



FOUR QUESTIONS

a series about living and leading

Eddie Hypolite

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EYR PTY LTD

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Dedicated to Phyllis Margret Hypolite
1925 - 2020
“You asked the questions and lived the answers”

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*Why and
Where Do I?*

This is a series of four conversations about how we come back to living and

Introduction

leading in a post-ish covid reality and world.

We are simultaneously living through a globally racial and social awakening, the awareness of a permanent shift in our work culture and the ever-increasing threat of climate change – none of which are local and isolated, all of which is happening to us all at the same time, be it to varying degrees.

There is also the ongoing concern that was highlighted in a 2019 World Health Organisation report, on the effect depression and anxiety are having on the workplace worldwide. Mental and emotional health and our ability to sustain the day-to-day pressure that life and work-related stress creates, has now become a major global concern for us all.

This series is the beginning of ongoing conversations about how we navigate this changed and forever changing landscape. It is also about how we ground ourselves as individuals, teams and organisations in an empowered

sense of self-efficacy and resilience;
and will be doing so by exploring four
simple but pressing questions.

Who am I?

How am I?

How do I?

Why/Where do I?

Four Questions... I'm looking forward
to taking this journey with you.

“Who am I?” It’s a question that speaks to both identity and personal

Who Am I?

narrative. Our global unpreparedness for the relentless onslaught of 2020 had the effect of temporary uncertainty about who we were and our ability to remember our responses to the uncertainty and upheaval that came with 2020.¹

As the landscape around us changed and reinvented itself, we had to move into new areas of discomfort and unfamiliarity in so many aspects of our lives.

Remembering who we were, learning for the first time who we were and in so many cases, being shocked to discover that we weren’t who we thought we were, are universal stories that played itself out repeatedly across social media.

While identity is linked to environment, culture and geography, in so many other ways it is also linked

¹ <https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/global/Documents/About-Deloitte/COVID-19/COVID-19-confronting-uncertainty-through-and-beyond-the-crisis.pdf>

to memory and narrative and our ability to access both in healthy and meaningful ways.

Identity is linked to our ability to remember the stories and events that informed us of the values and experiences that defined our development, whether as individuals, teams or organisations.

Identity is linked to our proximity to those memories, understanding that upheaval can create major distance between what we know to be true about ourselves and the upheaval that is making us forget.

Identity speaks to our ability to realign ourselves to a grounded sense of purpose and if need be, shift our goal posts and reaffirmed sense of self to meet the need of a changing landscape. Identity thus becomes solid in its self-efficacy and fluid in its expression of self-efficacy.

It's 2021 and with the introduction of new variant strains and the new concerns that come with that, we are in fact only post-ish Covid19. As we collectively and individually pull ourselves back together again, it has become clear that in a still shifting landscape, our self-realignment isn't going to flow in a completely

straight line however it can flow both intentionally and consistently in a forward motion.

So, continue to have these unsettling but honest conversations with yourselves, your teams and as organisations, and allow these conversations to be a filter to the other questions that follow.

Let's do the work

Who am I?

Engage:

What are the things in your lived experiences that affirm your sense of self?

Renew:

Make a list of all the new things about yourself you are now learning and the old things you're unlearning!

Inspire:

What is your commitment to yourself after reading this chapter and doing these exercises?

How am I? Really, how are you? How have you been doing? How has the

How Am I?

past year been for you? Have you taken a moment to pause and check in with yourself? If you are a leader of people and teams, or a carer of people, has anyone stopped you lately, or at all, and asked how you're doing? Have they just assumed that you're doing well because you haven't been heard to complain?

Men in particular struggle with this question because of the uncomfortable levels of vulnerability it produces in them when having to admit that they aren't doing well. That feeling of vulnerability is compounded by the fear of being perceived as dispensable and the accompanying anxiety of their true state being revealed or leveraged against them.

The 2020 reports on the financial and human cost of mental health related issues world-wide and also here in Australia, have been devastating. The Australian Productivity Commission put the annual cost of dealing with mental illness in work, health and life

expectancy at \$220 Billion. ²

The World Health Organisation stated that 264 million people around the world suffer with depression and anxiety making it now the leading cause of disability in the workplace and costing the global economy annually a staggering \$US 1 Trillion dollars in lost productivity. The annual cost to an Australian company to deal with a compensation claim related to mental health issues is \$27,700 per employee as opposed to \$11,500 for claims due to physical harm. ³

Companies have historically placed little emphasis on the mental health and well-being of their staff because they haven't felt the need to. Staff also haven't placed importance on their own mental health and well-being, because they somehow convinced themselves that resting at the weekend was enough to absorb all of the weeklong work related stress. But with our homes now becoming our primary work spaces, the traditional lines that separated home and work are drastically blurred, and the knock-on affect is being witnessed in the length

² <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-11-16/productivity-commission-releases-mental-health-report/12887012>

³ <https://www.who.int/teams/mental-health-and-substance-use/mental-health-in-the-workplace>

of our working day because everything work related is so immediate to hand.
So let me ask again, How are you?

Companies and organisations have already begun to rethink the working environments in employee homes in creating hybrid models of work as more and more workers express the preference of working remotely. With this preference, however, also comes the concerns of health and safety, increased working hours and the added mental stress on employees, all of which are highlighted in this most recent United Nations health study.⁴ Mental health and mindfulness have become central to the guiding policy making and creation of new working culture practices.

One thing that has become evident in this current climate is that companies that neglect to sow into the mental health needs of their employees, will reap a whirlwind in lost talent and increased financial costs, as compensation claims due to work induced mental stress continue to rise.

Ok, up to now I've been focusing mainly on you and how you're doing, fully cognisant that I'm not sharing

⁴ http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_544138.pdf

how I'm doing and where I find myself post 2020. So, for the purpose of transparency and maybe a little catharsis, let me share...

I've learned to be ok with not being ok: I've realised that the most dangerous person in the world to lie to is myself and that self-healing can only begin with radical self-honesty. So, when I'm conscious that I'm not doing well I don't ignore it, I embrace it. I then go about finding my safe and trusted people and begin the process of addressing what's wrong. It's impossible to always be ok so why force it when I'm not?

I've learned to remind myself that self-care is my first care: Who will care for the carer if the carer forgets to care for them-self? In my line of work, I'm surrounded more by consumers than investors – people that draw

***I'm not complaining,
I'm confessing.***

more from me than they add to me – and I understand that is the

nature of my life and work. I'm not complaining, I'm confessing. It's imperative therefore, that I find non-compromised time, spaces and connections that feed into my self-care and the replenishing of emotional, relational and spiritual energy. My 'me

work' has to be as important as my 'you work'.

I've created what I call an "accountability council" around me:

It's simply a group of key individuals, empowered and committed to keeping me grounded, honest and in touch with myself. Nuff said!

Humility and vulnerability empower strength and resilience

I've come to accept and embrace periods of vulnerability as times in which more strength than weakness can be found: Vulnerability does not have to be something we fear when surrounded by communities of friends, colleagues and sojourners that are invested wholeheartedly in your story – who we are and what we bring to the world. Vulnerability is our filter to the foolish and debilitating pride that convinces us that we can go it alone; it's a grounding inner response that reminds us that we are not islands and choosing to remain so in the face of life's oncoming storms will cause us to be swept away. Humility is the door to vulnerability, which in turn empowers strength and resilience, exposing for us our self-destructive individualism. As such, humility and vulnerability open our eyes to the

brilliance of the people around us and the assistance they are able to provide. They reveal the resilient reserves locked away inside us that can only flourish in synergistic interdependence as opposed to polarised independence. There's so much more that could be said here but for the sake of brevity be open to the importance of being humble and vulnerable.

This is where I find myself presently. I'm working on myself, trying to be kinder to myself, kinder about myself, kinder with myself; knowing that the things outside of my control cannot be allowed to determine my response to them.

Learn to sit honestly with the question of how you're doing. Please don't let the fear of dispensability or redundancy, whether occupationally, socially or in our most personal

Learn to sit honestly with the question of how your'e doing.

relationships, produce a hesitancy in you to address mindfulness and your wellbeing.

As I've already stated and constantly have to remind myself, "self-care is my first care" and it's your first care also. So, care enough about yourself and what you mean to the people and environments that depend on you, to

begin embracing honest conversations about how you're doing.

So, with that said, permit me to ask the question I began with, How Are You?

Let's do the work

How Am I?

Engage:

What aspect of self-care have you been avoiding but realise you cannot afford to anymore?

Renew:

Imagine yourself emotionally and spiritually at 100%, what do you look like? Write it down.

Inspire:

What is your commitment to yourself after reading this chapter and doing these exercises? Do you need help achieving it? Who are you going to ask to hold you accountable for following through with your commitment.

How do I? How do we? How do we live out all our commitments to and

How Do I?

about ourselves in real time and on a consistent daily basis? Well, let me begin by stating that there's no magic formula. Intentionality, determination and consistency are three responses that come immediately to mind. We do so one day at a time, growing one learned from mistake at a time and remembering that people, much like good ideas, need time to develop and grow. Figuring out how we give people space to develop, while extracting from them the brilliance we see emerging, isn't something we learn overnight.

Another critical component to people leading is self-leading and understanding who it is that we personally bring to the table. Remembering essentially that who we bring to a situation is who we are, and who we are had better be the person we'd like to meet if the tables were turned.

Ultimately good people and organisational leadership is distilled from lived experience, intentional culture formation, transformative self-

leadership and most unappreciated of all, time. It is via these variables, coupled with a deepened acknowledgement and embracing of the values, ideas and behavioural principles that inform and ameliorates who we are, that we're able to influence the people we lead, the people they in turn lead and ultimately a wider society and world at large.

**Who we bring to
a situation is who
we are**

Our global approach to self and people leadership has become critical in navigating a post-Covid future that depends heavily on progressive strategic partnerships, expansive cultural inclusion and creative diversify. The dual possibility of failure along with the fantastic possibilities if we get it right, have never been so acutely felt and so highly anticipated.

Great leadership and the leadership cultures that sustain it, are intentional in their imagining, development and execution, they don't just materialise. So as you engage in both self and people leadership development, and as you build and nurture the cultures that will sustain it, let me suggest four framework perspectives to add to the many I know you already possess.

Engaged diversity and encouraged inclusion.

The ultimate goal of diversity and inclusion is to create dynamic communities of accessible excellence. To achieve this we have to engage the uncomfortable process of narrative deconstruction, historical realignment, identifying racially bias frameworks, including our unchecked, unexplored and unexamined biases. There is no comfortable way to have an uncomfortable conversation, but discomfort will always be mitigated when discourse is engaged with honesty, empathy, understanding, professionalism and a commitment to real change.

Intentional and curated creativity.

While creative people may be abundant in your teams, if that creativity is not acknowledged and given space in which to manifest itself, it may as well not exist. Be intentional about how creativity is recognised, organised and maximised in your space of work and influence.

Embraced and imagined futures.

We don't know what the future holds, but to not dream, plan or imagine futures that could exist, disempowers confidence in not only what could be, but also what presently is. Leadership that builds towards the future by

placing its sights on a future that comes, stands a better chance of surviving it once it gets there.

Avoid the presumption of assumption.

The greatest killer of any leadership be it self or people, is assuming without enquiry or conversation. What assumption creates is the gap between what you know and what you think you know. The gap between both can have detrimental consequences if not addressed.

Let's do the work

How Do I?

Engage:

What aspects of self leadership do you avoid and what aspects of people leadership do you struggle with?

Renew:

Who are the leaders and mentors that have inspired you the most? Which of their principles have you adopted, which are you still developing?

Inspire:

List 10 positives about yourself as a leader and 10 positives about the people you lead. What is your commitment to yourself after reading this chapter and doing these exercises?

I once sat in the company of a cancer patient who was in the waning days

Why and Where Do I?

of his battle with his illness. He had lived a full life and had no regrets with where his journey was ending. His reply to me when asked how he felt about it all was, “Well we’ve all got to die of something Ed, so get figuring out how best to live”. I never forgot that.

“Well we’ve all got to die of something Ed, so get figuring out how best to live.”

His legacy to me for the brief time that I knew him and shared his company, was to realign my focus on how I

lived now and leave that value for life behind when I’m done.

Future proofing, succession planning and legacy building all form essential building blocks to the stability of personal and business relationships, organisational health and wider societal wellbeing. We can never totally have control of a future we haven’t yet arrived at; the unknown variables

make it impossible to do so with absolute certainty. We can, however, in our limited but very intentional intentions both dream into the future and lay plans for a future we would like to see.

Planning with the future in mind is foundational to an empowered sense of living and leadership. We won't be here in our vocational capacities forever and frankly neither should we plan to be. The best is always just behind us and that admission in no way diminishes or devalues the present we live in, that we contribute to or have control over. It does however create the inevitability that ideas, people and opportunities greater than we are currently exposed to will eventually surface and take centre stage. Excellence begets excellence and with expanding technology and increased innovation, the yet undiscovered brilliant people that make it possible, rise out of each succeeding generation.

So, how do we respond to the inevitability of change? We do so by pushing the boundaries of innovation, inclusion, imagined and realised cultures of creativity; we strategically and deliberately invest time, resources and love, yes love, in the current best and potentially brilliant individuals

emerging out of our environments of excellence and spheres of influence. In doing this, we affirm the best of the current contributors and value systems, while making room for what and who comes next. Legacy from age to age hasn't only or primarily been defined by the good things which generations say in remembrance of those that preceded them. Legacy has also been defined by the doings that they do. The impact on the thoughts and actions of current and ongoing generations is where legacy is to be found.

1. Address language culture:

Language matters in any thought of future proofing and legacy culture creation. The words used, and the actions policies and behaviours that consistently affirm those words, are an essential part of the building process. Find the words that inform and inspire behaviour and affirm the continued belief in those words with policies and incentives that will shape legacy intentional cultures.

2. Encourage a vision intentional culture:

Allow people the freedom to imagine futures together in which all constructs,

ideas and practices that are personally and professionally limiting are systemically stripped away. Give them the space to build frameworks and models that explore predicted and unpredictable futures and how they can be both navigated and thrived in. Do not use it as an exercise in wishful thinking but as an ongoing practice of innovational renewal and exploration.

3. **Encourage a process driven and event celebratory culture:** A changing and currently shifting world means that we cannot afford to approach long term goals like we used to. Settling in for the long haul on projects, contracts and commitments, must include incremental celebrations of the successes achieved on our way to the end goal. Celebrate the success to be found in the process.
4. **Be intentional about an invested in culture:** We often think that the primary investments needed to improve work moral and culture are financial investments. While this plays a big part in doing so, legacy intentional cultures are the ones in which people invest into

people with the other important variables such as time, skill, mentorship, affirmation and here's that word again...love.

5. Create relationally accountable environments: Accountability is one of the most important and pivotal components in any legacy intentional culture. A sense of vulnerability accompanies accountability. It exposes our limitations, forces us to recognise the gaps in our understanding and embrace feeling overwhelmed by the enormity of the whole experience. Accountability allows us to experience vulnerability in safe and empowering environments. It encourages deeper levels of realised resilience and gives us healthier views of the world and our place in it.

Who am I?

How am I?

How do I?

Why/Where do I?

These are just four questions among the many questions that press us for answers everyday. My hope is that they will give you a framework around

which you can be a better you and create cultures of excellence, growth and empowerment around you.

Let's do the work

Why & Where Do I?

Engage:

Who is the person/people, projects or environments, that you should be pouring yourself into right now.

Renew:

Make a list of all the people you know would be brilliant mentors and place the names of individuals next to their names, that need their mentorship.

Inspire:

What are you going to do about your list and those names? What is your commitment to yourself after reading this chapter and doing these exercises?

