



LEADERSHIP –COACHING AND MENTORING PACK

The Christmas Annual

2006 – 2023

I would like to start this edition with thanks and gratitude to those who have contributed to the monthly pack throughout 2023. I would especially like to thank everyone who sends me wonderful messages about both the Leadership & Engagement pack and blog posts 'Being Bettina's Dad' series. Your emails make my day! Thank you for your support.

The 'Christmas Annual' includes a piece from each month, working backwards through the year. Highlights include new articles for this month:

Our Resilience Coach, Damian Piper: **Navigating the End of year holidays: A Guide to Making it the Best yet** "As we approach the whirlwind of the upcoming weeks, filled with events, interactions, and a multitude of tasks, if we want to make the most of this period, it's crucial to take a step back and consciously think about what lies ahead. Each of us faces our unique set of challenges – events to attend, people to interact with, and a to-do list that seems never-ending....."

An exclusive article from a regular contributor, Rebecca Alexander (Executive Coach) **How to give feedback** "Feedback is a powerful tool. Many of us remember feedback from our earliest school days – perhaps we were praised for doing well in a certain subject, or told we were too easily distracted, or that we were quiet, or loud, or sporty, or musical. School reports are often our first formal taste of feedback, and they can have a lasting influence....."

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It's not about how good you are

It's how Good You want to be

New for December's edition:

Navigating the End of year holidays: A Guide to Making it the Best yet

As we approach the whirlwind of the upcoming weeks, filled with events, interactions, and a multitude of tasks, if we want to make the most of this period, it's crucial to take a step back and consciously think about what lies ahead. Each of us faces our unique set of challenges – events to attend, people to interact with, and a to-do list that seems never-ending.

Here's a few ideas to help make this the best yet.

Acceptance: Working with Reality

Acknowledging what we need to accept is an important step. Acceptance doesn't mean rolling over; it means being prepared to work with reality rather than an idealised version of events. The stress increases in the gap between our expectations and reality, and it's essential to manage this gap effectively. Avoid "should-ing" – proactively managing rigid expectations about what you should do or should happen. Being willing to adapt to what unfolds is not easy; however, it's liberating if we can do it. Having an approach to test and reset our expectations proves beneficial. The word "should" often lead to unhelpful thinking – replace it with something more flexible. Try saying "could" and see what shows up. Be open to the unexpected and focus on working with the situation at hand.

Gaining Perspective: Keeping Things in Check

When events unfold, it's easy to lose perspective and take things too seriously. Develop a go-to question or phrase to interrupt unhelpful thinking. Here's one many find helpful: Ask yourself on a scale of 1 to 10 how important the thing you are facing is. Chances are many of the things that initially feel high are in fact, a much lower number. Considering the transience of events, "will this be important in six-months?", is another route to help with this. Gaining perspective doesn't diminish the challenges you might face; instead, it empowers you to deal with them effectively.

Offload to a Trusted Person: Release the Pressure

If you anticipate challenges, especially from certain individuals..., don't bottle up your frustrations. Instead, offload to a trusted person in a safe space. The impact of sharing your concerns can be significant – it prevents the emotional pressure from building up like a ball held underwater until the point of release. Choose this person carefully; they are there to listen, not necessarily to solve your challenges.

Developing Peace of Mind: Aligning with Your Values

Use your values as stabilisers during hectic times. Knowing your values can bring peace of mind by providing a grounding force. Consider how your values can serve or hinder you

during this period. If you haven't consciously thought about your values, a free worksheet at effectivechallenge.com can guide you through the process.

Beyond Values: Gratitude and Reflection

Beyond values, practice gratitude and reflection. Take a moment to appreciate the positive aspects of what is happening. Checking in with gratitude promotes a healthy mindset. Additionally, prioritise your health overall, as it directly influences your well-being. Generating feel-good hormones through activities you enjoy contributes to maintaining balance.

In conclusion, the next few weeks may present challenges, but by accepting, adapting, gaining perspective, offloading when needed, and aligning with your values, you can navigate this period with greater ease. Remember, it's not about eliminating stress entirely but managing it effectively to maintain your well-being and ultimately have a great time.

I wish you well with whatever you are up to. And thanks for reading my articles in 2023. Here's to 2024. Our best year yet?

Damian

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New for December's edition:

How to give feedback

Feedback is a powerful tool. Many of us remember feedback from our earliest school days – perhaps we were praised for doing well in a certain subject, or told we were too easily distracted, or that we were quiet, or loud, or sporty, or musical. School reports are often our first formal taste of feedback, and they can have a lasting influence.

We continue to receive feedback from friends, family, colleagues, or bosses as we move through life. Some of it is irrelevant, some painful to hear. Sometimes it's so useful that we might change our jobs or goals as a result.

And yet, feedback at work can be patchy. Repeated surveys show that many employees don't think they receive enough feedback, and that they'd like to get more.

Despite this, many managers and team leaders find giving feedback challenging. We worry that we will be too direct, or not direct enough, that we might hurt someone or provoke

defensiveness or anger. Being on the receiving end can be just as daunting, as anyone who's received a confidence-damaging workplace review can attest.

Fortunately, there are some great feedback frameworks that can smooth the process for givers and receivers alike. Here are a few that many teams like to use:

I like.../I wish...

This format is great for introducing feedback skills to a team. First, comment on something that you see a colleague or direct report doing well. Make it specific, not general. For example, "I liked how your attentive listening and people skills helped to defuse that tense meeting", not "you were great in that meeting, well done!"

Next, ask for something you'd like to change, for example "I'd like it if you could spend more time planning our team schedule with me, your input is useful". Try to frame it positively and make it meaningful. Avoid bland statements like "I'd like you to keep doing what you're doing".

A good way to introduce this can be to divide into pairs and take turns exchanging "I like/I wish" statements with each other - this way everyone experiences both giving and receiving feedback and starts to feel more doing so.

Stop, Start, Continue

This is a non-threatening way to reinforce great behaviours, discourage less helpful ones, and introduce some changes. It works as both a one-to-one feedback tool, and one to use with the whole team. You can keep it open, or choose a theme, such as a work project or your team's ways of working. Begin by discussing what everyone is doing well and can **continue** doing, what isn't going so well and could be **stopped**, and end with ideas for new behaviours or initiatives that you would like to **start**. Agree together which of the Stops, Starts and Continues you all want to take forward, and when you will review. If you're using this one-to-one, it can help to make it a two-way exchange, so that it feels more equal. Making this a regular event – perhaps once every six months, or at the end of every project, will make it a normal part of your team's process.

Feedforward

This method from author and coach Marshall Goldsmith avoids looking backwards on the basis that critiquing past actions or events can spiral into a blame game and provoke defensiveness or withdrawal. Instead, the focus is squarely on the future.

The most common format is in small groups of three to four people. One person presents a question, such as "I'd like to be a better listener", or "I'd like to make the next sales event more profitable than the last one". The others listen carefully and then each make two to

three helpful suggestions of how this could be achieved. The 'questioner' doesn't critique the suggestions but listens closely before thanking each person for their ideas. It's up to the questioner whether they use the suggestions or not.

This method is as much about advice and ideas as it is about feedback. Its value lies in demonstrating how to ask clearly and simply for support, and how to listen without reacting.

Ask for feedback.

One of the best ways to encourage a stronger feedback culture is to be a manager or leader who solicits feedback regularly – perhaps using one of the tools above. The more that your teams see you requesting and listening to feedback, the more natural it becomes to share feedback with each other. Research also suggests that feedback we've asked for feels less threatening than unsolicited feedback. Keep your feedback request specific and timely. For example, at the end of a team meeting, ask "How well did I do just then on balancing my speaking with listening?". Small feedback requests like these are easier to process and model the kind of feedback loops that can become part of your team's way of working.

Start small and with positive intent and invite your team to suggest any feedback frameworks that they might like to try. Treating it as a collective endeavour encourages equality between managers and teams and takes away some of that 'school report' feeling. Aim for a point where people feel comfortable sharing what's working well, and what would be 'even better if', and you'll be off to a great start.

Read: *Thanks for the Feedback* by Douglas Stone and Sheila Heen

Watch: Marshall Goldsmith on [Feedforward](#)

Read online: [Build a feedback culture](#) by Gustavo Razzetti

Rebecca Alexander

Executive Coach rebecca@coaching-studio.co.uk



From November's edition

"Your time is limited, so don't waste it living someone else's life don't be trapped by dogma – which is living with the results of other people's thinking. Don't let the noise of other's opinions drown out your inner voice. And most important, have the courage to follow your heart and intuition. They somehow already know what you truly want to become. Everything else is secondary." Steve Jobs

From October's edition

CAREER MASTERCLASS

PUSH YOUR TEAM

Be explicit. Does every team member know the difference between competent and outstanding? Explain clearly what exceptional performance looks like and what the rewards are.

Spot what stops them. Help people identify what's holding them back. Whether it's crumbling self-belief (create achievable actions to boost their confidence) or just a chatty neighbour (change the seating plan), fix it together. And fix it fast.

Empower them. Don't confuse pushing with micro-managing; let those who can handle it reach peak performance in their own way. Use outcome-focused briefs, avoid rigid sets of instructions, and encourage creativity, then watch them drive themselves harder than you ever could.

Inspire. Steve Jobs once said: 'If you are working on something exciting that you really care about, you don't have to be pushed. The vision pulls you.' Explain the dream behind your high standards and rave until they're also desperate to get there.

Keep talking. Specific, stretching goals will only work if you evaluate them. Meet individuals every fortnight to discuss progress against clear measures. Grafters will be encouraged to try new challenges; coasters will get a wake-up call.

Practise what you preach. Be their role model. Are you pushing yourself as hard as you're pushing them?

What's in it for them? People will always strive harder towards their own goals than someone else's. Help them define their future then show them how it fits into the overall vision.

Create competition. Publicly praise star performers. There's nothing like a little rivalry to keep the troops on their toes.

Say thank you. Take a moment to celebrate victories before you set your team their next challenge. Host a team lunch, give them an early finish, send a praising email. You can only push a team thanklessly for so long before they push off.

The Mind Gym: Relationships is published by Little, Brown

From September's edition

Being Bettina's Dad: Enchanting by being fascinating and delightful



Bettina at the wedding reception in Oldham. Picture courtesy of Joyce Raw

Driving home from a family wedding in Oldham at the weekend, I reflected on how Bettina had, once again, enchanted everyone she met. I am reminded, once more, how much she inspires her family.

Bettina's wider family have followed her progress since she came into our world over 35 years ago. A person who was at odds with her world, caused by her severe autism and learning disability. With all her might, and the love and belief of her family, she fought her demons and won. With each visit to see the family they comment on her progress and delight in her achievements.

This Sunday afternoon my thoughts turn towards the week ahead, which includes a presentation and preparation for a Board Meeting. I hope to influence those I meet and communicate with, about how our company www.dosh.org feels about supporting people with a learning disability to be more independent and have more control over their money.

I want to inspire and capture their imagination, but ultimately enchant them.

Thinking about Bettina's charm helps me to prepare:

How Bettina enchants people:

- Her calmness casts a magic spell that soothes away your stress and anxiety.
- Bettina knows how to look and feel every moment of her life with an innocence and vulnerability.
- Every decision Bettina makes says something about her.

Related: <https://leadershipintheraw.org/2018/03/29/being-bettinas-dad-be-your-authentic-self/>

- Bettina enchants others by choosing her words very carefully, which can be difficult as Bettina finds retrieval of vocabulary a slow process. Each word she speaks is in accordance with your own way of communicating.
- By being enigmatic – Bettina attracts attention without really trying. People, including her family, find themselves watching her without realising it wondering what she is going to do next.

“She was put here on earth to make sense of its wild enchantments.”

Boris Pasternak

Bettina’s six lessons of enchantment:

1. Putting others first
2. Concentrating on being true to yourself and your passions
3. Offering a better solution to a difficulty without the expectation of something in return
4. Loving what you do and how you live is infectious.
5. Focus on the person you are interacting with
6. Communicate genuinely and not just for the sake of hearing your own voice

A quote that could have been written for Bettina:

“Only those who truly love and who are truly strong can sustain their lives as a dream. You dwell in your own enchantment. Life throws stones at you, but your love and your dream change those stones into the flowers of discovery. Even if you lose, or are defeated by things, your triumph will always be exemplary. And if no one knows it, then there are places that do. People like you enrich the dreams of the worlds, and it is dreams that create history. People like you are unknowing transformers of things, protected by your own fairy-tale, by love.”

Ben Okri

As I finish this blog post I hear a knock at the door. It is Bettina (and her Personal Assistant) returning home and once again they have managed to fit a huge amount into their day together.

“Hi Bettina” = “Hello Dad, Steve boy” (sometimes just Dad, sometimes Steve and sometimes my full title, but at 67, to be still called ‘boy’, that’s enchantment for me).

Having spent the whole weekend with Bettina it is always a bit of an anti-climax when she leaves to start her busy day, but she is now back once again to enchant her family.

So, who are you going to enchant today?

“To the one who knows how to look and feel, every moment of this free wandering life is an enchantment.”

Alexandra David-Neel



Bettina and her dad moments after the wedding. Picture courtesy of Joyce Raw

This is an updated version on an article I wrote on October 18, 2018, after a trip to Great Manchester to see family.

HURRYING AND WORRYING ARE NOT THE SAME AS STRENGTH

(Nigerian Proverb)

From August's edition

Career Development



Flagstaff House in Colchester*. The end of one career and the start of a new one.

Walking across the grounds of the military headquarters at Flagstaff House in Colchester for the last time, I was about to embark on my second career with just a weekend in between as a break. It had been my workplace for the last seven years and was the last posting of my 24-year career with the Army. It was a career that had surpassed all my expectations.

In the year leading up to my military retirement, I needed to decide whether I would be looking for a second career or a job. I decided on a career and one I was going to be equally enthusiastic about. It was going to be personal. Being the father of a young person with a

learning disability and autism, I wanted (and was going to) make a difference for people with a learning disability.

I recently received an invitation from another department of our organisation to give an inspirational talk during their 'away-day'. They chose 'Career Development' from a list of topics on offer.

As I prepared my presentation it gave me the opportunity to reflect on the things I have learned and which I could share with my audience. I have ten areas of learning - which I believe have helped me - and I hope you also find them helpful.

10 Things I have learned:

1. Networking – It really is about who you know. My life has been enriched by the people I know, and I have concluded that the success I have achieved (in both careers) has often been down to knowing the right people. My definition of a network: 'people sharing an aim, interest etc. and frequently communicating with or helping each other.' Done correctly, networking promotes your career; helps you learn from the people you network with; provides a sounding board for your ideas and, if you get stuck with a problem or situation, a good network will always know someone who can help you.

Related: [Networking: it really is all about who you know – Leadership in the Raw](#)

Tip: When you walk in the room adopt the mindset "what can I do for you?" rather than "what you can do for me?".

2. Who is your Mentor? Who is your Coach? Both mentoring and coaching are processes that enable you to achieve your full potential. Mentors are someone who will give you the answers based on their experience and knowledge. Coaches are those who support you to formulate your own solutions. A mixture of both mentoring and coaching has helped accelerate my career and I have always actively sought Mentors and Coaches.

Tip: Look for a Mentor and/or Coach in specific areas where you think you may have gaps you want to develop/progress.

"I've got the attitude which I still have today that if I find someone that I really admire, someone that I think, I want to be you. I want to do the things the way you do them. I've always sort of been stupid enough or brave enough to go up to them and say, will you mentor me?"

Rene Carayol – Businessman, Speaker, Author, and Broadcaster

3. Qualifications and Continued Professional Development (CPD) – Starting out on my second career I felt I was starting from scratch. Most of my military qualifications were not transferrable at the time and it was one of Joyce's (my wife) pearls of wisdom: "A qualification a year, get back into the learning habit and invest in yourself" From experience qualifications are the only investment you can guarantee a return on. Your CV gets you a seat at the interview table.

Tip: Do not put all your eggs in one basket. Have a spread of qualifications. Mine include Leadership, Coach & Mentoring, Project Management, Training, Management and Social Care.

4. **Voluntary Work.** Broadens your outlook and enhances your skill set. It was voluntary work during my army career supporting a residential home for people with a learning disability in Berlin and organising social events for them that attracted me to my current career. Subsequently I have been a citizens advocate for a person with a learning disability; a school governor at a special needs school; a Trustee for a Carers Centre and several projects for a military charity which included being a mentor for wounded, injured and sick (WIS) armed forces personnel.

Tip: Look for something you are passionate about where you can make a difference

5. **Add Value – what is it you bring to the table?** Doing a good job is a given, so what makes you different? Adding value means going beyond your job description. Investing more time and effort than is required of doing a job well. Linking your work to specific organisational objectives enables you to focus on the tasks that will have the biggest impact on your team and company's success. What is your added value?

Related: [The 8th Leadership Lesson I learned – Add Value – Leadership in the Raw](#)

Tip: A question to repeatedly ask yourself. What is my unique selling point (USP)?

6. **'Snakes and Ladders' Prepare for the Ups and Downs** Not everything will go according to plan. There will be appointments and roles where you feel you are a square peg in a round hole. This happened to me in the late 1980s. I had just spent three years in a Commando Squadron and then proceeded to a completely different unit. Despite my best efforts I found it difficult to fit in with an entirely different work culture. While I saw this as a setback in career terms, I was determined to learn as much as possible from this experience and consider what I would do better and different in my next posting.

Tip: Accepting this will can happen, and not only once, enables you to be more resilient, enabling you to bounce back better. Think of it as a learning experience.

7. **The Art of Reinvention.**

I love life. I want to be the best I can be, therefore, why do I feel the need to reinvent myself and how will it help me progress in my career(s)? Reinvention has worked for me:

- By stretching myself – early on I came to the realisation that only when I am really challenged am I at my best.
- It keeps me fresh and motivated.
- It gives you a competitive edge.
- It helps me recover from setbacks, obstacles, and events outside of my control.

Re-inventing myself has often happened when I have changed a job role and or moved between organisations.

Tip: It is an opportunity to do things differently, be known for something new and test out new theories.

Related: [The Art of Reinvention – Leadership in the Raw](#)

8. Surround yourself with talent

If you want to be the best person you could possibly be, then surrounding yourself with talent will fill gaps in both your own knowledge/expertise. You cannot know it all.

“If you have the ability to work with people smarter than you, always try to be the least smart person in the room and surround yourself with talent, because iron sharpens iron.”
Jake M Johnson

Related: [The 3rd Leadership Lesson I learned – Surround yourself with Talent – Leadership in the Raw](#)

Tip: Actively seek out great people to work with. People who will inspire you and from whom you will learn.

9. Be Lucky. My younger brother (who was also in the Army) once told me he thought I had joined a travel company rather than the Army due to the number of places I was sent to. I must admit I got to visit and work in some amazing places and do some exciting things. For me being lucky in life/work is all about ‘when preparation meets opportunity’ I have always put time aside for preparation and research whilst maintaining an awareness of opportunities that may present themselves (often when least expected).

Related: [The 6th Leadership Lesson I learned – Creating Opportunities – Leadership in the Raw](#)

Tip: When someone asks if you are ready to take on an exciting new role or responsibility. Say “yes” then get busy finding out how to do it.

9 Do the work you were always meant to do.

Life is short and as my wife, Joyce, often reminds me, you are a long time at work, so it is important that you are happy doing what you do. Here are some questions you should ask yourself if you are going to do the work you were always meant to do:

- What is it that you are enthusiastic about? • Do you want your work to have influence?
- What will it take to make you feel fulfilled?
- What skills, experiences, knowledge, gifts, and capabilities do you have?

Related: <https://leadershipintheraw.org/2016/07/27/do-the-work-you-were-alwaysmeant-to-do/>

Tip: Do you want a job or a career? Both are good but it is important for your expectations that you know so that you decide what it is you really want to do.

10. Making Plans but do not be restricted by them. I have always made plans. I have goals I want to achieve, and I like to have something to look forward to. However, I have never been restricted by my plans – they are not set in stone - so when an unexpected opportunity arises, my mind is not closed to trying something different.

Tip: Ask yourself this self-coaching question: “If I were to meet you in 1 (or 3 years) what would make you feel satisfied with your progress?”

In the football game of life, my career development has been played out in two halves with no half time and I am now going into ‘extra time’ Hopefully it will not go to penalties.

"I would like to be remembered as someone who did the best, she could with the talent she had."

J.K. Rowling

Steve Raw

* Flagstaff House is no longer a Ministry of Defence property and has been converted into residences.

From July's edition

TIPS FOR BEHAVING ASSERTIVELY

To start the process towards assertive behaviour, there are a range of actions to take. Some of these will come naturally but with some you may have to make an extra effort. Be prepared to feel uncomfortable at times when you begin to use assertive behaviours that are new to you. Here are some examples:

- Take one step at a time – rather than trying to instantly become fully assertive, in all situations with all people, look for occasions to use and develop the skills
- Work at developing the best level of assertiveness for the situation, rather than using it all the time. It's a skill to use when the circumstances and timing are right.
- Take the time to develop your responses – it's easy to get into the habit of instantly answering questions you're asked, rushing to provide help when requested. To develop assertive behaviour, sometimes you need to take time before responding instant answers are more likely to be passive or aggressive.
- Use assertiveness to make others aware of your feelings – in an awkward situation, people often respond aggressively (which is likely to harden the feelings and attitudes of all those involved) or passively (when others simply won't know how

upset, frustrated etc. the other person might be). Assertiveness helps others to understand your feelings and to do something to improve the situation.

- Use brief explanations – long, detailed ones, especially in awkward situations, don't tend to help. They can confuse the listener or become repetitive.
- Avoid "I'm in charge" behaviour – you may be an individual's team leader, supervisor, manager etc. but this behaviour is likely to be interpreted as aggressive.
- Consider the other party's reactions – remember assertive behaviour should be a two-sided coin. But, when considering using it, analyse both the occasion and circumstances. You must be sure that your assertiveness doesn't increase aggression in others.

SPEAK ASSERTIVELY

There are several simple steps you can take to develop this skill:

- If you have the opportunity, prepare, and rehearse.
- Never present your ideas apologetically or apologise for holding an opinion.
- Express your feelings in your words. If you have a strong belief, then let the audience know – along with your lucid reasoning.
- If you are undecided, say so. Then you can present both sides of the argument, and listen as others debate (and help you reach a conclusion)
- Don't insult others' views (whether offered or yet unspoken) when offering your own.
- When it's important to do so, be willing to state your opinion without being asked. An example would be a meeting chaired by an aggressive person; one who knows you are likely to disagree so simply tries to exclude you from the discussion.

THE ADVANTAGES

Here are the positive ways that assertiveness is beneficial – both to yourself and those who come into contact with you:

- ✓ You are taking control of both your life and its individual activities.
- ✓ Others respect you – and you have a high level of self – respect.
- ✓ It allows and encourages others to respond assertively to you.
- ✓ You demonstrate the respect you have for others.
- ✓ There's less likelihood of conflict, anger or aggression being a disruptive factor in your life.
- ✓ You develop a high level of self-esteem: your aim is to live up to the standards you set for yourself, rather than trying to guess and work to other people's expectations of you.
- ✓ You allow other people to be in control of their lives. You give them room to manoeuvre in awkward situations.

Source:

ILM

From June's edition

Clare Tarling MBA

"Perfection is achieved, not when there is nothing more to add, but when there is nothing left to take away." - Antoine de Saint-Exupery

This quote serves as a perfect introduction to my Easy Read and plain English training sessions. This article is about how the principle works for me, in practice.

Time Holes

I once attended an incredible music improvisation training course - Lifemusic - led by [Rod Paton](#) at the University of Chichester. One of the improvisations was called "Time Holes". Participants sit in a circle, and are invited to create Time Holes, one at a time.

Any participant can indicate when their time hole starts, by saying "click". The rest of the group then waits for the Time Hole owner to say "stop", and the Time Hole ends.

There is often a tangible sigh - a relaxation of the atmosphere in the room. The Time Hole is an unusual, shared experience. There is anticipation, a bit of unease and sometimes even some anxiety. I noticed that the most confident people often tend to make longer Time Holes.

We avoid silence in our everyday lives, especially in conversation: a long silence can signal disaster, so we tend to fill all the gaps to prevent any discomfort or awkwardness.

Simplicity in Design

The same is true on a page. We have a strange urge to write long sentences and many paragraphs to thoroughly explain *everything*. An amateur poster design might feature a background image, a fancy border, 6 fonts in many different sizes and ten contrasting colours. Empty space on a page can be likened to silence in a conversation or in music. It is a brave and confident statement.

I often translate very long documents into Easy Read format - and even the most wellwritten strategies, reports and policies contain lots of repetition and unnecessary explanations. The highlighter pen is my friend, helping me to spot and preserve the most important points. Then, I can confidently slash the word count, retaining the message and spirit of the original version. When I have got rid of everything I can *and* the message is still present and clear, I am done.

Conclusions

- Treat parts of your page like deliberate Time Holes, and become comfortable with visual silence.

- Apply Antoine de Saint-Exupery's words: everything on the page must be intentional and serve a purpose. If it is not needed, hit delete.
- It takes bravery, confidence, and clarity of thought to create silence in music or white space on a page.

Book Recommendations:

1. [Lifemusic: Connecting People to Time](#) by Dr Rod Paton
2. [White Space is Not Your Enemy](#) by Kim Golombisky and Rebecca Hagen

Published by



[Clare Tarling MBA](#)

I declutter information to make it more accessible

[#EasyRead](#) [#lifemusic](#) [#improvisation](#) [#design](#) [#plainlanguage](#) [#perfection](#) [#quoteoftoday](#)

From May's edition

Courtesy of Katie Scott – Dosh Non-Executive Director

“Best Friend Therapy - Elizabeth Day and Emma Reed Turrell

Hi Steve,

I really enjoyed reading this. It is a good reminder that the. me principles apply across all aspects of our lives whether it's at work or not. Katie

<https://podcasts.apple.com/gb/podcast/best-friendtherapy/id1614793299?i=1000555399900>

From April's edition

The mundanity of excellence

Author: Sam Pullan

Or, we are what we repeatedly do.

I was recently introduced to a new phrase: the mundanity of excellence. (Thanks, Alex Richardson – @1917AndAllThat). I love it and think it's highly applicable to teachers. Here's why.

We can all produce the odd, brilliant lesson. You know the sort: the ones you really prepped for, maybe created some sh*t hot new resources or lined up a fantastic sequence of questions. Or maybe you know, you just know, that you've laid all the groundwork and today's discussion will fly. These are lessons they love, you're proud of, and you all remember.

But those aren't the lessons that make you a brilliant teacher. They just show that you can do it from time to time. Similar examples:

- In the Euro 2016 football tournament, Wales' Hal Robson-Kanu scored [an undeniably world class goal](#). But he's no-one's idea of a world-class striker.
- My wife has a theory that every band has one great song in them. But that doesn't make them a great band. Yes, I'm talking about you, Babylon Zoo and, er, [Whigfield](#).
- [You can insert your own, more culturally sophisticated, example here.]

By contrast, the truly excellent teachers aren't the ones who sometimes knock it out the park. They are the ones who sometimes knock it out the park but always, always make good contact. The ones who produce not one great single, but an album that's almost all killer and hardly any filler. (I mean, we all have off days, right?)

Socrates put it thus: "As it is not one swallow or a fine day that makes a spring, so it is not one day or a short time that makes a man blessed and happy." Marvellous. But sacrilegious as it may be, I prefer the more modern take by American historian Will Durant: "We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit."

Not an act, but a habit. Not a once-a-season thirty-yard screamer. Not a once-a-month painstakingly prepped, expertly engineered debate on the causes of World War One.

Instead, the screamer now and again but all the mundane, literally every day, things you do to make yourself an excellent teacher. Things like:

- doing your register, accurately and on time.
- turning up for break duty, even in the rain;
- upholding the uniform rules, so that there's a consistent line among all staff;
- marking regularly and helpfully (but not overly frequently);
- being pleased to see your pupils, even if you're not feeling like it;
- asking how your tutee's poorly pet dog is getting on;
- expecting high standards in your classroom, of behaviour, effort and achievement;

- directing your questions to appropriate recipients;
- looking the part;
- not snarking at rules you don't like or policies you don't agree with (there's a time and a place);
- helping colleagues in a jam;
- helping photocopiers in a jam;
- carefully calibrating the amount of challenge;
- remembering that not every lesson can be perfect;
- reflecting on your practice and trying new things sometimes.

None of these are glamorous. They aren't all immediately noticeable and won't all be apparent to colleagues, line managers or SLT. They won't have the commentators off their feet or the critics losing their minds. But they are some of the basics, the building blocks of brilliance. Do them consistently well and you're well on the way to excellence. We are, after all, what we repeatedly do.

[The mundanity of excellence – Blog On \(wordpress.com\)](#)

Sam Pullan

Assistant Head (Executive Operations),

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There is nothing I would not do for those who are really my friends" Jane Austen

From March's edition

Practice Leadership



Thera East Anglia recently held their second Senior Support Worker Development Day. The theme was Practice Leadership, and the day was facilitated by Operational Managers Justin Smith and Yvette Ferguson, and Sophie Davies – PA to Thera East Anglia's MD as well as Project Manager for Quality & Excellence. Guest presenters were David Parker – Service Quality Director, Keith Page - Executive Assistant to the Service Quality Director, and Tracy Harrison from Thera Trust's Learning Development team.

Thera East Anglia is investing in it's Senior Support Workers and supporting them to development their confidence as leader and role models within teams. Much of the day was about Practice Leadership.

"Practice Leadership is a central issue in enabling people providing support to do a good job... Practice Leaders are the custodians of the vision of the team and its culture"

Mansell & Beadle-Brown 2012

We talked about how we can have the best ever PBS training, and the most amazing delivery of how to do active support, but without practice leaders, the time might be wasted. Practice leaders are the link between excellent training and support plans, and people we support actually having a great day with support happening the way *they* want it to happen. Practice leaders need to know their stuff, they need to know how to model great support, they need to be able to support team meetings, and deliver feedback in a timely fashion (positive and constructive)y. On this second development day we revisited the skills and traits of leadership covered on day one.

David and Keith delivered a presentation we call 'broccoli corner', which is now part of the Thera East Anglia Happiness Project and invited teams to think about the balance between helping people to remain healthy, with a recognition that people we support will make the occasional unhealthy choice.

Justin spent a little time with the SSWs thinking about the general principles of PBS, and then Sophie and Yvette facilitated some great discussion around the link between what we say and what we do and the importance of sound terminology when writing about the support we provide to people.

At the end of the day, Tracy delivered an excellent presentation around 'how to have difficult conversations' with some superb group work.

The SSWs fed back that they felt empowered to lead excellent support as well as provide feedback to the teams they lead.

Watch this space for the third Senior Support Worker Development Day! **Justin**

Smith



Operations Manager.

PBS Coach and PROACT SCIPr-UK® Instructor

Thera East Anglia

From February's edition

Confidence Is Key

BE confident. Confidence is absolutely critical to your success in running a business and in forming trusted relationships.

The fastest way to be confident? Act as if you are confident. The mind cannot tell the difference between something that happens in reality and something it imagines with emotional intensity. So, literally, pretend to be confident and act as you would if you really were, and you will be.

(extract from The Naked Millionaire by David Taylor)

Source: Steve Raw

'Do not grow old, no matter how long you live. Never cease to stand like curious children before the Great Mystery into which we were born'

Albert Einstein

From January's edition

Beyond the glamour of the start

It's likely that at some point over the last couple of weeks, you have had a conversation or read something about new year's resolutions. I know I have. You will also know someone, maybe even yourself that starts each year full of enthusiasm for a goal to achieve only to find that you fall short of what you want within weeks of starting. You'd be in good company if you are. There are multiple research studies on this topic. A common component is that circa 10% of people achieve what they set out to do. Despite 50-60% being confident of success at the start.

Often people fall victim to the glamour and enthusiasm of starting something and then meet the reality of daily life. Maybe 2023 is different. Here's my BEST framework with four areas to consider in pursuit of what you want to achieve. In all four the thing to determine want will help or hinder your success.

Your Behaviours

I guess this is an obvious place to start. What behaviours can you draw upon to help you achieve what you want? And equally important are there behaviours you have that will get in the way of you being successful. This takes a degree of self-awareness so allow time to reflect and consider the answer to the two questions fully. It can sometimes be insightful to ask someone you trust the same questions.

Your Environment

First, let me clarify what I mean by your environment. Everything in and around your personal world. The people, the physical things, your job etc etc. Doing an audit of your environment with your resolution as the focus can be very powerful.

If your resolution is to get a bit fitter...

- Have you got clarity on the 'why' you want to be fitter? Writing it down and having that in your environment where you will see it can be a game changer. Or having your why expressed in a picture or photo some people find equally beneficial.
- Assessing the people in your environment could reveal the friends who you might exercise with or the friend who is going to drag you to the pub. You can then decide if you need to do something different with them.
- Want to run? Is there a new top you need to buy that fits your current body shape? If ignored, this is one that can really set up resistance. If you don't feel comfortable, your brain will do all it can to protect you. Much of this protection is likely to be irrational. That's not how it will feel.
- What triggers are in the environment? Some will encourage what you want, some will trigger you to do the opposite.

Your Skills

Are there particular skills you could enhance or develop to help with a sustainable approach? If the resolution is to say what you think instead of holding back. Do you need to develop your communication toolkit?

Your Time

Often time is the blocker to so many resolutions failing. Steve R recently recommended this [Ted Talk](#) by Laura Vanderkam to me on 'time management'. I would recommend it to anyone being challenged by this topic. I'm not a fan of the term time management. It's a fallacy that draws people into a whole host of 'time hacks' in the belief that they hold the solution to their time challenges. Don't misunderstand me, there can be some value in the tools, tips and tricks. However, I agree with Laura's hypothesis that it's about priority management. If your resolution is really a priority make sure you schedule it first as you think about the week ahead. Yes, life won't pan out as you'd like. However, if you have a true understanding of your priorities then you will find a way to make them happen.

As I write this it's the 14th of January. Two weeks into 2023. If you have fallen short of what you'd like, when it comes to your resolution, please don't negatively judge yourself. Negative judgement is like poison. You need to get it out of you before it does even more damage. I can't think of a single time personally or professionally where judgement has served well. Instead, how about reconnecting with your resolution intent and using the framework above to set yourself up for success?

2023 could just end up being your BEST year yet.

As always, I'm interested in your thoughts and observations. And if you have questions please ask.

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