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KATE RAMSAY AND THE AnD COACHES WELCOME YOU TO OUR STAYING IN TOUCH NEWSLETTER.

In Learning Moments in this edition first you can read about how to clear your crowded brain and, in a world that is now overloaded with feedback, you can then get some new ideas on how to better give and receive feedback. Our third Learning Moments piece is about how good leaders lead in a culture of trust and safety. In Did You Know? Kate shares news about a book she's writing and in A Good Read we feature Sheryl Sandberg's book Lean In. We close with a mantra as a tool to help clear the busy mind.

## Learning Moments

### Does my brain look big in this?

Kate writes: As soon as the flight attendant said we could turn our phones on after we'd landed on a recent flight from Melbourne to Sydney, I noticed all my fellow passengers began staring into their laps and scrolling and pressing their smart phone screens. Instead I decided to take some deep breaths and say the loving kindness mantra you'll find at the end of this newsletter. Why? Because I'd recently viewed David Ryan Polger's talk at the Springfield TEDx with the catchy title above.

Polger argues that because we're now overloaded with unlimited information we've become 'mentally obese'. He uses the food pyramid as an analogy: just as a healthy diet consists of 6 -11 servings of cereals and grains, 3 – 5 of vegetables and fruit and 2 -3 of dairy, meat, fish, beans, eggs and nuts per day and fats, oils and sweets only sparingly, so too we need to keep a healthy balance between the amount of information we take in each day and the time we invest in synthesising this as knowledge and ultimately wisdom, which I've just read is the 'knowing of things as they are'.

So whether my fellow passengers were checking for emails or new posts on facebook or twitter or logging onto a search engine to clarify something, they were ingesting yet more information while I chose to settle my busy brain with a mindfulness exercise.

How do we synthesise information? Polger suggests a 'mental food plate' consisting of equal amounts of

'mindful consumption, reflection, brain training and mental assessment'.

I believe the key is reflection: taking regular time to pause and ponder so that we can ingest the information that is all around us. And when I looked at Polger's mental food plate, the AnD Learning Map (attached) that we AnD coaches use in our Leadership Coaching sessions came to mind. Using Kolb's learning cycle we invite clients to share their experiences with us, reflect on these in order to gain fresh insights (what we call 'aha moments') that can inform the actions they commit to take for change. We call this process reflective practice and our clients tell us it really helps them to make sense of their world.

Are you feeling mentally obese? If so here is some 'food for thought' about how you might embark on a mental fitness training program.

### Thanks For The Feedback

This is the title of a new book written by Harvard law Professors, Douglas Stone and Sheila Heen.

In a 2011 survey, one in four people said they hated their annual review more than anything else in their jobs and 55% thought theirs was unfair or inaccurate. This suggests all is not well in the giving and receiving of feedback. Stone and Heen write that, while we want to feel we're learning and improving and also to be appreciated for who we are, many managers muddle the three types of feedback: appreciation, coaching and evaluation. They argue that companies should separate these three into different sessions rather than bundling them all into the annual review process.

Heen and Stone suggest that managers need to get better at delivering feedback and that receivers of feedback also need to get better at hearing it; and this isn't always about accepting all the feedback we're given. In fact, part of being a good receiver of feedback is knowing when to decide that your boss or partner is so critical that it's time to walk away. The book suggests we say to feedback-givers, 'Tell me what I did well, tell me what I should do differently, and don't confuse the two'.

## Why good leaders make us feel safe

This is the title of a TED talk given by Simon Sinek in March. Sinek, a management theorist, tells us that great leaders enable their team to feel secure by drawing them into a 'circle of trust'. And he acknowledges that for leaders to create a culture of trust and safety – especially in a tough economy – is a big responsibility. I was moved by this talk, see what you think at TED.com.

## Did You Know?

Kate writes: If you've been reading this newsletter for a number of years you will remember Des Ryan as the co-founder of AnD Consulting and the conceptual brain behind much of our work. Indeed for some of you he was probably your coach. Des died at the end of June 2005 after a long and debilitating illness and, as his partner in life as well as his partner in business, I've been writing a memoir about his and my story.

I'm proud to announce that I've just completed the 5th draft of the manuscript and am about to get brave and submit this to some agents/publishers. Getting published is now a pretty difficult thing to achieve, however watch this space because I hope to be promoting a published book some time in the not too far distant future.

## A Good Read

Kate writes: I was put off by the reviews of Lean In – Women, Work, and the Will to Lead (Alfred A. Knopf) when it was released in 2013. Written by Sheryl Sandberg, COO of Facebook, the reviewers I read accused her of being 'elitist'. It was only when a client, a partner in a law firm, told me the first half of the book accurately described her experiences as a woman in a law career, that I got off my moral high ground and read it.

Sandberg uses her own experiences and those of others to illustrate the extra hurdles women still have to jump over.

She also highlights the fact that most managers still do not understand that for people who are different from the dominant culture, including women, to experience fairness, they at times need to be treated differently.

Some sobering quotes from the book:

*A 2011 McKinsey report noted that men are promoted based on potential, while women are promoted based on past accomplishments.*

*An internal report at Hewlett-Packard revealed that women only apply for open jobs if they think they meet 100% of the requirements. Men apply if they think they meet 60%.*

*The Tiara Syndrome: women expect that if they keep doing their job well someone will notice and reward them.*

Sandberg quotes Alice Walker to stress that some of the barriers to women are within themselves:

*'The most common way people give up their power is by thinking they don't have any.'*

So how does Sandberg propose that change can happen?

For women, she says they must understand that it's essential to 'sit at the table' and once there to 'lean in' and make sure their point of view is heard and acknowledged.

And for organisations:

*First we must decide that true equality is long overdue and will be achieved only when more women rise to the top of every government and every industry. Instead of ignoring our differences, we need to accept and transcend them.*

Hence the need for a so-called elitist approach in this book, which I now believe is a must read for all women at a senior level and any leader who truly wants a gender diverse workforce including in their own senior team.

## And to Close

Instead of looking at your smart phone in every free moment, try clearing your mind with this loving kindness mantra. It could help you to synthesise all the information you've taken in so far today.

*May I be happy, may I be well, may I be at ease.*

*May you be happy, may you be well, may you be at ease.*

(The 'you' can include your family, friends, colleagues, neighbours, fellow citizens or indeed the whole world.)