



## **‘Coronavirus & Wellbeing In The Eye Of The Storm!’**

***...Even before the dust begins to settle, here are three ways we can attend to our wellbeing & future proof our life for whatever comes next!***

This eBook builds on the podcast, ‘*Coronavirus & Wellbeing in the Eye of the Storm*’ which can be found on the **Mudd Partnership’s** website ‘*Coronavirus – What next?*’ Resources Page, by clicking on the link [here](#).

### **So, To Begin**

*“Hope is not a conviction that something will turn out well, but the certainty that something is worth doing, no matter how it turns out”.* **Vaclav Havel**

**And first I’d like** to say that whilst we are all in the same storm – We are not all in the same boat!

**Second**, that paradox and ambiguity are unavoidable, but standing in their tension is the most alive place to be, freer and more vibrant than any certainty – The ultimate ‘*heat experience*’.

**Whilst what’s more**, the events we are currently experiencing aren’t *unprecedented*, so let’s park that word, because naming as such serves only to create a greater ambiguity, complexity and uncertainty, which in turn inhibits our ability to make meaning and understand. **In fact...**

### **Pandemics Are Not The Exception They Are The Rule!**

- In **1918/19** *Spanish Flu* killed **3%** of the world’s population
- In **1956 – 58** the *Asian Flu* Pandemic killed **2M** people globally
- In **1968** there was an *Influenza Pandemic*

- The *HIV/AIDS Pandemic* is ongoing since it first broke cover in the late 1970's and there's still no definitive vaccine
- **2002** saw a *SARS Pandemic*
- **2009** we had a *Flu Pandemic* with **60 million** cases reported in the US alone, and with a pathology that saw younger people being the most seriously affected rather than the elderly and the infirm, making it a totally different beast to COVID\_19
- In **2014** there was the latest *Ebola* epidemic, not a pandemic as it remained localised, but for that we should be very grateful as **39%** of people who contracted the virus died – And to put that in some context the global mortality rate of COVID\_19 is estimated to be around **1%** whilst for flu this sits at **0.1%**, &
- Then in **2020** we have witnessed the Coronavirus pandemic.

All that in just the past **100 years**, and over this time we have also seen a plague outbreak in Los Angeles in **1924**, the “parrot fever” panic of **1929 – 30**, the Legionnaires disease affair of **1976**, Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (a newly discovered *betacoronavirus* closely related to COVID\_19) that was first identified in a patient from Saudi Arabia in **April 2012**, and recent ‘*Zika Virus*’ cases in Brazil.

**And after a pandemic** there's usually a jump in what is known as the ‘*Gini Coefficient*’ which is a measurement of inequality and following all the uncertainty and upheaval things never quite return to how they were before.

## But What Is Certain

Well apart from the certainty that our understanding will be at best partial and limited, the aftermath this time will be no different from other pandemics. The ‘*Gini Coefficient*’ is already having a real-time impact as some racial groups and sections of the population are being disproportionately affected by COVID\_19.

And in a world where currently so much is and will remain uncertain, what is also clear is that whilst the global sweep and local impact of COVID\_19 has thrown everything in the air, **we are all in it** for the long haul.



## So, let's focus on another word instead

*KRISIS* – Spelt in the original Greek with a **K** rather than a **C** & its literal translation is, “A vitally important or decisive state of things, or rather events – & a point at which change must come!”

**Now just pause for a moment** – What words jump out at you here, *Important. Decisive. Change* – Well, let me introduce another, *Opportunity* – And as President Obama’s former Chief of Staff, **Rahm Emanuel** famously said, “*You never let a serious crisis go to waste – It’s an opportunity to do things you thought you never could!*”

## **Not In The Same Boat**

**And as I said right at the beginning** of this eBook, we’re not all in the same boat.

We all see events from a different vantage point, from a different historical, geographic, social and personal orientation.

So, it is unsurprising that we will all be at different stages on our journey in our *meaning-making*, trying to make sense of what is happening, and going through various recognisable stages such as *surprise, disbelief, frustration, and depression*, to behaviours that include *re-engaging and letting go, learning to work in the newsituation, acceptance and growth*.

**As this Krisis goes on** and it will, as it’s what we would call a ‘*Long tail*’ event, you may feel at times you are going backwards, or getting stuck, but this is OK and it’s normal too!

## **Three Phases**

**Because**, at a time like this there are three phases we will all go through to a greater or lesser degree.

**First there’s the ‘Emergency Phase’** – Characterised by a visceral response, a rise in energy levels as our ‘Fight or Flight’ response is activated – And we might not be exactly sure what to do, but we are spurred on to do something.

**Then comes the ‘Regression Phase’** – When people start to run out of steam, get tired, start asking ‘*Howlong is this going to last?*’ – We lose focus, a sense of purpose and we can become overwhelmed by the smallest of things and it’s all too easy to become a tad tetchy and snap – At ourselves and at others, especially those close to us – Does that sound familiar?

It should, because that is where a great deal of the world’s population has found itself in the past couple of months, however buoyant and naturally resilient they may usually be.

**But, the ‘Good News’,** and there is Good News...**This is then followed by the ‘Recovery Phase’** – In which you can hit the reset button and create a new ‘*Day One*’, start to do things differently and **begin to build back better**.

## **A Phase In Between Perhaps?**

**But let’s just pause again.** Perhaps there should be an additional phase that comes before ‘**Recovery**’. One that we could call the ‘**Reinvention Phase?**

Because what might get in the way of creating a new ‘*Day One*’?

**Well, how about** being a work in progress. We are continually creating, recreating and co-creating ourselves, through lived experience, acting and reacting.

**We are not now**, nor ever where, a ‘*concrete self*’, because as the Harvard psychologist, **Daniel Gilbert** so appositely puts it, “*Human beings are works in progress that mistakenly think they’re finished*”.

**Or, what if we’re expecting** things to simply return to how they were? Clinging on to what we know, because it’s way too

difficult to let go?

Or, just being unable to believe that things can be better, even if they are different?

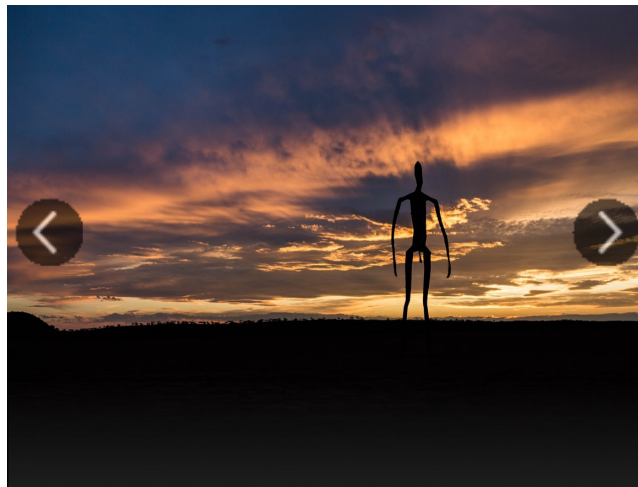
**To a greater or lesser degree**, we all have an inbuilt '*Negativity Bias*', reinforced by the way we interpret things through linguistic frames shaped by a language habit that makes implicit judgements about what is good and what is bad.

This doesn't always correlate with the facts, even if they are known, and is a profound challenge and barrier to transformation, because it means we tend to notice and dwell on the bad stuff rather than the good.

**Susan Nolen-Hoeksema**, the late Yale Professor of Psychology, defined this compulsion to focus on what's wrong, rather than what's right as '*Rumination*'.

Such thinking would certainly get in the way of being able to hit the reset button. To accept and learn to work with what is different.

And with that mindset we might remain stuck, unable to recover, grow and renew.



So, what if we were to challenge our mindset to change, perhaps **by imagining we were an alien**, newly arrived on planet earth. With no preconceptions of what it would look and feel like and how our future would now play out.

And everything we are seeing and experiencing for the first time, is not just new, it's vivid and vital, and correspondingly we feel new, vivid and vital!

Could we then hit that reset button?

### **An important Question**

**An important** and wholly legitimate question that we can ask to help to shift our mindset and give us permission to start to think and do differently is, "*After all that has happened and all that is still to happen, how am I supposed to feel?*"

**And it's important in this regard**, because the questions we ask of ourselves and of events we experience, the frames we chose to interpret stuff and the language we now use for the stories we will narrate to ourselves and others, will help to change our beliefs and behaviours which in turn will change the outcomes we will experience.

Regardless of background or nationality, we are human and contrary to what the French Philosopher **Blaise Pascal** thought and wrote about human nature in *'The Pensees'*, I take the view that **my health and wellbeing is your health and wellbeing**.

**And to be human** is also to be a storyteller and a mapmaker, because of a need for permanence – Because of our need for connection – Because we are colleagues, friends & lovers – Because we have families and lives to live.



### ***Our Liberties Depend On Our Wellbeing***

**Our liberties depend** on our Wellbeing, so, what positive steps can we take to help us become unstuck if we have become stuck, to move forward with a reinvigorated resolve, and to build our resilience and find a renewed purpose?

**Before I answer** that head on though let me say that this is not just about your wellbeing, it's also about our well becoming, which is something that I'm finding myself talking about more and more at the moment – Because this is an opportunity for everybody and everything to reset, recharge and build back better – Be that on a personal & professional level, or on a macro level, as a more communitarian, just, and economically balanced society and world!

### **Break Create Transform**

**OK, it is said that** if you have more than **three** objectives you have too many – Well, I think there are **3 Key Objectives** with actions we can take that will really help in all this, and these are to **Break**, to **Create** and to **Transform**.

**Firstly, to Break** – Let's see this as an opportunity to *'dump our idols'* – To break from our usual ways of thinking & some of those beliefs we hang onto that are maybe way past their sell-by date, outmoded, unhelpful and no longer fit for purpose, & we can then start to be more Present and respond and Behave differently – Because Beliefs drive behaviours & thinking and behaving differently can change outcomes – There is a saying however that goes, *"The difficulty lies not in the new, but in escaping the old"* – **So, whilst accepting that mortality** is the profoundest threat to our egos, be Mindful of this, but give yourself permission to let it go, along with your attachment to the way things are and have been.

**Second to Create** – By looking back to move forward, **let's** see this as the time to take stock – **Let's capitalise on this opportunity** to do some root and branch thinking about where we are and have been, and where we now want to get to – Let's

be courageous with the questions we ask our self - **e.g. Leaning-In Questions:** 'Where am I currently?', 'Where do I want to be?', 'What do I need to Stop, Start, Continue?' – **Leaning-Out Questions:** 'What have I already achieved that I wouldn't have thought possible?', 'What am I learning about myself?' – And **Future Proofing Questions:** 'What do I now want my story to be?', 'What qualities will be important going forward?', 'What challenges will I face and what opportunities will there be?', & 'Who can help?'



## Be Kind & Compassionate To Yourself

**But foremost** be kind and compassionate to yourself, knowing that it is OK to feel as you currently do, accepting what is outside your control, whilst doubling down on those changed beliefs and behaviours which will be the building blocks that help you create the 'Day One' of your new story.

**And Third to Transform** – Our 'Call to Action' to make it so – "Monotony collapses time – Novelty unfolds it – But Purpose makes it liveable" –

Rest in reason, move with passion – 'Find your Exceptional Excellence and live your Purpose' – Remembering that happiness is found in the small things, the everyday stuff and **40%** of our happiness is determined by our thoughts, actions and attitudes, which is also why it is **so** important that our first step is to make that **Break** because as **Einstein** purportedly said, "Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results".

**In fact, he didn't say that** – This is a classic example of a misattributed quote & it's all part of what is known as the 'Matthews Effect', but that is an avenue to explore in another eBook perhaps ☐

**However, the stoic philosopher and one-time Roman Emperor, Marcus Aurelius did say,** "Sanity means tying your wellbeing to your own actions". (**Meditations, page 92**)

## How You Now Chose To Act

**Your own actions** – Again that is so important, and just like we have a physical immune system there is evidence that we have a psychological immune system too & when you think about it, why not?

After all we have **three Brains** – Head, Heart & Stomach – All connected by our central nervous system – Through the '*Vagus Nerve*' as it's called – And when things get bad, we rationalise, we figure it out, we are actually a lot more resilient than we think and we can use this time to act and learn better habits and transform ourselves **to Become – Becoming the change we want to see & Be!**

**Remember** – *“You are braver than you believe, stronger than you seem, and smarter than you think”* – As a wise old bear once said!

## End Piece

**This is a three set-match.** Covid\_19 has taken the first set, and the second and third will be tough and long, requiring extreme resilience and fortitude, human connection, cooperation and collaboration.

But let me conclude with the following. Never forget that gratitude precedes happiness, so if you take nothing else from this eBook **hold these three simple things close:**

1. **Start a 'Gratitude Journal' now** and write down **3 – 5 things** for which you're grateful, every day.
2. **Get adequate sleep, &**
3. **As well as focusing** on your mental health and wellbeing, attend to your physical health too, because the Roman poet **Juvenal** was onto something when he wrote, "*Mens sana in corpore sano*".

Do these things and I'm certain you'll soon notice a difference in how you think and feel about things!!

*“And once the storm is over, you won't remember how you made it through, how you managed to survive. You won't even be sure, whether the storm is really over. But one thing is certain. When you come out of the storm you won't be the same person who walked in. That's what this storm's all about”*

**Haruki Murakami**

**End.**

## Links to further relevant resources available free from the Mudd Partnership's website Resources Page include:

- eBook '[Living & Working Through COVID\\_19 & Beyond](#)': *We are in the same storm – We are not all in the same boat – During these complex, uncertain times, employers, leaders, and policy makers et al will forget this at their peril – Make sure you don't!*
- Video '[Six Top Tips to Thrive & Survive working from Home](#)'
- eBook '[COVID\\_19 – Plus Est En Vous – And 5 Things You Must Absolutely Work On Today](#)'
- Video(s) '[Beyond Covid\\_19 – 5 Simple Steps to Ensure You Can Live Your Best Life](#)' & '[7 Ways You Can Rise To The Top Today](#)'
- eBook '[Do You Want To be 10% Happier?](#)'
- Video '[A One Minute Mindful Breathing Exercise](#)'

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