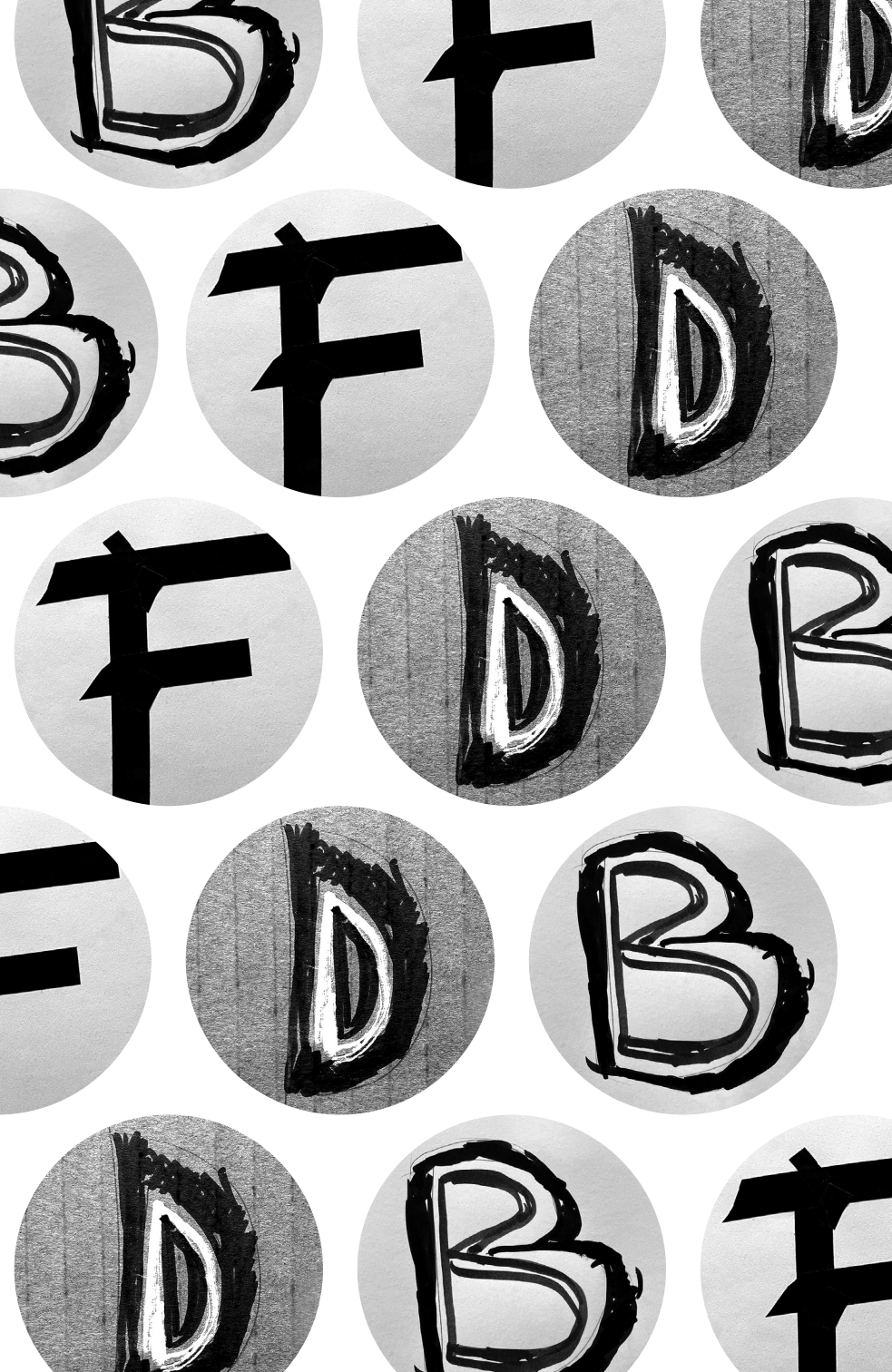




**THE
FORTUNE
COOKIE
FACTORY**

ALEX LANZ



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COOKIE
FACTORY**

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.Lanz

.thanks

To all those I have had the pleasure to meet so far and who have touched something in me.

Especially to my wife and my children who have challenged me to show more of myself.

Also to my parents whose diverse personalities taught me to connect contradictions.

Thanks to all those who have a paid version of this e-book. Thanks also to all those who have a forwarded version of this e-book and are still willing to honour the author's efforts. To do so, please click on the payment [link](#) or scan the QR code.



.the fortune cookie factory

Looking for ways to boost his pocket money, one day one of my children comes up with a plan with a friend. They are going to bake and sell cookies. Soon they realise they are short of hands: making batter, baking cookies, serving them, selling them - that's a lot of work. And the neighbourhood also needs to be made aware of this great offer. So, someone is also needed to design, print and then distribute advertisements.

As a father, I have no knowledge of this. Until I go to pick up my children at school and suddenly a cohort of a total of eight children crowd around me. My son quickly explains why. Why not, I think. Can I have the house key already? Yes, no problem. The children sped ahead. Fifteen minutes later, I'm home too. I see eight children fully engaged. Three children at the kitchen counter. One child is preparing the ingredients, another is mixing, and the last one is warming up the cookie pan. Two other children are busy designing the advertising leaflet. And one more is busy finding the first customers in various WhatsApp groups.

My son was walking around among them, checking that everything is running properly. And then, a shout. 'We have a customer! We have customer!' Jumping children celebrating their first order. The speed in the kitchen goes up. Trays are already prepared. In the meantime, the first cookies are delivered. The first money is earned and reinvested in supplies. Meanwhile, the advertising leaflets are ready. A team walks the streets and throws the leaflets through the letterboxes. Neighbours come out of their nests and order cookies. New customers again.

A well-oiled machine. Everyone busy. If they feel nervous, such as putting advertising material in the letterbox, they ask other children to join them. And they gladly join in. It's fun helping out for a while, getting a new experience. If they gradually notice that they don't like the role imposed on them, they frankly drop it in the group and someone else takes it up again. All organic. Meanwhile, my son takes a break and lies on the lounge chair, relaxing and reading a Donald Duck magazine. Damn, I think for a moment, this is exactly how it should be. Organising things together in such a way that everyone can carry out their tasks independently, only intervening where necessary. And in between relaxing every now and then.

Fantastic, right? Kids just do it. In the cookie factory, each child naturally occupied their role. If they no longer liked it, they asked for a redistribution of tasks. If they found it stressful, they simply asked for help. That's how easy it could be.

If everyone had such a working environment, wouldn't we all be fortunate? In my opinion, we should all put a lot more thought into this. But how do you create such a natural environment?

By starting from what affects and hinders you, and not from laws and regularities. But what does that mean? How do you do it, where do you start, and how deep should you go into it?

Questions. I always have lots of questions. I also have answers. My answers. But you need your own answers.

Unsatisfactory? I get it. But quite honestly: have you ever followed someone else's advice? Let's explore together.

Let yourself be intrigued and surprised by this collection of stories, reflections and observations. Above all, make use of what touches you. Do not expect immediate answers. Be kind to yourself and allow yourself enough time. In the meantime, see where you can change things yourself. It is often the little things that make a big

difference. Once you have started the movement, it often happens automatically. I call it change on the go®.

I wish you much fun, reflection, confusion, research, discoveries and, above all, engaging conversations.

Colophon

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.the beginning of the end

It was a gorgeous spring day. I tried to conquer a parking place on the Amsterdamseweg in Arnhem. But unfortunately, it was too crowded. No permit holder spot left. I had to reroute to paid parking. I got out of the car. In the back, my son was safely in the hold of the maxi-cosi. It was five o'clock in the afternoon. The sun was shining through the street. I was enjoying the light, the intensity of the colours and the gentle breeze. I walked to the parking meter. While I tried to get a parking ticket, someone tapped my shoulder. I turned around. It was Jan, a homeless person who lived in a shelter down the street from me. I liked him and always took time for a chat. He had sparkling eyes and radiated 'joie de vivre' (joy of living). Sometimes he seemed to be in touch with a parallel world. At times like that, he would stand still on the street and turn his gaze towards the sky. I did not dare to speak to him then and left him in his own world. Jan could inspire me a lot. He was my partner in crime for a lot of special conversations. Sometimes he surprised me with questions. Like that one spring afternoon. I had just turned around, recognised Jan, said hello and I got thrown the following question. 'Alex, when is the beginning of the end?' And gone he was.

When is the beginning of the end? What a beautiful question. I would like to invite you to cherish this question for a moment. What is your answer to this question? Take a moment. I'll share my answer in a moment. Just my thoughts. Because as indicated earlier, it's not about my answers, it's about your answers.

I remember the moment like yesterday. For me, it was as if time stood still. A scene like the empty street in New York in the film *The Devil's Advocate*. 'When is the beginning of the end?' Such a beautiful question. No rush to answer it. First buy a parking ticket and put it on the dashboard, don't forget your child, go home, cook, put child to bed and then take your time again.

When is the beginning of the end? I did not have an immediate answer to this question. Over the next few days, the question came up regularly. Sometimes I took the time, sometimes I just parked the question again. Over time, however, I was able to find my answer to the question. The beginning of the end for me would be if I think I know how things work, if I couldn't, shouldn't or don't want to wonder about anything anymore, if I stopped being curious, if I stuck to the known and no longer opened up to the new, the unknown. If this were the case, then for me it would be synonymous with dropping out. The moment where the beginning of the end makes its appearance.

.on fire

The Olympic flame. It just keeps burning, relying on its main task: to burn. Games or no games, it goes on. Wind from the right. Bending to the left. Wind from the left. Bending to the right. Rough conditions. No panic. He trusts his main task. Just keep burning.

I believe everyone carries an Olympic flame, a vocation. Something that is your natural habitat, that comes easily to you, that by itself always energises you. Something that you won't put off. Something that connects, enhances unity. Something that makes sure that the glass is always half full. Crisis or not. You do it. You keep doing it. Because it's your thing, your calling. It may not always be what you envision or had in mind. Often you have to discover it. Or if you've already discovered it once, rediscover it. Not by frantically searching, but by taking a path, the path to the flame, and embracing what crosses your way. With every step you take, you have a choice. Is this a step that will bring me closer to the flame or one that will take me somewhere else? Difficult choices, often. Freeze for a moment. What does my head whisper, what is my gut feeling? Do I trust my head or my gut feeling? No right or wrong, just a way. Your way. A road, a path, that you don't walk alone. A route that you walk together. Businesswise with your colleagues, your team, your organisation. Privately with your family, friends, life partner or children. Searching together, keep searching for the essence together, leads to answers and new perspectives. Searching together, being open to what is to come, being open to each other, keeps your flame alive.

So, what is your Olympic flame? It is, and always will be a difficult question. Above all, don't overthink it, that is my advice. Descend to your feelings. I have made a small selection of questions that might help you on your way. Above all, don't be modest, I would

say. Not bothered? Then maybe it would be wise to slow down a bit and look at yourself a little more critically. Here we go!

- In which situations do I feel very good?
- What gives me energy?
- What makes me unique?
- What am I particularly proud of?
- Who am I most jealous of/who do I admire most, and why?
- On which topics am I better informed than others?
- What can I do better than others?
- What are the interests and qualities that my friends and family value me for?
- What do I prefer?

Enough to dwell on. Let the questions sink in. Share them with colleagues, friends, family. Seek out, engage in conversation. Don't expect immediate answers. Accept that you may never really find out. The way is the goal. And if you think you have found out: How can you be sure?

.now

Why start something now? Why not wait for tomorrow? Or, as the end of the year approaches, until New Year's Eve? Or the next year?

It was my last year of study in Bologna. I shared a poorly maintained penthouse in the city centre with Davide, Paolo and Glauko. For us students, however, it was paradise. Especially the rooftop terrace overlooking the red city's landmark: 'le due torri', or the two towers. At some point, however, the entourage no longer met the needs of all companions.

Davide was the first of us to say goodbye to student life. As befits a good Italian student, he had put in plenty of time. But everything, even Italian student life, comes to an end. Davide dived into working life and suddenly got nesting urges.

One day, Davide suggested refurbishing our home. I immediately felt pressure on my wallet. However, it was not too bad. His proposal was just to remove the old wallpaper and whitewash the walls. Why bother with this, I asked him, if we are all leaving the house in one year anyway? Why can't we just persevere it? He parried my input masterfully: It is only for one year, but it is one year of our lives.

What are you putting off at the moment? What do you keep putting off?

Procrastination, by the way, is not a bad thing. It may mean that your energy is currently going towards other activities, which have a higher priority. A little f#us and guts might help.

.f#us

‘You need to f#us!’ Roberto was pleasantly surprised. He had prepared his presentation well and hoped for an opening with impact. It was apparently a good choice. In one fell swoop, he had the full attention of his English colleagues.

Roberto had been asked by his management team to inspire his colleagues in England. He had been the top salesman of a global franchise organisation for years. And he achieved this even in Spain, which had been in recession for years. The story behind his success: f#us! He candidly shared. At one point, the English audience thought he was getting a bit too outspoken. One participant raised his hand and cautiously asked: ‘Roberto, do you mean fo-cus?’ ‘Yes, fukus!’

Focus. For some people it’s cut-and-dried. For me, there are a lot of choices to make, especially since I have a family. Standing strong on what I really care about. Standing strong on what my wife and I find important. Reflecting on how we want to develop with each other, next to each other. Reflecting on how we divide time while the children still need guidance. Projecting how we want to embrace life later, when the children are out of house. Realising that some choices have a huge scope. Realising that making a choice implies leaving something behind. But what? The answer to this question is something everyone must derive themselves. In good consultation with those within their inner circle. Perhaps also in the light of a longer time frame, even if the future is increasingly difficult to predict. Ideally taking into account the stage of life you are in. And by mainly skipping what doesn’t really matter. To want versus to need. What would I like? What do I really need? For me, a frequently consulted signpost when making choices.

Focus. It has been with my family in recent years. Our youngest is now nine and I notice that more space is opening up again to take up other things. In the division of roles, my wife and I observed that I had more patience to take care of the children. At least, while they were young. Now that they are growing a bit older and sometimes need guidance for school, the roles have reversed. My wife can do that better than me. She picks it up now. I do other tasks now.

The choices, the focus. It was not always easy for me. The male image, which I thought I had to live up to, certainly played a part in that. A man is supposed to work, earn money, work long hours. However, I relied on the wisdom of men who looked back on their lives and all came to the same conclusion: I worked way too much when my children were small. I cannot make up for that time. Focus. Easy when you do exactly what is expected of you. Or if you do what everyone around you does. Harder when you go your own way. At least, for me. A little f#us helps then, too.

What should you focus more on right now? And where would a little f#us help?

.influence

Just taking a sidestep together. Let's make time for a little test.

Some things you have to experience first for yourself to really believe in it. By the way, more is often possible than you think. That's why this experiment is about your sphere of influence. After all, it is huge. Believe it or not, the following experiment is the living proof. It is low-threshold and works everywhere. I picked it up in the Netherlands and now apply it unconsciously. It ensures that wherever I go, I can always create a friendly environment around me. Worthwhile in my opinion, especially when you consider how short our time on this planet is. Here we go:

Next time you have eye contact with someone, who you may or may not know, give them a sympathetic natural smile while greeting them. The next level, and much more fun, is the experiment when you give it a try on people you randomly cross. You will see that the majority of people give you a smile back. It works anywhere in the world.

Your circle of influence. Don't limit it to a smile.

.doors

Making choices. We do it all the time. Shall I do this or that? Shall I start now or later? Most of the choices we make are automated. At some point, if we have enough experience, we also make them intuitively. With some choices, however, we lack experience. Then choices are more difficult to make. Or they are choices with far-reaching consequences, requiring extra care.

Ideally, we would have many options, with as many open doors as possible. Unlimited freedom of choice! That seems ideal, but it often backfires. Choices then sometimes prove more difficult to make because we stick to what we know, fall back on the old, on what we have always done.

Limiting your choices to three doors, three options, proves to be an effective tool in making choices. Reduce complexity by pre-sorting. With three doors, one soon appears to fall off. Only two doors left. The choice is getting close. Just to be sure, slow down one more time and pick up the logic you always apply to underpin important choices. Just test the logic. Is it still correct? Or does that logic itself need to be scrutinised? If the logic applied doesn't really help me, or I realise that I am still in too much doubt, I will beam myself mentally to the end. Meaning that I try to imagine how later, when I am old, I will look back on the choice that I have to make now. I can recommend this approach, it can provide a lot of clarity. Then, if I still can't figure it out, maybe no choice is the best option. This is also a choice. Sometimes you even have to discard all your options, close all open doors, so that new doors can open again. Sounds exciting. Is it. By the way: the biggest draft emerges when only all but one door is closed.

How do you make choices? Who do you involve? What other factors could you take into account? What if you were to rely purely on your feelings? Which doors would you have to close to create the biggest possible draft?

.impact

'I want to make an impact!' This was the opening of a presentation by one of the participants of a leadership programme. It was the first day of the programme with a total of three two-day sessions. During the first session, we reflected on leadership visions.

'I want to make an impact!' This opening statement briefly reminded me of a colleague who likes to introduce himself as an inspirer. You don't decide whether you are inspiring or not, but your audience does. By extension: 'Make an impact!' Why would you want to? It is not up to you to decide whether you make an impact, but up to your environment.

Making an impact, on the business unit and the people he managed, and how they had to do the work. This was his vision on leadership. On me, the participant did not make any impact. My perception was that he was telling a story that was not his one. In my view, he was mostly concerned with how he would like to be perceived rather than what he would really like to get done as a leader. I voiced my perception to him and asked him what made an impact on him. He had no answer for a while. Confusion.

'If you want to reach another person's heart, you need to speak from the heart.' According to sources, a suggestion made by the German poet and writer Goethe. I forwarded it to the participant.

During the programme, he sorted out the topics that touched him. He sought conversation with colleagues, asked for feedback. During the final presentation, he took us along on his journey and gave us an insight into what kept him busy, what he stood for and what he would like to commit to in his role as a leader. This made an impact.

Making the big small by staying close to yourself. It can be that simple. And that's why it's often so difficult.

What makes an impact on you? How do you transmit this into action? And how do you make sure you are the decisive link?

.switch

Imagine an ongoing line. No beginning and no end. And also imagine a point on that line. Your point. On the endless timeline, it completely dissolves. Your point. It may be there, of course. But suppose it is really so, that your contribution is and remains marginal in all respects, regardless of the greatness of your actions and thinking. What do you care about then? Why should you care?

It reminds me of two executives who built a wonderful company together over ten years. When they started their adventure, they were in their mid-forties. Now they are in their mid-fifties. They look back and note that they have been able to overcome quite a few obstacles together. Corona briefly threw a spanner in their business, but it is just another challenge. With wisdom, they look ahead to the final phase of their careers and agree to do the following: let's have a good time together.

Revitalise. It helps. But also the consciousness that quality of life is very much depending on the quality of relationships, as a long-term study of people from diverse social backgrounds and financial spending power has shown. The quality of relationships, that's something everyone can influence.

But what if my point dissolves anyway on the endless timeline? That axis is nothing but a concatenation of points. On the other hand, the line only exists by the grace of all points. That means every point, including your point, matters. Each point is a link connecting the past to the future. What do you want to start, or what would you like to stop? And, even more important, what is your legacy? Imagine, there is something that you think is very important to pass down generations, and you reach just ten people with it, who are so touched that they pass it on to ten more people, and so on.

It takes time, indeed, but it can also go viral quickly these days. In everything, you are and remain the link.

Which link do you want to represent? What would you like to pass on? What would you like to leave behind?

.'nuff said

I have a great admiration for people who can talk for a long time, or write a lot. But sometimes I think: couldn't they have been a bit shorter? I regularly catch myself trying to understand what they really want to convey. What if they only had so little time like Frank Cotton to convince Willy Bank?

Willy Bank was the casino boss in the film *Ocean's Thirteen*. Frank Cotton tried to sell Willy Bank a game of dominoes, obviously for some reason. He didn't have much time. He had to be brief. To give his words extra emphasis, he closed with 'nuff' said.

Frank Cotton managed to convince. Willy Bank was persuaded and agreed to operate the new game, which promised big profits for the casino. In retrospect, this action turned out to be part of a major coup against casino boss Willy Bank. 'Nuff said.

'Nuff said. Suppose you don't have much time, or you try to get at the underlying essence in everything you say, think and do. What would this be then?

By the way, what are your revelations? What makes these essential to you? Where do these come from? For someone who had wanted to keep it short, this still turned into quite a long story. 'Nuff said.

.luggage

In the end, everything works out. And if it hasn't worked out yet, then it's not the end.

A slogan that is often true. Often. Not always. Afterward. Looking back. When we have a setback to deal with, when things get tough for a while, like during a crisis, it doesn't help. Then you would benefit more from a stoic approach. Accepting the moment as it is. Apart from what was before, and what might be coming. Tricky? True.

Once again, I am inspired by the mind of a child. Max was just two years old when he broke his leg. The whole leg had to be in plaster. He, who was just discovering the world from a standing position. The plaster cast meant that he suddenly could no longer walk. He had to crawl again, for a while then. I don't think Max gave it a second thought. He moved forward as if he had never done anything else. He just resigned himself to it. He was so right. There were no other options for moving at that moment either. And musing about what can't be done wouldn't have changed the status quo either.

Taking it as it is. It sounds so fatalistic, so hopeless. Sometimes it can feel like that, and sometimes it is, because you don't always have a stake in a situation. What you do have influence over is the way you approach a situation. *Amor fati*, Latin expression for embracing what is inevitable. Easier said than done. The more life experience you accumulate, the harder it becomes.

No, or little baggage. Fleet-footed through life. Constantly exploring new directions and angles. Travelling light. It seems wonderful to me, and at times it is. I don't always succeed.

Lots of baggage right now? Most people only experience pressure when things are not unfolding the way they would like. They would then prefer to change their situation - often created over a long period of time - immediately. Take time. Make time. Reflect. See where you can shift gears and influence things yourself. Give back what is not yours. Let go of what you can't influence.

.smoke detector

Feelings. They just happen. Sometimes more, sometimes less. Sometimes I suppress them, sometimes I release them. Sometimes fiercer, sometimes softer. Feelings. A valuable source of information, if dosed well. Feelings. A kind of smoke detector. Sometimes it still needs to be activated, sometimes tuned. Once active, we need to keep calibrating. Where, when or what gets you triggered? You tell me. Everyone has his own smoke detector with his own mechanisms. And not necessarily underlying a certain logic. Cause and effect are not always closely related in time and space.

For example, my 'smoke alarm' goes off when I notice that I have no, or less patience for my children, or my cooking results are dissatisfying. In both cases, for me it is instant feedback that I am not capable to focus on the things I am busy with at that very moment. Both, the children and the prepared food, signalise this to me. Valuable hints which I see as an invitation to root out. I don't always succeed, or see the need. Sometimes I derive actions. Sometimes only when it looks like a pattern. Even then, you do not always have to fix it. Understanding why it triggers you, accepting it, is often enough too.

What are your smoke alarms? When do they go off? Do they go off at all? Do they alarm too soon? By the way, a sufficient level of oxygen makes your smoke alarms work effectively.

.oxygen

We lifted off a while ago. We have already covered the first part of the flight with instructions, perhaps a movie, a drink and some snacks. Gradually it starts to get quieter. The first passengers are already asleep. Finally peace and quiet. Silence. Dreamland. Suddenly: 'Dear passengers, this is your captain speaking! We are about to face a severe storm. We will try to fly around it. For now, please fasten your seatbelt and listen carefully to further instructions.' The red seatbelt light comes on. The passengers do as they are told. The flight attendants and stewards walk around and wake up the passengers. Occasional air pockets. You feel the tension. The staff are alert. Lightning. Still far away, however, they are getting closer, like the sound of thunder. Everyone is awake by now. Children start crying. Parents try to calm them down. The captain asks the flight crew to sit down. The plane is too restless. We are in the middle of a thunderstorm. Suddenly a big noise. Lightning and thunder. Lights go out, emergency lights on. The pressure in the cabin goes down. From the ceiling, oxygen masks fall. What were the instructions again? Take care of yourself first, then others. In the meantime, even the engines have failed. You feel the plane descending.

How would you react now?

Completely panicking? Or tranquillity itself, not caring and stoically grabbing a book and starting to read it? Or something in between?

Perhaps this has happened to you before. Hopefully never before. Perhaps it is difficult to put yourself in that position. Try to imagine: How would I react?

Fortunately, it hasn't happened to me either. If I were to put myself in this situation, I imagine I would be in the intermediate category by now. React thoughtfully. Accepting what comes at me. Not overreacting, because I can't do anything about it anyway, but not ignoring it either, because it is happening. This has not always been the case. I used to belong to the stoic category. Anything to do with emotions I pushed off. I didn't know what to do with it. I didn't like it. But I was also afraid of it. Afraid to look at it. What's beyond it? Where does it come from? At some point, however, I decided to open myself up to it, to explore. To complement the mental perception with the emotional one. To want to understand. To give it a place. To give it a spin.

What is adequate is hard to say. In the end, we decide that ourselves. Together. In interaction. In terms of emotional intelligence, there is a standard for adequacy. Not overreacting, but not ignoring either, so that you can make good decisions at all times.

Emotions. Feelings. It's like oxygen in your lungs. Too much makes you hyperventilate, too little makes you faint.

What is the right dosage? In other words, in which situations are you in control and in which are you not? When do you overreact emotionally and when do you shut down? What does it deliver? How could you do things differently?

.big-black-box

Imagine that the universe is a big black-box, that, like on aeroplanes, stores everything we, including me and you, say. You can never delete it. It's recorded forever. So how would you choose your words? What would you want to reverse?

Don't worry so much, Alex. They're just words. But is it really? If they are just words, then surely it wouldn't matter what we say. And yet it does matter. You can do magic with words. You can give people hope, show them a new way, help them. At the same time, words can also be destructive. You can hurt people tremendously with them, break them and even incite them to violence.

If only I was able to choose the right words in every situation.

Which words would you like to dial back? And what would you like to say instead?

The big-black-box also saved frogf*er. Unfortunately, or fortunately? Just what you make of it.

.frogf*er

Then you are literally bewildered for a moment, when on Thursday evening, after a busy working day, you volunteer to give 13 boys that are 13 years old football training and you get this thrown at your head: frogf*er. Creative word composition, nice alliteration, you might think, if you take it personally. However, if you have just stopped training ten minutes earlier to remind the boys of the agreements we had made at the beginning of the year, which we reiterate together at the start of every training session (and regularly in between), you may well react abruptly. Like in this case, my fellow trainer sent the young man home. To complicate matters, we had also agreed that we would not send anyone home.

However, this young man kept troublemaking around the field and at one point started kicking fences and posts. To prevent vandalism, I walked up to him at one point and asked him what was going on. Emotionally, he told me that he also wants to have fun on the football field and did not understand why he had been sent to the dugout. I explained to him again that there is certainly room for fun within the agreements made, that this is even very important, but with the necessary focus on the goal of the exercise. Frolicking on the edge of the football field with a friend while we are practicing is not the way to go. In addition to that, this behaviour means also letting down the rest of your team, even if it is 'only' during a training session.

I then walked with the young man to the fellow trainer and asked him if we could solve it together. The fellow trainer explained his perspective. Frogf*er was just the straw that broke the camel's back. Meanwhile, the young man had cooled down again, realised that he should not have used this label and apologised to his trainer. Apology accepted. The young man was allowed to join in again.

Incredibly nice to have support from each other as fellow trainers in cases like this. Especially if you have a team with some 'behaviourally challenging' children. It's incredibly hard work, especially on yourself. How do you avoid getting out of control in "the heat of the moment?" Easy if you are in the observer position, challenging if you are operational within the team, and blood-curdling if you see that there is a persistent pattern that is reignited with each new team member. By zooming in and out with some regularity, keep repeating, keep believing, you see that change comes. Once set in motion, everything comes together at some point.

What moments of reflection do you have in your daily routine? Who do you regularly spar with? What is your primary reaction? Why? How do you recover or, even better, how could you anticipate on it?

Words are powerful. It makes sense to occasionally slow down and digest words. Why is someone saying what they are saying? What makes it affect me?

How handy a time machine would be sometimes!

.time machine

Things go the way they do. Anyhow, sometimes you wish things had gone differently. That you had said something, or not said something. What, then, if you had a time machine at your disposal and could travel back to such a momentous event? Like in the film *About time*, in which the male offspring of a family possess the ability to travel back in time to put things right that didn't go the way they wanted. I like to apply this metaphor and travel back in my mind to the moment before things, say, started getting messy. Going through the same conversation again, this time, however, with the wisdom of hindsight on what to pay attention to. It would often be a huge relief because you'd managed then to resolve the issue. And you could travel back in time until it is okay for all involved.

The male offspring in the film often did the same. Gradually they discovered, however, that any rectification in the past affects the future. This, of course, happens when you can travel back in time, in history. At some point, they decided to just take things as they were and make the best of it.

Actually, we don't need a time machine. Going back to the moment together mentally is always possible. What moments and conversations would you like to travel back to do them again? What is stopping you from calling this person or persons now and going through that situation again and clarifying open ends? Words matter. Too bad if you can't address them or wait until someone is on their deathbed.

.behind us

I had an enormous clash with my eldest son. After the catharsis, we took a moment to explicate and amend. I made the following suggestion: Let's forget what happened and move on. He said 'No, Dad, we don't have to forget. We'll just leave it behind.'

Children are a huge inspiration to me. Especially their ability to act in the moment, recover quickly, move on and not get stuck in the past.

What are you holding on to and what could you leave behind? With regard to any relationship. Mmm, how do you mean with regard to any relationship? The following story might give you the answer.

.relationship-check

Guus has a tear-off calendar with a saying for every day. For my fortieth birthday, he sent me the saying quote from his tear-off calendar: When my legs start moving, my thoughts start flowing. Coincidence or not, I cycle a lot and regularly. And I naturally get many new inspirations when I cycle, or more specifically, when I exercise in nature. Sometimes I do this alone, sometimes in company. Even then, fascinating dialogues often arise, like for instance with Jan Erik. We were enjoying cycling in the Hoge Veluwe National Park. Suddenly he seems enlightened. 'Alex, everything is about relationships!' 'What do you mean?' I asked. He replied with the following summary...

The relationship...

...with yourself

...with your family

...with your parents

...with your partner

...with your work

...with your friends

...with your colleagues

...with your customers

...with your suppliers

...with society

...with nature

And so you can go on and on. Dang, I thought. It's true. Everything is about relationships.

What kind of relationships do you foster? And how consistent are you towards your own self in all these relationships? Are you always yourself? Do you always dare to be yourself?

By the way, have you ever tried fostering 5-star relationship?

.5 stars

‘How many stars do you give your mutual relationship on a scale of 1 to 5?’

‘3’. Silence. ‘It’s really impossible to get 5-stars in interpersonal relations,’ a board member added.

‘You work in the premium segment. The customer will settle for nothing less than 5-star. Everything you guys do on the outside breathes 5-star. What stops you from also going for 5-stars in the mutual relationships in the management team?’

So asked, so done. The executives decided to go for 5-stars in their mutual relationships as well. How did they do that? By accepting the challenge not to talk in strategic and policy terms for a while, but to share stories that really matter to them. The result? Smooth answers to tactical and strategic issues, and perhaps most importantly, confidence that everyone is doing the right things in the interests of the joint enterprise.

I can imagine you are curious to know which customer it is. Unfortunately, I have to disappoint you. Discretion is important in my business, not to say essential. I can tell you, though, that it’s a cool club, with even cooler people. Dedicated. Driven. Perfectionists. And how sparkling it is when perfection is also sought in relationships? Who do you go for a 5-star relationship with? Attached are two little springboards - deductive and intuitive - on how you might proceed.

Conclave with yourself and define your criteria for a 5-star relationship. Your yardstick. Then identify five relationships, both personal and business, and distribute stars for each relationship. All five

stars? Fantastic. What do you need to do to maintain this? Less than five stars? See what you should or could do more or less of, or what you could add to lift the relationship to a higher number of stars. Satisfied like this? Also fine. These are your relationships and you are the only one who can influence them.

Don't feel like setting a 5-star gauge? Then proceed intuitively. Write down five names that come to mind right now and assign the stars for each one. Trust your feeling. Then for each name start reflecting about what makes her or him get a certain amount of stars. What's in it for you? A higher awareness of what you find important in relationships, and how you could leverage with more people.

After two intakes and two structured dialogues, the connection in the management team had been raised to a higher level. The way communication took place proved decisive. So you see. There is always a way out, if we open enough and find the right tone. Being sensitive of invisible walls of course helps.

.invisible wall

Sometimes, when interacting with another person, you feel like there is something in between, something that prevents you from really connecting. As if there is a glass wall in between. Not annoying, but not really constructive either, because you can't really put your finger on what it is. I find these situations intriguing. What makes me feel a barrier between the other person and myself? What is my share, what is his? Does he feel the same way? Making assumptions for someone else is always tricky. And you never get anywhere with it. I decided to make it a habit and descend to my feelings by sharing them with the other person. For example, in the run-up to some leadership training I opened up to a female colleague. She had returned from her maternity leave and was planning to bring her child to the training to breastfeed. I noticed I was uncomfortable with that. A kind of obstacle between us. My concern was that it would be received unprofessionally. I shared my preoccupation with her. She reassured me. She planned to bring someone who could take care of the child during the day. Gone was the hinder. Just in the moment you express it, you share it. And that's often the solution already, in my experience.

With which people do you experience a glass wall?

What makes it a glass wall?

What would you like to reveal? And how would you address it from a personal need?

.working

Imagine: you can get along with anyone. But then really with everyone. Impossible? I understand your initial reaction. But have you ever tried? I thought it was a fun challenge to take on. Insane? In some ways, certainly. However, it is enriching, at least for me. You learn something about yourself every time. And how relative everything is.

Being able to get along with everyone. I took on that challenge with myself a couple of years ago. The underlying motivation? Daring to be myself in all situations. However, who is 'me'? What makes me upset, or not? There is no point in dwelling on that for too long. It's a feeling, which is just there.

I decided to just explore these feelings: Why do I think I feel chased by dominant people? I'll spare you the long version. In retrospect, I found that I was, and still am, very sensitive to other people's opinions and eager to be accepted. Being rejected was the underlying fear. As a result, saying no was definitely not my strong suit. The dominant people, from my perspective at the time, disclosed that. They made me aware that I still had work to do. Work to do because I found it difficult to read myself and address my own needs.

You only start seeing it when you realise it. Exactly. I didn't feel like being chased by dominants anymore. But how do you handle something like that? At one point, I just embraced these kind of people. I secretly thanked them. Thank you for being there. Nice that you show me where I still have room for development, otherwise you wouldn't trigger so much in me. And so, these days I scrutinise everything and everyone that touches me. What does it tell me about myself?

Now I feel myself at home among dominant people. They are definitely still there, but they don't bother me anymore. It's getting boring now, I thought for a while. How could I keep growing? Fortunately, there are enough people or situations out there. Like a man who lives down the street from me and has never bothered to seek eye contact, let alone to greet. Stoically and with a firm, forward-looking stare, he repeatedly passed by. I could get annoyed at first. Wait a minute, I thought. Why is he affecting me? Apparently there is something to learn from him. Otherwise, he wouldn't touch me. I went into conclave and caught myself being jealous of him. He didn't care about his surroundings and just went about his business. So that was it. I would have liked this more too. Caring less about my surroundings.

I could get along with this man now. But could he do the same with me? Perhaps, without eye contact, or will he master it himself. As mentioned before, however, not in these words: My burden is my package, your burden is your burden.

Who are your masters? What do they tell you about you? By the way, you don't always have to solve it, in my opinion. Understanding where it comes from, giving it a place is often enough too.

**Work on yourself,
not on the other.**

My slogan, which helps me get moving when things don't go the way I envisage. Like, for instance, with the football team, which I coach together with a few more parents.

.scoring

Cohesion, safety and trust. According to numerous models, these are the basics that need to be in place in a team in order to perform together. It all sounds so logical and simple. However, the practice is many times more obstinate and demands a lot. Not only from a team leader, but also from the team members. Everyone has to get going. But how do you do that in practice? Where do you draw the line? What matters? What doesn't? The following practical example, of which I was testimonial, may offer some insights. The case study concerns a football team of boys under 14, which I coached and trained together with another father. Authentically acting adolescent boys who were, first of all, very much focused on themselves and when not distracted, with football. A lot of fuss, which we couldn't get rid of. Consequently, we did not have a lot of fun on the field. We were a team, but there was no teamwork.

The past summer break gave everyone a chance to step back and start the new season with a new momentum. In the coaching team, we used the time to reflect on our share in this. The composition of the team had also changed in the meantime. Some boys left and some new boys joined. All in all, an opportunity to make a fresh start. So, we decided to invite the boys and their parents to the season kick-off, with the aim of understanding mutual expectations, agreeing on the fundamentals, and perhaps also intensifying the coaching of the boys by involving even more parents.

During the kick-off, a total of four extra parents proposed to volunteer, which meant that from now on we could guarantee to have two trainers on the field to deliver the training. This soon proved fruitful, but it was not the only thing. We also established together with the parents and the boys a framework that would allow us to train effectively for one-hour. We then created a fixed

training schedule that also took into account the boys' desires: to play as many games as possible. This gave trust to the boys, as we soon found out. We no longer had to explain or justify why we did or did not do something. We also made agreements about how we treat each other: respectfully and constructively. An important addition we were able to make is that everyone is present 15 minutes before the training starts, so that there is enough space to check-in: share stories and experiences, goof around, and the moment the training starts, everyone is on - not only physically, but also mentally. This initially seemed excessive, but we soon noticed its positive effect. After repeating it a few times and drawing attention to it, we were finally able to get started right at the start of training. The first wins were already in the pocket!

After two months of training, a basis had been set for constructive interaction. We repeated the agreements prior to training, we stopped training at regular intervals to reiterate the agreements and we spoke to the boys about their roles, both individually and as a team. We also helped the boys to draw each other's attention to the agreements made.

A point of concern remained the low attendance rate at training sessions. Two boys excelled in this, with one also having the sharpest tongue on the pitch. Announcements such as 'no training, no match' did not really ring true, because we would then have no substitutes in matches, but also because we embraced inclusivity. But we also noticed that due to the culture of tolerance of the coaching staff, other agreements were doubted and mutual unrest threatened to rekindle again. We ran the risk of getting back to square one. In the end, we decided to share our dilemma with the two boys in question and their parents.

The conversation was not easy. You would rather not have it. However, it wasn't tedious either. It was sincere. And it effected a lot. Not only with the two boys, who regained their training discipline after this. But also with the rest of the team members, who started realising that the agreements were really being kept.

A week later, we had the whole team attend training for the first time. Party! One boy made a tasteless remark to one of the boys who was often absent. We immediately dealt with this, reminded him of the agreements and helped the boys make up between themselves. Of course, we had to stay sharp. Everything you do or don't do affects the culture within the team. But we were very grateful to see that it paid off.

More than once I caught myself thinking of throwing in the towel. But I preferred to persevere with the experience because you can always make something out of any situation. That even an unpleasant period can be solved as a team, if you work at it together. In the following training sessions we could see a huge growth curve among the boys. Commitment was shown from the first minute, both in training and in matches. The boys were finally able to focus on playing football. Many matches we still lost, but nobody dropped their heads. They kept playing football, having fun. They could see for themselves that they were making progress every time and they knew, as well as we did, that we were collecting a lot of victories over time.

Do you also want to score with your team? Get the basics right first and don't focus too much on the goals. Those are just the logical consequences of teamwork.

And if things are briefly disappointing: see it as a gift to grow to the next level.

.gift

A report with feedback on the content of the programme and performance of the coaches. Completely transparent. We could see from each other how we were assessed. Very transparent, because you could also see how your colleagues were perceived. Pleasant if you meet or exceed expectations. Not pleasant, if this is not the case and the report automatically highlights under-performance. It happened to me. Absolutely unpleasant. However, the feedback was honest. I could relate to it. In reflection, I had to note that I was not mentally present. I had too many things on my mind and could not free myself from them. The participants apparently noticed this. Sharp. I benefited a lot from this feedback. I made a promise to myself from then on to make sure that I focused fully on what I was doing. Long and tough learning years followed, and will certainly follow. The harvest? Full attention. Focus.

Feedback. Nice when you are confirmed. Not nice when you are confronted with something you could have done better. Indeed, it is still up to you whether you do something with it or not. But still, we prefer to be confirmed. However, be grateful for any feedback you get. Someone else is sharing how she or he experienced you. Someone is making an effort for you. And that's why feedback is a gift. A gift to grow.

Sometimes you can just ask for presence, like my youngest son. Quite impressed by his brothers' toy guns, he also wanted to understand how to load them to shoot darts. Action-reaction is always fun. I explained it to him and demonstrated it briefly. He took the toy from me and then asked, 'Daddy Alex, I'm just imitating it. Would you check if I'm doing it right?'

When was the last time you gave 'presence'? Or when did you ask for it?

.grip

My neighbour on the other side of the street was redecorating his garden and had hired a landscaper to do so. Apparently, a lot of stones had to be removed as well. There was a well-filled three cubic metre container in the street. That's convenient, I thought to myself. I could immediately ask to have the ten bricks I still had lying around taken away.

I stepped up to the landscaper and asked if I could drop the ten bricks into his container. 'Ten euros!' he replied. At first I thought he was joking, however, his facial expression remained unchanged. 'What do you mean?', I replied. 'It's only ten bricks.' 'This is how business works' was his response. And he added. 'That's just the way the world works!' 'No,' was my reply, 'that's not how the world is put together. That's how you want the world to be put together'. I eventually disposed of the bricks myself.

Beliefs. They provide grip. And at the same time, they can also cause us to get completely stuck.

What beliefs give you grip? And how do they hinder you from interacting?

What do you want the world to be like? What is that based on?

What don't you like and keep anyway from?

.mirror

It happened during a bike ride. It was a beautiful summer day and I finally had a Saturday afternoon free for a longer bike ride. Radio Kootwijk seemed like a nice destination from Arnhem. My cycling buddy and I got on our bikes together and pedalled out past Otterlo. After forty minutes we came to a red-and-white sign suggesting to turn right to Radio Kootwijk. I told my buddy I was going to ask a couple of passers-by if this was really the right road. He suggested that the elderly couple a little further on might be able to provide more reliable information than the two overweight men in vests, who were sitting at a picnic table next to their scooters enjoying a can of beer. My first hunch was the same. The older couple seemed trustworthy at first. Based on their appearance. Don't be so constrained, I said to myself, and stepped towards the two tank-top wearing gentlemen.

'Gentlemen, we would like to cycle to Radio Kootwijk, but we don't know the area very well. Could you help us?' We received an answer from two very polite men. They suggested going via Kootwijk, since we were on road bikes. The path where we were at the time would turn into an unpaved road. We thanked. They replied with a smile.

We were presented with a memorable bike path to Kootwijk and a mindset change: how quickly projection happens, and how limiting it can, or could be.

What do you judge? Why? How come? How does the judgement affect your interaction? Or does it actually not help?

If only I always had the third eye activated.

.the third eye

It must sound unimaginable, but it really is true. I lived without a television for 15 years. In a time when there were no tablets and smartphones. However, I was never bored for a single moment. Indeed, I regularly wondered where people found the time to watch television.

With the birth of my first son, this changed. My wife and I decided to give him access to the digital world too and we bought a television. We loved using it too. We were just too tired at night to do other things. Ten years later, we still have a television, but also more peace and quiet again. Rest to reflect on the day together along with a cup of tea. Rest to take each other through what kept us busy. Rest to share stories we have been told along the way, like my wife's story about the three levels of reflection.

Level 1: No reflection. I sometimes envy people who are or remain at this level, consciously or unconsciously. I wonder if life is easier then. You just do. If it succeeds, it succeeds. If it doesn't succeed, it doesn't succeed. Children do it too. They just do. That's why they are so good at responding to the moment. But always wanting to anticipate the moment, and therefore always falling into the same trap? In my opinion, no one feels like that. In my opinion, some reflection can't hurt.

Level 2: Reflection afterwards. Looking back at what happened, discussing, what is my part, what is your part, what could I have done differently, what you could have done differently, giving feedback, retrieving feedback. Sounds logical and achievable, however, it still happens too little. And when it happens, the quality of the feedback often leaves much to be desired. We often know how to do it, but that doesn't mean we can apply it properly.

Level 3: Reflection in action. The highest level, which everyone should aspire to. In everything we do, we are able to act and at the same time reflect on our actions. As if we have a third eye that watches with us from a distance and provides us with additional, contemplative information, allowing us to adjust, correct or rectify our actions on the go.

What are your moments of reflection?

What are critical situations for you, or situations, where you are easily thrown off track and could benefit from a third eye?

Would the third eye recognise that you are losing connection with yourself, that you are interacting inadequately?

By the way, we are halfway through this book. You've built up enough reflective power, I assume. Anyway, in my opinion, you are ready for the ultimate challenge.

.to win

Winning. It is deeply engrained in our society. How deeply became clear to me during the birthday party of one of my sons. He was celebrating his ninth birthday. He wanted a scavenger hunt. So my wife and I set up a scavenger hunt and devised four riddles to lead to the ultimate goal. Sonsbeek Park in Arnhem, which includes a watermill, deer, ice cellar and waterfall, seemed a suitable location. We also used these elements to create the riddles.

Riddle 1: What turns and yet stays put?

Riddle 2: What is wild, but you can still pet?

Riddle 3: What is cold yet tasty?

Riddle 4: What falls but doesn't break?

At each stopover, the children had to complete a task. At riddle 1, they had to time how long the wheel of the water mill took to turn one lap. At riddle 2, they had to do a 'jumping jack' for each deer. In riddle 3, they had to do a jump for each depth gauge of the cellar. In riddle 4, they had to stand in the cold water as long as possible.

Winning. It is deeply embedded in our society, as I said. It is also deeply engrained in my wife. To keep things a bit exciting for the children, she suggested dividing them into two groups. The group that would reach the fourth station first would be rewarded with a candy bag. If she thinks so, so be it. I liked the idea of tracking together enough, but yes, winning is something you do together. And sometimes that means going with the other. Knowing my wife, I was already prepared that she would like to win with her little group. And yes, after we had started and the groups got their first assignment, a short time later I saw her running in front and taking the children in tow. Well, let me join in just this once. I chased my

group too. It was a neck-to-neck scavenger hunt. It was fun, even for the children, because challenging each other can be fun. As fate would have it, we were heading together towards the end station where the cold water challenge would take place. The children were already walking ahead to the waterfall and then neatly stood with their bare feet in the low pond. The task was clear, so was the goal: stand in the cold water for as long as possible. Neither group wanted to give up, as no one wanted to give up the prize, or worse, lose it. At one point, given the children's stamina, I complimented them on their achievement and suggested that everyone had won and they could share the candy bag together. Nope, they didn't go along with that.

Winning. It is deeply ingrained in our society. It is evidently already seeded in our children. Is it nature or nurture? You tell me. Winning. It has brought us much. But we also pay a price for it. In my opinion, there is much more to be gained if we take the next step in our evolution: winning from ourselves by not wanting to win anymore. Surely, this seems to me the greatest victory ever.

.saloon doors

Spaghetti westerns always intrigued me as a child. The horses, the cowboys, the duels, the brawls, the dust from the galloping horses. But what stayed with me most, perhaps because they were often staged with contrasting lights, were the saloon doors. They were always accompanied by a moment of tension. Someone stepped in. Momentary silence. All eyes on him, sometimes on her. In the meantime, the saloon doors flapped for a while.

The saloon doors. It is my metaphor for how I see interaction. They wave all day. From outside to inside. From inside to outside. It's a constant flow. Two directions. I receive. I send. I receive. I send. The other person says or does something. And that triggers me, or not. But I also do trigger the other person, or the others, who are also present. Does it do something to everyone, or only to some? Does it matter to her or him, or to the whole group?

My saloon doors. They keep moving. Let through, let go, block. What is going on with me, what is going on with the other, or others? Should I absorb or react to it? My saloon doors. Always there. All day. Job related? Definitely. But a very enjoyable one. It is my invisible playground. I observe myself with great pleasure. What does this tell about me? Does it feel okay? How does it feel to the other person? Something overlooked? Work for me? Or work for the other person? Just checking. Just picking up. Not working for now, works later. Or just for now? Send. Check. Double-check. Everyone in sync.

The saloon doors. It is also my metaphor for how leadership should take place. Constantly in exchange. Sending, receiving. Receiving, sending. In the here and now.

My saloon doors. My companions. My signposts. But where to? You tell me. As long as the hard drive doesn't crash.

.hard drive

A metaphor I like to use to indicate how you could stay hooked in an ever-changing world.

Every one of us has a hard disk that stores all sorts of things. Some store more and longer than others. At some point, this hard drive is full, or seems to be full. No more storage capacity. No more room to record new things. New information, new experiences, new reflections, new ways. They are no longer really stored. The old information dominates and does not allow it to be transferred. A shame, in my opinion.

What if yesterday's solutions are today's challenges? What if my hard drive functioned as a security log and overwrote everything after a certain amount of time? What if I cleaned up my hard drive regularly so that there is always enough space? What if my hard drive cleaned up after only five minutes? What if I could continuously let go of my past and be able to focus on what matters now? What would my interaction look like then? How would I be in life then?

How far is the reach of your storage capacity? How much space do you have left to store? How could you free up extra space? How could you ensure that you store as little as possible?

A well-cleaned hard drive. It might have prevented me from overshooting.

.overshooting

During the football training of our boys' under-14 team, things escalated violently between two players. One of the two was my son, whom I immediately side-lined based on what I saw. In retrospect, I intervened too harshly and was too biased.

There are often two sides to a story. I should have also involved the other boy, listened to both stories and helped them resolve it themselves. The other boy appeared to have provoked repeatedly. I would have dealt with this differently if I had been aware that I was the trainer during training, and not the father. If only I could have invoked the third eye for a moment. Missed chance.

I apologised to my son and brought it up again at the next training session with the two boys, including my role and what I did not do well in this specific situation. This way, we were all able to learn from it. For myself, the renewed understanding of how difficult it is to switch between the different roles, which each of us holds. In this particular case, I had to learn to live with the bleak conclusion: failed as a trainer, overshot as a father. Better next time.

What roles do you occupy in your daily thinking and doing?
What behaviour do you exhibit in which role?
What is your natural role?

.hope

I am manically optimistic. The glass is always half full. Or mostly. I, for some reason, always look at the bright side of life. This is not always advantageous. The danger is that I keep denying problems. Naive you could also say. True. However, I am coping well with it, so far. I may have to adjust this at some point. If things do get bleak, the following Buddhist wisdom helps me.

Do you have problem? Yes.

Can you solve it? Yes.

Why worry?

Do you have a problem? Yes.

Can you solve it? No.

Why worry?

I use this concept regularly and it's a demanding job to embody it. However, the Corona period helped me to master it. Especially after the announcement of the second lock-down. I mentally collapsed. I decided to let go and persevere it for a while. Drooping. Doing nothing. Self-pity. It was wonderful. For a while, nothing needed to be done. Then I consciously tied the knot. Don't worry about it, I told myself. You are selling yourself short. You are not solving anything with this attitude. On the contrary. And besides, nobody fancies a nag. It's easier said than done, but it's worth it. Keep trying. Perseverance wins.

What knocks you out? What provokes you?

How could you get ahead of this provocation?

.aligned

Past success is no guarantee for the future performance, unfortunately. Staying alert and sharp is important, as we had to observe with our football team.

After a two-month break because of the Christmas holidays, Corona, and wintry weather, we resumed football training. The boys gathered physically for the first time in a long time. They all arrived on time, as agreed: 15 minutes before the start of training. The start of training, however, was labourious. They were still busy catching up socially. They had not seen each other for a long time and had a lot to say. Being quiet when the trainer talked succeeded only after repeated attempts. The arc of tension when performing the exercises was also limited. And after forty minutes, they were already tired. On the one hand, understandable. They had been attending online classes for months, hardly met any people and had barely had any exercise. On the other hand, it was also frustrating, especially as we had worked hard together to build a healthy team dynamic. The next training session went just like the first, as you can see from the attached correspondence in the coaching staff's app group:

'Last Thursday and yesterday the boys were hard to motivate: groups standing around chatting, some boys even lying down on the grass during training! Claiming to be tired. We stopped 15 minutes early. How was Tuesday?'

'Recognisable. I think it's the side effects of these times. Before the start of training, I repeated the rules again: when the coach speaks, the players are silent etc. Important to give this some more attention together. Do expect to get back on track slowly, especially when schools open again as well. In the meantime, continue to insist on the team spirit in a friendly manner.'

'How it was on Tuesday I cannot say, what I can say is that I see that some of the boys find fun important(er) (which is also important) and it gets the upper hand. The last part of the training there is no more football too. How do we tackle that?'

'Freeze training when needed. Repeat, repeat, repeat. Consistently. Consistent, and consistent together.'

As the remainder of the correspondence shows, we as companions had also digressed, and lost each other for a while. What did we think was important? How did we make sure we stayed on the same page? The children partly mirrored us in this too.

'I am already happy that the boys are allowed to train again. I think the spirit is drawn-out.'

'They are also reaching an age when you should expect something more if you choose a team-sport.'

'Even though the spirit was not there yesterday and engagement was very mediocre, I do see that almost all of them always come and have fun.'

'There was a lot of laughter and they come because they genuinely enjoy coming. It's an hour of fun for them and I also see friendships forming.'

'A number of guys also say it: they come because they enjoy it and not specifically to win matches. And indeed the fun and healthy aspect is what it's really about. I see no reason for concern.'

A few more messages see-saw. The last one was:

'Let's stay tuned. Can we schedule another zoom meeting this week?'

So said, so done. Old agreements held up to the light, and con-

firmed. Also agreed that we should give the boys extra space at this time, make sure we manage in the same way and that we apply a small structural change in training.

Even before the changes were made, we played a practice match within the association against a team we had already lost to twice. The first time 13:1, the second time 6:1.

During the warm-up, we observed similar behaviour as during training, which in itself makes sense. What you don't do during training, you also don't do during, or prior to, the match. We mirrored the boys and kindly, yet emphatically asked them to now take the social fun out of playing football, get into the match mentality and park everything else. Causal relationship or luck, you name it, the boys were sharp, stood like a wall, offered little space for the opponent, especially in the first half. Won by 6:7.

Without us realising, they had made a lot of progression anyway. Occasional sharpness furthers the team process, if there is also compassion for the circumstances and, as in this case, the reins are loosened. And not immediately expecting everything to keep going as if nothing ever happened. Another win, win, win, despite harsh circumstances. Or thanks to harsh conditions? A bit of scratching can't hurt, by the way.

.scratching

The principle of a long-playing record that sticks. It helps in the interacting with human beings. The idea behind it is simple: like a long-playing record that sticks around and plays the same thing over and over again, you keep repeating what you think is important, what you have agreed. And in doing so, you remain calm. You breathe in. You breathe out. You keep bringing it to the other's attention. Until it goes on its own and no longer needs attention.

The less self-interest, the calmer you stay, is my experience. What do I really want to transfer to someone? For now, but perhaps also for later. Here, I assume that if people could do things differently, they would do them differently. Sometimes, however, you have to scratch a long-playing record. Like the goalkeeper of our football team, a very relaxed and amiable guy. Unfortunately, he regularly forgot to put on his shin guards. At one point, the club management alerted us that in the absence of this preventive measure, there is no insurance cover for any personal injury. Not insignificant, but much more important is that the boy does not get injured. Indeed, we applied the principle of the long-playing record, in this case, however, with moderate success.

We were just preparing for training. Most of the boys were already on the field. Our goalkeeper came jogging leisurely on. He had just wanted to pass by on the way to the football field. I greeted him politely and immediately grabbed his shin. No shin guard. I explained to the boy that it was important to us that he did not injure himself, that we had repeatedly pointed this out to him, and that now, to support him in this, I was going to send him home, which personally was not my preference. So it happened. Informed the parents about it, too. The young man never forgot his shin guards again.

Protecting someone by scratching responsibly. We should do it more often. Do you do it? And if you do, with what intention do you do it? And how do you do it when it is getting complex?

.complex

It is complex. I hear this often. Increasingly often. However, I wonder if sometimes we shouldn't make, or want to make, it too complex.

If everyone does what she or he is good at, and gives the other the space, then surely it would be very simple. Or am I thinking too simple now?

In 21 lessons for the 21st century by Harari, I came across the term 'knowledge illusion'. The gist: we have less knowledge of many subjects than we like, but always an opinion. Modesty, humility. It would help humanity.

Complexity

is the prodigy of the world.

Simplicity is the sensation of the universe. Behind complexity, there is always simplicity to be revealed. Inside simplicity, there is always complexity to be discovered.

- Gang Yu -

.meaning

Making money, making a profit. Nothing wrong with that, in my opinion. Important even, because without profit there is no possibility of investing in the future. But not an end in itself, just the logical consequence of doing something well. At least, in my eyes. And often that's how it started. A problem, an accident, a necessity, or just a lucky shot, like at Hertz.

Mr Jacobs, a garage owner, was looking for extra income and decided to rent out his twelve Ford Model-Ts. Within five years, his business grew to a fleet of six hundred cars. Then a journalist named Hertz lost his job! He decided to take over Mr Jacobs' business. The rest is history. Literally and figuratively. Hertz had to file for bankruptcy in 2019, after 100 years in existence. If I had a time machine at my disposal, I would love to travel back in time to ask Mr Jacobs and Mr Hertz what drove them. Why did they do what they did? What was their passion, their dissatisfaction? And yes, they made money doing it. It just seems that gradually making money, making a profit, became the only goal. Whereas spinning through the original story would be a much more powerful and natural engine to move with the times. How did it ever actually start? What was the thought behind it? And how might we translate this thought to our times?

What remains if there is no more meaning except making money? Or, what if money suddenly had no value? What would you do then? What would you do as an organisation? What could be the added value? What is your added value?

I bet there is meaning to be found in everything we do. At least, if we don't limit ourselves to what we do, but also look at how we do things.

.invest

It was the first day of summer after a long period of rain. It was Wednesday. The children were free in the afternoon. I was having lunch with my children and some kids from school. 'A swimming pool at home, that would be cool. Then we could take a dip right now!' A lively interaction with wild dreams began.

'That does cost a lot of money.'

'Then you have to make sure you get money.'

'How do you do that?'

'That's what they call investing. You buy a piece of land. Instead of immediately putting up your villa with swimming pool, you start building a tower with lots of houses. You then sell those houses. On each house, you earn fifty thousand euros. With this money you can then buy your villa with swimming pool.'

'Would you want to live in the tower?' With this question, I entered the discussion.

'No,' was the resolute and unanimous answer.

"Why realise something that you would not take yourself?" was my follow-up question. I got reasoned answers from market thinking, however, no answer to my question. "Why realise something that you would not take yourself?"

May I take the liberty of asking you this question. 'Do you interact in such a way that it would not matter which side you are on?'

It all starts with trust.

.trust

My son was invited to a birthday party. Together with six other children, they were taken to the swimming pool in Deventer. After four hours of water fun, they were brought back. He came home overjoyed. “Dad,” he told me, “It was so cool!” “How nice,” I replied.

Tell me, what was so cool?

“We were all alone.”

“What do you mean, all alone?”

“Well, birthday boy’s parents brought us and came to pick us up four hours later.”

I wouldn’t have dared as a parent. And I would definitely have asked the parents if they were okay with leaving the kids alone in the pool for a few hours. Perhaps they were just waiting outside. I didn’t find out anymore. I did ask my son what made it such a special experience. “The fact that they trusted us,” was his reply.

I did not expect that answer. However, it made me think. Trusting the other person. How important that is. What it does to the other person. And how hard letting go is sometimes. The fear, my fear that something will happen. That something will happen to him that I could have prevented. Giving trust. Accepting trust. It often goes step by step. Sometimes too slowly, sometimes too quickly. The biggest challenge is staying confident, especially when things don’t go the way they should.

What do you need to trust someone?

How do you handle the trust you receive?
Do you trust yourself? Are you trustworthy? Do you say what you think and do what you say? Do you have the guts to do it?

.balance

To give and to take. Quid-pro-quo. It should be in balance, they say. For some it is easier to give, for others more natural to take. Taking costs me effort. Giving is easier for me. To receive, you also need courage, I once heard. Guts because you might owe somebody. There's a bit of truth in that, even though it did not come to me immediately. Meanwhile, I have also learned to receive, or ask for help. Just as I like to help, other people like to help too. Start asking. Everything starts with a first step, a first act, a first question. I have also learnt that I cannot always help, or give the attention I want. I learnt to say no. Not now. How about tomorrow after lunch. I then immediately make it concrete. Or explain why I can't or won't help. Not always pleasant, but honest. Taking people seriously. Approach them as I would like to be approached.

What does your give-and-take balance look like?

Giving and taking. It should be balanced, they say. Giving, however, in my opinion should be greater than taking.

A black-and-white approach might provide clarity.

.black-and-white

I like nuances, shades. Sometimes, though, it's easier if you fully zoom out or zoom in, take extreme positions. Not to provoke, but to get to the bottom line, which facilitates to seek out the nuances together again.

I have not always approached it this way, and perhaps I will update or refine this reflection on the go again. I realised at a certain stage that I was sometimes too cautious in my expressions. Fear of provoking, hurting, disrupting. Why are we so susceptible to interferences? What if we were occasionally prepared to make ourselves invisible in conversations and would be capable to ask more question in order to better understand the counterpart? Listening, wanting to understand what underlies the other person's thoughts. Whether it has always been that way. What has been influential, what hasn't. An excursion into black and white would be beneficial, as I personally experienced during my first assessment.

I was about to graduate and had already started looking for a job. I had selected some companies for application. At one company, I was invited to undergo an assessment. I still remember that I had to go through a questionnaire in a small room. I tried to fill it in based on what I thought was desirable. After submitting the questionnaire, I had to wait a while for the results. After half an hour, I got the feedback. I had failed. And as a suggestion I was given: a grey mouse never makes a difference.

If only I had had more courage to share my views, to be who I was, and not how I liked to be seen. To not be afraid of being rejected. Or, as someone else once said to me: you have to choose to be chosen.

Are you into nuances or black and white? What are the pros/cons?

.time

Travelling without moving. I like to do it. With people I meet. No travel-enhancing tools needed for it, by the way. Such was the case with a person who used an object to tell what he considered important in being a leader. He had brought along an old-fashioned clock. The clock, on the one hand, symbolised time. For him, however, it had another deeper meaning. His grandfather was a clockmaker. He found it fascinating to see how his grandfather made or calibrated clocks. His grandfather's philosophy had particularly impressed him: his secret for repairing clocks. That secret had to do with time. Indeed, his secret for repairing a clock WAS time: Make time, take time, give time.

Making time. Taking time. It has to do with attention. Being able to give attention to the things that really matter at that very moment. But what really matters? Time will tell. So give it time. How? By mostly not doing many things anymore. What would that mean for you? And suppose you weren't afraid, what would you do, or stop doing, or stop doing so often? It's often the little things that make all the difference. Make time. Take time. Give it time.

What are you really paying attention to right now? What is causing you stress? What could you delegate, put back or stop doing? What, if you did everything you do with complete dedication? What would that be like? How would you achieve that?

When everyone is in a hurry and has no time, waiting suddenly becomes a privilege. And time is the new gold. Do you really need to take a holiday for that?

.holiday

My parents live in an apartment block where, among others, uncles and cousins of mine also live. They share a large garage together. You wouldn't think it, but that garage is a pretty cosy place. It's like a beehive. There is always someone busy in there. Stalling, cleaning up, tinkering. Someone just arriving or leaving. When I visit, I always bump into someone and we can catch up. I love spontaneous encounters. Like that one time, when my uncle was preparing his camper for a weekend trip.

I got caught up in a longer conversation with my uncle Paul. He talked about how much he enjoys travelling. The rest, the relaxation. The time he has then. But also the distance he can then take from all things. That he can leave all his worries behind him. Nothing to worry about then. Completely free. Until he is back, I thought.

Rest, relaxation, distance. Taking time. It helps to put things into perspective. It often solves some things. However, it doesn't solve everything. Once you are back, you are often back in the same pattern.

Getting away, going on holiday. In my ideal world, it would be the cherry on the cake. So what is the cake? Everyday life. Everyday life. The working life with all the daily stuff and activities. 48 weeks a year versus four holiday weeks.

If you could choose, which would you prefer? How would you arrange your life so that you never have to go on holiday again?

What could you do right now? Often more than you think.

.doing

A small tribute to Frank is in order here. After all, Frank gave me a gift.

I met Frank in our children's schoolyard. Gradually, we found out that we are professional colleagues of each other. When we met once to see what we could do for each other, Frank said to me that I am good with my words but that he does not see this reflected on my webpage. He actually said it a bit more flatly. Your web text is crap.

I am grateful to Frank for taking the trouble to share his observation with me. Clear. Unflattering. Honest. Absolutely not rude, as you as a reader might think. He made an effort for me. He could also have kept it to himself. He thankfully didn't. And I felt he had a point. I also realised that I could no longer do everything myself, even though I would have liked to very much. Not working. Not realistic. Everyone's job. Your text is not good, he said. He also said: I do have an address for you. And so it happened. I contacted Eveline and made it work, completely in line with Frank's business card:

Doing is the best thinking.

How does your thinking and doing relate to each other?

What should you think more about before you act?

And vice versa, where do you get stuck in thinking and could you do more? Choose your own speed.

.speed

We were visiting friends in South Tyrol (Italy) and decided to experience a sunrise in the mountains with our children. That meant getting up early. At 2.45am, the alarm clock went off. We had packed our stuff with provisions beforehand. We got dressed, brushed our teeth and immediately got into the car and drove towards our friends. From there, all I had to do was following Harald.

As you may know, or may have observed while visiting this region, the indigenous people distinguish themselves from tourists by very sporty driving. Harald was impossible to keep up with. I did my best, however, at one point I no longer felt safe in my own car. What to do? Just keep up with the group dynamic? I decided, for the sake of myself and my family, to go at my pace. Once I disappeared from Harald's rear view mirror, he also reduced his speed.

The environment. It can inspire, stimulate, encourage one's own boundaries, push them. However, it can also backfire.

Where are you going too fast? Where are you tiptoeing? Where should you slow down? And where might you speed up?

.altitude course

That it all happens between the ears becomes clear to me every time I go to a climbing forest with a high ropes course. Equipped with helmet and climbing harnesses, the adventurers confidently traverse unknown terrain. Little instruction beforehand, and up you go.

I have rarely witnessed anyone really having to fall back on the equipment that provided their physical safety. However, I can imagine the opposite will happen if you go up into the heights without a climbing harness. Just because we don't consider ourselves safe. Fascinating to me. The same situation, just no backup in case, and most of us, including myself, start cramping up.

With the necessary training, we would certainly be able to build the same confidence in us as we did with the climbing harness. But what if we don't have the time? What if we have to start a new chapter that reminds us of a high ropes course? We haven't done it before. What do we need to take a first step? What gives us confidence? What gave us confidence before and might give it again now? What might we need help with, or to reflect on?

It all happens between our ears. We are the only ones who know what's going on in there. Do we allow ourselves to give the other person an insight? I think we would appreciate it. So that we can understand each other better and provide what the other needs to feel safe. This step alone can sometimes cause unsteadiness. What might the other think of me? What am I really afraid of, anyway?

It's not just between the ears. A healthy mind in a healthy body also makes you more stress resistant. By the way, how do you get enough exercise?

.movement

My wife returned from a health conference and told me that not moving appears to be ‘the new smoking’. More and more people are not getting the weekly minimum amount of exercise to grow old healthily. Apparently, the minimum is two and a half hours of elevated heart rate per week. This is easily met, was my first reaction. After a bit of arithmetic and addition came the sobering realisation. Despite my regular gym sessions, I barely managed to achieve two and a half hours of elevated heart rate weekly. Following the credo “culture follows structure”, my wife and I started looking for structural changes to get as much exercise as possible. We quickly figured it out. At the time, we still had two cars. If we got rid of one car, we would have to make more use of alternative means of transport. Taking the bike, when there is no car. Going by public transport as much as possible, even when the car is available. Or postpone for a while. The fact that it can’t always be done can also give peace of mind. And so it was.

We got rid of one car. Teardrop. Our beloved black, old New Beetle. Goodbye. However, we got a lot of peace in return. For business, I now travel by train as much as possible. I do have to get up earlier and plan my appointments more consciously. I regularly find myself on an empty platform at half past six. The first train is coming. The light on the train has yet to come on. The train stops. The lights go on, the doors open. Everyone enjoys the peace and quiet. So do I. I board the train. Plenty of room. I sit down and enjoy the approaching day and life slowly but surely getting underway. An hour later, I am usually at my destination. Sometimes I still have to walk or travel a bit by bus or taxi. I am usually at the location by eight o’clock. Still an hour to quietly prepare everything. And if I have started the day quietly, then the group, which I am about to receive, can also land quietly. Of course, sometimes I have to

switch. Most of the time it goes well. Sometimes I may miss a connection because the train is delayed. Often, I have enough room to accommodate. Sometimes it is disappointing. However, those are exceptions. In either case, I sit down for a while. I wait. For the next train. I observe the people. Busily engaged, on their phones. Apparently, everyone is busy saving the world. Fine, then I only have to worry about resisting the impulse to grab my phone. Have a cup of coffee. Waiting for a moment. A moment to myself.

How do you get enough exercise and rest to be your friend's Frederique?

.frederique

He is my hero. Or is it a she? Or is it both? Almost has to be. Frederique, the field mouse. It's actually a children's story. I found it super inspiring. And still do. First the story. It's about field mice working diligently from the first to the last warm ray of sunshine to gather enough winter supplies. Everyone is busy except Frederique. It looks like Frederique is doing nothing at all. It does not go unnoticed. The labouring field mice, looking at their stock, ask Frederique what he is doing. One time he is in a flower field collecting colours. Another time he is tanking sunshine. And yet another time he seems to be nodding off. What turns out? He is collecting words.

Winter is making its appearance. The first snowflakes fall and the mice retreat to their well-stocked burrows. Despite all precautions, at some point they run out of food. Things start to get tough. A mouse asks Frederique about his supplies. Frederique stands up, invites his friends to close their eyes. One day he pours them the warmth of the sunbeams he has collected. It is no longer cold. The other day, he hands out the colours he has collected. The days are no longer grey. Another day he tells stories with the words he has taken to himself. The days do not feel long anymore, and winter is soon over.

What could or would you give when times are tough?
What reserves are you already building up? Physically and mentally? What could you start with now? So that you can run a marathon soon.

.marathon

Harald, the guy I tried to keep up with by car in the speed story, does a lot of running. These days he even runs ultramarathons. In the mountains, of course. During a joint running trip, he drew a parallel between running a marathon and life. 'Alex, imagine: Life is a marathon. Let's assume that each kilometre represents two years of life and you therefore live until 84. How do you guarantee that on the last kilometre of your life you also have reserves left? How do you ensure that you can accelerate in between? That you continue to enjoy what you are doing? That you also look around to the left and right during your marathon, that you enjoy the entourage, the crowd, or in less metaphorical terms, the people around you, the things which are precious to you?'

How do you guarantee that? How do you do that? Never thought about it? Now you have a moment. What is the first thing that comes to your mind. Write it down. What would give you a little break right now to catch your breath, or stay on it. Or maybe you should just speed up to get going.

Running a marathon. I did it once. Berlin 2004. However, the most enjoyable part was the preparation. I learned a lot from it, especially from the variation in training. A lot of basic training. Building up the distance slowly, but especially running a lot of long distances at a relatively low heart rate. Combine these extensive training sessions with strength training in the form of sprint sessions and hill training. Build in a lot of rest and peak only when necessary, not when possible. My biggest challenge was getting enough rest and doing more recovery training sessions. With other training buddies, it was just the other way around. So you see. Differing starting points for the same goal.

If your life were a marathon, how would you want to run it? How would you want to lay it out? How would you want to finish it? Are you concerned with the result or the process?

.thoughtfulness

Thoughtfulness. Maximum attention. Complete focus on what I am currently doing. It could just be the key to a fulfilled life. But how do I direct or redirect thoughts? What to think, what not to think? Both have to do with control. What do I permit, or not permit? What do I reject, or not reject? My urge to do everything that comes to mind immediately is my biggest pitfall. Recently, however, I had a hopeful experience.

I share a gate with my neighbours. In the frenzy of the morning, one of my sons used too much force and the key in the gate broke. I then tend to fix the problem immediately. Done is done is my philosophy. At that moment, however, I realised it was not a good idea. A job like this always takes more time than you think. You don't have the peace right now, and for sure you will run into unexpected scenario's. Besides, you also have to take the kids to school and you have a work document to finish this morning. Absolutely right, was the conclusion of my internal dialogue.

I left the gate for what it was, informed my neighbours, brought my children to school and finished the working paper. It took less time than expected, so I had a time window large enough to hunker down over the broken key. I also had enough peace of mind. I had already done the most important tasks. Through the search engine, I retrieved information first how to fix it. This should be doable, I thought to myself. I grabbed a pair of tweezers and, voilà, the broken key was removed in no time. Then I sprayed a bit of grease-free lubricant into the cylinder and the job was done. Beginner's luck? Perhaps. However, the experienced thoughtfulness resonated. Complete focus. Or bundling of energies, as a neighbour of mine once said. It could just be the gateway to success.

How mindful are you of the things you do?
What could you do with more attention?
How could you do this?

.confirmation

My brother-in-law's father ran a shelter that gave people and families, struggling for whatever reason, the opportunity to unwind. These could be refugees from all corners of the world, but also local fellow citizens who had found themselves in an unsafe home situation. Holidays can be especially tough for this vulnerable group. To ease the suffering somewhat, my brother-in-law established a sort of tradition of cooking for the shelter residents on Christmas Eve. On one occasion, I also volunteered as an assistant cook.

My brother-in-law and I put together a Christmas menu taking into account the different cultural backgrounds. In the morning, we did the shopping at the market and around lunchtime we started preparing dinner. During the afternoon, together with my brother-in-law's father, we decorated the hall and set the scene. We went out of our way to welcome people. Glad you are here, glad we can be there for you. In the afternoon, the first residents of the shelter came by to take a look, and some of them stayed in the kitchen and asked if they could join in. Of course! Spontaneous conversations took place, even between residents who barely knew each other, but had not yet had the occasion to get better acquainted. Doing something together, being busy together, helps. Time flew. At one point it was seven o'clock. More and more residents came to the festively set table. The children's eyes began to sparkle as there were even gifts for them on the table. Everyone took their seats, including our spontaneous helpers, and my brother-in-law and I started serving. After the four-course dinner, people stayed for a long time.

Afterwards, I understood from my brother-in-law's father that this had not happened before. The residents appreciated that they

were allowed to participate, that they received attention, that someone cared about them, that they were not judged. That they were simply affirmed in who they were. And that it was okay who and how they were. 'Just once not to be second-rate, that was nice,' a resident linked back.

I realise that it still touches me, as I write this story. But also every time I talk about it. It's actually quite simple. People don't need to be helped. Attention and understanding for their situation, and confirmation that they are okay the way they are, is often enough. No more and no less. Simple, right? But try it: It's not about you right now. It is now only about the other person and others. You don't matter for a while. The more capable you are to do so, the better you can care for the other person. Making yourself invisible for a while.

When and why are you really taking care of the other person? Without self-interest? Without judgement? Just because you want to be there and mean something to others? Like Claus.

.claus

It is a wonderful cartoon on Netflix. It's about Claus. Saint Claus. And it was the first time I came across the following saying: A true act of goodwill, always sparks another. Spot on, I thought.

What do you do without interest?

What do you do to get something in return?

Help because you love to help, and not to get something in return.

.figurehead

We were in Hamburg for the weekend and decided to take a boat trip on the Außenalster. Corona had already made its appearance. The captain courteously pointed out to us that on the boat there was a duty to wear face masks at all times. He added that, according to the regulations, the captain was allowed to be the only exception to this. However, the captain waived his privilege saying that he would not consider it fair to us. The captain of our boat trip on the Außenalster: literally and figuratively was a real figurehead.

Do you always do what you say? And do you always say what you do? What you expect from the other, do you also expect that from yourself? The rules, your rules, do they only apply to the other person? Or also for you?

.lantern

In the mountains, where I come from and still return regularly, there has been a movement in recent years. Actually, I should say an invasion. It has certainly not gone unnoticed by hikers. The electric mountain bike. More and more tourists are taking advantage of the local rentals and penetrating spheres that not a long time ago were reserved only for hikers. However, it is not only limited to tourists, as I learned from Hannes, my wife's cousin. Indigenous people are also increasingly switching to electric mountain bikes. Indeed, Hannes shares with us, in his circle of friends he is the only one who still cycles purely on muscular power.

Hannes understands that there are target groups that could benefit from extra support. Due to physical or age-related restrictions. Of course, you wonder whether they might not then be better off choosing other routes. Less strenuous, fewer altimeters, shorter. And therein is exactly the crux. With the extra support, you can now do more in a shorter time. Now it only takes one hour. It used to take two hours. That the improvement is due to the electric power doesn't matter for the moment. This also applies to Hannes friends who are in good shape.

Hannes. He persists. For now. It's getting harder, as he himself admits. He stays true to himself, even when temptation is strong. Because he can barely keep up with his cycling buddies without support and increasingly has to go alone. It seems as if he is increasingly drifting away. Or does this actually put him in a pole position? In any case, he is someone who does not follow, and can therefore lead in a direction. A lantern.

For which directions are you a lantern for?

.diamonds

Diamonds are not created under pressure, as is often claimed, especially in the rock-hard business world. To be created, diamonds need time. And of course pressure is also needed, well dosed, but above all, time.

Where or for what could you allow yourself more time or space?

Where do you put unnecessary pressure on yourself?

Or where could you build more pressure on yourself?

Where do you put the pressure on someone else?

.earned

It is a story I wrote down in my notebook after the first Corona wave. Interesting to read it back now. It is still relevant, and will always be relevant.

Friday, July 10, 2020. It is our children's last day of school. My wife and I are waiting by the school playground. It is noon. The children walk towards us happily. "Holidays!" they exclaim elatedly. Happy holidays! Have fun! Happy faces, excited voices. No hands, no hugs. It's still Corona, but after the worst wave.

'Actually, we don't deserve this holiday,' says Julian, a friend of our son Max, on the way home. 'How do you come up with that?', I ask him. 'Well,' he replies, 'The Christmas holidays felt different. Then we worked hard and actually got to have a holiday. Now, because of Corona, we didn't work so hard, and then it doesn't feel like a holiday either.'

Recognisable, I thought to myself. You can only enjoy it when you have worked hard. Only then have you earned it. Funny, that a ten-year-old child already looks at the world like that.

Working during Corona was and is certainly different, even for children. Yet we all worked just as hard, maybe even harder, just differently. Moreover, we all gained new experiences and insights together. That is also a kind of working. Perhaps the kind that pays off best in the end.

What new insights have you gained thanks to Corona, or a crisis? What will you hold on to from this? What do you want to let go of forever?

.luxury

When my father turned seventy-five, I gave him a diary as a gift. 'Father,' I said to him, 'I would like to get to know you better.' Here is my gift: a diary. Write down what's on your mind and share it with us.' He never accepted the gift, 'You don't want to know what I've been through' was his reply.

Six years later. We decided to travel by car sleeper train this time to visit our family in Italy. 'That's luxury,' my father said, when I told him. I was bewildered. Luxury to go to Italy by car sleeper train? His remark rattled me. The first thing that popped up to me was that I was apparently spending too much money. However, I found the distance in the car with children quite long. Especially since the roads were getting increasingly busy and there were quite a lot of roadworks on the route.

Once I arrived in Italy, I shared with him what his remark did to me. He was surprised by it. This had never been his intention. He thought it was nice that I could travel by car sleeper train, even reassuring. He excused himself for what he said. No need, I told him. The fact that it affected me, says something about me, and not about you. He hooked in, saying that over the years he has become more careful about expressing himself. Too often he has experienced that his words went down the wrong way with other people. Too bad, I said to him. I think you have quite a lot of experiences worth sharing. True actually, he says. However, I am aware that my choice of words is sometimes imprecise, causing something that is not really my intention, he added. Under no circumstances would I want to hurt people. Hence, when in doubt, I prefer to keep a low profile.

It was a special conversation. An intimacy I had been looking forward to for a long time. From then on, many in-depth conversations followed.

A good conversation. It should not be an unnecessary luxury. A good conversation. A kind of luxury that is within reach for everyone, and yet not for everyone.

What is an encounter for you? When do you really meet? And who do you really meet? What do you share of yourself to make an encounter possible?

.beginning by the end

Making decisions, we do it like an assembly line. Every day. Sometimes more or less consciously. However, some decisions have far-reaching consequences, so you need to take more time to make them. Decision trees can help you make conscious choices. However, they don't always help you. When doubt persists, I fall back on my ultimate testing framework for decisions for which I have no logic for a while and can only rely on my intuition. I mentally travel to the end of my life and ask myself this question: when I look back on my life, do I regret doing or not doing certain things?

While we're at it. What marks would you like to leave behind? And what steps could you take right now?

.the end

If you were to ask me if there is ever an end, of course I would say 'Yes', at least in physical terms. At some point, our bodies give up and we become our own eyewitness to the impermanence of life. What once seemed so far away is suddenly so close. In his novel *The Invention of Solitude*, Paul Auster describes, how a son is confronted with the death of his father, whom he does not really know at all, as he has to painfully acknowledge when clearing out his belongings: 'The moment life ends, it seems as if death has always been in possession of this life'.

It seems like everyone will be heading for a dramatic ending, but I don't think that is necessary. At least, not if we try to apply Sándor Márai's poetry in *La recita di Bolzano*.

**Life, my love
is a man and a woman
who meet
because they were made for each other,
because they are to each other what the rain is to the sea:
one always falls back on the other,
they generate each other,
one is the condition of the other.
From this fullness comes harmony,
and therein lies life.
Something very rare among people.**

Having read this. What is stopping you from starting this right away?

.epilogue

In the Fortune Cookie Factory, you act based on what affects and hinders you, and not on laws and regularities. Everyday you focus on which things you can influence and determine for yourself. You do this mindfully. Doing so, you are capable of connecting realities, even if they are divergent.

You realise that sometimes things take time. And that sometimes you have to take a step backwards or sideways, to then be able to take two steps forward again. In everything you do, you trust that what needs to be done is needed to be done. And that you can always give a twist to everything, even if it's just between your ears.

Step to your mind

I tell you a story

I tell you a story about a story

He says: His story is history

You say: Your story is your story

I say: My story is mystery

– intro song *Space is the place* by Cee Knowledge –

.postscript

Technology. Incredible what you can do with it. But honestly, I doubt if it is going to help us to overcome our society's big challenges. Behaviour would do so. Bold proposition? Definitely. Hard to accept? I understand it. Especially since you have to start moving. Technology works for us. That would be much easier. However, real change only starts when you decide to start moving. And if we start moving all together, it could happen very quickly.

May I invite you to a little mind game? Perhaps one day the opportunity will arise to apply this in real life. For now, ladies and gentlemen: The factor 2 experiment! Or, in other words, the F2 experiment! Fits quite well, actually. It could go fast, like a fighter jet. With marginal effort from us.

Let's make the following assumption for convenience: there is a direct causal relationship between the level of CO² emissions and the amount of meat and air travel (MA) consumption. What are we going to do? Nothing special. We are merely going to, overnight, halve our MA consumption and double prices. The one who flies twice a year will now fly once a year. The one who eats meat every day, now eats meat every other day. The one who eats meat once a week, now eats meat once every fortnight. And so on.

You could, of course, ask whether it would not be fairer if everyone was allocated an annual quota. Perhaps it would. However, as you can see, you are now engaged in a diversionary tactic. You are looking at how to manoeuvre yourself into a slightly more advantageous situation. This is not necessary at all. It is just a mind game and it only lasts for a while. In summary, we halve MA consumption and double its prices. Cash flows remain unchanged. Consumers do not lose out financially. Airlines and meat industries continue to

earn the same amount and commit to the same number of employees and suppliers. People working in these industries have more time and attention. This in turn benefits consumers. The fast-paced speed we apparently all suffer from, goes down. Prosperity is maintained, well-being goes up. And what nature will do, we'll see. In any case, we have put in the work. And maybe we do have more influence than we think. A small change with perhaps a very big impact. Our common Fortune Cookie Factory!



Alex Lanz

Born 1975 in Brixen, South Tyrol, Italy.

Gets people moving individually or in teams.

Is married, has three children and lives in Arnhem.

Background

I studied econometrics at the University of Bologna (Italy). After my studies, I started working at PwC in Germany where I advised companies in process performance. Before LANZ, I was responsible for the internal organisation of The Explorer Compagnie, a Netherlands-based, internationally focused trade organisation, and was actively involved in business development projects. In 2007, I founded LANZ from where I operate in several European countries.

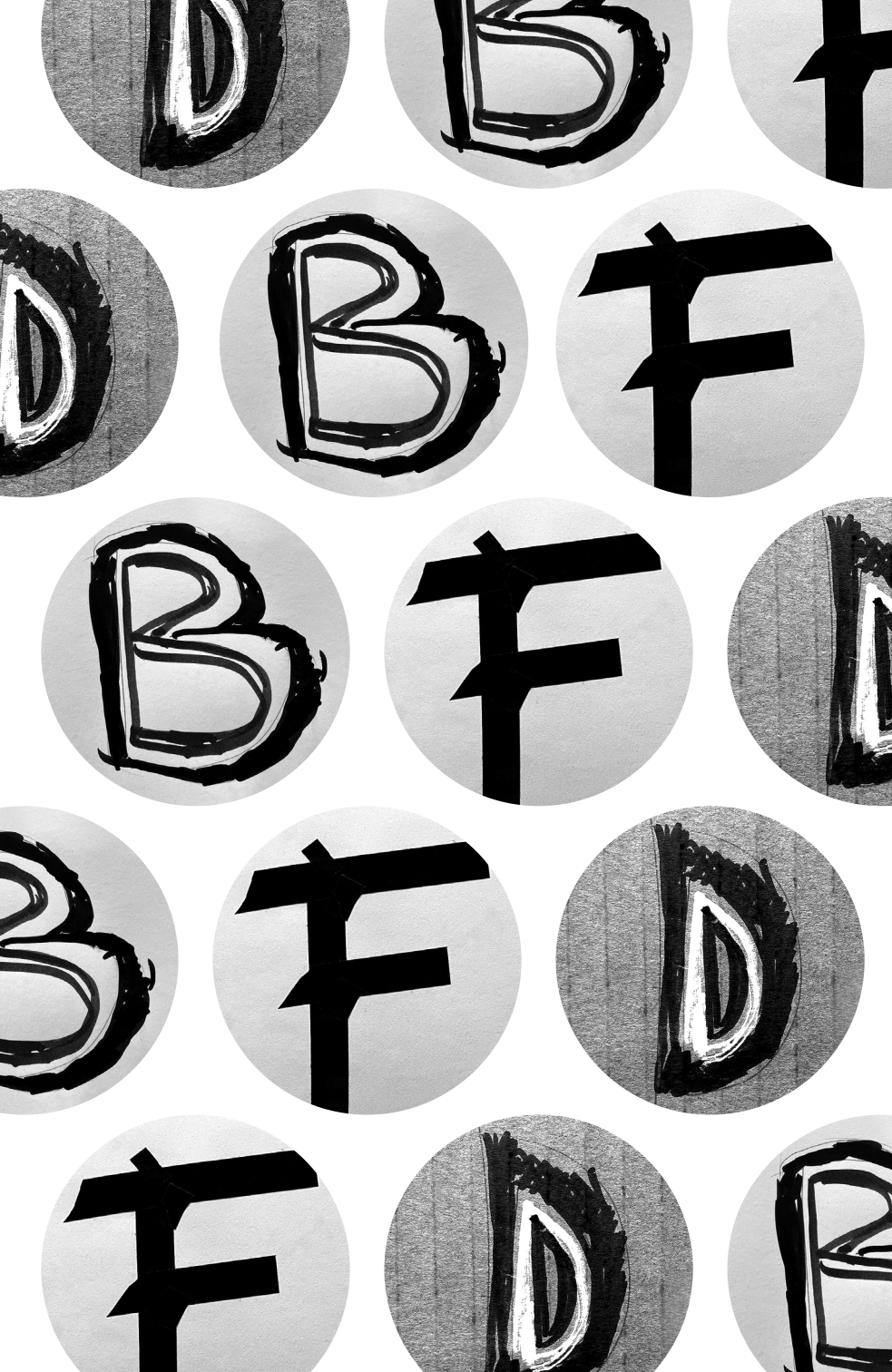
Specialisation

I have done postgraduate studies in conflict management, scientific research, change management and system design. I am also a certified business coach & mediator and have completed certified training as a Business Coach and Mediator. I speak German, Dutch, Italian and English.

Moving people

Being able to move without getting off your anchors is a growing 'art' in our ever changing fast-paced world. And not always easy. At LANZ, I help people deal effectively with change, conflict, and their performance. Fast and concrete, complemented by my experience and my own vision of the essence of change: helping people to be heard and understood by addressing issues that touch the core. I always start from what moves, hinders and matters to people. Hard and soft factors. Big and small things.





We live more and more in a world of data and analytics. But to what extent does this really give us control over our choices and what our lives look like?

In the Fortune Cookie Factory, they go a step further. Everyone focuses on what affects and hinders them, and not just on laws and regularities. Curious about the pay-off?

Who am I to tell you what the pay-off is? Research it yourself. On the inside, 55 stories are waiting for you and your answers.

.Lanz