

## Are you switching off from work yet? The story of helping Samoa recover and a Special Offer

Welcome to Moving Minds, the (recently renovated) newsletter from aVara. Moving Minds takes you on a short journey every two months into more about how you work *inside* and how you can get even better. Be sure to take advantage of my special offer below, share with your friends and notice what inspires you most. Enjoy ...

### Are you switching off from work yet?

As you may know, earlier this month I was fortunate enough to be invited on TV One's Breakfast to talk about 'switching off from work'. I've had numerous people tell me they were busy writing the tips down, or that they missed it and wanted to catch it to see what advice they could glean. I got thinking about how last year I wrote about getting stress under control and looking after your wellbeing, and it seems that switching off from work remains a perpetual challenge. So, for those of you looking to get even better at leaving work at work and feel more energised overall, to follow are three things it really helps to remember.

To see what else helps, here is a [free tip-sheet](#) for you to download which outlines the advice given on Breakfast. Feel free to [forward](#) this on to someone you know who is facing the same challenge. If you didn't catch it, you might like to take a look at [Breakfast](#), and hear more.

#### Switching off from work - Remember these 3 things

1. There will always be more to do, no matter how much you get done in a day
2. Get into the habit of noticing what you have achieved – see tip sheet above
3. Focus on the tasks that will *make the most difference* to what's important to you



#### Special Offer in May: 2 for 1 Coaching

Here is a very special offer for you this month - when you book coaching at the same time as a friend or colleague, you get two for the price of one (and for those mathematicians out there, you will have worked out that means half-price each!). Just mention this offer when you [book](#). Tell your [friends](#) too!

"Winners take time to relish their work, knowing that scaling the mountain is what makes the view from the top so exhilarating."

Denis Waitley

## 1. There will always be more to do, no matter how much you get done in a day

Have you noticed that soon after you empty a dishwasher or clear the bench of plates, more dishes appear, encrusted with crumbs, sauce and the usual detritus of a snack or meal? That nice feeling of satisfaction of a clear, shining bench is so enjoyable, and although it can be short-lived, isn't the delicious meal that will mess it up again so enjoyable!

So it is at work. If we were to get our entire to-do list completed, everything crossed off, our desk clear, an empty inbox, wouldn't we have so much space to think? And what would we do then? Would we use the space wisely? Would we get bored? Would we suddenly seem disposable, unnecessary, unfulfilled? Notice your response to any of these points – they are glimpses into what drives you to do, do do.

Even when all the to-do's are not yet crossed off, we can create more space to think – it comes from creating boundaries around your work. For example:

- Turn off any email notifications that pop up or make a sound.
- Close down your email for an hour at a time
- Take yourself off to a space free of distractions to do good 'thinking' work – meeting room, café or close your office door (that is, if you have one). Open plan work areas can be a huge distraction. I will often have a coffee down the road while I write so I'm free of phones, emails and my vast to-do list.



## 2. Get into the habit of noticing what you have achieved

At the end of each day, take stock of what you have achieved. This serves two key purposes: to recognise the effort and progress you're making, and help you feel satisfied with what you have achieved so that you can go in to your evening or weekend feeling you can enjoy your down time. Read more in the free tips above.



### Did you know?

> Did you know there is a clever part of your brain (actually it's all immensely clever!) called the RAS? It's your Reticular Activating System. Your RAS performs many useful functions in your brain, and one of those is sorting information. For example, when you're walking through a busy mall and a friend calls out 'hello' to you, you (usually!) hear it over all the other sounds such as the people around you, music playing and so on. That's your RAS sorting out all the auditory information that's coming in to your brain and helping you identify the part that is important or relevant to you.

> Your RAS is activated by your thoughts and emotions – when you set goals, write them down and feel excited about them your RAS is enlisted in your goal achievement journey (this is why it's essential to think about what you do want, and not what you don't want).

Plus -

If in this process you've noticed something you want to do differently tomorrow to achieve more, think about how you could do it (write it down) and take that into the next day. Make the most of this valuable feedback loop.

### 3. Focus on the tasks that will make the most difference to what's important to you

Spend your time and energy primarily on what matters most – to you, your organisation, your family. For a recent client of mine what mattered most to him was completing strategic projects that were going to grow revenue for the company, increase his bonus and enhance his reputation and success. He soon realised what he therefore needed to primarily focus on in his day. For a business owner it might be business development activities or improving customer service.

If you're not sure what is important in your day, you need to stop and ask yourself these questions (and get some answers!):

- What am I here (in this role/business/place) for?
- What is the purpose behind what I do?
- What do I ultimately want to achieve in my work?
- What will it give me? My company? My family?

Finally, ask yourself, given what I'm actually trying to achieve, what needs to happen for that to be achieved? Actions should flow from purpose. This is the basis of motivation.

Understanding what's most important will help you 'Chunk' your to-dos into varying levels of priority so that you know what needs to be done first. When we get those things done we naturally feel more satisfied at the end of the day and enjoy our time off even more.

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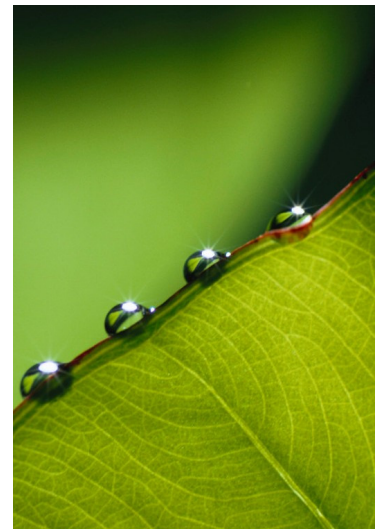
## The story of helping Samoa recover

I was recently asked to write about my experience in Samoa and thought I would share it with you too. Have you wondered how this wonderful project began? It was in fact born around the dinner table at my place when a friend and colleague, Rachel Papaconstantinou, mooted the idea of going up to Samoa to help people suffering from trauma after the tsunami that hit the southern coast in September of last year. We'd all seen on TV that many people there were still distressed and finding it difficult to rebuild homes and villages. The three-stories-high wave killed 134 people, displaced hundreds, and affected thousands.

To be able to take the wonderful tools I help people with each week to Samoa was a temptation I couldn't resist!

> Once activated, your RAS helps you identify resources, opportunities and ideas that are relevant to your goals and what's important to you.

> Your RAS is working all the time, while you're driving to work, sleeping or playing a game of tennis, so you can trust that it will be looking for helpful information even when you're not consciously thinking about your goals. It really is that clever.



**FREE Communication Skills Course for PARENTS**

The Peace Foundation "Cool Schools Communication Skills Course": focussing on simple, proven ways for adults to increase their effectiveness



Within days the NZ Trauma Recovery Team was born and we were contacting everyone we could think of who needed our help and who could help us get there; local funding agencies, local Samoan representatives, charitable trusts, all our friends, colleagues and relatives, Apia hospital, the Samoan Ministry of Health, the Red Cross in Samoa, and on it went.

Within two weeks we had a formal invitation from the Samoan Ministry of Health to help with trauma recovery there. Following more than two months of fund raising, planning and preparation, seven members of our team (of 9) left New Zealand on the 24th of February. We were going to train local mental health workers and counsellors, and work one-on-one with those requiring help - using NLP techniques that have been shown to be the most effective solution to treating PTSD in war zones, and following the 9-11 events in the US. I was excited!

My biggest challenge so far had been the demands of running a business and helping coordinate a big overseas project, so after weeks of intense busy-ness it was a great relief to arrive in Apia, feel the warm tropical air and know we could put all our focus and attention on helping the people of Samoa. We were very warmly welcomed by the team at Aggie Grey's, and as we walked into the beautiful century-old hotel I realised that if it hadn't been for them sponsoring our accommodation we wouldn't be there. I felt humbled by the support we'd received even before we'd landed in Samoa.

Day one of our three-day training opened with the Samoan Prime Minister welcoming the team and talking about how important the skills people are learning on the training are going to be for "re-building people's minds to enabling them to rebuild communities in Samoa". As I sat and looked around the room at all the participants seated in rows, noticing the frangipani in the ladies' hair, seeing our team dotted around the edges and listening to the Prime Minister address us all, I felt a rush of elation mixed with disbelief that we were there, so successfully so far, with nearly 40 people attending! And the Samoan Prime Minister addressing us! It was a great feeling.

The next three days were hectic; when I wasn't in the training room assisting with the rest of the training team, I was helping coordinate media liaison. TV 3 Samoa came to

with children and teenagers.

This Communication Skills course is based on the internationally recognised work of Dr. Richard Bolstad, and Margot Hamblett of the Transforming Communication Skills course and Dr. Thomas Gordon's work in the Parent Effectiveness Training and Teacher Effectiveness Training courses. Participants learn a complete system of communication techniques as well as the principles of when and why they are to be used and for what purpose. They get coaching and practice in putting the skills to work immediately.

Next dates: Six evenings - 6.30-9.00pm on May 18, 20, 25, 27 and June 1 and 3 at Stanhope Road Primary School, Mt. Wellington.

This course is FREE, and run over several days or a series of evenings. **It can be run for your school too – inquire now.**

**Contact Caroline Ongleo for information about dates and venues, please email her at [caroline@peacefoundation.org.nz](mailto:caroline@peacefoundation.org.nz) or phone 09 373 2379.**

[www.peace.net.nz](http://www.peace.net.nz)

interview some of the team on day two, as well as Radio NZ and local papers over the next couple of days. TV One NZ followed our in-field work later in the week.

As I watched the participants enjoying discovering the skills and tools they were learning, it felt amazing to see their transformation. It was especially touching to hear people talking on day three about their experiences healing their own trauma during the training. One woman told me of a traumatic event she'd experienced as a teenager that she had been able to heal and move on from (now in her 60's). She told me that in the past when she was counselling people she would hold her heart as she comforted them, as her own heart was hurting. She was bubbling with excitement that she could heal herself and feel better.

On our final day of training we were over-awed with the short ceremony that concluded the day; we were presented with a table laden with gifts. For me the most moving thing was the beautiful songs the group sang for us. The harmony of voices flooded me with an overwhelming sense of love and gratitude. It helped to say our goodbyes knowing we would be working with many of the group over the next few days.



"The mark of a successful man is one that has spent an entire day on the bank of a river without feeling guilty about it."

*Anonymous*

On Saturday morning my phone in the hotel rang. It was 3am. It felt surreal hearing Aggie (junior) explaining there was a tsunami warning in place and that we will need to evacuate at 6am. The warning had gone out across the Pacific following the Chilean earthquake the previous night, measuring 8.8.

The sirens sounded around 4am. For those of us having never experienced this kind of emergency before, there was a brief sense of the fear and panic some people experience here in Samoa at the very thought of another tsunami. After our evacuation that morning and talking with people around the island on the following days, it brought home to the whole team just how very real the threat of natural disasters are there. While many people have been able to let go of the trauma and move on, we saw how traumatising these warnings can be for those still suffering from the September disaster. One woman I spoke to had been shaking all over as she drove down the hill from her home to evacuate people from their coastal fale's.



**The Eckhart Files**

In the final chapter of A New Earth, Tolle makes the connection between the present moment and enjoyment. "The 'waiting to start living' syndrome is one of



One of the highlights of our trip for me was working with UN agencies on our final day, along with Rachel. We ran a short workshop on stress management for five agencies including UNESCO and the Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS). These were tools for coping with the various situations they are faced with from crime scenes to disaster responses, and looking after their own emotional well-being. Then we spent the afternoon running and supervising 1:1 sessions for people suffering from a range of issues including severe and long term PTSD (post traumatic stress disorder). It has been wonderful following up with those people since then and hearing how different they are experiencing life since their sessions; it's immeasurably rewarding to make such a difference.

During our seven days in Samoa I met so many warm hearted, courageous people. Some of those are people still suffering from nightmares, are afraid to come down from the hills for school or work, or are drinking to suppress their flashbacks or nightmares. The beautiful people of Samoa made us feel so very welcome and appreciated, and we look forward to helping them further. We are currently planning an urgent follow-up trip in May, and still require sponsorship and donations. Inquiries welcome – email [karen@freshwaysforward.co.nz](mailto:karen@freshwaysforward.co.nz).

You can also find out all about the Samoa project online at

[www.traumarecoveryteam.org.nz](http://www.traumarecoveryteam.org.nz)



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