

Defining the new normal through chaos

By Kathy Kraus

My last two blogs have really delved into the murky depths of my personal Covid-Chaos. I have shared some of my team's journey too, as we, like many other organisations, were suddenly required to reorganise ourselves and establish fundamentally different ways of working and collaborating at break-neck speed. This took no small measure of time, effort, dedication, and often-times soul-destroying trial and error, and the rolling blackouts did not help either. I must take a moment to - once again - share my gratitude for the colleagues, friends, and clients that I work with every day.

Now, I love my job. I love getting stuck into the gritty, complex, strategic human capital problems that organisations deal with every day. But some of my most fulfilling work is facilitating Catalyst's personal and career empowerment program, I am Talent.

In mid-March, we kicked off a blended I am Talent learning journey with a group of future leaders at a global client. This journey was originally designed as a 4-month program with 4 highly interactive, face-to-face workshops, with projects, and digital, self-driven learning modules, exercises and reading in between sessions.

In our first workshop, we explored all the ways the world of work is changing. We worked through and reflected on our natural resistance to change as human beings. Exactly 10 days after this workshop, SA went into lockdown. HAHHAHAHA. It is of course now a standing joke. It was the universe's way of saying "Here, hold my beer and watch this".

In the following weeks and months these leaders have been required to define new policies, processes and safety procedures required to balance the impossible tradeoffs between critically important values, productivity targets and staff safety. Required to make urgent decisions with few clear-cut guidelines. And required to make effective decisions with potential life or death consequences.

While we managed the pivot to facilitating the deep, personal experiences and learnings in a virtual setting somewhat seamlessly, the energy, resilience, empathy and authenticity with which these leaders have "showed up for class" has been a deeply humbling experience for me.

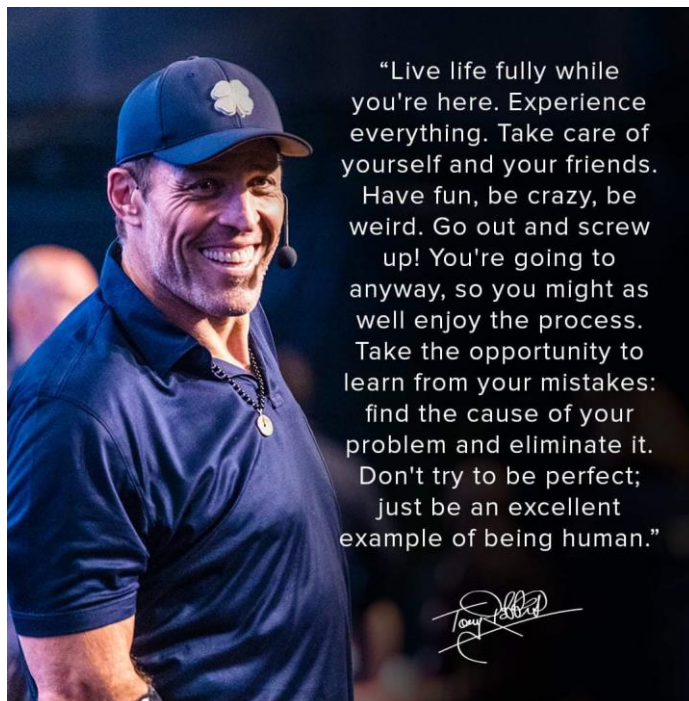
Through one-on-one discussions aligned to the program purpose and outcomes, we have provided additional support through individual mentoring sessions. Support and encouragement to dig deep, and to find the strength to self-reflect and continuously step further out of their own comfort zones. All the while continuing to support their families and teams through the rising pressure and growing tension and stress as the chaos has come closer and closer to home.

In my own moments of self-reflection of late, I have found myself searching for my true value and purpose. Searching for ways to create something worthwhile in both my personal and professional life.

Now I previously shared some of my own challenges with lockdown entirely from the relative safety of my home consulting office. But in the last 2 months Coronavirus has come closer and closer to home. My children and I have been forced to self-isolate, family members further afield have tested positive, and I again felt the walls closing in.

I have found solace in keeping my children close and the ongoing support from my colleagues and team. And I have drawn personal strength from a few other special people in my life.

In closing I want to share something from Tony Robbins that resonates deeply with me.



Till next time.

Kath