



KATE RAMSAY AND THE A n D COACHES WELCOME YOU TO OUR STAYING IN TOUCH NEWSLETTER.

The theme of this newsletter is leadership and learning. In **Learning Moments** Kate quotes Otto Scharmer about a feminine style of leadership, and Oliver Burkeman tells us about learning from our mistakes. Our **Good Read** is Margaret Wheatley's latest book that "summons us to reclaim leadership as a noble profession that creates possibility and humaneness in the midst of increasing turmoil". The **AnD Story** suggests the best way to learn to understand the world is through both science and spirituality. **And To Close** we quote a US Democratic congresswoman on leadership.

Learning Moments

i Women's leadership style

In a blog dated 30 September, 2018 headed **The Future of Leadership will be more Feminine**, Otto Scharmer of MIT Boston explores women's leadership style:

Feminine leadership includes relating and listening and holding the space and bringing something new into reality ... and this is largely missing in our institutions and culture today. In China we would say the yin and yang, and it's the yin side that's missing.

Scharmer then stresses that at present we have too much of the yang (masculine) style of leadership, and too little of the yin (feminine), and that the challenge for leaders the world over is to achieve a yin and yang balance.

One exciting initiative to contribute to meeting this challenge is the recently formed Global Institute for Women's Leadership at King's College, London (<https://www.kcl.ac.uk/giwl>). Former Prime Minister Julia Gillard is the inaugural chair of this institute that aims to tackle the shortage of high quality global research on women as leaders, and the ways in which gender impacts perceptions of leadership.

ii Learning from our mistakes

Kate writes: I always enjoy Oliver Burkeman's short column in the Guardian Weekly. In the 26/7/19 edition headed 'You can regret your mistakes only because you've learned from them', Burkeman challenges the sense of that often-asked question to celebrities, "What advice would you give your younger self?" He argues that this question poses a paradox because:

You only acquired the wisdom on which your advice is based by making the mistakes you're now advising your former self to avoid.

In other words, we need to make mistakes in order to learn from them, and this takes time. Burkeman again:

Regret is a self-contradictory emotion: the very fact that you're feeling it means that you've grown into the kind of person who can look back critically on what you did in the past. Which means that, judged by your present values, you've emerged from your life experience better than before, and ought... to be happy rather than regretful.

Burkeman closes with the reflection that we might find it useful to advise our younger self as a way of actually advising our present self; because although we can't change the past, we can learn from it to help us to change some aspects of our present, and to shape our future.

A Good Read

Kate writes: I have mixed feelings about Margaret Wheatley's latest book *Who Do We Choose To Be?* (Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2017).

Having been impressed by her book *Leadership and the New Science: Discovering Order in a Chaotic World* back in the early '90s, I was excited when a colleague told me that Wheatley had published another book. However in some ways this latest book has not met my expectations.

Yes, it does have some excellent suggestions about the kind of leadership that is needed in the midst of increasing turmoil in our world. She calls this "Sane Leadership" which she defines as:

The unshakable faith in peoples' capacity to be generous, creative and kind. It is the commitment to create the conditions for these capacities to blossom, protected from the external environment. It is the deep knowing that, even in the most dire circumstances, more becomes possible as people engage together with compassion and discernment, self-determining their best way forward.

And yes, Wheatley agrees with the concept of Peter Senge's Learning Organisation:

Leaders have proved how powerful it is to learn from experience and apply this to decisions and actions. Without question, organizations become more creative, effective and resilient. And individuals and teams who engage in learning are much more innovative, engaged, and work well together in trusted relationships.

And yes, she argues that:

People need visionary leaders . . . who they trust because they embody the values and qualities we're working toward. Leaders don't have to be perfect, and it helps to make one's personal struggles and challenges visible. But people need to see what's possible. That it is possible to live with integrity, and that humans can still live and work well together.

And yes, Wheatley agrees with my belief that we need to be of service in order to make a difference:

What does it mean to make a difference? The simple answer is found in all philosophies and spiritual traditions: Focus on serving others. serve individuals, serve small groups, serve an entire community or organization. . . . We can offer insight and compassion. We can be present. We can stay and not flee. We can be exemplars of the best human qualities. This is a life well lived..

So what is my problem with Wheatley's book? Two things:

The first is that in spite of the quotes above and much more, I didn't feel that she put a cohesive case to me about how to "reclaim leadership as a noble profession", and hence I'm not clear about my takeout from her book.

And the second is her use of the words "Warriors for the Human Spirit" to describe the kind of leaders who are now badly needed to lead our troubled world. She describes these Warriors as:

Decent human beings who aspire to be of service in an indecent, inhumane time. . . . They train in service to people, to support our best human capacities for generosity, compassion, altruism, curiosity, creativity, caring.

I agree that we need such leaders, but I find the term 'Warrior' both masculine and war-like, although I'm struggling to suggest a substitute. I've turned to my Thesaurus for help, and have chosen 'Guides for the Human Spirit', although I'm not sure this quite works either. Your alternative suggestions would be most welcome.

An AnD Story

Kate writes: As our regular readers know, AnD is named to represent an and/both view of the world rather than the either/or way our western conditioning has taught us.

The Conversation lands in my Inbox on every weekday and I found the article **Spiritual Consciousness** in the edition of 19 July, 2019 a good example of and/both in action. Written by Steve Taylor, Senior Lecturer in Psychology at Leeds Beckett University and author of the book *Spiritual Science*, the article explores the concept of consciousness. Taylor tells the reader that the brain is not responsible for consciousness, but instead "acts as a kind of receiver which 'picks up' the fundamental consciousness that is all around us and 'transmits' it into our own being".

Taylor uses what he calls the 'puzzle of altruism' to illustrate his point:

If, as many scientists believe, human beings are just genetic machines, only concerned with the survival and propagation of our genes, then altruism is difficult to account for. If we are fundamentally selfish, why should we be willing to risk our own lives for the sake of others? Altruism is often instantaneous and spontaneous, particularly in crisis situations, as it is deeply instinctive. From a "spiritual" perspective though, altruism is easy to explain. It is related to empathy. Human shared fundamental consciousness means that it is possible for us to sense the suffering of others and to respond with altruistic acts.

To solve this 'altruism puzzle' Taylor concludes his article with an and/both solution:

I believe that consciousness as a fundamental quality of the universe has a great deal of weight. . . . It may be that the best way to understand the world is not through science or spirituality alone – but through an approach which combines them both.

And To Close

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, a Democrat and the youngest woman to serve in the US Congress, said this about being a leader (Sydney Morning Herald, 14 July, 2019):

People think of leadership as this glamorous, powerful thing. To be a leader is to come first, to set the agenda. But what people don't realise is that leadership is enormously difficult. Leadership is a responsibility. Leadership is not fun. Leadership is about doing things before anybody else does them. Leadership is about taking risks. Leadership is about taking decisions when you don't know 100% what the outcome is going to be.