

By Steve Raw

30 years ago and I am sitting in a parked car at the Military Corrective Training Centre (MCTC) in Colchester (some of my older readers will know that the MCTC was known as the 'Glass House' where soldiers who had 'sinned' were rehabilitated and returned to their units as "better" people) and the person marching towards me is the Regimental Sergeant Major (RSM). I haven't done anything wrong – yet! I am about to take my driving test and the RSM is a Qualified Examiner. Now, there was a time when I would have been experiencing extreme nerves at the prospect of something like this (an RSM coming towards me and/ or taking my driving test) but now I was calm and in control. I was even looking forward to getting started.

So, what changed and how was I able to control my nerves?

Do you suffer from nerves? If so, I am hoping my post will help you in the workplace (if you are a runner then this will be a bonus too) and before your next event.

Forty minutes before my driving test I went through the normal routine I would perform before an Athletics Race – much to the amusement of my driving instructor who was taking me to the examination centre. It consisted of:

- Getting out the car and sitting down on the grass and completing a visualisation exercise, closing my eyes and visualising driving well and passing my test
- Deep breathing exercises and imagining my heartbeat slowing down – and then it does!
- Stretching exercises from my head to my toes – I know, it must have been a spectacle for anyone passing by, but it worked for me
- Making sure I was wearing my favourite clothes and they were the right attire for the occasion

A pre-race routine would also involve going for a 1-mile jog, 10 x 100m strides and going to the toilet at least twice!

So, what are my 5 top tips for controlling nerves before the big event?

1. Give yourself a good talking to! Breakdown what it is you are about to do then ask yourself what would you be nervous about? What is the worst that could happen if you failed? Have you been through something similar which is important to you, if so, how did you get through it? You can do this.
2. A Routine. My pre-race routine is not much different from the routine I go through before any presentation I am delivering, or workshop I am facilitating. Do it often and consistently and it will become the norm. Having a routine that works for you is also calming.
3. Change your mental attitude. Rather than saying "I will see how it goes" or "I will do my best and see what happens" change the mantra to "This is the result I am aiming for". Writing it down and/or telling others will cement your commitment.
4. Relentless focus on what you are about to do cuts out any distractions to the point they just become background noise.
5. I recommend you do this twice before the event. When you wake up in the morning imagine how your day is going to pan out in a positive and inspiring way. Then repeat this an hour before the actual event.

A Post It for tackling your nerves:

- ✓ Prior Planning and Preparation Prevents a P**S Poor Performance (the 7 x Ps). Put this down on a 'post it' and look at it often

You will neutralise your nerves if you follow a routine that works for you methodically on every occasion. Beating your nerves is something you can WIN.

Footnote: I passed my driving test. Typically of the Army, my Boss knocked on my door and said he had fixed me up with a course on the Tuesday and that my Test would be on the Friday “and you had better pass it!”

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about the time I took my driving test.