



EBOOK **NAVIGATING**

**LIMELIGHT, PRESSURE, AS WELL
AS RISK AND HARD BETTER**

**THE MINDFUL PRACTITIONER ADVOCATING
FOR MINDFUL THINKING AND HABITS FOR AN
AGILE LIFESTYLE**

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**YOU DON'T HAVE TO LEAVE EVERYTHING TO
CHANCE**



A lover of life and a development specialist who advocates agile thinking. A psychological practitioner contextualising development and science.

Adopting an agile mentality is necessary in navigating risk, pressure and connection.

MEET GEMMA

Before I get into the thick of this ebook, I want to give you a picture of who I am, the changes I've made in my life, and why I advocate for mindful habits. Adopting agile thinking is what I now call agile performance. As you learn more about me, you will learn how this change "changed" my life personally and professionally.

NOTHING CHANGES UNLESS YOU CHANGE

We have all heard this statement, and while I believe this statement is true, I also know there are layers to it. We are changing all the time. Change is **not** our problem; it's changing intentionally towards the person we want to be and the life we want. **Just chase your dreams, one may say.**

I've seen many professionals in all industries self-destruct and sabotage both personally and in the public eye. Let me explain, but before I do that, I will share an insight into my own personal journey.



At 12, I wanted to jump out of a window!! Yes, a window. I start with this because at such a young age, I learnt silence, and had no idea about childhood adversities. Adverse experiences are events we all go through. Growing up, the conversation around accessing support and development was limited. By sharing this, I hope I can show you that even when you can't see better for yourself, it is still there. Over the last decade, I've realised that growth is more about what you do to put yourself on a path to unlock what is already there.

How I got to that point at 12 was layered; however, due to my childhood adversity, I grew up with a deep sense of disconnection as well as a lack of belonging. **My actions from a young age were to do what everyone did - don't talk about it.** Growing up, I thought this was a Caribbean issue; however, my work has shown me that silence, fear and guilt run in races, cultures, societies and industries. My adversities continued into adulthood, which built walls around me as well as limited my coping mechanisms. Watching others engage in substance abuse and other risky behaviours made me feel like I was okay because I wasn't doing that, but I too was struggling; it just looked different.

Your Personality

Protagonist (ENFJ-A)

Protagonists are inspiring optimists, readily taking action to do what they feel is right. These warm, forthright types love helping others and have the creative energy to achieve their goals.

Comparison is the thief of joy



Learning this was difficult because while my actions didn't look like the ones mentioned, I was isolated, didn't trust anyone, riddled with many limiting beliefs which stopped me from making life-changing decisions closer to the life I desired.

I reached my 30s and it felt like something had to change but what, how and where do I start?

At this time, I was working in education, struggling to understand what I was experiencing and tired of being sick and tired. One day, trying to reach out for help to someone who was a friend at that time, I found myself buying an A4 notebook, coming home and sitting on my floor.

After so many questions about the past, current circumstances as well as my future, I wrote on the page.

The old way is no longer an option!!

Not knowing the where, what, why or even the how. I set out on a learning journey to learn mindful habits and psychological theory to just see if there was a different way of navigating life.

**This process
stripped me
mentally but rebuilt
habits as well as
thinking that put me
in rooms far beyond
what 12-year-old me
thought was
possible.**



Introduction

This eBook is broken into four sections, two areas we must understand and prioritise and two about mindful habits I adopted to support me in achieving agile performance. In this eBook, I will share some concepts that are roadmaps for change in thinking and behaviour.

We live in a world of mass information, and in some ways, this has happened because information has become more accessible. While this is a good thing, it can increase overwhelm.

As a result, we may jump from one thing to another, a new trend, a new process or loads of half-truths. Rather than subscribing to a school of thought and becoming a master of that. If you have processes you use and they keep you safe, agile and connected, then don't change anything but take the information as affirmation that you're on the right path; maybe you need fine-tuning in some areas rather than a complete rebuild as I did in my 30s.

MY ENCOURAGEMENT TO READERS

Be open because only when we are open to learn outside what we know already is where growth can happen.



Limelight, pressure and risk

There have been many stories of people not realising the level of expectations and pressure that came with them living their true desires. Work, relationships, children, etc, all come with pressure, risk and expectations.

What we don't often speak about is access. What do you do when your access increases? This could be access to people, substances or activities.

What do you do when everyone is doing the same thing? Most conform, the problem with that very quickly you become a shell of yourself, and you now have a set of behaviours and thinking that distort reality, which is a dangerous place to live.

What event, party or activity should you be saying no to?

It is easy to say that bad people do bad things, however I know it is more layered than this. You start bright-eyed, hopeful and full of energy and then life happens.

“Just because you can doesn't mean you should”

Life will always give us

Challenge, Conflict or Disruption

Sometimes you experience a situation that brings all three, which increases the weight of stress. This is why having tools and techniques is vital, but they are also needed to navigate pressure and risk. You must be clear with who you are, what you want to achieve and **don't let the challenges of life derail you from your path.** If anything, it should support you to keep adjusting to different opportunities and life circumstances.

We are rarely prepared for change or loss. Equally, we are often not equipped as well as we could be. We wait until we hit rock bottom before we engage in support, often for damage control rather than proactive change in our lives.

What made you engage in support? This could be therapy, coaching, or mentoring.

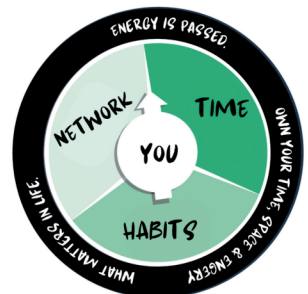
The discipline doesn't matter at this stage; just reflect on your engagement in wanting to achieve your goals, processing emotions or seeking accountability.

Support gives you a space to just be, held to account and remain focused. Support also creates opportunities for you to be the best version of yourself for others and the opportunities you engage in. **Could you build this in your network of trusted people in your life?**

On the following pages, I hope to show you the importance of engaging in support as well as activities that will keep your mind agile. I will start with the mind, then go into adversity, because I found these are the areas of our life we minimise in the hope of achieving resilience.

Resilience is being self-aware about how you feel, what you're experiencing and navigating through your circumstances in the best way possible.

Powerful 3 - concept: three areas to focus on in adopting change and achieving goals



THE MIND

Your mind will either be your best tool or your worst prison. For many, we think external components like relationships, certain jobs or cars, children etc, show that life is on track and one is doing okay.

But we don't have to go far to see that this is not always the case.

Here, I am not going to give you a lesson on the brain, but I want to share a process you can adopt to make the mind agile. The concept is called **factors of change**.

This process brings the unknowing into knowing



This concept consists of four areas to adopt change, which starts with awareness. Here we are talking about learning for discovery. But to lessen the overwhelm, let's focus on the areas you want to improve.

I advise the individuals I work with to connect most of their learning to the areas they want to improve. This way, we minimise the intake of wasteful information. Of course, there will be some learning you may not take on board, but by giving your learning a direction, you lessen any waste as well as limiting the overwhelm.

Have an area or goal? Next, ask this question

What learning needs to take place to improve in this area?

Ever heard of the **Three Mask Theory?**

This is a Japanese philosophy, also the reason I encourage you to dig deeper when asking yourself questions.

It's the idea that we are not the same person at all times. We have different parts of ourselves that we show to different people and situations. Here is a little snippet of theory.

The First Face

This is the persona we tend to be most of the time. We project the image we want people to see, show the best parts of ourselves, because we don't want to or are not comfortable enough with judgment from others.

The Second Face

This side of your persona is a truer version of who you really are at your core. What makes this face shift is dependent on our comfort level in judgment of others or our desire to be accepted. This may also be hidden if your behaviour or thinking is not socially accepted.

The Third Face

It's the one you never or rarely show. It is your true essence of who you really are. Admitting fears or experiences that are difficult to face, regardless of the judgment of others.

Knowing this theory will allow you to dig deeper, ensure you connect to yourself by not being held by fear of limiting beliefs. Knowing this is not a silver bullet for change, but it is a puzzle piece.

Judgement kept me from revealing my third face to close ones. One thing I learnt is that what you try to suppress will only manifest when you least expect it.



A misconception many make is that if you are already in the area you want to improve, you think time will improve it. Which it might, but think about what you could achieve by becoming intentional with any improvement and not hoping for the best?

A relationship will not necessarily improve without work. In fact, I think if you spend your life reacting to things in your relationship and not responding, you end up operating from rupture, leaving no space for repair.

I feel this is the same in any area. Career paths, parenting or running a business.

Outcomes are not always guaranteed. Remember this, as often we attach the work we do towards the outcomes we want, which outcomes you desire are not guaranteed. The outcomes you desire are based on many factors, but don't let this discourage you.

Keep going.

This process of change is about you, not the outcomes at this point. Your learning will bring discovery and create the space for you to **acknowledge** and **accept** the impact of your experiences. Good, bad or different. **You can't change the past.** While I know this is often hard to process, remember this: You didn't know what you didn't know.

The last component is action in the **factor of change concept**, but I want you to notice you're really taking action throughout this process. Ever heard the saying, even when you don't make a decision, you just made a decision?

The same is true even when you think you're not taking action, you are. Using this process allows you to be intentional with achieving change and improvement.

Adversity

Back to life will always giving you **Challenge, Conflict or Disruption.**

Adversity is a funny thing; we all feel its impact differently, which is why we must contextualise our experience. We minimise our adverse experiences because we want to demonstrate that we can handle them, and we think this is what resilience is.

I don't believe in this....

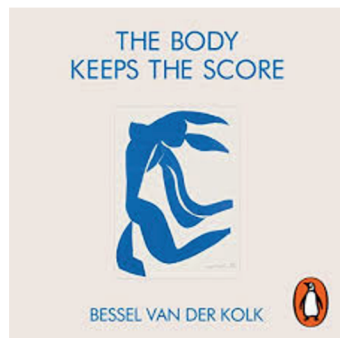
The key should not be to minimise the experience but to be self-aware that are aware of any impact and strain. Over the years, I've seen many people say they have not experienced trauma, then I ask them a question about an experience that held significant impact, and they react in such a way, I am like, really! Never oh okay....

It is important to clear up a myth and share some understanding about trauma.

Trauma is what is left after an event with a significant impact.

We know that the body holds trauma, and it is vital to heal the body. I would go as far as to say the body and mind are connected, so healing the mind is also important. This is where I believe mindful habits and activities have a fantastic place in supporting this process. A great book to read is **The Body Keeps Score.**

Going back to learning, this will aid you in understanding why healing is ongoing. We all should be healing our minds and bodies any chance we get.

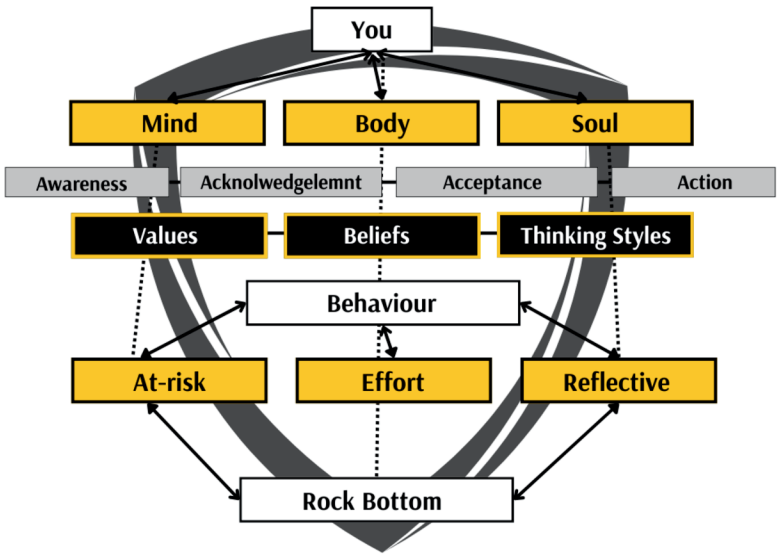


In growing in awareness, I believe it would be helpful to know and work through any childhood adverse experiences that had any significant impact on your life. Anything that changed your thinking or behaviour may have caused changes or gaps in memory.

Often our experiences impact how we communicate, interact and trust others, but because you're not aware of this, you don't realise the impact. But it doesn't mean that the impact is not there and doesn't play out in your daily life. **This is why awareness is key.**

Learning how you respond to stress is another area to be aware of, as stress responses and trauma responses are the same.

This doesn't mean that all experiences that are stressful are traumatic. In fact, some stress is healthy; it allows us to thrive and find a flow state. Below, I have shared a wellness matrix I created that shows everything is connected.



If you were still thinking about the importance of support and development, hopefully, this shows you visually to back up what you have read, why this is a necessity.

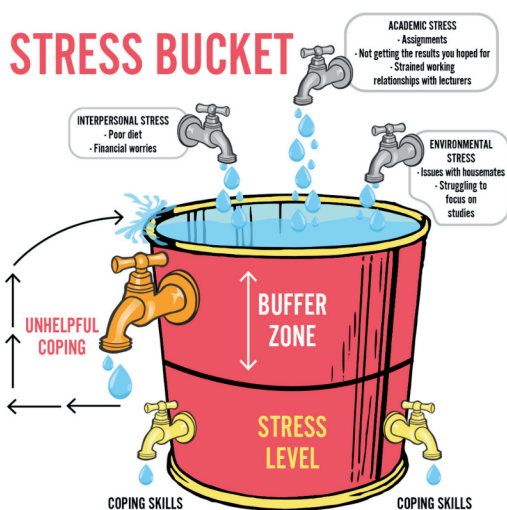
In this section, I did not want to tell you what is classified as a childhood adverse experience, that you can find out for yourself. My aim is to break down the myth that being resilient means you don't have traumatic experiences, as well as showing you that healing the mind and body through mindful habits is important.

Mindful habits are what I call your tools and techniques that support you in being agile.

There is a long list you can opt for, but I will share two that have helped me in ways I could never have imagined. Meditating and journaling are the two main techniques I use and advocate for others to adopt at least one of these habits, in the aim of mastering the practices.

Make it a lifestyle in how you live your life.

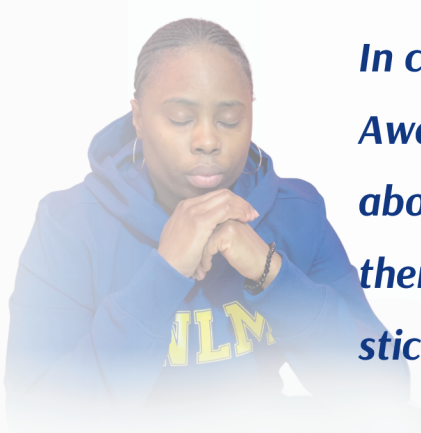
Both practices are great ways to help you reduce stress, heal and support development. Ever heard of the stress bucket concept? If you have never heard of this, check it out add it to your learning list.



Meditation

Meditation is a practice that I came across my path in my late 20s. In my early 30s, I told myself meditating didn't work because nothing magical happened. How wrong was I? In my self-discovery journey, I took a different approach in speaking about things I am not committed to.

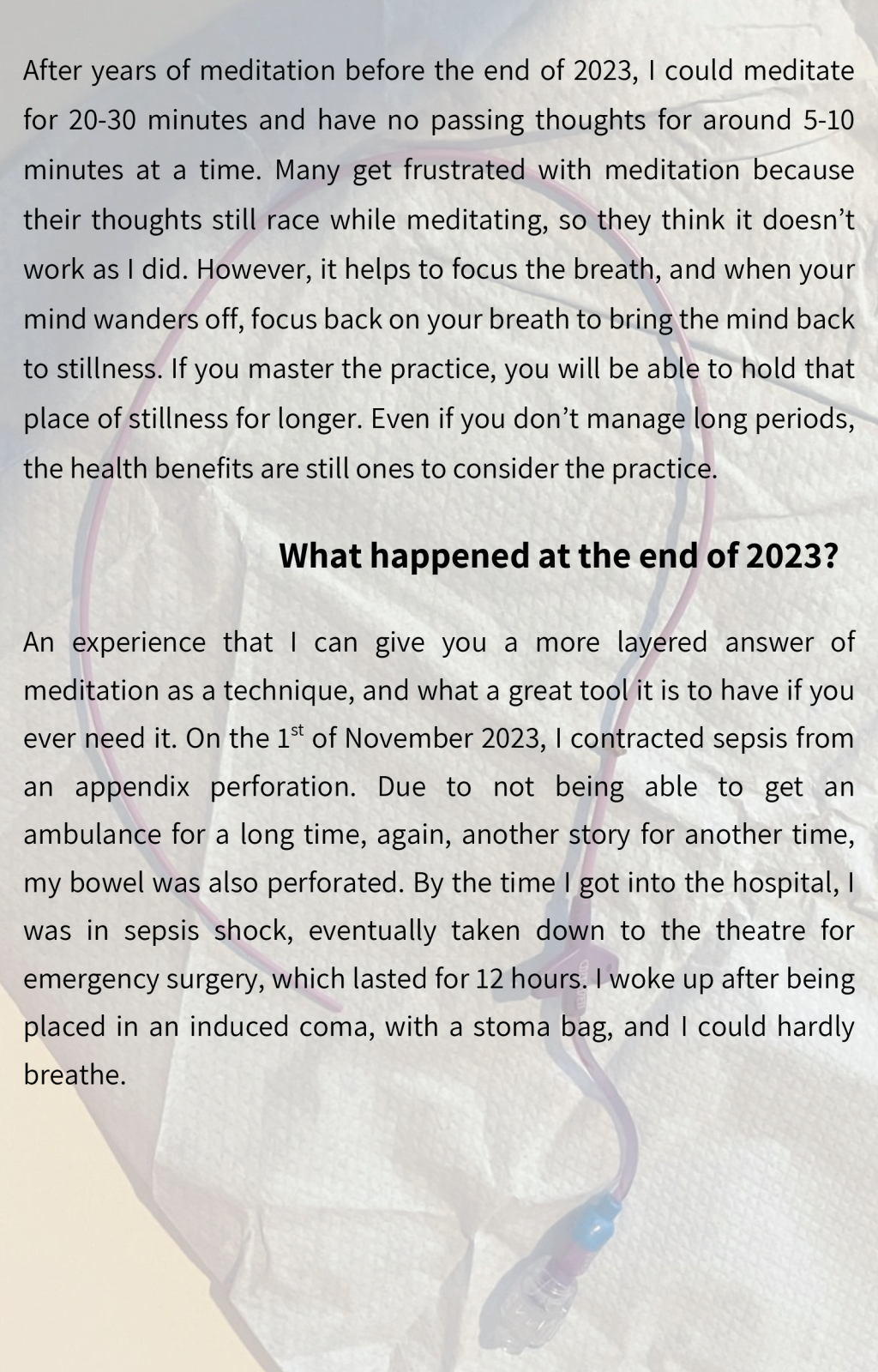
In one of my journal entries, I had to be honest about my knowledge of meditation, as at the time, all I knew was that it was slowing the breath down, but in reality, there was much more to the practice than that.

A woman with dark hair, wearing a blue hoodie, is shown in a meditative pose with her eyes closed and hands clasped in front of her. The image is semi-transparent, serving as a background for the text.

*In came the factors of change:
Awareness. I needed to learn
about what meditation was,
then maybe, just maybe it would
stick.*

Meditation is a mindfulness technique and comes in different forms of breathing techniques. The practice itself takes years to master, but the more I learned about meditation wasn't about the outcome or feeling it gave me.

It was about the commitment to the practice and the impact it had on my mind and body. Alongside this, I was learning about trauma, time management and achieving goals. Meditation fitted in perfectly once I understood what I was doing.



After years of meditation before the end of 2023, I could meditate for 20-30 minutes and have no passing thoughts for around 5-10 minutes at a time. Many get frustrated with meditation because their thoughts still race while meditating, so they think it doesn't work as I did. However, it helps to focus the breath, and when your mind wanders off, focus back on your breath to bring the mind back to stillness. If you master the practice, you will be able to hold that place of stillness for longer. Even if you don't manage long periods, the health benefits are still ones to consider the practice.

What happened at the end of 2023?

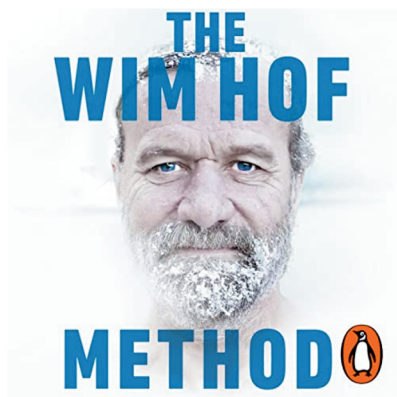
An experience that I can give you a more layered answer of meditation as a technique, and what a great tool it is to have if you ever need it. On the 1st of November 2023, I contracted sepsis from an appendix perforation. Due to not being able to get an ambulance for a long time, again, another story for another time, my bowel was also perforated. By the time I got into the hospital, I was in sepsis shock, eventually taken down to the theatre for emergency surgery, which lasted for 12 hours. I woke up after being placed in an induced coma, with a stoma bag, and I could hardly breathe.

As the days followed, I realised I had lost 30% of my lung capacity. My knowledge of meditation kicked in as soon as I was taken out of an induced coma due to vaguely hearing the surgeon say they were not happy with something about my breathing. I could not meditate as I once was able to however short bursts every so often within an hour completely rebuilt my lung capacity. **Slowly but surely.**

Surgeons remained shocked because they couldn't understand that this practice held these results. My main surgeon said to me that he would never discount Eastern practices again because, for him, what he knew about science and in his experiences, not only was I not supposed to be alive, but I should not have recovered in the way that I was recovering at the time.

There are so many different types of meditation, but the ones that I engaged with are guided meditation, box breathing, and the Wim Hof method. This is why mastering a practice takes years. You have to try to see what types work for you and then master that practice

**Meditation as a tool is
amazing, not just for
managing pressure and
risk but also for navigating
conflict, challenging and
how we interact.**

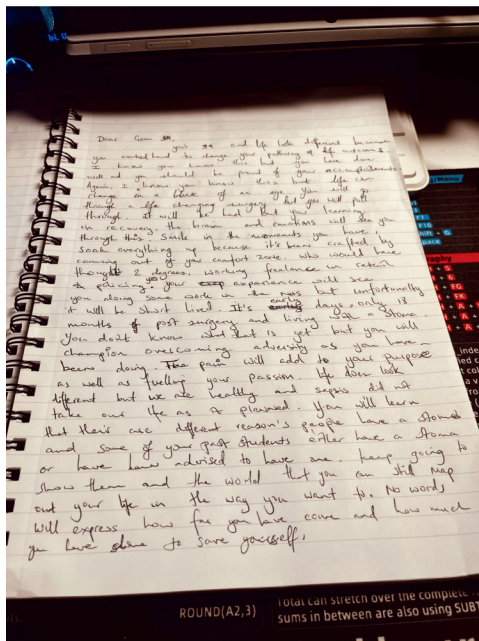


Journaling

Very similar to meditation, this was another practice that I said didn't work, but I can tell you the problem wasn't with the journal but with myself, because yet again, I was not doing it consistently enough to notice any tangible benefits.

Again comes with various science benefits, but for me, this is really about two things: being able to brain dump what is in your mind, equally a great tool for active reflection when looking back on how far you have come.

When we are reflecting we rely on memory, which I won't go into detail, but memory is never 100% accurate it is pieced together with more blanks over time, even though you may not feel or realise it. **Knowing this**, I rely more on writing things down than thinking that I remember everything in full detail as I think.



A reason I think I had such a barrier to journaling is not having boundaries to say the journal is off limits to others wanting to read it. You know what partners can be like, however this is not about them but about the boundaries I put in place and the space a partner gives in the want to control or support.

Side note: Not trying to open a can of worms, just saying it is okay to have your own space for your thoughts.

THANK YOU

Thank you for reading. Whatever your reason for downloading this eBook, I hope this supports you on your road to achieving your goals in the way you desire and achieving connection.

It's okay to learn some things that you may not be happy to discover. The key is to unpick, process and action your life. Through support or development, we unlock parts of us that tend to get hidden through adverse experiences. Below are some great books I have read, do enjoy them and if you have not already, connect with me on most platforms, **The Mindful Practitioner**

The Obstacle Is The Way and all books from Ryan Holiday

The Dance of Anger and all books from Harriet Lerner

The Four Tendencies - Gretchen Rubin

Chimp Management - Professor Steve Peters

Perform Under Pressure - Dr Ceri Evans

Love Languages - Gary Chapman

The 5 am Club - Robin Sharma

Emotional Agility - Susan David

The Tools - Phil Stutz

The Power of Now - Eckhart Tolle

S.U.M.O - Shut up and move on - Paul Mcgee