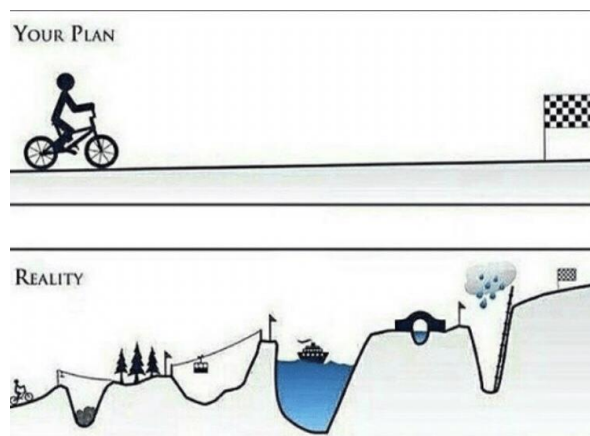


Harborough Mail Blog by Wendy Aspland

During 2022, I had the pleasure and honour of being part of the design and facilitation of the new Next Steps course with VASL. This learner-led course is aimed at helping clients take their 'next steps' after being part of the community champions project. Over the 3 sessions that we met, we explored how loneliness was impacting our lives and what might be possible for us in our future in ways that felt right to us.

We used some key principles to support us in our exploration, such as openness, courage and trust. By sharing our stories, we created an atmosphere of trust and openness, built on the agreement of safety and confidentiality. You can imagine the amazing tales from a group of people with the level of life experiences that was in the room. Just incredible.

We used the concept of experimenting to look at ideas of things we could try. By using experimenting rather than goal setting, we open ourselves up to possibilities we might not currently know, rather than limiting ourselves to one predetermined outcome. Add in some courage, and we can stretch ourselves out of our comfort zone, again in a way that feels right for us.



We also learned some techniques to help us with confidence and momentum. We looked at how our mind gremlins can get in the way of our decisions but that we get to choose how to respond to them. We looked at practising gratitude as a way of bringing joy into our lives.

We looked at how to deal with setbacks, when the reality of life is not straightforward! And we shared many ideas for activities in our resilience jars, that we could take home and use whenever we wanted to.

Running this course was a highlight of my personal development career. The level of trust in the room was heart-warming, the personal stories shared served to set the tone for possibilities. Nothing was right or wrong, ideas for experiments were shared and the support and encouragement provided to one other was inspiring. We had tears and laughter, confidence and nerves, joy and sadness. All of it was welcomed and underneath it was a determination to take a next step. It was truly humbling to be part of the magic that is created when a group of people with a shared sense of purpose get together. By the time we finished session 3, there was boldness, confidence, empowerment, inspiration, ideas and creativity. A WhatsApp group had been set up to keep in touch, people had their 'next steps', and we applauded and congratulated each other for being part of this incredible experience.