

Being the New Difference

Published 23 days ago by [Mike Porteous](#)

This post from my Confidence Centred Coaching site was originally intended to be a short, animated video - hasn't quite happened yet. So while the animators, artists and sound crew have been temporarily stood down, here is a slightly different format to normal posts.

It follows two online Coaches' Exchanges on **The Path Ahead** that we ran in February and other conversations with coaches, on how we respond to the challenges ahead. It may come over as quite heavy and maybe political - bear with it though as the intention is to give ourselves a chance to pause and reflect before we get caught up in a hurry to restart our coaching.

And the key message is all about **being and acting differently**, saying “**no to normal**” (normal blog post formats included). As our attention and hopes increasingly turn to the prospect of training centres reopening, club sessions restarting and some competition and events back in the calendar, what are we going to do differently? What changes and differences are we going to make?

ON THE NATURE OF HOPE

How brilliant that the timetable for easing of restrictions looks set to be on track and we can start to plan realistically for sessions restarting, venues reopening and even have some faith in events pencilled in the calendar going ahead. There's a sense of hopeful excitement in the air.

It seems to me, though, there is an important difference between hope as a kind of wish-filled, looking forward, awaiting something better to emerge from somewhere - and a more energy-filled, purpose-fuelled, spur to action kind of hope, as in the Rebecca Solnit quote I never tire of referring to.

Hope locates itself in the premises that
we don't know what will happen
and in the spaciousness of uncertainty is room to act.

— Rebecca Solnit: On Hope

I also feel when we talk of hope in looking ahead there can be an element (subconsciously or consciously) of selective filtering out of the realities of many around us - most obviously those for whom the last twelve months or so have brought life changing disruptions and losses. We are drawn to look forward at a hopeful landscape of sunlit plains and would rather not also take in the daunting, dark mountains and valleys that lie ahead for others.

These two strands of thought - of seizing the opportunity to act “in the spaciousness of uncertainty” and being aware that others' experiences and perspectives on what lies ahead will be very different to ours - run through what follows...

... and our first key question (imagining the video with a captivating voice-over, maybe a light, other-worldly yet incisive Tilda Swinton or a deeper, heavy with no-nonsense Idris Elba):

how will you act and make a difference

in your coaching?

in your club?

in your community?

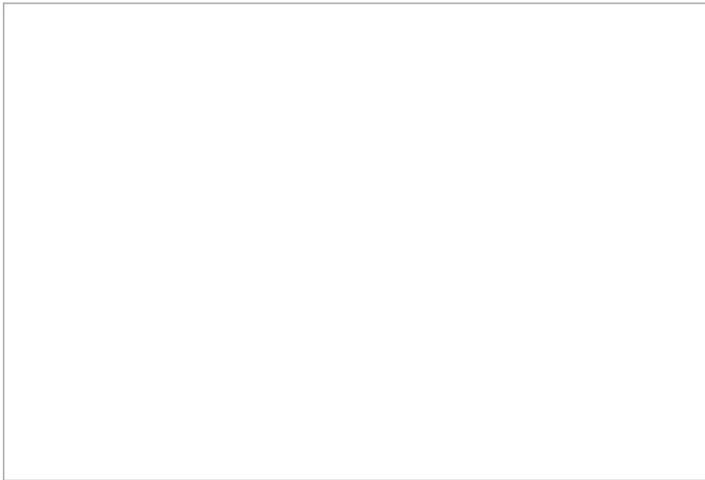
JUST SAY NO NORMAL

In the video the following would appear :

it starts with saying no to “going back to normal”

too much has changed

and too much of the old normal needs to change



Think of all the disruption, the anxious uncertainty and frightening losses over these last twelve months. At the same time think of the upsurge in community awareness, the small acts of kindness and compassion that brought new depth to our way of being with others.

And thinking of the ‘old normal’, take yourself back to the anger, hurt and sense of long suffered injustice in the Black Lives Matter movements, just recently downplayed by a Government report that effectively denies what so many of us know to be painfully true. This is an ‘old normal’ that needs to change.

And say no to passively waiting for a “new normal to emerge”

we create our paths

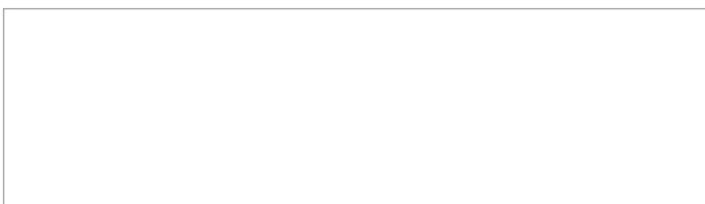
we can seize the “room to act”

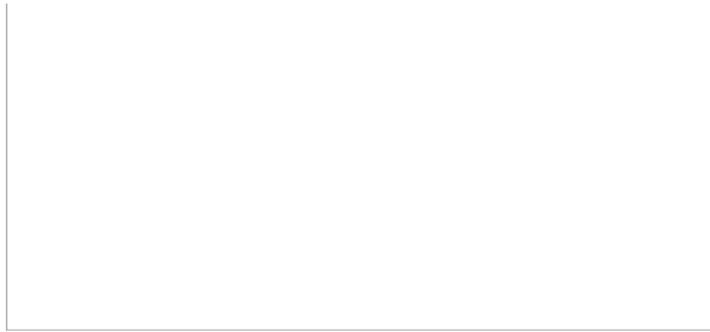
*and **be the new difference.***

So what might this look like? Where can we be the difference?

WHAT LIES AHEAD

In our Coaches’ Exchanges we touched on the complex mix of issues and challenges shown here.





Picking out just three, first we see more people discovering the benefits of being more active... while many others are reported to have spent a year in deeper inactivity

so how might we encourage a greater focus on wellbeing, on active fulfilling lifestyles, our sports as a path to making a new start?

or do we just stick to the old ways of a narrow focus on performance and competition? and still expect people to come to us?

Secondly, are our clubs and our sports genuinely open to all?

Thinking of my own sport of triathlon, despite being still relatively new it has quite obviously and singularly failed to connect with and make a home for people from **any** ethnic minorities. We have begun some slow, small steps to address this in my Club, asking ourselves “are we as inclusive and welcoming as we have always liked to tell ourselves we are.” The make up of our membership says otherwise and listening to members we’ve found very different experiences, some feeling “everything is fine” while others have little or no sense of belonging.

So the questions we are asking and that are certain to apply in many other sports and clubs, are:

what makes the ‘old normal’ comfortable for some (for people ”like me”) and distancing for others?

and (drawing on Ed Accura’s inspiring work with the [Black Swimming Association](#)) how can we make our sports and clubs “relatable” and genuinely open?

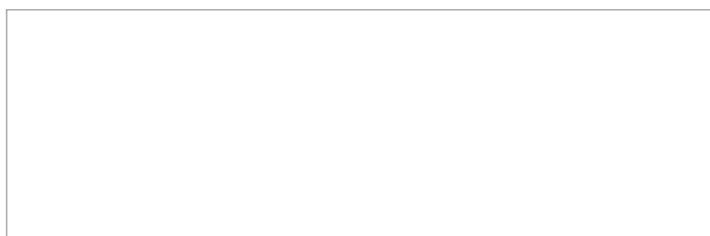
And a third big challenge, what of the largely unseen effects of uncertainty, loss and isolation on our young people’s mental health and well being?

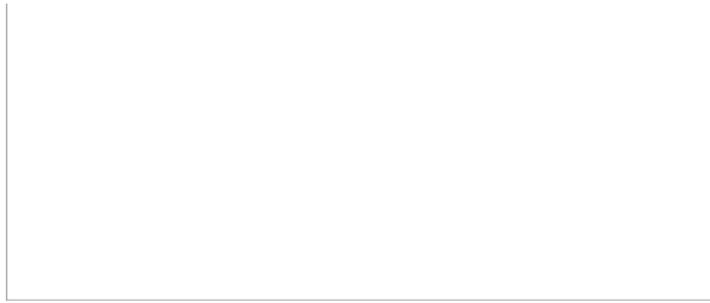
what will new safe spaces need to look and feel like?

and how can we create the time and space for everyone to reconnect?

SO WHAT TO DO/BE

Each coach and club, within their own circumstances and communities will find the answers for themselves - just as we are attempting to do in our Tri Club. It seems to me though there are certain basic qualities that will come into their own in the Path Ahead - and which are at the core of Confidence Centred Coaching.





It starts with self-awareness, knowing what we truly value and what drives us.

Empathy and the ability to listen without leaping to ready made solutions, to understand and make the time and space for others will be even more important than before.

And creativity. Already many coaches have found they have had to rethink and imaginatively adapt their coaching to the constraints and new demands. Imagine how much further we could take this if we viewed our coaching relationships as fundamentally all about creative exploration of possibilities.

And above all, what a powerful effect we could have on so many if we saw ourselves as both a listening ear to others who don't typically get heard and a clear, consistent voice for change.

TO CONCLUDE

Back to Tilda (or is it Idris?) and we finish with three questions to try to make time for as we hurry back to our coaching:

what will you do differently to the old normal, to be a new difference?

where will you look for great practice to learn from and be challenged by?

and who will support you along the way?

As always, please share your thoughts and reflections in the comment box below.

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