



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

In **Learning Moments** we first of all reframe the metaphor for Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs from a pyramid to a sailboat, and we then explore the factors underlying how visionary companies outperform their competitors. In **Did You Know?** we share research about how many of us are responding to extended isolation, as well as how this is affecting our brains. A **Good Read** in this edition is *Big Magic* by Elizabeth Gilbert, and our **AnD Story** shares Gilbert's and/both of creativity. **AnD to Close** we quote the essayist Rebecca Solnit on perfection.

Learning Moments

i Maslow's sailboat

Kate writes: I've been a fan of the work of Abraham Maslow since learning about his 'Hierarchy of Needs' in the '80s; but it turns out that Maslow did not actually propose a five-step one way hierarchy towards 'self-actualisation'. Instead, he suggested that we humans need to work on our multiple needs simultaneously, while also being mindful of the needs of others.

I was shocked to learn about this in a May 14, 2020 article by Scott Barry Kaufman at medium.com, because I'd been sharing what I thought was Maslow's pyramid with my coaching clients for well over 30 years. Kaufman explains that it was a management consultant in the 1960s who adapted Maslow's work into a pyramid, and that this was a 'gross misrepresentation of the humanistic vision that propelled Maslow's work'.

Instead of a pyramid, Kaufman suggests we use the metaphor of a sailboat to capture what Maslow was proposing: in this metaphor the hull of the boat represents our *Security* needs of *Self-esteem*, *Connection* and *Safety*, with the sail of the boat being about our *Growth* in the areas of *Exploration*, *Love* and *Purpose*. Above the sailboat, the bright blue sky represents our *Transcendence*. Kaufman concludes that:

We crave belonging, understanding, safety and discovery. This, in Maslow's view, is what it means to be human. To use the sailboat metaphor, while we each travel in our own direction, we're all sailing the vast unknown of the sea. Together.

Footnote: I've delegated the AnD design team to create a Maslow Sailboat – watch this space!

ii How visionary companies outperform their competitors

Some things are built to last including, it seems, the 1994 book *Built to Last – Successful Habits of Visionary Companies* (Random House) written by Jim Collins and Jerry Porras. Most books become dated quite quickly but the principles in *Built to Last* are still being used to advise companies on how to outperform their competitors, some 27 years later.

So how do visionary companies outperform? Collins and Porras suggest the following:

1. They have core ideologies. ... 'This is who we are: this is what we stand for: this is what we're all about.'
2. They have a few core values that are unique to them.
3. They have a clear purpose which is their fundamental reason for existing, beyond making money.
4. They couple ideology with a relentless drive for progress that impels forward movement in everything but the core.
5. They set Big, Hairy, Audacious Goals (BHAGs) to surge ahead.
6. They ask, 'How can we do better tomorrow than we did today?'
7. They invest heavily in the future.

For more, why not buy the book!

Did You Know?

i Languishing in isolation

Adam Grant, an organizational psychologist at Wharton, has given a name to how many are responding to extended isolation during the COVID pandemic. Grant suggests the word 'languishing' to describe our response, and calls this the 'neglected middle child of mental health' – it's not depression, but then again, nor is it the joy of living:

Languishing is a sense of stagnation and emptiness. It feels as if you're muddling through your days, looking at your life through a foggy windshield. And it might be the dominant emotion of 2021.

To counter this Grant suggests we adopt what he calls 'flow – that elusive state of absorption in a meaningful challenge ... where your sense of time, place and self, melts away.'

And how to achieve flow? Grant recommends we allocate some time each day to focus on a challenge that matters to us, be that an interesting project, a worthwhile goal or a meaningful conversation. And yes, there's always that brisk walk in the fresh air to clear the lungs and the mind.

Grant also suggests a socially acceptable response to the 'How are you?' question. Instead of answering 'fine' or 'OK' we could say, 'To be honest, I'm languishing.'

ii How isolation is affecting our brains

Kareem Clark, a postdoctoral associate in neuroscience at Virginia Tech writes in *The Conversation* that a national survey in the US earlier this year found that 36% of adults – including 61% of young adults - reported feeling 'serious loneliness' during the pandemic. She explains that humans have an 'evolutionarily hardwired need to socialize' and that research has shown that from insects to primates, maintaining social networks is critical for survival.

Our need to socialise is called Social Homeostasis and Kareem explains that the human brain has developed specialised circuitry to gauge our relationships and make the correct adjustments to maintain our sense of wellbeing. Further, she writes that a recent study found that social isolation can destabilise our Social Homeostasis, which can, in turn, cause memory loss, anxiety and stress.

Kareem concludes with the good news that studies have also shown that the brain responds to resocialisation by restoring our Social Homeostasis.

A Good Read

Kate writes: 'Enjoy your creativity' is the core message of Elizabeth Gilbert in her book *Big Magic – Creative Living Beyond Fear* (Bloomsbury, 2015). As it says on the back cover, 'whether we are looking to write a book, make art, find new ways to address challenges in our work, embark on a dream long deferred, or simply infuse our everyday lives with more mindfulness and passion, *Big Magic* cracks open a world of wonder and joy.'

Gilbert defines creativity as 'the relationship between a human being and the mysteries of inspiration'. She writes short, catchy chapters that are often funny and always motivating about how to tap into and trust our creativity. Some takeout tips for me:

- Write for yourself not others.
- Forget about perfection – it's unachievable.
- Look out for the 'wonder' in everyday life.
- Trust that if you make 'enough of a glorious commotion, eventually inspiration will find its way home to you.'
- The outcome must not matter – Gilbert believes we were born to create regardless of the results.'

Writing is my form of creative expression and Gilbert's book has been a timely addition to my book shelf, given I'm currently labouring over another book manuscript.

If you'd like to stimulate your creative juices, do yourself a favour and grab a copy of *Big Magic*.

An AnD Story

As you will have seen in the introduction to this newsletter, Elizabeth Gilbert also includes her and/both of creativity. In her final chapter headed *In Conclusion* she writes:

- *Creativity is sacred, and it is not sacred.*
- *We toil alone, and we are accompanied by spirits.*
- *We are terrified and we are brave.*
- *Art is a crushing chore and a wonderful privilege.*

Gilbert closes with a plea and a promise: 'Make a space for all these paradoxes to be equally true inside your soul, and I promise – you can make anything.'

And to Close

The essayist Rebecca Solnit on perfection:

So many of us believe in perfection, which ruins everything else, because the perfect is not only the enemy of the good, it's also the enemy of the realistic, the possible, and the fun.