



PSYCHOLOGY

# Can we future proof ourselves to improve wellbeing?

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**R**apid globalisation and social development have resulted in a range of conversations, critiques and debate about a multitude of topics. An example of this is the never-ending discussion surrounding the executive pressure present in many industries, including education. Despite such extensive discussion, the question remains as to how we lead through adversity, with a view to improve the wellbeing of those around us.

'Future proofing,' a recent term often bounced around emphasises the increase in uncertainty for the future. With this comes a need to reduce the negative impact of uncertainty and ambiguity on wellbeing. This can be achieved through the development of certain skills on an individual level, which not only enhance individuals in the workplace, but also their relationships, home life, community and sense of self.

Some of the capabilities that can

improve our world and create a greater sense of confidence in our activities are detailed below. These aspects are typically associated with professional competency, however, they can also be seen to have a direct influence on our broader lives.

## **Sense of community**

Research from around the world addresses the need for a greater connection in our lives. Whether it be a community you work within, part of your work, or a hobby you enjoy, being an active part of community increases our wellbeing by increasing our:

- Feeling of belonging and connectedness with others
- Support network during difficult times
- Acknowledging of attainment and so celebration
- Reach and network, allowing for further development of job skills, opportunities and reflection
- Understanding of our perspective and impact.

## **Prioritising planning**

There are many points in our lives when time passes and we feel a rapidly widening gap between our hopes and aspirations and our real-life achievements. Ensuring we dedicate time and focus on planning, both within our professional roles and personal lives, supports the proactive development of talents, recognition of skills shortage and identification of common barriers or blocks in our lives. Strategies to incorporate planning into our time include:

- Allocating two dates in your diary when you will complete a 'touch base' of where you are at, professionally and personally
- Using reflection to establish goals and actions to continue your growth and ensure development is towards a target
- Including physical aspects, such as workspace, room allocation, space utilisation, etc. to clear your physical space and therefore mindset
- Having attainable short-term measures





and goals you seek to achieve, as well as clarity of how these will be beneficial

- Considering your future ambitions, ask yourself how your current task, role and behaviours will help you accomplish your goals.

### **Communicate your vision**

Having a vision of your ideal future is essential to achievement. Once you have a vision, the importance lies in creating this ideal as a reality, by moving towards it with support. Seek out people you can share your thoughts with, whether they be your fellow professionals or others in your personal life. Sharing this allows you to:

- Own the direction and vocalise it to others
- Obtain support in your achievements
- Enjoy progressing towards your goal
- Assistance through moments of turbulence (support network)
- Access development opportunities to build your capability.

### **Seek optimism**

As you face setbacks, obstacles or become disillusioned, focusing on the positive will assist you in developing resilience, and recognise that it is part of the journey. Research from prominent psychologists including Martin Seligman, Adam Grant and Shawn Achor support the use of positive mindset to overcome the unknown, the negative and the blocks we are confronted by in our lives. Viewing the world

with hope does not block the negative, rather it allows us to:

- Come to accept what is
- Identify what control we have
- See negative in our lives for what it is
- Develop affirmations to respond to pessimists
- Improve our health, physically and mentally.

### **Embrace change as potential**

We each know how we approach change. Whilst it can cause a feeling of darkness and disillusion for those who fear it, equally it can create unbound energy and enthusiasm for others who can embrace it. As stated in *Who Moved my Cheese?* (Spencer), change is continual. We can manage the cycle of change by coming to accept change along with anticipating it. With a clear vision of our future, we can aim to connect these changes, foreseen and unexpected, with our desired outcome. On occasions this is unclear or can take some thinking, however connecting it with our greater purpose de-personalises the change and so reduces the emotion around it.

### **Value self-care and compassion**

Emphasising self-care and self-compassion allows us to set ourselves up for success and take control of the future. Often caught in the whirlwind of life's demands, our focus on self, our awareness of self-talk and the responsibilities that weigh heavily on us, we can often put our needs

away. In doing so we can cause issues to our view of our performance, the way we view ourselves and seeing the potential of ourselves. To increase your self-value:

- Partner with a friend or mentor who can keep you grounded
- Set time for your professional growth, use this to read, listen to podcasts or network
- Select an image, photo or quotation that boosts your confidence and make it visible
- Listen to your body when you are feeling run-down, tired or distracted
- Create windows for activities you enjoy, include physical events such as exercise.

Our wellbeing and the wellbeing of those around us is our priority. In focusing on the future as an agile space to be moulded, enlivened and experienced, we cannot only improve our outcomes and achievements but also our relationships, health and connection with our wider community. By looking outside of the box, we can create our next opportunity, see our greatest supporters, and realise and achieve our dreams. Importantly, we can attain these without dramatic sacrifice through collaboration with others and respect for ourselves and those we partner with. In doing so we are positioned well to face uncertain change, hurdles and roadblocks as they confront us.

Johnson, Spencer. *Who Moved My Cheese?: An Amazing Way to Deal with Change in Your Work and in Your Life*. New York: Putnam, 1998. Print.