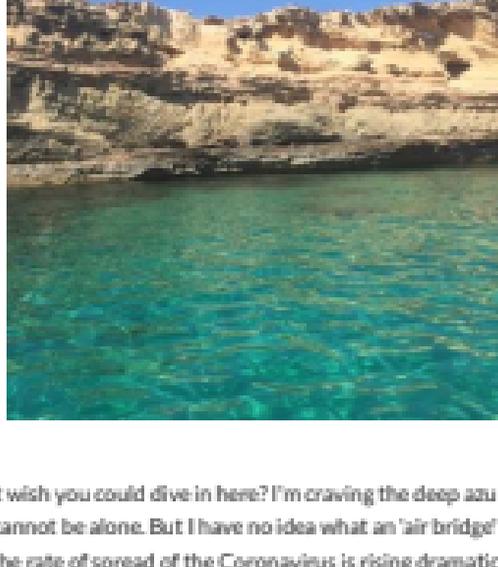




June 2020



Don't you just wish you could dive in here? I'm craving the deep azure of the Med so strongly. I cannot be alone. But I have no idea what an 'air bridge' means, especially as the rate of spread of the Coronavirus is rising dramatically around the world (just as we in the UK think we may be turning the corner). So I suspect it will be a while before the deep blue sea gets me.

This is the period when we in theory get back to normal and lockdown 'lifts'. But how many want to return to the old, always-on life?

What is very clear is that people are craving simplicity precisely as things get more complex. In an interview I did this week with [Deborah Martinson of Britain Thinks](#) she points out that just 9% of people 'want to go back to life as it was before' - the rushing, the commuting, the frantic adrenaline many of us (myself included) have taken totally for granted.

[Listen to Niall Ferguson, Ruby Wax, Elijah Lawal, Anthony Seldon discuss what simplicity means to them](#)

The Fear Factor



One of the biggest tragedies of this moment was encapsulated by the distinguished psychologist Daniel Kahneman who said recently that "We have a population that is afraid of people and is afraid for its life to some extent. Those you pass on the street can be a threat without even talking to you. This is new."

Just when so many people are coming together to unite against the scourge of racism, Covid19 means we don't trust each other at a basic, physical level.

This is the complex problem which I believe will impact on everything from the economy to the future of work. How can we live together unless we have strategies to overcome fear?

[I am a trustee of a brand new vital UK charity - OurBrainBank. Please take a look at it here](#)

The Six-Fix



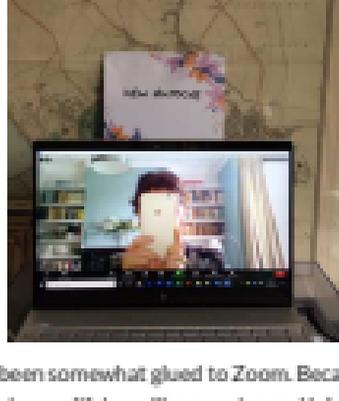
So I'm into the number 6 and have [written here](#) about why it is mathematically 'perfect' and therefore an ideal number to conquer overload and complexity with. Don't take my word for it: Look at the 6 kingdoms in biology, or the 6 realms of the brain associated with learning and experience; or the relevance of 6 in faiths from Judaism to Islam; or the prevalence of 6 in Sport, from cricket to basketball; or in culture: we bury our dead six feet under and we talk of a 'sixth sense'.

But really the reason I choose 6, over and above the above and its perfect symmetry as an organising number is this: We have a working memory limit of seven, beyond which we zone out, tune out, freak out. This assertion alone is far from simple but at its heart is a debate about [human limits](#).

Here are six human priorities to focus on, if we are to experience more of simple success and less of complex failure.

1. **KEEP IT REAL.** [Matthew d'Ancona's brilliant](#) audio essay on the behind-closed-doors crisis in 10 Downing Street illustrated what happens when you try to deny what is real and go in for magical thinking instead of clear-sighted action.
2. **CUT THE BULLSHIT!** Closely allied to this is a need to connect in working life - and now is a perfect opportunity - with what matters and what you value, and not to participate in anything meaningless, pointless, timewasting or obviously not right. To help you on your way, read my Cass Business School colleague [Andre Spicer's book](#).
3. **SMALL IS THE NEW BIG.** From the science of [lockdown-lifting bubbles](#) to Frederic Laloux's so-called [Teal Organisations](#) which are small and self-managing, it's time to embrace small teams of 6 not 60. It is so much clearer when you do.
4. **BE LESS CROSS.** There can be no doubt that everyone is witnessing or experiencing great tension right now. On the street, on Twitter, in our heads. Learning to be productive and focused means being less cross, using energy wisely. Don't snap back quickly, don't pile in on the pile-on. Think clearly and act clearly. If you're still angry then use that energy...wisely.
5. **HAVE A SIX-HOUR DAY** We already operate on cycles of 6: the 24-hour day; the 12-month year etc. In practice most of us are awake for around 15 hours a day, but it is not realistic to even think about being productive for more than around 6 of those hours. Trust me, it isn't. So give yourself a break and plan to focus just on 6 hours, broken up into chunks with enough time to wander off and make the tea or be distracted, and then you stand a chance of getting really good results, full of focus and creativity. Try it: Six is the perfect number.
6. **KEEP IT SIMPLE, SWEETIE** From the memorable slogan to the simple interface (there is a reason why Zoom has zoomed), keeping it simple matters because: it usually works. So always, always, look to what works. Look to what is simple because usually it is just as good - if not better - than the complicated, tortuous alternative.

WHAT I'VE BEEN UP TO LATELY



Like many of you, I've been somewhat glued to Zoom. Because I'm still on the book plugging circuit (which is now lifelong, like exercise and inbox management) this has involved interviews for, variously, [The Great Big Book Club](#) with Sarah Vine of the Daily Mail; Monocle Radio's [Meet The Writers](#) (trust me, you still have to get dressed up because it's all online); Cognition X the tech festival which I did with wonderful Ruby Wax; and then something which required a piece to camera which now means piece-to-pinhole. So I cheated and stuck up post-it autocues.

All well and good except - surprise. The line went down. Not just human limits then, technology limits beat us every time.

Too complicated by half!

Have a good week,

[Click here to Keep It Simple \(Sweetie\)](#)

"It's the question of our modern times: how to recapture simplicity in our lives so we can once again connect with ourselves. In this book Julia Hobbs has given us an answer: by using the shape and pattern of nature. Her six-word mantra - Keep it Simple, Learn From Nature - shows us how we can use the power of the world around us to change our lives for the better."

Arianna Huffington, Founder & CEO, Thrive Global

