

learning for life



TUNING IN...

to someone's hopes and dreams



by Robin Booth, Life Coach & School Principal

Intellectually stuck-in-the-mud. That's the easy definition of the concept "analysis paralysis". It's that situation where whatever you think your decision or course of action could be, it seems that it might end up with a result that you do not want. So you keep trying to find another solution and in so doing you remain "paralysed" or quite literally, stuck in the mud of your own intellectual thinking.

And right now I'm up to about my neck in this sticky mud. Only my eyes are now able to move around searching the surroundings for the illusive insights which will ultimately wrench the plug from the mud bath and free me to move again.

One of the most powerful motivators of getting Humans into action is the belief of "HOPE". If you have no hope you fall into resignation resulting in you giving up. And linked to hope are your dreams. There is always the hope that your dreams will come true. And hope doesn't need to come in large doses for it to be powerful. All it needs is a little ray of light, a breath of fresh air. "Don't take away another person's hopes or dreams" the wise people say.

But hope can also keep us detached from reality (or at least what we perceive as reality). In fact it is so addictive that the word "Hope-ium" often best describes this situation. I hope so strongly that something is going to happen (to the extent that I may bury my head in the sand and refuse to "wake up and smell the coffee").

And this is the Analysis Paralysis. If someone comes to me really excited about a project they are working on and I don't think it will work, do I give them my advice and take away their hope or dreams? Why must someone else make the same mistakes I made? But then we also learn most from our experiences, especially those ones where we 'failed' in (of course, and that's the reason why I now know what to do and why I have such good advice for you). So I learned most from my mistakes, which means you may also learn most from your mistakes, so does that mean I should let you mostly learn from your experiences? So when should I let someone fail at something because in the long run I will actually be helping them most this way? You get it? Analysis Paralysis and the mud is rising higher.

As I grew up, my family had an old piano and as I played it the most it came to reside in my house when I moved out. As it was a good piano, I decided to rebuild some of it and was all excited by what I could do. I got some professionals in and through observing them working and with

their explanations I was awestruck by the piano's complexity and fragility. It seemed you really needed to be expertly trained in doing this work. I sadly realised I was not going to do any of the rebuilding myself. Then my brother, a few years younger than me, was given an old piano. Without any musical background he one day stated that he was going to strip it and rebuild it himself. I was fighting a raging current in not telling him that he was wasting his time because I had seen professionals battle with the fine mechanism on the piano. I wanted to tell him that he could strip the main pins, damage the springs or crack the soundboard. All I could think about was, "Don't take away hope and dreams." He seemed so worked up, so motivated. It was his new winter project. Cautiously I tried to explain that by unscrewing all the pins, one may strip them and cause serious damage. Halfway through the explanation, I decided to leave it. I could not find the way to make him

aware of the risks without taking away hope. Instead I said, "Wow. That sounds like quite a job. It looks like you are all set and have every thing planned out."

Over the next few weeks I saw the piano come apart, and the pieces laid out in a methodical manner to be reassembled at a later stage. Soon, my brother started letting me know how things were really going.

"Aggh. It took me ages to find out how to undo the hammer. Some springs came off and got stuck in the keys. But wow, this instrument is amazingly made up." He then went to explain the process of how the piano key transfers power to the hammer and how it returns to the board. I was also caught up in his explanation and can honestly say that I was a bit envious as well.

A few weeks further down the line, he realised where his limitations were and how much he could really do. He started assembling the piano again and said, "Wow, this is a lot harder than I thought."

What I learnt from this is that by choosing my words carefully at the beginning, I had left the option open for my brother to include me in the process of his re-building the piano. If I had come across as a negative force right at the beginning as I explained how he was wasting his time, I would have been left out of his process. He would not have let me know how things were going and he would never have admitted that perhaps this was too complicated for him. Besides, I had seen that I was wrong. He did not waste his time. He not only followed his dream, but also learnt a lot about pianos, patience, planning and his own limitations. By trying to protect him from disappointment, I was protecting him from hoping, striving, dreaming, and sometimes from achieving his dream. I guess in this I also learnt a bit about my own limitations as well. ☺

