

5.2 Networks – board of directors

Slide 1

One of the things that drain our resilience and wellbeing is a lack of perspective when we are stressed; we often can't see things clearly or see a way out of a situation. We feel stuck.

If we are gripped by our impostors' voice or inner critic, we might also be hesitant to take on new and stretching challenges.

Slide 2

Two heads are better than one when we are trying to have good ideas and move forward, but why stop at just two heads?

Slide 3

If you were a large organisation, you wouldn't make important decisions without consulting a board of directors. The board would be made up of people from a range of backgrounds and perspectives. They would help you to decide marketing strategies, which products to launch, what makes you competitive, what to stop and start doing.

As an individual researcher, why not compile your own board of directors? Better still, to avoid difficult diaries and travel costs, how about a board of directors that is virtual, and meets in your head? This might sound crazy, but it is a really effective way of generating ideas, getting a sense of perspective and feeling brave or motivated to move forward and stretch yourself. The joy of a virtual board is that you can have anyone on it that you like: people you know, famous people, characters from books, anyone alive or dead.

Here are some suggestions for who you might want on your board. They should be people that you know well enough to be able to predict their point of view:

1. Your future self: this is a version of you from perhaps five or ten years in the future (you may have met them if you have watched the video on optimism and focussing on the future). This version of you tends to be more relaxed, more experienced, and wiser. They see the bigger picture and what is important. They are often much kinder to you than your current self or your inner critic. They help you to put things into perspective.
2. Another person might be a critical friend – someone who will be honest and tell you when you are holding back or could have done better. They do this with the best intentions for you because they care about you. You won't want to disappoint them.
3. Another board member might be someone who is a cheerleader – someone who always believes the best in you – they are encouraging and know you can do more than you might think.
4. Have a mentor on your board – someone who has done similar things to you and achieved the things you want to achieve – they can reflect back on their experience and give advice. They can let you know what they might have done in a similar situation.
5. You might want to invite a competitor on to your board: these are people who won't wait around to take up opportunities that could be yours. They will encourage you to get moving and take action
6. Another seat might be given to a role model – someone that you admire – you like the way they do things, they inspire you and offer you a new or more stretching way to do or see things.

Who else might you put on your board? A family member, a famous leader from history? A character from a book?

Once you have your board established, you can meet with them occasionally to go round and gather their opinions on your current dilemmas. Or you might use your board to help you do a horizon review, which you may have learnt about in the presentation on reviewing and stock-taking.

Finally, the board is a great way to get opinions that are different from your inner critics. The advice from your board will always be constructive and move you forward.