

ELVIN TURNER & LUNA STUDIO PRESENT



Expert tips for a happier
and healthier 2021

BUILD • CREATE • CAREER • REFLECT
CHANGE • RELATE • HEALTH

Let's restore
what was
lost and
grab hold of
a happier,
healthier
2021 →

*So, 2020 didn't quite turn out
as most of us expected.*

Many people I've spoken to around the world experienced a subtle fading-to-grey in different areas of their lives during the various lockdowns and other constraints.

So in a small but deliberate attempt to help restore our collective colour, Luna Studio and I have teamed up with a diverse range of collaborators. Our aim?

To share some tools to help us detox from anything unhelpful that we picked up in 2020, and to kickstart some new habits that help us find new focus and develop resilience for other changes that are likely ahead.

Maybe only one idea on these pages is relevant to you. Great, apply it to your life this year with the best of your ability.

But while you're reading think about anyone else you know who

might benefit from one of the tools and share the book as widely as you can.

No-one is getting paid for producing this book but we do want to give readers the opportunity to support Emerge Advocacy, a great cause dedicated to helping young people who are struggling with mental illness.

Click the below button if you'd like to know more about Emerge Advocacy.

[Find out more about Emerge](#)

Finally, thanks to everyone who generously contributed to this ebook – I really appreciate each one of you!

Elvin Turner

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The time to
repair the
roof is when
the sun is
shining

John F. Kennedy



Build capability before you need it

Most organisations and individuals wait until a crisis before they initiate change.

Even when organisations know they are rearranging the deckchairs on a sinking ship, they cling to what they have.

“The more you sweat in peace, the less you bleed in war,” said Norman Schwarzkopf. The brave organisations build capability before they need it.

Take Fujifilm, decades before their old sparring partner Kodak went bankrupt Fujifilm started reallocating resources.

Fujifilm unbundled their core capabilities and invested in possible futures.

Through this process they discovered one of the core components of film is Collagen, also a key ingredient in beauty products. They reassigned many of their executives to work on a new future.

In 2007, Fujifilm boldly launched a high-end skin care range called ASTALIFT.

Today, their beauty brand ASTALIFT provides billions of dollars of profit.

With a subtle hat tip to their origins, ASTALIFT aims to deliver “Photogenic Beauty” to its customers.

The key to personal and organisational evolution is to build capability before you need it. Fujifilm prepared for a digital iceberg, Kodak did not.

Aidan McCullen

This is an excerpt from Aidan McCullen's forthcoming book, "Undisruptable: A Mindset of Permanent Reinvention for Individuals, Organisations and Life"

[Click to find out more](#)

[View the book on Amazon](#)

3 Grow your brain(s)

You have more than one brain - use them

Great news - we have more than one brain, However, many of us don't use or take care of our other intelligences. In particular:



Heart brain
(~130k neurons)

Primary purpose:

Compassion, focus, emoting, values, relational affect



Gut brain
(~500m neurons)

Primary purpose:

Courage, focus, core identity, self-preservation, mobilisation



Head brain
(~100bn neurons)

Primary purpose:

Creativity, focus, cognitive perception, thinking, making meaning

When the brains are aligned, we can operate in a choiceful, authentic, healthy, and accountable way - both personally and professionally. When they are not aligned - things don't feel right, we should notice where and explore why - is it head, heart or gut centred? ➤

Source: MBraining: 'Using your multiple brains to do cool stuff'.

Oka, M. and Soosalu, G. (2012a)

When the brains are aligned, we can operate in a choiceful, authentic, healthy, and accountable way

How to develop a healthy gut brain

Our gut is one of the first places that feels when things are right and we know that our mental wellbeing is linked to the health of our gut. Three things that help gut health:

1. Probiotics are shown to lower the stress hormone cortisol
2. A diet with healthy fats, e.g. eggs, nuts, seeds, and salmon support serotonin aka "the happy chemical" production
3. Sleep and regularly exercising are also key

Mark Simpson

Founder, Resilient Changing

Breathe for your brains

Many of us breathe incorrectly. Balanced, or "belly breathing", is known to oxygenate our multiple brains and improve our wellbeing, creativity, balance, and sleep.

Just 2 ½ minutes twice a day to practice balanced breathing creates results.

How it works:

1. Sit in a comfortable position with your feet on the floor. Your eyes can be open or closed.
2. Inhale through your nose for 4 counts, and then exhale through your mouth for 4 counts.
3. Once you are comfortable with this try 6-8 counts per breath.

[Click to find out more](#)

4

Growth sprints and growing pains

**No-one likes pain, discomfort or inconvenience.
But fulfilled lives are rarely lived without them.**

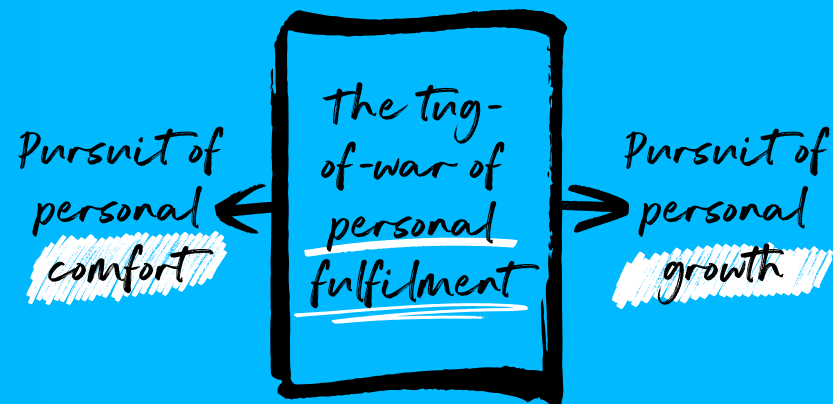
Think of anyone you know who lives their life to the full and you'll see deliberate choices to step into discomfort or inconvenience in pursuit greater gain.

Growth, depth and impact almost always comes with a cost.

Look back from 20, 30 or even 50 years' time. What areas of your life will have remained saplings instead of becoming oak trees because of a continued choice to avoid pain and inconvenience in your life?

Choose one of those areas and ask yourself:

- What stops me from stepping forward?
- What negative or limiting beliefs hold me captive?
- How would I like to think about myself in this context?
- What tiny step could I take towards inhabiting those beliefs? ➤



Even tiny steps require courage and going it alone can be tough. So lower the 'pain barrier' and invite a friend to encourage you to the first step, and then the next and then the next. Ask them how you can reciprocate.

A wise old friend of mine who has impacted tens of thousands of people around the world in his sphere says, "I've had a hard life, but I've had a good life."

*Stepping more fully
into your design isn't
always comfortable. But
it's the most fulfilling
journey you'll ever go on.*

Elvin Turner

5

Become a reader!

According to Gallup's 2019 Global Emotions report, less than half of adults are regularly learning or doing something new. Nigel Paine, a learning expert and former HR Director of the BBC, suggests ways to change that...

Many of us love the idea of reading but never seem to find the time. Learning author and expert, Nigel Paine, helps us build the habit:

If you can develop the habit of reading you will sustain the habit of learning; you will develop your curiosity and you will become a more interesting and engaged person. You will also be challenged. Some of your cherished opinions may be severely stretched or even contradicted. When this happens

you are on the way to becoming a reader!

The problem is, that as you get older, you tend to read only those things you have to. Often, these are work related. When you read for enjoyment you pick what you know and like. If you enjoy spy novels that's all you tend to read; if you like biography that is what you will look for. The challenge is to become an active and avid reader of material that you would not necessarily have picked up first. >

Tip 1: Go opposite

Pick something that is the exact opposite of what you would normally read. If you love novels, read some science history; if you only read fiction, try some non-fiction instead.

Tip 2: Only read one page

If you do not read anything longer than a few pages, here is a tip to get going. Pick up a book that you always intended to read and read the first page. Put it down. Read another page the next day and so on for two weeks. Make yourself do that. It will take 3 minutes a day. I will guarantee that, after two weeks, you will be reading considerably more than a single page and during those two weeks you will have developed a small, growing reading habit. Keep it going. Within a month, you will be reading chapters or even whole books. You will be hooked. I promise.

Tip 3: Write what you read

Always reflect after finishing a book. Preferably write down a note to yourself about the book: what you liked and what made sense; what you need to think more about. After a year read through what you wrote. You will be amazed at the ground that you have covered.

If you can develop the habit of reading you will sustain the habit of learning

Nigel Paine

Turn the page to read more from Nigel Paine. >

Keep 6 your brain plastic

Take your brain for a long walk. You'll be amazed at where it leads you.

We have known since the 1970s that the brain is 'plastic'. What that means is that it is continually remaking itself. It is possible to build new neural pathways throughout life. We can continue to learn and flourish long into old age. And that process is positively enjoyable.

On the other hand, if you think that learning anything new gets harder and harder, and you believe the old adage that you cannot teach old dogs new tricks then you will stick with what is comfortable, and your brain health will suffer.

We try to exercise regularly because we know it is good for our body. Sitting all day is bad for your health. The mental equivalent is also bad for your health. Take your brain out on a metaphorical long walk, you will feel better, and your brain will serve you better as a result. What is healthy for the body is also healthy for the brain.

Tip 1: Challenge your brain.

Try to take on a difficult learning project e.g. learn a new language every decade of your life. You may never be fluent, but the more you try, the easier it will get.

Tip 2: Explore new places.

End up in a strange country where ➤

We can continue to learn and flourish long into old age.

only a few people speak your language. Force your brain to work overtime to help you make sense of everything. You will find that you can become comfortable in just a few days. And you will be proud of your achievement.

Tip 3: Reflect on your progress.

What can you do this year, that you could not do last year? What adventures have you had? What challenges were overcome? The more you write these things down, the longer the list will be each year. Never give up. Remember there are opportunities throughout your life to keep your brain plastic and keep those neurons firing. Seize them!

Nigel Paine presents Learning Now TV. All programmes are free and can be viewed by clicking this button:

[Learning Now TV](#)

Nigel also makes a weekly podcast with Martin Couzins. There are over 170 to choose from:

['From Scratch' Podcast](#)

His books on Leadership, Corporate Learning and Learning Culture are published by Kogan Page:

[View Nigel Paine's books](#)

Nigel Paine

7

Creativity
begins, not with
curiosity as
many think.

It begins with
giving a crap.

Bean Lotto

Author of *Deviate*:

The Creative Power of Transforming Your Perception

[Click to find out more](#)

8

The 5-Day Brainstorm

Marketing expert Seth Godin tells that “qarrtsiluni” is the Inuit word for “sitting together in the darkness, quietly, waiting for something creative or important to occur.”

And it works. Scientists have known for decades that the “incubation” stage of the creative process is crucial for original ideas to emerge.

But we’re typically in too much of a rush. We want cordon bleu results in microwave timescales.

So this year, hold your nerve. Instead of squeezing in a 30-minute brainstorm between other Zoom meetings, try a 5-day brainstorm: Have one on Monday and then reconvene on Friday. You’ll be amazed to see what your respective and collective brainpower has unconsciously crafted through the week without even thinking about it.

Elvin Turner

See Chapter 24 of “Be Less Zombie” for more information about the 5-day brainstorm

[Click to find out more](#)

9 A CV Superpower

According to the World Economic Forum, innovation has become perhaps the most valuable employee skill. But most people that I meet don't rate themselves as especially innovative. Here's why I disagree:

Most big ideas come from crowds. Sure, initial creative sparks might fly from individuals. But for those sparks to become sustainable roaring fires, it takes what Brian Eno calls a 'scenius': a group of people that amplifies the creativity and turns it into practical action.

The diversity of an idea's crowd matters. In the early idea generation stages it turns out that "deep level diversity" matters most. Research says that mixing up people with different values, personalities and abilities gives you more creative

firepower than focusing only on age, gender and race.

Later in the process you'll need people who can refine ideas, see where they could fail, roll-up their sleeves and turn them into action.

When we think about innovation in this way – as the process of sparking, developing and implementing ideas, it turns out that we all bring skills and value to the party.

So identify your particular innovation strength and deliberately develop it. Tools like StrengthsFinder, the GCIndex and DISC can help.

It might be your most important CV upgrade of the year.

Elvin Turner

10. Sing!

Singing might not be in your shortlist of things to try more of. Here's why you should reconsider...

Singing can help develop self-esteem and confidence. It relieves stress, reduces anxiety and lifts your mood. Singing songs that carry a powerful lyrical message can help you process thoughts and emotions healthily and express them creatively. So, sing!

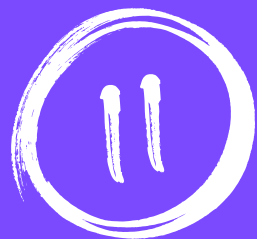
Regularly singing with others can help develop empathy and understanding. Being part of something bigger than yourself provides perspective, and a real sense of togetherness and community through shared experience. So, join a singing group!

Singing transcends a song's lyrical content, and communicates beyond that which can be explained or understood. Singing unites divided stadiums, eases frenetic minds and comforts grieving hearts. So, sing!

Emily Bollon

Emily Bollon is a multi award-winning songwriter, business woman, choral arranger and choir director. She has also served as a coach on the TV show X Factor.

[Click to find out more](#)



Avoid
burnout



Avoiding work-from-home burnout

Working from home is becoming the new norm. But blurring boundaries with home life can create stress.

Maintain physical and social boundaries

“Boundary-crossing activities” help you make psychological shifts from one state to another (e.g. home life and work life).

Maintain some of these boundaries when working remotely. For

example, putting on your work clothes every morning or replacing your morning commute with a walk to a nearby park, or even just around your home, before sitting down to work.

Have clear “out of office” boundaries

Employees who feel “on” all the time are at a higher risk of burnout when working from home than if they were going to the office as usual. In the long-term, trying to squeeze in work and email responses whenever we have ➤

We all need to find
new ways to carve
out non-work time
and mental space.



a few minutes to do so — during nap time, on the weekend, or by pausing a movie in the evening — is not only counterproductive but also detrimental to our well-being. We all need to find new ways — and help others do the same — to carve out non-work time and mental space.

Talk about it!

Have a team discussion with your colleagues about your respective home responsibilities and likely implication on your most productive working times.

Laura M Gurge
Vanessa K Bohns

*Adapted from “Three Tips
To Avoid WFH Burnout”*

*Laura M Gurge, Barnes Research
Fellow at the Wellbeing Research
Centre at the University of Oxford.*

*Vanessa K Bohns, Associate professor
of Organizational Behavior at the
ILR School at Cornell University.*

[Click to find out more](#)

12

Executive presence in a virtual world

In online meetings your presence still matters. Here are three principles for leading in a virtual environment:

Get Present

Eliminate distractions before entering meetings by taking a pause. Breathe. Ground yourself.

Get Personal

Invite others to share what is keeping them from being 100% present and set potential distractions to one side.

Get Productive

Invite all voices to contribute through the meeting. >



Rob Salafia

[Click to find out more](#)

Author of Leading from your best self: Develop executive poise, presence and influence to maximize your potential (McGraw Hill, 2019). Executive Coach, MIT Sloan School of Management. Founder & CEO of Protagonist Consulting Group.

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What is success?

Reframe how you define success. Make sure your definition of succeeding is not based on a short-term outcome that you can't control, but relates to what you do every day:

1. What are the criteria for each day to be successful (consider how you want to turn up each day, your mindset, your behaviours, the way you interact with others)?
2. What brings longer-term meaning to your life? Sounds a bit deep, but honestly, what's it all for? If you don't know why you're doing what you're doing, you probably shouldn't be doing it - better to find out sooner rather than later.

3. What will you still learn and gain from this year, even if you 'fail' to achieve any of the key results and metrics you had hoped for? Treasure those lessons, nurture those gains, they form the core of the resilience and motivation you will need to reach new heights in the future.

Cath Bishop

Cath Bishop is a former olympic rower and war-zone diplomat.

[Click to find out more](#)

[View Cath Bishop's new book](#)

Treasure
those lessons
nurture
those gains

they form the core of
the resilience and
motivation you will need
to reach new heights
in the future

Cath Bishop

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Prayer

The word prayer comes from the Latin 'precarius'.

We pray (and all the surveys say we do) because life is too precarious and too marvellous for us to contain. We pray, in other words, because we are human.

No one stands under the Northern Lights muttering 'Wow, I'm incredible!'

Pete Greig

Founder of 24-7 Prayer. Pete is a best-selling author, pastor and bewildered instigator of the 24-7 Prayer movement which has reached more than half the nations on earth. He is also the Senior Pastor of Emmaus Rd, Guildford, England, an Ambassador for the NGO Tearfund, and teaches at St Mellitus Theological

Nine words on prayer:

- > Keep it simple
- > Keep it real
- > Keep it up

[Click to find out more](#)

College in London. For 7 years Pete served with the senior leadership team at HTB and Alpha International. Pete's publications include 'Red Moon Rising', 'God on Mute', 'The Prayer Course', and 'Dirty Glory'. He loves art galleries, live music and knocking down walls. Pete tweets regularly @petegreig

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Dream big Zoom in start small

It's easy to put our dreams on pause indefinitely. Life coach Joy Ahearn shows us how to hit the 'play' button again.

Tip 1: Dream Big

If you haven't done it before, start writing a dream list. Make it as broad as you can, anything goes! What would like to do, to try, to learn, to experience? Committing dreams to paper (or screen) is an easy and powerful signal to yourself that you're serious about getting started.

Tip 2: Zoom In

A long dream list can feel overwhelming and can stop you getting started. So pick one dream that above all else you want to make progress on.

Tip 3: Start small

Dreams often stall because taking the first step feels too difficult. So shrink that problem for yourself. What is the smallest next step you could take towards your dream? It can help to ask a friend for help here. That will also help you commit to taking action.

Get started on your dream list now!

Joy Ahearn

Joy Ahearn is a life coach based in the UK.

[Click to find out more](#)

16

Escape the comparison trap

**Who have you
compared yourself to
in the last 24 hours?**

Scrolling through social media it can be easy to compare ourselves to others – either feeling ‘less than’ or perhaps a little smug. Neither approach will feed your soul.

Life coach Joy Ahearn suggests flipping your comparison mindset on its head:

1. Instead of comparing yourself to others, adopt a mindset that chooses to learn from others. It might challenge your ego at first, but it pays dividends.

2. Choosing to appreciate the differences and to value the uniqueness of others can help develop your empathy skills. But it also helps reveal and reinforce that you too have something unique and valuable to contribute to the world.

Joy Ahearn

Joy Ahearn is a life coach based in the UK.

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Comparison is the thief of joy

Theodore Roosevelt

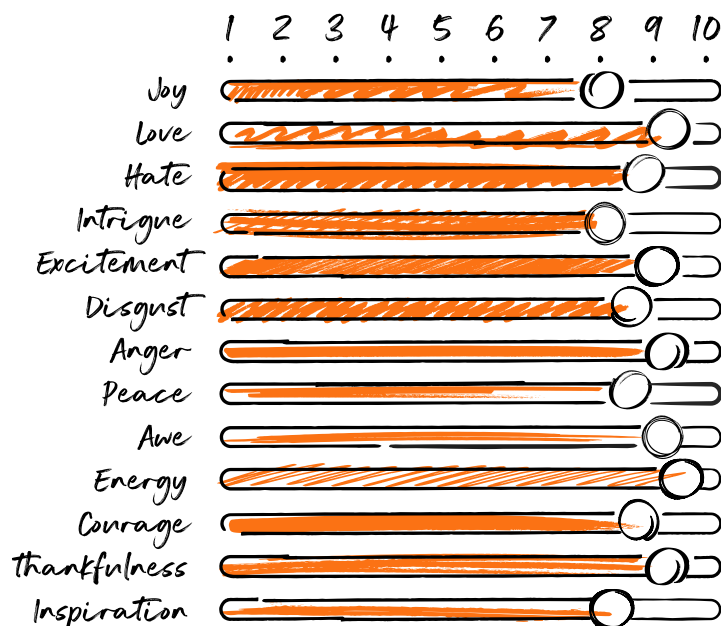
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What are you 'wired' for?

Often we get so stuck in the necessary rhythms of daily life that we forget what we're wired for: the things that give us a unique sense of worth, meaning and purpose.

Most of us need some upgrades in this area. So, take a moment now. Look at the emotional graphic equaliser and ask yourself:

Which things in life push me to at least a score of 8 on each scale? >



Don't rush. Write down whatever comes to mind and don't limit what you write. It can be anything from the feeling of anger over poverty or the joy of feeling sand slipping through your fingers. Are there people, places, causes, situations that you feel particularly drawn to? Consider why.

Your list reveals some of the things that give you life.

Now develop some ideas to weave more of these things into your life on an ongoing basis. They won't show up by accident – most likely your life is already full of things that stop these 'life givers' from showing up. Consider asking your partner or a close friend to do this exercise, too. Share your lists and explore how you could help each other get a better balance. What could you stop or reduce in order to make space for things that you want to increase or start?

A friend of mine calls this 'enjoying your joy'. It's not a guilty pleasure. It's agreeing with and investing in your unique design. It's a pathway to a more fulfilled life.

What are the things that give you a unique sense of worth, meaning and purpose?

Elvin Turner

19 Personal brand

The clothes you choose are an integral part of your personal brand. Kerrie Ellis, a British image consultant, offers two tips for helping your wardrobe boost your performance.

1. Maximise the power of your clothes as communicators

Clothes can be powerful anchors that trigger emotions such as confidence, happiness and efficiency. Just think about how you feel at the weekend when you're in your most casual clothing relaxing on the settee, versus your mindset when you're smartly dressed for an interview. The act of 'getting dressed for work' sends signals to your brain that you are in 'work mode'.

So, when planning your outfit, work back from the mindset you need for the task ahead and dress accordingly. Doing so is likely to give you a marginal performance gain.

What you wear also has an unconscious impact on those you see/meet. As fashion psychologist Dawnn Karen says, "We are all influenced by our own histories and biases, which we then project onto others".

2. Get some expert input

If clothes aren't your thing, invite advice from trusted friends. Ask for honest opinions about styles and colours that best suit you.

If you're approaching a significant career opportunity and want to do everything you can to make a great impression, consider talking to an Image Consultant. These experts can design a "capsule wardrobe" for you, (one that contains fewer clothes, but that which all mix and match to create multiple outfit options). They can also create personalised, digital 'look-books' to make choosing what to wear each day easier. Think of it as the Hello Fresh solution for your wardrobe! Make those 7 seconds (or less) that it takes to form a lasting first impression, really count.

Kerrie Ellis

Image Consultant & Personal Stylist

[Click to find out more](#)

20

As we pass each other in the street in silence, our clothes just had a conversation

Dawnn Karen

Fashion Psychologist

[Click to find out more](#)

21

Fear
 sometimes
 masquerades
 as wisdom

Bill Johnson

22 Navigating
 personal change

If you are planning any kind of change my advice would be “go inside” and remember that “small is beautiful”.

1. Go inside

One of the reasons that change fails is because people believe it's a tool, a process change, or a plan. It's not, it's a human process.

So start by being really honest with yourself. Take a step back and ask yourself how you react to change in general. Then think about how you are thinking and feeling about the change that's ahead. Acknowledge your fears, your assumptions, what you control and what you cannot control and how you can navigate that differently.

2. Small is beautiful

Change never goes quite as planned. Remember that small is beautiful. Visualise your challenge holistically, break it into bite-sized chunks and be open to regular, minor course corrections. It's a much smarter and less painful journey. Build and learn on every insight or experiment, and practice thinking differently.

Suzie Lewis

Transformation and change expert
 Managing Director, Transform for Value

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Tips for the aspiring entrepreneur

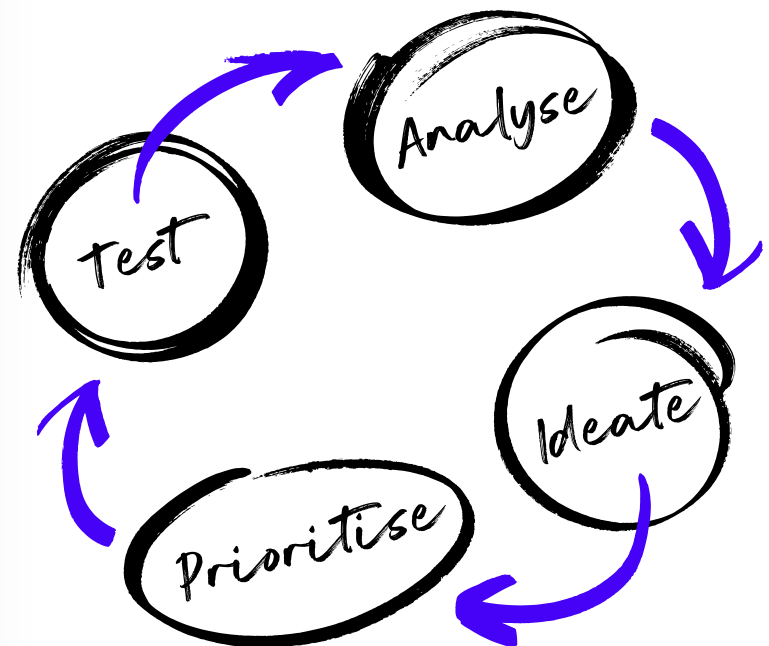
If you're considering a change and launching out on your own, consider the following:

1. Focus on what you are passionate about

Starting a business takes a massive amount of effort, therefore you want to focus on something that appeals to you. Think about what gets you up in the morning and where you would like to focus on. This could be a combination of existing knowledge and skills that you can leverage. Before you start, take some time to really investigate these drivers and see how they can be used.

2. Recognize your strength and weakness

You only have 168 hours in a week so ensure that you understand where your skills, abilities and knowledge is situated when building your business. Focus on these areas, think about your core skills and look to build a network of contacts to fill the void. Don't be afraid to ask for help as you will be surprised how many people will be there for you when needed. >



3. Embrace an experimentation mindset

In a start up, you will need to test out your idea with your target audience and understand how to adapt. Embrace failure, as this allows you to learn and experimentation is the key to this. Use an experimentation loop such as the above to make meaningful changes based on evidence, not an opinion to get to your milestones quicker and in a more scientific manner.

**Andrew
Constable MBA**

Model from Growthhackers.com
Business Start-Up and Innovation Coach

[Click to find out more](#)

24 Awkward!

Why we have a love/hate relationship with kindness, and how to fix it

A manager was recently helping me understand the culture of the global organisation that employs him: "People here are so kind. But that means that we often avoid giving others feedback that they really need to hear. And the longer we leave it, the bigger the potential pain for everyone involved."

We like the idea of working with kind people. And I passionately believe that kindness should be a foundational value for every organisation. But it's all in the definition. Usually, it's too narrow. Often, without realising, it's geared towards our own comfort rather than others' benefit.

Consider Wikipedia's definition: "Kindness is a type of behaviour marked by acts of generosity,

consideration, or concern for others, without having an expectation of praise or reward."

A truly kind culture always has others' best interests at heart. Never is this more true than when it comes to giving other people feedback. Whilst it can sometimes feel awkward, it is a potential key to others' future thriving.

Consider this: Is it kinder to give a colleague data that will help her grow into a better version of herself or keep quiet during a performance review and hope she'll figure it out some other way (she usually won't)?

A blurry form of kindness shows up a lot in creative work, too. "I sort of knew that idea would never work," says the person whose intention to be kind actually resulted in a lot of wasted time, effort and resource.

Close encounters of another kind

So what's causing us to trade true kindness for something less?

Usually, it's our preference to avoid pain overpowering our desire to be kind. Let's be real: Disagreements and conflict feel yucky in two directions. We don't want to hurt another's feelings, and we don't want the stress, anxiety and awkwardness that often comes from making someone else upset.

At other times it's our need to be liked that makes the whole issue of kindness foggy. Is my need for this person to like me greater than my desire to help them grow? Ouch. I know I've done that one a lot.

This sets up a difficult thought. Perhaps my intention to be kind by withholding feedback is actually, well, unkind. Maybe it's more about me and my own discomfort, than them in the end?

I don't want to pretend that this is easy, but we do need to deal in reality. If we genuinely want prosperity for the people and places around us, we need kindness and courage to keep close company.

When fear overpowers generosity the lights dim a little. Thankfully there are tools that can help us make it easier.

Leadership expert **Tammy Day** now gives us some advice on how to prepare to give good feedback. I recommend the following resources for a deeper dive:

"Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When Stakes Are High" (Kerry Patterson)

"Humble Enquiry" (Edgar Schein)

"Radical Candor" (Kim Scott)

Elvin Turner

25 Handling difficult conversations

Avoiding difficult conversations is a huge cause of personal and team stress. Here's how to get started with them:

1. The most common reason that people avoid difficult conversations is fear of generating feelings in others, or in themselves.
2. Consider the consequences of NOT having the conversation. They are often worse than being brave and doing it! What specifically would you like to say? What, if anything, is preventing you from saying what you need to say?
3. These preparation questions can really help to find your motivation to have the conversation. What exactly would you like to change? What is the best thing that could happen? What can you do to help this become the outcome? What are you afraid of happening? Is this true/likely? What could you do to reduce this risk/handle it if it does happen?

Tammy Day

Tammy Day is an award-winning strategic business leader and leadership consultant for some of the world's biggest brands.

[Click to find out more](#)

26 Learn some 'love languages'

A great tool for improving the communications in your relationship is understanding your 'love language'. Sounds soppy? Reserve judgment for now – it could be a game changer for your relationships.

In his bestselling 1992 book "The Five Love Languages" Dr Gary Chapman states that we each have a specific way in which we want to experience the love of another person. The five languages are:

- Words of affirmation
- Physical touch
- Receiving gifts
- Quality time
- Acts of service

The better we understand our own language, the more we can help our partner understand what matters most to us, and vice versa.

It also applies to families. I've found it to be an excellent tool to help my children develop self-awareness and empathy.

Start below with the "Love Languages Quiz" to learn which of the five languages matter most to you. Then look at the other resources on the website to help you take some next steps. There's even an app to help remind you that your partner needs some love!

[Click to find out more](#)

Elvin Turner

27

The healing power of forgiveness

"Resentment is like taking poison and waiting for the other person to die."

Malachy McCourt

Research shows that stress, anxiety, our immune systems, heart attacks, cholesterol levels, sleep and blood pressure are all negatively affected by unforgiveness. And as you move past the age of 45, the impact increases.

No wonder 62% of Americans said they needed more forgiveness in their lives, according to a survey by fetzer.org

So how can we learn to let go of grudges? Whilst some issues may benefit from the support of a specialist counsellor, many areas of unforgiveness can be dealt with ourselves. ➤

Professor Everett Worthington of Virginia Commonwealth University shares his 5-step REACH approach:

R

RECALL THE HURT

To heal, you have to face the fact that you've been hurt. Make up your mind not to be snarky (i.e., nasty and hurtful), not to treat yourself like a victim, and not to treat the other person as a jerk. Make a decision to forgive. Decide that you are not going to pursue payback but you will treat the person as a valuable person.

E

EMPATHIZE WITH YOUR PARTNER

Empathy is putting yourself in the other person's chair. Pretend that the other person is in an empty chair across from you. Talk to him. Pour your heart out. Then, when you've had your say, sit in his chair. Talk back to the imaginary you in a way that helps you see why the other person might have wronged you. This builds empathy, and even if you can't empathize, you might feel more sympathy, compassion, or love, which helps you heal from hurt. This allows you to give...

A

ALTRUISTIC GIFT

Give forgiveness as an unselfish, altruistic gift. We all can remember when we wronged someone — maybe a parent, teacher, or friend — and the person forgave us. We felt light and free. And we didn't want to disappoint that person by doing wrong again. By forgiving unselfishly, you can give that same gift to someone who hurt you.

C

COMMIT

Once you've forgiven, write a note to yourself — something as simple as, "Today, I forgave [person's name] for hurting me." This helps your forgiveness last.

H

HOLD ONTO FORGIVENESS

We write notes of commitment because we will almost surely be tempted to doubt that we really forgave. We can re-read our notes. We did forgive.

Professor Everett Worthington
Virginia Commonwealth University

[Click to find out more](#)

28 *Living at the speed of love*

We're wired for connection. But sometimes our most important relationships are inadvertently starved to death.

What's going on? When we live at the speed that life seems to dictate...

- **We're often too thinly spread:**

We over-invest in hundreds of distant social media relationships

- **We're overcommitted:**

We try to fit too much into our lives and our relationships get the loose change

- **We're distracted:**

We allow our attention to be robbed by 'just one more' quick hit of social media snacking

- **We're goal-oriented:**

We prefer to get stuff done than spend time on something that appears to have no tangible outcome

And let's be honest, sometimes, deliberately investing in our most important relationships (beyond a maintenance level) just doesn't cross our minds.

Unless we're deliberate, a steady relational erosion happens to us all. Our communication diet becomes functional, little more than status updates and diary planning. We stop providing soul food for one another. An imperceptible fade to grey.

What can we do?

This book isn't intended to be an exhaustive guide here are four practical but powerful suggestions to help you start living at the speed of love: >

- > *Slow down*
- > *Look around*
- > *Listen up*
- > *Feed a soul*

Slow down

Most of us are running too fast to notice how people around us are really doing. Often this is simply because we're trying to cram too much into every day. Be real. Doing things well requires time and attention. So which things in your life need more, higher quality attention, and which lower-order things could you pull back on? Do this with your partner – but individually – and then compare lists and priorities. Always a good reality check!

Look around

Instead of instinctively reaching for your smartphone between activities, choose one of your most important relationships and consider what's going on for them right now. If they're nearby go and ask them. If not, you have permission to reach for your device and send them a message.

Listen up

Practice listening to what people are saying, rather than simply hearing their words. Eye contact matters – we've got used to talking to each other whilst multi-tasking in another part of the room. Giving someone undivided attention is a powerful relationship builder. Time is perhaps our most precious commodity so when we lavish it on others, it's a rare gift in modern society.

Play back a summary of what they said so that they experience having been heard. You're being deliberate about connecting.

Feed a soul

What can you now do or say that would help fill that person's 'love tank'? What authentic word or act would encourage them, delight them or simply help them in that moment? It rarely needs to be a grand gesture. Simply taking the time to notice, ask, listen and acknowledge the other person's feelings is a big step in the right direction for strengthening many relationships.

> [Click here](#) to read the section on "Love Languages" for more ideas (page 37)

Elvin Turner

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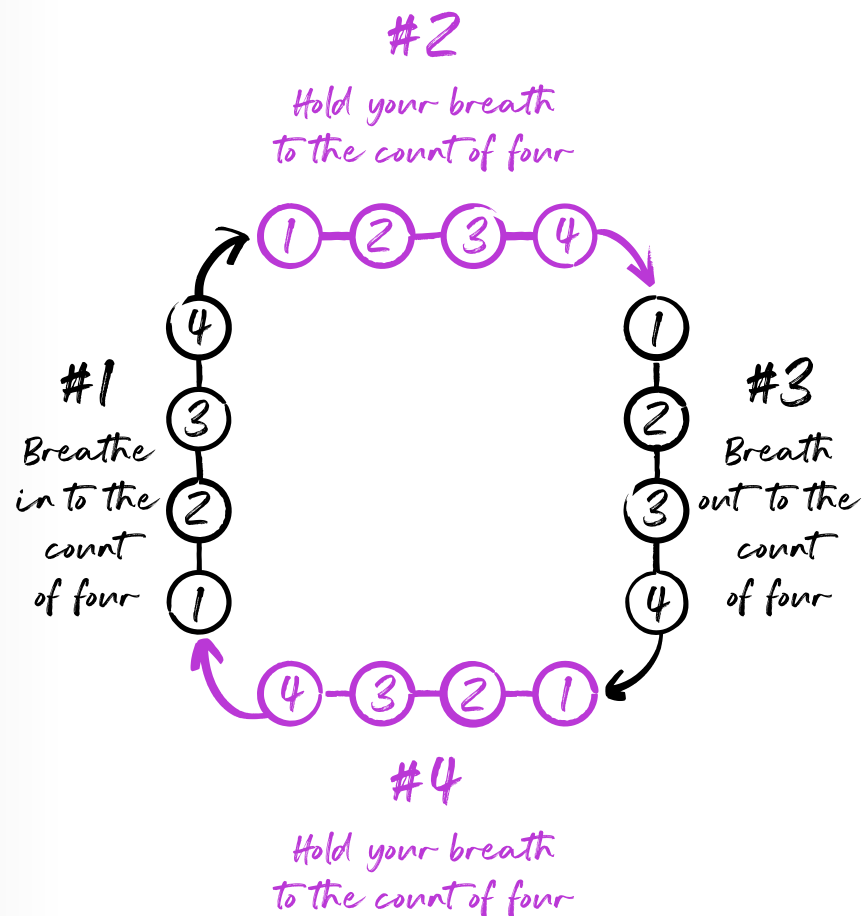
Breathe

Research indicates that there is a link between the way you breathe and the way you think and feel.

The US Navy Seals take this seriously. In the heat of a battle, panic and fear can trigger unhelpful decisions. So they worked with leading psychologists to develop breathing techniques that can reduce those feelings very quickly. One technique is called “Box Breathing” – try it out next time you can feel anxiety rising within you:

1. Imagine a box with a dot at the bottom left-hand corner. Breathe in to a count of four. As you breathe in, imagine a dot moving up the left-hand side of the box.
2. Hold your breath for a count of four, this time imagining the dot moving along the top of the box.
3. Breathe out for a count of four and imagine the dot moving down the right-hand side of the box.
4. Finally hold your breath again for a count of four and imagine the dot moving along the bottom of the box.

Repeat the pattern as required.



Elvin Turner

30 Mental wellbeing

Protecting and developing our mental health has rapidly become dominant theme in the wellbeing media. Ana Loback, a psychologist and top executive coach, shares three tips to help us develop our mental wellbeing.

#1 Focus on your focus

The most important choice you can make today for your mental health is what you choose to focus on.

3 Key things you should know about focus:

1. Your ability to focus on something is a limited resource which decreases every time you 'pay attention' to something. Our minds can only concentrate on one thing at a time so our limited ability to focus should be used wisely.
2. What you focus on grows. Your attention amplifies things. Even at the best of times, human beings are hardwired to notice threats and weaknesses with a lot more intensity than positive stimuli. This is a negativity bias that serves us well as a self-defence mechanism,

but it can play against us when it hijacks our ability to focus on the positives around us and within us because we will literally miss what we're not focusing on.

3. How you focus your attention changes your own brain, and in turn, affects how you interpret your circumstances and experience the world. Your experiences don't determine how you feel or what you think, in fact, events don't change you, it's what you choose to focus on that changes you. How you interpret situations, your thoughts, which are shaped by your beliefs and values, help you make sense of the world around you. It is this interpretation that affects how you feel about things, and in turn how you behave. ➤

#2 Get your "emotional 5-a-day" nutrients

Watching your emotional diet and aiming for a minimum of 5 positive emotions every day is the new 5-a-day.

3 Key things you should know about positive emotions:

1. All emotions are momentary, they rise and dissipate. But positive emotions tend to be even more fleeting. Research shows there is an asymmetry between positive and negative emotions. This positivity offset means that the human brain is hardwired to process negative emotions with more intensity than the positive ones, so this negativity bias needs to be counteracted with getting more familiar with positive emotions and intentionally seeking to experience them daily.
2. Positive emotions are like nutrients to the brain – they not only help us feel good in the moment but they also broaden our awareness and increase our thought-action repertoire which helps us build enduring personal resources, from intellectual and psychological to physical and social resources.

Positive emotions help us to think better, to learn faster, to be more creative, to solve problems and make complex decisions more effectively because when the brain is operating in a positive emotional state it is significantly more productive than when it's operating in a negative state. Negative emotions tend to hijack the brain's natural stress response system and keep us stuck in a fight or flight response, narrowing down our attention and every cell in our bodies to quickly fight a threat or run away from it.

3. Positive emotions can not only improve our cognitive performance but they can also impact our physical health. Research shows that positive emotions can reduce pro-inflammatory gene expression and even impact the immune system. People who experience a range of different positive emotions regularly every day tend to be happier, healthier, live longer and enjoy more fulfilling relationships. ➤

#3 Develop social connections for maximum wellbeing

Social connection will be the most important habit to cultivate as a health behaviour in the next decade.

3 Key things you should know about social connection:

1. Social connection is a habit that needs to be intentionally developed. One measurable impact of digital communication may be on our biological capacity to connect with other people. Our repeated experiences leave imprints on our neural pathways, a phenomenon called neuroplasticity. Our habits mould the very structure of our brains in ways that strengthen those habits further. Our habits of social connection also leave an imprint on our brains and on our bodies. How much time we spend meaningfully connecting with others, how attuned and connected we feel to other people, and the quality and quantity of our daily social interactions can all have an impact on our ever-changing biological capacity to connect.

2. Social connection is the number one predictor of wellbeing across the lifespan. Maintaining good connections and supportive relationships, particularly during times of crisis and challenges is an important health behaviour and a protective factor in mental and physical health that can determine someone's ability to bounce back from adversities. Social connection is associated with cardiovascular health and stronger immune system response.

3. Social connection is so deeply central to human beings that the entire structure of the human brain is designed to help people survive and thrive in social environments. From an early age, humans know how to recognise and interpret facial expressions, a skill designed to help us connect and belong. The pain experienced in social rejection is felt by the same brain structures that process physical pain, and the reward experienced in social acceptance is experienced with the same brain structures that process physical pleasure.

[Click to find out more](#)

Ana Loback

Ana Loback is a psychologist
and top executive coach

#1

Focus on
your focus

#2

Get your
"emotional 5-a-day"
nutrients

#3

Develop social
connections for
maximum wellbeing

31 Energy

Most of us could do with a little more energy in our lives. Often, we know how to get that extra energy but try and shortcut the system. Top personal coach, Kevin Witham gives his back-to-basics tips for improving our physical energy:

#1 Sleep

Most adults don't get enough sleep. The impact? We increase stress, harm emotional wellbeing, increase our risk of developing serious illnesses and reduce our performance. Reducing screen time before bed and having a consistent routine helps. Reading a book on a subject and by an author you don't know before bed can help too. Also, try a short 5-10 minute stretching routine before bed.

Sleep is crucial to your health. Don't cut back on it. Instead develop a deliberate plan to increase the quality and quantity of your sleep this year. The rest of your life will thank you for it.

Kevin Witham

#2 Move

Moving frequently helps to unlock personal energy by increasing blood flow to the heart and brain. So at work, try not to sit for longer than one hour at a time, ideally less. Short outdoor walks (5-10 minutes) are an easy way to stimulate physical and mental energy through the day. Also, stand whilst on the phone and consider getting a standing desk to limit your time sitting through the day.

#3 Eat

Small changes to your eating can boost energy levels. Some simple tips include varying what you eat; drinking a little more water; and eating plenty of vegetables. Eat snacks such as nuts during the day and always have breakfast; eggs can be an excellent choice.

[Click to find out more](#)

Most of us
could do
with a
little more
energy in
our lives



32

Next-Level Creative Culture

Most of this ebook is focused on helping individuals make some positive changes. But many of us work in teams that need a boost.

Last year I wrote a book called *Be Less Zombie: How great companies create dynamic innovation, fearless leadership and passionate people.*

The next chapter is an excerpt from that book which contains some ideas about how to improve your team culture.

Don't be put off by the word "creative" in the title. As you read, you'll realise that it's actually about **helping any team become a more inspiring place to work.**

Elvin Turner

[Click to find out more about *Be Less Zombie*](#)

The power of 'kindred connections'

Whenever I'm inside an organisation that has a strong reputation for innovation, I always sense an irresistible force magnetically pulling people together and forward.

That force isn't accidental. It's well understood by the leaders of these organisations and it is carefully cultivated as a source of competitive advantage.

It attracts the best people, retains them, draws out their best work, and motivates them to reach beyond their grasp. All key ingredients for a culture of innovation.

So what is this force? I call it a 'kindred connection', a fusion of three elements that forms an almost unbreakable bond between people and organisations:

Connection to the purpose of the organisation

We're doing something here that matters.

Connection to meaningful, progressing work

I'm getting stuff done that matters.

Connection to other people on the same 'journey'

These people get it and are 'on it'.

At its simplest, innovation rock stars create environments where people can do something that they care about with people that they care about. It's mission-making. It's tribal. It's kindred connection.

Connection to Purpose

Company purpose is who we are, what we stand for, the difference we're making, and for whom. That's not difficult information for any organisation to share with its employees on a regular basis. It's corporate communications 101.

Yet you'd be amazed how many people that I meet every year who have no real idea what their employer actually does. I'm not kidding.

In management coaching sessions, one of the biggest barriers to meaningful business-related conversations is a lack of awareness about strategy, decision-making processes and who does what.

If people don't know what we do, why we do it, and how we are continually making a difference, their level of engagement is likely to be moderate at best. In an environment of continual change, that's not a deep enough connection to sustain high performance. ➤

Making Meaning

Connection to purpose isn't a problem at Decca. The 90-year-old record company has launched numerous industry legends, and produced the biggest track of all time, Bing Crosby's 'White Christmas'.

'Decca is about making meaningful music,' Becky Allen, president of Decca tells me in the company's hip, new headquarters in London's King's Cross.

One could easily write that off as a cute platitude, but I quickly feel its truth as Allen's leadership team gathers for an off-site that I'm attending. Unlike many such meetings, people are not cramming in a few last-second emails or consoling one another over the edict that was sent out last night.

These senior executives are geeking out over 'the craft' within some demos that they were listening to on the tube, and overnight news of some emerging artist who got a great Instagram shout at a gig, and wondering if the label could do anything to help ease the homeless situation in the area close to where we're meeting today. And it continues at every break throughout the day.

I know a geek when I see one (I love geeks) and I quickly realise

that these people are sold-out, in relentless pursuit of making music that matters.

This is confirmed later in the day when we're discussing a 'DNA manifesto', something to help crystallise, communicate and amplify their culture. 'Can I read something out?' someone half-coughs. 'It's just something I quickly hashed together last night.' He takes the floor. 'It's called, "We are Decca."'

*We are the sound makers,
the ground breakers
The come-up-for-more-breath-takers
We're the sound of your soul
We're a sign for the times
A tribe of imagineers
Elsewhere just can't find
Been here since the start
We go back, but look far
If there's a sound not yet made
You know it's coming OUR way
You see, we've pledged no compromise
Makes sense to mix fools with the wise
We're the future of sound,
the status quo wrecker
Ain't none can compare
Because we are Decca*

If I'd dropped a match the whole place would have exploded. The team went bananas.

Now that might not be your cup of tea. It doesn't matter. What matters is that your people need to feel something like >

It attracts
the best people
retains them,
draws out their
best work, and
motivates them
to reach beyond
their grasp.

that to care enough to fuel the innovation journey that will get you to your future. If your team's likely response to a culturally appropriate equivalent is a polite clap, a connection to purpose is unlikely to run deep.

The Decca feeling is a kindred connection to purpose, and it starts with leadership.

Play It Loud

I meet up with Allen a few weeks later to discuss her approach to creating that deep connection to purpose. Since the workshop she has become one of only a handful of women to make Billboard Magazine's 2019 'International Power Players' list.

'Decca is a label that likes to surprise people. We like the unexpected,' she says. 'If we're going to deliver that promise sustainably it means we'll need to take a lot of smart risks. And that means people need to care enough, and feel safe enough, to step into potential failure. It has to be worth it.'

But what creates the care?

First, somewhat unsurprisingly, is a deep love for music. Just like any industry, if people care enough about the subject matter, they'll find a way to make a living from it. But that alone isn't enough.

Second, there is the deep motivation that's provoked by an artist's commitment. 'Most of our artists are masters of their craft,' says Allen. 'I'm often blown away by the price that artists pay to be the best in their field. It draws out an admiration and a passion to do whatever you can to help them succeed.'

Whilst this may feel unique to the entertainment industry, there is a wider principle here that any company can apply. Research has shown that when staff meet customers in context, their empathy levels increase which has a knock-on effect to customer service performance. Run an experiment and see what happens. >

The third area is what I read between the lines after being around Allen and her colleagues over the next few months. Her actions and reputation betray a deep and genuine care for whoever is around her. And that undoubtedly contributes to the strong followership that she has. 'I'd leave my job tomorrow and work for her,' someone from a sister record label blurts out to me in the elevator one day.

But one expression of that care particularly caught my attention. And it's a leadership trait that is crucial for building kindred connections.

Allen is a 'star maker,' not only for artists but for her people. It breaks down into three areas:

Instincts: Allen recognises the potential in a person at an early stage, sometimes before the person has seen it themselves.

Generosity: Spotting the gold in someone is one thing; drawing it out of them is quite another. It takes deliberate time and effort to take people on that journey. That requires a generous spirit,

especially when the journey gets bumpy.

Humility: As the stars grow, their abilities begin to overtake the mentor. Pride causes many a car crash in these situations, yet Allen graciously defers to others' perspectives, ever willing to learn, it seems.

She is the brand's purpose in action, finding great talent and taking them to the top of their game.

Of course, not every journey will have a neat and happy ending; we're dealing with human beings after all. But Allen carries around a philosophy that helps her stay resilient to failure and to stay the company's number one creativity cheerleader.

'One of the best pieces of advice that I ever had was from my childhood trumpet teacher,' says Allen. 'Play it loud, play it wrong, or not at all.'

In a world where businesses need greater levels of disruptive innovation, that sounds like good advice. >

'Play it loud, play it wrong, or not at all.'

Connection to Personal Progress

I once worked for a 30,000-person company at the peak of its Silicon Valley powers. For a while, it was the place to be.

But try as I might, for the whole year that I worked there, I didn't get anything done. I mean nothing. Sure, I sat in on tons of conference calls, went to lots of meetings, went along to some great corporate jollies. But actual progress against a target? Zip.

Did anyone seem to care? Not really. We just moved the numbers around, blamed the blockers in another silo, and set new targets for the next quarter. Zero progress in a whole year. I couldn't wait to leave.

Five years later the company was on the ropes and was bought for a bargain. But five years is a lifetime now.

A leader inside a 4500-employee airport technology company told me that a 12-person company in Silicon Valley had eroded 50% of its market share in just 18 months. This company had been around for decades. When I fell victim to the painful torture of their

procurement process, I started to see how things might have started to go wrong for them.

People need progress. Great people want to do great work. If they can't they'll go elsewhere, and with the 'war for talent' showing no signs of abating, there are plenty of available options.

Not All Work Is Created Equal

But great work doesn't mean all work. No one will complain that they didn't spend enough time reading the emails they were copied into today.

The most consistent theft of important, meaningful work that I encounter is thinking time. And here's the irony: people are crying out for it to fuel their motivation, and your future is crying out for it for survival. But there's a drastic shortage in most organisations.

Think of a Number

Have you ever asked yourself how much quality thinking time your role actually needs? Or perhaps, how much better your performance might be if you could trade off some transactional work for more strategic and creative thinking and problem solving? ➤

This line of enquiry is the stuff of daydreams for most people who desire it but can't imagine how it could possibly happen. But as we learned in the earlier chapters, this is exactly what innovators like Amazon do. They make deliberate choices about the time and energy needed for certain types of value creation and plan accordingly.

There's no reason why every team couldn't take a step in a similar direction. I'll look at some specific approaches to doing this in the section on Resourcing.

But what we do is less than half the story. I believe how we do it is more important when it comes to building kindred connections.

How We Work

'Real work happens at a desk.' These days managers know that they can't openly agree with this binary statement. Yet the actions of many reveal their true convictions. The 'real work' mindset remains one of the biggest, silent blockers to innovation, and a constraint on how deeply kindred connections can run.

True, some work is done best at a desk. Yet the most valuable work inside high performing innovators

happens wherever it needs to. Recent research backs up this approach showing that average productivity for 'work from anywhere' employees was 4.4% higher.¹ Few breakthroughs occur in front of a computer monitor with one eye trained on the inbox.

At its root, this is an issue of trust. Absence may make the heart grow fonder, but it also quickly triggers doubt and suspicion amongst managers who can only equate employee productivity with presence.

During a corporate innovation push inside a well-known UK company, I sat in many meetings where the board struggled with the idea of moving towards more flexible working patterns that would support more creative and strategic thinking.

Finally, in one meeting, an exasperated executive blustered, 'Yes, but what would they all be getting up to if we started letting them work from home?' Everyone was thinking it. And many still do.

If leaders genuinely want to free people to do more of the creative work that their future needs, they need to address the trust crisis that is present in so many ➤

organisations. Of course, there are certain types of work that are arguably best done in person in the office. And I would advocate a decent measure of office presence, not least because of the important relational bonds that it strengthens.

But when leaders trust their people to make the right choices about where and when great work needs to happen, motivation and trust boom. In turn, that fosters deeper connections with both managers and the brand.

How many people in your organisation drive home smiling, thinking, 'My boss trusts me deeply'?

Companies wanting to make progress in this direction have some options, including:

- Executive education about the conditions under which human beings do their best work (Ron Friedman's book *The Best Place To Work*, and *Culture Code* by Daniel Coyle, are great resources to start with).
- Challenging executive mindsets that people should 'just get on with it' – we never had these "perks" and look where it got us'.
- Normalising experimentation around optimal ways of working. Data from ➤

"We jumped on a cruise boat and ran our brainstorm speeding along the River Thames"

experiments about performance improvements is difficult to argue with.

I remember watching a conversation between a conservative executive and a marketing manager once. 'Your new campaign is great! Where did the inspiration come from?' asked the executive. 'We jumped on a cruise boat and ran our brainstorm speeding along the River Thames,' came the reply. Confounded silence.

- Learning best-practice ways of working from organisations that were 'born digital' such as Spotify and Airbnb, and creative giants such as Pixar and Lego.
- Measuring for outcomes, not attendance. In theory we do this; in reality there's often a cognitive penalty applied to those seeking more flexible approaches to work. They're not deemed to be 'serious'.

Pursuing trust is essential for deepening the connection people have with their work. If, deep down, they know they aren't trusted by colleagues, there is a limit to the depth of connection they can make.

Even in a progressive company like Decca, old habits die hard, and the performance state shift that Allen is continually pursuing will require many people to un-learn the habits and reflexes that persist from twentieth-century ways of working. It's hard work, but essential work. And rewarding work.

Kindred Connection to Others

'These people get it, and are on it,' is how I described this component of kindred connection earlier.

When we're on a mission with people who care as deeply as we do, and demonstrate their commitment with consistent integrity and excellence, most days are good days. And on good days, great work can happen. But it can run even deeper, as Dr Alice Cook, a senior emergency room specialist in the UK, tells me.

'Working in a high-stakes environment, often with inebriated, addicted and violent patients, means that a sense of crisis is never far away,' she says. 'But if your team has your back, and you've worked through difficulties together, you all come out stronger.' ➤

That level of connection isn't automatic, it is grown. As you saw in Chapter 38 on rehearsal spaces, calibrating culture to the level of creative outcome and risk must be deliberate.

So how do we develop those connections?

According to psychologists, there are three primary drivers of close friendships: proximity, familiarity and similarity. In other words, the more that we share time, space and interests, the more likely a friendship will develop. (Hence my earlier affirmation for at least some work to happen in the office.)

Simply working in the same space will take you so far. But every company does that, so where's the advantage?

The real magic happens when we pursue depth.

Getting More Naked

Let's remember the real outcome of what we are pursuing on this journey toward more kindred connections: People who are passionate enough to explore an uncertain journey together that will be characterised by risk, ambiguity and failure.

That means creating a safe place to be real, and to be vulnerable. It means being free to say how we really feel, to matter-of-factly point to the emperor's birthday suit, to admit to a paralysing fear, and to call someone back up to a position of dignity when they stumble.

Like everything I'm suggesting in this book, start with very small steps towards the edge of your team's comfort zone. It's getting more naked, but one sock at a time.

So how do we go deeper?

I have helped teams do this in two ways: conversationally and experientially. Conversations are free, so let's start there.

Kindred Conversations

We don't need psychologists to tell us (even though they've proven it), that when we share personal details with others, we feel a closer connection. Yet in the workplace, it isn't always opportune or appropriate to have those conversations. And sometimes, we just plain don't want to. Vulnerability, and fear of shame, is a scary place for most people.

But it doesn't have to be that way. What I'm not talking about here is revealing deep, dark secrets. That's not the point. >

This is about letting people see a slightly bigger picture of who you are, what makes you tick, and why. And the 'why' is often electric because it involves stories, and people love stories.

I once facilitated a spiritual development programme for a group of Christians who had known each another for some time. But this group wanted to go on a journey that would require a vulnerability upgrade. So, to warm people up, I asked people to share a simple story about how they first became a Christian.

Oh.My. Goodness.

What I thought would take a couple of hours took over 10 hours (across a few meetings) and the impact that it had on the group connection was incredible. What happened? Over time, the stories graduated from handshakes to heartbreaks, from simple informational transmissions to powerful, deeply personal testimonies.

One of the beauties of telling stories is that people can volunteer whatever level of information feels safe. But there's an interesting dynamic: when someone wades out a little deeper and offers

something that the group is unlikely to know, it sets a confidence precedent for the rest of the group to follow, if they want to. And they usually do.

Whilst in many instances along the innovation journey I caution against leaders speaking first in meetings, this is a great time to do the opposite and pitch the tone early. There's no compulsion for people to follow suit, but chances are they will paddle out further than they would have done otherwise.

Designing Conversations

Intentionally building kindred connections means designing pathways for the right kinds of conversations to go deeper. That generally means two things:

1. Creating safe opportunities for those conversations to happen

Vulnerability is generally a function of safety. The leader's job is to understand from people how 'safe' looks and feels, and then create that experience. This could include location, who is present, what will be discussed, and what happens to disclosures outside of the meeting. >

2. Designing conversations that stretch comfort zones and provide opportunities for greater disclosure

I would always emphasise to people that they are in control of how vulnerable they want to be in conversations. However, with the right conversation guidelines, most people are willing to be more open than they might have expected to be at the start of the conversation.

Designing conversations is a subtle skill and whilst this is a generalisation, my experience is that women have better instincts around where to start them. Male designers can often be in too much of a hurry to cut to the chase. Yet, ironically, it's the men who often take longest to 'warm up' during the actual conversations.

There are three main levels to this kind of conversation:

Level 1: General, informational questions: 'What', 'how' and 'when' questions. These are ice-breakers.

Level 2: Gentle 'why' questions that give the opportunity to go further and reveal general motivations.

Level 3: Finally, questions that explore underlying values, assumptions, beliefs and expectations.

Sony Music once brought in a guerrilla negotiator to help its leaders develop deeper kindred connections. Working with consultancy DPA and events company Shelton Fleming, SonyMusic built a 'pop-up guerrilla terrorist camp' in a forest outside London.

The leaders were dropped off at the camp where they met Simon Walsh, a humanitarian aid expert whose work in the jungles of Colombia requires him to negotiate with guerrillas.

After learning his methodology for stepping into fearful but necessary situations, the leaders paired off and were given a handful of related questions to explore together. The questions led the delegates to share stories of workplace situations that provoked fear at different levels, and to explore some underlying root causes, and overcoming strategies.

This wasn't therapy, it was gentle, guided exploration, entirely under the control of the individuals. And it was phenomenal to watch people talk privately, yet openly about deep issues for the first time. In a fake guerrilla camp. Yes, it was a little surreal. ➤

Obviously, there's no need to go to these lengths to facilitate a conversation (this was in the context of a week-long innovation leadership bootcamp). I've facilitated comparable conversations in sweaty meeting rooms.

It's the sensitive and deliberate design of conversations that's the key.

Shared Experiences: No Pain, No Gain

That said, great conversations in the context of a powerful shared experience take kindred connections deeper, faster.

But like conversations, different depths of connection occur with different flavours of experience.

Those that include a collective struggle to overcome something, or involve a degree of pain, deliver deeper levels of connection. This can happen in the context of a workplace crisis. Get to the other side and something relational shifts in the team.

This is borne out by research that asserts that shared pain is an important 'social glue'² that increases group cohesion and collaboration.

But waiting for a crisis to show up that may go off in a direction that doesn't necessarily build deeper connections, perhaps isn't the most proactive strategy. Deliberately engineering them in pursuit of greater innovation performance is a tried-and-tested practice inside great innovators.

Show Time

I had first-hand experience of this during a leadership programme in the Swiss Alps for a global electronics company. For reasons that would take too long to explain, my role on the programme was to pose as a tourist. I was to discreetly follow delegates around as they completed difficult assignments and listen in on their conversations to track their progress.

Some delegates did not enjoy certain aspects of the week-long programme at all. The low-light for many was being told that 100 school children were arriving in the town square in three hours and were expecting to watch a circus performance from the leaders. In full circus costume. I could feel the silent earthquake of rage inside the senior executive that I was standing next to at the time. ➤

Whilst I'm not necessarily advocating the humiliation of senior teams (I hasten to add that the circus wasn't my idea!), it was interesting to observe management dynamics within that company over two years later. Those who had been on the programme had a much deeper connection with one another than with other managers.

In fact, for new leaders entering the company, programme alumni had to make special efforts not to become an exclusive clique. This stuff works but needs careful management.

Camp Rock

Decca's leadership team took a slightly different tack in 2019. Rather than use pain to deepen kindred connections, they voluntarily chose to live together in tents for four days. Now that's commitment. And potentially painful, I guess.

The context had a sweetener though: the camp site was the Glastonbury Festival, the UK's primary outdoor music event.

Allen's team confidentiality contract was clear: 'I'm a 45-year-old married mother of two. I don't get out much. What happens at Glastonbury, stays at Glastonbury. Is that clear?'

Passion Trumps Paychecks

I once met veteran Hollywood script coach, Bob Dickman, in a Los Angeles hotel. Squinting over the top of his glasses he asked me, 'You want to know the golden rule for all Hollywood scriptwriters? It's three words: Make. Me. Care.'

Passion trumps paychecks when it comes to innovation.

Every company is different, but the requirement is the same. A kindred connection to purpose, work and each other is essential fuel for sustainable innovation. That level of care rarely develops on its own, but with intentional focus it can and should be systematically developed.

Care is connection, and kindred connection is competitive advantage. >

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Elvin Turner

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Meet the "Try THIS" team



Elvin

Elvin Turner is an award-winning consultant, TEDx speaker and associate professor of innovation, entrepreneurship and creativity at several business schools.

He has coached and facilitated hundreds of strategy and innovation programmes around the world for companies including Universal, Telefonica, Cisco, O2, Santander and Accenture.

Elvin's work spans consulting, facilitation, conference speaking, leadership development and coaching.

His TEDx talk, "The Secret Life of Great Ideas" can be viewed by clicking the below link.

[Click to find out more](#)

[Watch Elvin's TEDx talk](#)



Lanna

Emily

Luna Studio was founded in 2013 to provide clients with London quality creative work, without the London price tag. It is led by Emily Wallis and Laura Besley.

Our work speaks for itself, and our client list grows because of high recommendations. We work with a range of clients in a variety of sectors, including education, travel and tourism, information

technology, transport, finance and law.

We are a team of award winning creatives who are passionate about the power of great design. We deliver a bespoke and personal service for each of our clients. Get in touch to find out how we can provide you with high quality design, on time and within budget whilst exceeding your project expectations.

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