



Wellbeing Insights

Measuring backwards to help you move forwards

I invite you to bring to mind the feeling of progress. Can you think of a recent time when you had clear evidence that you were making progress, that you were improving? Maybe it's a physical activity and your walking distance, running speed, or swimming technique might be improving. Alternatively, it may be a mental activity and you're quicker at doing a sudoku, more adept at writing, or more proficient at project management. Another possibility, is that you are improving your skill at a relatively new hobby, be it cooking, yoga or kite surfing. From these ideas I hope you have been able to recall a recent moment of progress, and I hope this brings a smile to your face, and an internal feeling of pride.

On many occasions, it's not about the absolute level of your skill, it's more about whether you are getting a little better, a little more proficient than before. It's so important for us to look out for and tune into our progress. (Side note: I hear my Dad's voice in my head as I am writing this. I'm picturing Dad, aged 84, saying 'gone are my days of progress, but let me tell you about regress!' My Dad actually is an incredibly healthy and active person, who is wrestling with ageing, but with a smile on his dial will regularly remind me that it's far better than the alternative!)

Back to progress. Now sometimes progress can feel particularly hard, you may feel you are in the middle of a learning or growth plateau and you can't see or feel any real progress. This can be particularly challenging if you have set yourself a long-term goal of trying to achieve a particular standard or level. It is often when we see no signs of improvement that we can lose motivation.

This is where I would like to introduce you to a valuable motivation technique known as 'measure the gain, not the gap'. This is a concept popularised by Dan Sullivan and Dr Benjamin Hardy, who have published a book by this name and have various video clips you could watch on the topic. The gap is the distance between your present state and your ideal state – that is, the state of achieving your goal. Focusing on the gap can make people feel miserable as they focus on what's lacking and how far they still have to go. Alternatively, the gain is the distance from where you are at now, to where you were previously, so the gain is literally the progress, how far you've come. If you focus on the gain, you can enjoy your journey and feel motivated by your progress. So, one way to maintain motivation – is literally measuring the gain not the gap, or in other words measuring backwards to help you move forwards!

And, if you are currently experiencing somewhat of a plateau - maybe try to change things up a bit. Can you try a different approach, a new strategy, a new environment, a new system? Introducing some form of change may uncover new pathways of progress. Go well!