

THE LEADER

The official newsletter of the African Nutrition Leadership Programme



Allowing you to see the hope
inside yourself

To make Africa a better place;
change starts with me!

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Contents



Foreword	1
Allowing you to see the hope inside yourself.....	2
To be your own worst enemy.....	6
My journey since the ALNP 2014: success, challenges, and the way forward.	8
To make Africa a better place; change starts with me!	11
It was not an easy journey	14
Contributors	16

Foreword BY CHRISTINE TALJAARD

One bite at a time

With June waving us goodbye and the remaining six months of 2017 ahead of us, it's not the easiest assignment to write this editorial. As much as I would like to think that we, the ANLP alumni, are at this point still full of energy and feeling positive and confident that no task ahead of us is too great, I think the reality may look a bit different. Many of us have no idea where the first 6 months went and we wonder how on earth it will be possible to finish the huge and ever-growing remaining workload before the end of the year.

At this juncture; let me draw your attention to the declaration of the 2017 ANLP alumni:

“We, the ANLP 2017 Alumni, commit to boldly lead from where we are; using our network to advocate with passion, for evidence-based change to improve nutrition in Africa for all.”

As I read this declaration, I thought to myself, it's clear that this ambitious statement was not written in the middle of the year or it might have read “hang on for dear life – we are halfway there”. But seriously, is it possible that for many alumni this declaration might have become overly ambitious words that no longer reflect the reality of life. As a scientist, I thought it

prudent to examine this further, digging deeper into the meaning of some of the key words:

Boldly: In a confident and courageous way; showing willingness to take risks

Passion: Strong and barely controllable emotion

Change: Make or become different

Improve: Make or become better

Africa: The world's second-largest and second-most-populous continent

As I pondered over the simple meanings of the words above, I felt hope rising. I was reminded of the well-known saying “how do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time”. While we all find ourselves to be beyond tired at times, we can (and must) take time to invest in ourselves. Read and reflect on the words above. I trust that you will find encouragement in the articles written by Leon, Jane, Johann and the invited writers to boldly and passionately lead from where you are, toward the change for improvement within Africa, and to eat your elephant, one bite at a time.



Allowing you to see the hope inside yourself...

BY JANE BADHAM

I love these words from an inspirational lady, Oprah Winfrey – ***“A mentor is someone who allows you to see the hope inside yourself... Allows you to see the higher part of yourself when sometimes it becomes hidden to your own view.”***

The importance of mentoring often comes up in discussions around leadership – the value of being mentored and the need, in turn, to mentor others. It is a topic that I have for a long time being interested in, myself having had mentors play a significant role in both my professional and personal life. I am both grateful to them and, certain that without them I would not have made many of the choices that have placed me where I am today.

If you read Henry Mark and my article in the last edition of *The Leader*, titled ‘*Taking the Hands of Others...*’, you will gain some insights as to why, currently, I’m particularly preoccupied with this subject. There is no doubt in my mind that the ANLP needs, as one of its future steps, to develop a youth nutrition network and mentoring programme. A programme where alumni can find a suitable mentor (if they don’t already have one) and where, with some skills development, they can

themselves become mentors to others. During a discussion about mentoring at a symposium hosted by one of the committees at the 2017 ANLP, I found myself left with many more questions than answers. As a result, I placed a large Amazon order for a range of books on the topic. The more I read, the more convinced I am that everyone needs a mentor (also the title of one of the books I purchased by a David Clutterbuck that I can highly recommend).

I see now that my gratitude is due largely to the fact that my mentors have almost perfectly fitted the role that comes up in the literature - someone who gives wise advice and who challenges, is a critical friend and role model, and who guided me in building my network and personal resourcefulness. They have helped me work out what I want to achieve, assisted me in planning the journey and often, just been there to listen.

But as I read, I realise how ‘lucky’ I have been with my mentors. The term ‘mentor’ is commonly so loosely used that it has often been distorted and mixed up with other terms such as coaching, counselling or sponsorship. While there may be some overlapping components, these other

terms certainly don’t capture the essence of mentoring as we will explore in this article.

Clutterbuck categorises the **benefits of having a mentor** into four groups, and I agree:

1. Developmental outcomes – knowledge and skills
2. Career outcomes – achievement of goals
3. Enabling outcomes – a career and development plan
4. Emotional outcomes – confidence and reflection.

There are also two different types of mentoring – sponsorship and developmental.

Sponsorship, as the name implies, focuses on hands-on help from the mentor and often happens within the line of command in an organisation. The mentors power and influence are important and the mentee potentially becomes some kind of protégé. There is a clear sense of senior and subordinate.

Developmental mentoring, on the other hand, emphasises helping people to do things for themselves. There is a focus on

co-learning, on helping someone to make better decisions, and to grow in wisdom as a result of a deeper self-awareness. Less emphasis is placed on power differences. This is the type of mentoring that the ANLP subscribes to. In Clutterbuck’s words, “it is a partnership between two people built upon trust. It is a process in which the mentor offers ongoing support and development opportunities by addressing issues and blockages identified by the mentee. The mentor offers guidance, counselling and support in the form of pragmatic and objective assistance. It becomes a strong two-way learning relationship.”

“My mentor said, ‘Let’s go do it’, not ‘You go do it.’” - Jim Rohn

In terms of mentoring, where personal development is the desired outcome, the literature shows that the most effective relationships are those in which the mentee is proactive and the mentor is relatively passive or reactive. It is about being challenged and stretched while also being supported and encouraged.

On a continent where in the past, aid has been so dominant, I believe many of us have (even subtly and unconsciously) become reliant on the hand-out rather than the hand-up. We base so much on what we can get and always seem to be asking for something or looking for power and status (see The Leader article 'The Poison of Protocol and Per Diems'). This lends itself to leaning towards the sponsorship type mentoring. But as ANLP alumni, we need to be different

both in our expectations - change begins with me – and, our approach - lead from where we stand. This places us firmly in the developmental mentoring sphere. Mentoring that is concerned with implications beyond the task; that focusses on capability and potential; where the agenda is set by the mentee; emphasises feedback and reflection; and discussion is primarily about implicit, intuitive issues and behaviours.

This excites me as I continue the journey forward toward establishing an ANLP mentoring programme. I'd love to hear about your mentoring experiences (both as mentee and mentor) and what would excite you about this new ANLP concept – jane@jbconsultancy.co.za

“

Tell me and I forget,
teach me and I may
remember, involve
me and I learn. –
Benjamin Franklin

”

To be your own worst enemy

BY LEON COETSEE

One of the most instant and accurate summaries I have ever heard about a person was when the chairman of a selection committee, for a senior position at a university, remarked that a candidate just interviewed is his own worst enemy. He said: "Gerald is one of those people who does not need enemies. He is his own largest obstacle". If you apply your mind to it, you will be able to identify people you know who suffer from the same impediment. This is not a description of a personality disorder but just an observation that some people, in some situations or occasions, tend to be their own worst enemies.

An old Chinese proverb says: *"The only truth is that things shall change"*. All organisms, even human beings and the organisations in which we work, suffer from a condition known as 'entropy' – an innate condition of decline and degeneration (to deteriorate into a groove) and then to disintegrate and decay (the grave). This condition is accelerated by a commonly coupled state – apathy.

Dennis the Menace once said: *"Apathy is a major problem – but who cares?"*

Fortunately individuals, like organisations (hospitals, universities, government departments, sports teams etc.), have the ability to turn apathy around and to become committed to growth and development – thus escaping the groove and avoiding "the grave". However, this requires overcoming apathy and conquering another hindrance - our default position of resistance to change.

"Progress is impossible without change, and those that cannot change their minds cannot change anything"
George Bernard Shaw

"In times of change, the learners will inherit the earth, while those attached to their old certainties will find themselves beautifully equipped to deal with a world that no longer exists"
Aiken & Higgs (2010; Developing change leaders)

A conservative is someone who believes in reform - but not now.
Anon

You are not impeded by what you are, but by what you think you are not.

Apathy and 'change resistance' are the most important reasons why individuals and organisations fall into a groove and eventually into the deeper grave. We become our own worst enemies when we feel comfortable in this condition, especially when we start to defend this situation. We typically have resistance to change when we anticipate that the change (or the results of the change) will threaten or impede our comfort zones. Change often demands that we question our fixed habits, attitudes and even our firm beliefs and it sometimes requires more: that these must be adapted and in certain cases changed.

Positive growth and development usually requires managing the difficult dilemma of

preserving the status quo (the well-known, the trusted and comfortable) versus shifting to a new state (i.e. a new way of thinking and doing). In essence, a shift to a changed reality. Remember that Tarzan could only move forward in the jungle if he let go of the branch supporting his weight in order to reach for a new branch. **To escape a groove requires a reorientation – to observe, to think, and to 'do' differently.** This again requires courage and self-belief – two of the most important characteristics of entrepreneurs and leaders who are their own best allies and who achieve success. Having the self-belief that you can change and the courage to do so are, in essence, the foundation of self-management and leadership.

- We have an inherent condition of entropy - decline and disintegration. You become your own worst enemy if you fall into a groove and if you are unable to manage your own resistance to change
- Adapting to change requires adaptation of deeply rooted beliefs, attitudes and habits in order to move from the old disposition to a new position. It also requires being able to manage the dilemma of preserving the status quo and adopting a new reality
- To manage self-change effectively requires that we must change our thinking – to start thinking in new ways.
- Change requires self-belief and courage – the typical characteristics of successful entrepreneurs and leaders.

My journey since the ALNP 2014: success, challenges, and the way forward.

BY KARIM BOUGMA

The most common comment made by ANLP alumni is that the seminar is a life changing event, a game changer. I even think this is an understatement. My take home insights, once I completed the seminar, were more related to human or personal skills rather than technical skills even though these are also important and need to be constantly challenged and improved. During the ANLP, I connected more with self-awareness and growth, purpose, servant leadership, social responsibility, giving-back, leading from where one stands, and not least, rule # 6, have fun! In a word, I left the ANLP seminar with the firm conviction and resolution to become a better person, a better human. This connection may have something to do with conscious and unconscious circumstances in my life but one I can remember is related to my first experience as team leader on a research project. I had one objective, deliver a good job, nothing else mattered. Indeed, we did a good job, no missing data, plausible data, etc. However, it all came down to this one comment from a team member at the final debriefing with the project coordinator: "This guy should be in a police station, not here". Later in a one-on-one conversation, the coordinator (who is also my mentor) told me that I can achieve the same results with my

teammates smiling. So how has my journey been since?

Self-awareness

Anthony Tjan, in his Harvard Business School article on ways to become more self-aware, said that "by giving us a better understanding of who we are, self-awareness lets us better understand what we need most from other people, to complement our own deficiencies in leadership". It's all starts here, with the person you see in the mirror, you! Change starts with me. Easier to say than to do as being able to reflect and having the capacity and willingness for introspection is a regular challenge. Different situations, events, and circumstances bring different perspectives to the way we realise the importance of taking time to pause and reflect.

Emotional intelligence

Popularized by Dan Goleman, emotional intelligence is defined as the ability to identify and manage our own emotions and the emotions of others. Either at personal or professional level, I try to know people to the point where, if the tone in the response to 'how are you?' is different from usual while the answer remains "I am doing well", I ask the question again. Sometimes, we just

need an ear to listen, some empathy, some compassion.

Servant leadership

"The servant-leader is servant first... It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first." - Robert K. Greenleaf.

In our ANLP 2014 declaration, we took this commitment to be servant leaders. I view servant leadership from the perspective of a "domino effect", serving others around us or in our teams means helping and supporting them to unlock their ingenuity, to attain their full potential and inspire them to also become servant leaders. I realized that this doesn't take moving mountains and as is often no more than just helping someone to fill a job or a scholarship application. It is about simply delegating responsibilities, giving people space to grow, and trusting others, this latter being a challenge that I face on a regular basis.

Social responsibility, giving back

Generally, when talking social responsibility, we refer to corporates "doing good", such as with the construction of schools, hospitals, etc. But, at individual level, one can give

back and it is not all about financial support. I think most of us, if not each one of us, at some point of our lives has received a supporting hand "free". If you can give support financially within your capacity, it is good but you can also give your time, your "expertise". Here, at McGill University, we have a Student Life Ambassador Program where newly-admitted graduate students coming from abroad or other Canadian cities are matched with retuning students to support a smooth transition into McGill. It mainly involves answering questions about McGill or about living in Montreal. So, I have volunteered to be an Ambassador, just the title is a great privilege and the role is incredibly rewarding. One student I was matched with had some concerns about the program, the student-supervisor role and responsibilities. I provided some answers and references to the program guidelines but mainly, I told the student to not stress out, to be patient and take the necessary time to have a clear dashboard of the structure of the program.

Rule #6, have fun

At some point, I found myself being the senior student in my lab, though generally I have been by age since I joined the lab! I tried my level best to support and reassure my fellows that, despite the challenges, they

will make it, mainly the challenge of the comprehensive exam. So, when it came to the school Christmas dinner with our supervisor saying she will pay for all those wishing to attend, I immediately jumped in as a "dictator" saying that it is mandatory that we all go. This was my way to push forward with the team spirit, to move beyond the academic to the social level of engagement. Let's have fun! (And Jane, please don't tell anyone that you saw me dancing Ethiopian traditional style during the Micronutrient Forum).

The way forward

While recognizing the importance of technical skills, I purposely chose to focus my contribution to the Leader on the developmental journey I've undertaken with my personal skills and abilities. I certainly haven't mentioned all of them. It is a continual learning and growing process to practice these skills and to own them. There are always ups and downs in my journey but giving up are not an option. My major achievement since the ANLP 2014 is the completion of my PhD. After my oral defense, one of my mentors ask me what I will do with my PhD as it a privilege. Teaching and supervision is high in my consideration as a contribution, a way to give back. Being involved in the development sector is also a way for me to contribute directly to the well-being of populations. Maybe I will have the opportunity to progress in both of these fields, following the steps of some of my mentors. I consider myself as lucky and privileged to have had several wonderful mentors. I know that I am not alone when facing challenges and uncertainties, and I will undoubtedly benefit from their experience and advice to light my way.

"by giving us a better understanding of who we are, self-awareness lets us better understand what we need most from other people, to complement our own deficiencies in leadership"

- Anthony Tjan



To make Africa a better place; change starts with me!

BY HIBBAH ARABA OSEI-KWASI (NÉE SAEED)

A few months after I got back from the ANLP programme/training, I started work as a part-time Research Associate on a project exploring the nutrition transition in Ghana and Kenya. As part of this job, I was offered the opportunity to lead a module in Nutrition. In the past, my response would have been: "No. I don't think I'm qualified to do this. I've not even finished my PhD". But guess what? The ANLP transformed me, and so I gladly accepted the role.

My passion, as a nutrition researcher, has always been to contribute to better nutrition and the overall health of people in Africa. As such, the ANLP was an excellent opportunity to gain the requisite knowledge and skills to support me to become an ambassador for nutrition. However, after the ten intensive days of training, I realised that the ANLP was not just about teaching us to become organisational leaders or ambassadors for nutrition. Personally, it was a life-changing experience. I got to know myself; my strengths and weaknesses. I learnt to get out of my comfort zone and I

now feel there is no challenge in life that I cannot overcome.

After each day's session at the ANLP, we had the time and space to personally reflect on how the topics discussed linked with our own personal growth; to think of what we would like to start doing, keep on doing and to stop doing. I found these reflective sessions very useful, as it gave me the opportunity to think about my development plan: where I wanted to be, the next change I wanted to see in my life and what I was going to do to be able to achieve this. Today as a daily routine, I have built a short reflective session into the end of each day, which I find very useful personally and professionally.

We learnt how to communicate effectively, not just by using a power point presentation, but recognising the non-verbal communication we give with eye contact, body movements and gestures. We undertook vocal exercises, with emphasis placed on rate of speech, volume and inflection. Since I returned from the

ANLP, before I even prepare slides for a presentation, I first of all write down what it is that I want to communicate to my audience and I have realised how much this has improved my communication skills.

Understanding our own personal locus of control (internal and external focus) was one of my favourite sessions. For most of us, almost as if by default, we are quick to attribute failure to other people or external forces. Therefore, we are unable to look inwardly to critically analyse what we can do differently to achieve better results. I learnt from the ANLP that setbacks and challenges are inevitable in life. We will always have those colleagues who are difficult to work with; we may have complicated work systems that we cannot change. However, we can stay conscious of our locus of control –which is just achieved by taking responsibility for our actions and making the best of every opportunity. In other words, we cannot always change external circumstances, but we can choose how we respond to them. A positive attitude in life is crucial!

As W. Clement Stone, the American businessman and philanthropist, said:

“There is little difference in people, but that little difference makes a big difference. The little difference is attitude. The big difference is whether it is positive.”

The sessions where we received personal feedback from our own team members and the ANLP team were very challenging as we could listen and ask for clarification from colleagues while refraining from trying

to explain our actions or behaviour during the day. It was so hard to be criticised by people I had just met. However, this turned out to be of one of the most useful sessions for me. For the remaining days, each team member tried to work on their weaknesses, resulting in fewer team conflicts and a better working environment all round. Today, as I work with a team of researchers from five different institutions around Europe and Africa, my experience at the ANLP makes me very comfortable knowing that we cannot all be the same. We each have our unique strengths, and for us to have a better working environment, we need to identify these and to complement each other.

The ANLP was not all lectures and discussions. We also had the opportunity to watch some inspiring videos. My particular favourites were the TED talks of Sue Austin about free-diving in a wheelchair, and William Kamkwamba, the Malawian inventor who built a windmill when he was just 14 years old.

After these videos, participants shared their own stories of challenges they had faced in life and how they overcame these. This was one of the most emotional moments at ANLP as several people shed tears when listening to others share their life stories. The lesson learnt for me was that one's background need not dictate who you are and what you can achieve. I realise from their narratives that all challenges can become opportunities. During reflection

later that day, I pondered over one thing that resonated from the stories shared: people had opportunities created for them along the way, and that's how they were able to overcome some of the challenges. I felt like I was one of the privileged few, who did not have to sell my home or possessions to pay my PhD fees or go to sleep at night on an empty stomach to be able to study for a PhD. I was inspired, I was touched, and I kept saying to myself: I want to be that opportunity maker for someone else out there in Africa. What can I do and how do I start? The ANLP made me realise that it is the responsibility of leaders (in this case all of us at ANLP) to create opportunities and we can be that generation that makes a change. But for us to do that, **change has to start from me.**

Finally, at the 'Nutrition leadership in Africa' session, I learnt that if we want to achieve an impact and make a difference we must work on the skills needed for this. I have reflected on my area of expertise, and I am now ready to contribute to improving nutrition in Africa and the world as a whole. I am going to lead from where I stand!



It was not an easy journey

BY HALUMBA MUNACHONGA

As I sat down to pen this article, a number of possible titles came to mind including: “It was not an easy journey”; “Now the sky is the limit”; or indeed “The greatest asset in life is a human being”. I guess as you read through, you will decide which title among the three is the most suitable from your own perspective.

Back in 2007, while working for a local nongovernmental organisation, I applied to attend the African Nutrition Leadership program (ANLP). Even when I was applying, I knew too well that I did not have the education credentials that were required as part of the selection criteria. It was joyful, amazing and astounding for me then to receive an email saying that I had been given the opportunity to attend ANLP 2008. I guess Johann and his selection team saw something in my application beyond my education credentials – my passion for nutrition.

During the first three days of the ANLP programme; I realised that being an undergraduate among graduates was not a barrier to full participation in the training. I noticed that everyone was called by their names even when they were Dr, Prof etc. This helped me to get rid of the self-doubt I had and to fully embrace the programme without looking down on myself. The training helped me to understand myself better and how I could develop and

position myself for scaling up nutrition at whatever level. I learnt how to take a holistic approach to solving community problems, and how to be a responsible leader who is always interested in the affairs of his team members. *Above all, I learnt leadership skills that direct my own personal development, and that focus on self-improvement i.e. beating my own record, not competing with other people.*

One day during the training, as the sun was about to settle after ‘Reflection Time’, I took a walk to view the beauty of the Vaal River. There I met Dr. Onno who was also gazing at the wholesomeness of the river and nature. We had a small chat and agreed to explore the possibility of him representing my organisation to a funding agency based in the Netherlands who needed personal representation.

When the training ended, I returned home energised and ready to contribute to the nutrition fraternity in my country - Zambia.

While at my place of practice, I continued communicating with the ANLP network especially with Dr. Onno. One day he told me that he was invited by the Fred Foundation for a meeting where he was to represent my organisation for a possible grant. Dr. Onno never failed us. His representation resulted in my organisation receiving a one year grant from the Fred Foundation.

In 2011, the ANLP organisers called for concept notes to attend capacity building training in Windhoek, Namibia. Looking at the calibre of the ANLP network, I knew well that the selection was going to be competitive since the training was only for a small cohort of participants. But as I had learnt to believe in myself and in ‘beating my own record’, despite still being an undergraduate, I sent in a concept note. Again, I was ecstatic when I was notified that I had been selected to attend the training.

It was in Windhoek that my understanding of developing competitive concept notes and grant applications was enhanced. This rare opportunity was very important for my career especially as I was coming from a non-governmental organisation that solely depend on grant applications for program implementation. I had an opportunity to meet representatives from funding agencies such as Nestle Foundation, and Sight and Life among others. The training also helped me to understand how to develop and apply the ‘lenses’ required when responding to any request for applications. The impact of that training was just immeasurable and my organisation has so far received funding from various international agencies including ViiV Healthcare (UK), Elizabeth Taylor Aids Foundation (USA), AmplifyChange (UK), Manos Unidas (Spain), Cummins Africa (South Africa), Next World Now (USA) and World Vision (Zambia).

On one of the days in Windhoek, I sat next to Dr. Edelweiss who was one of the training organisers. She knew that I was still an undergraduate and so she asked me why I had not pursued graduate education. I told her that it was due to limited resources.

She advised me to consider spacing my education by doing distance learning with the University of South Africa (UNISA). She also gave me the details of the person I could contact at UNISA for further information.

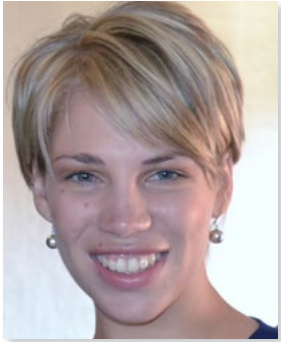
After the training I returned home with the skills needed for fundraising for both my organisation and also for my personal educational development.

I took Dr. Edelweiss’s advice seriously and contacted Mrs. Elize Symington at UNISA who advised me to make an application during the University admission window (August 2011). I was pleased when I was finally enrolled to study Bachelor of Consumer Sciences in Food and Nutrition.

The academics at UNISA were most challenging, requiring consistently high performance in assignments and exams. However, with the travelling for residential lessons and other financial obligations, I realised quickly that I was not going to be able to fund the financial requirement from my savings alone. I then remembered Nestle Foundation, and Sight and Life whose representatives I had met in Windhoek, so I made some requests for support. Fortunately, I received a positive response from Sight and Life. With their support; it was just a matter of persistence while balancing work, family and school. I finally graduated on 30 March 2017 with 11 distinctions out 30 modules.

By now, I am sure you will agree that it was really not an easy journey for me, but now the sky is the limit, and human beings really are the greatest asset.

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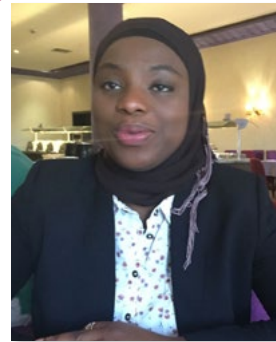
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