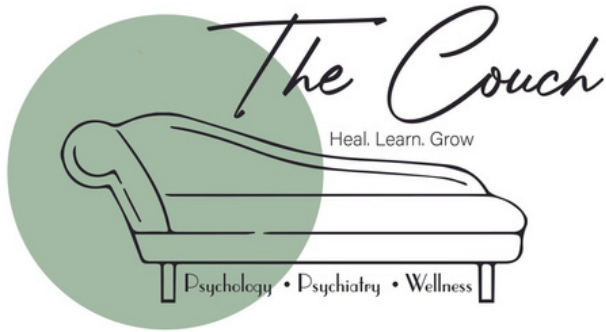




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The Psychology Couch Newsletter

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LINKS OF HOPE

JOIN OUR CHAIN REACTION!

This October, we're weaving **your stories** into **links of support**. Each paper link carries **hope, courage, or celebration**. As our community adds their pieces, the paper chain will surround our practice — a green reminder that **mental health matters** and **connection** makes us **stronger**.

How to Add Your Link:

Grab a piece of paper and a pen, write your message, and connect your link to our chain.

Online? Message your "link" virtually and we'll add it for you!

Need Inspiration? Try Writing:

What helps me cope...

Words I needed to hear...

My small wins...

How I show kindness...

I want to break the stigma by...

Things I am grateful for...

What mental health means to me...

Soon a living chain of stories, courage and support will wind its way around our practice — a tapestry of care and connection.

MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH

Links of Hope: A Chain Reaction of Care

Holly Claase (Psych Honours Graduate)

This October, in honour of Mental Health Awareness Month, our practice is inviting you to join us in building something meaningful together: the Links of Hope Chain Reaction.



At first glance, it may look like a simple paper chain, but each link represents far more. Every piece added carries a story, a message of courage, or a reminder of hope. When joined together, the chain becomes a powerful symbol that mental health matters and that connection makes us stronger.

The message behind **Links of Hope** is simple but important: when we share openly, we reduce stigma and remind each other that no struggle has to be faced alone. Each link, no matter how small, represents a voice, an experience, or an act of kindness. And when these are joined, they form a visible reminder that our collective strength lies in empathy and connection. What may begin as one person's story becomes part of something larger: a chain of care that supports us all.

Getting involved is simple:

- Write down a message of encouragement, something that helps you cope, or what mental health means to you.
- Add your link to the chain in person or send it to us virtually, and we'll include it for you.

By sharing your words, you're helping to create a visible reminder that every voice counts and every story matters. Soon, our chain will wrap around the practice – not just as decoration, but as a living tapestry of hope, kindness, and solidarity.

We'd love for you to add your voice and become part of this chain reaction. Together, let's weave a story of strength and connection for Mental Health Awareness Month.

Ancient Wisdom for Modern Leaders

By: Yumna Zubi
Clinical Psychologist

The demands on today's leaders are greater than ever. CEOs strive to align innovation, profitability, and employee retention, while healthcare workers grapple with burnout and systemic inefficiencies, all against a backdrop of rising disconnection, purpose fatigue, and diminishing well-being that threaten to erode human connection within teams. What if the solutions we seek lie not in modern trends but in the wisdom passed down through ancient civilizations?

For centuries, rituals and storytelling were at the heart of communities, building trust, encouraging belonging, passing down knowledge, and sustaining cultural identity. Today, forward-thinking leaders are rediscovering their value, integrating them into modern workplaces to strengthen organizational culture, engagement, and long-term growth.

This article explores how the principles behind rituals and storytelling, deeply rooted in human history, are shaping modern business. Drawing on ancestral wisdom from around the world and its intersection with cutting-edge AI, we will uncover how integrating these time-honored practices with modern psychological and technological insights goes beyond quick fixes and addresses the root issues of disconnection, exhaustion, and purpose fatigue.

The ancient city: A story that resonates

Imagine a thriving ancient city, bustling with life. Merchants trade goods in the marketplace, elders share wisdom under the shade of a tree, and healers care for the sick in sacred spaces. The city's strength lies not just in its wealth or systems but in the stories and rituals that bind its people together.

Every morning, merchants gather to exchange tales of their journeys, building trust and fostering relationships. Healers invoke rituals before treating patients, calming the mind and spirit for healing. Elders pass down lessons through storytelling, planting seeds of resilience and courage in the younger generation.

Now imagine if all of this disappeared. If the rituals ceased, the stories stopped, and the connections between people were reduced to transactions and tasks. The city's walls might still stand, but its heart, the shared sense of purpose, trust, and belonging, would crumble.

This city thrived not because of its resources or technology but because of its connection, shared humanity, and purpose. Rituals and stories were the glue that held the community together, fostering resilience in the face of challenges.

What rituals or traditions from your personal or organizational history could be revived to strengthen community, culture, and purpose in your workplace?

The modern world: A parallel story

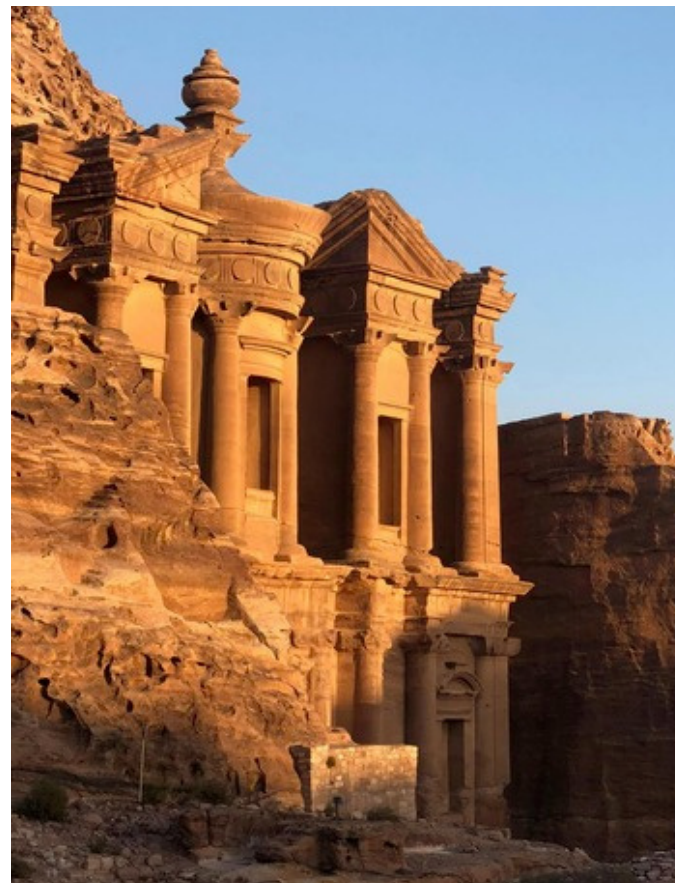
Today's world mirrors that ancient city in many ways. While technological advancements bring efficiency, organizations often lose sight of the human element. The modern world compartmentalizes our lives, separating work from home, efficiency from rest, and individuals from communities.

The rituals that once connected us to each other and our purpose have been replaced by relentless productivity. Businesses may prioritize short-term profits over well-being, and healthcare systems may focus on clinical outcomes while neglecting the emotional and spiritual aspects of care. This fragmentation leads to disconnection and burnout. Beyond being a cultural loss, this is the leadership challenge of our time.

Are modern leaders too focused on quarterly results to see the wisdom in practices that prioritize long-term connection and sustainability? How might embracing "ancient time" transform your leadership approach?

As we race to meet modern demands, we forget that people are not machines. Organizations that ignore the human need for connection will lose the essence of what truly makes them who they are: their people.

Are you measuring success in ways that prioritize well-being and purpose alongside productivity? If not, what needs to shift? Leaders must cultivate deeper connections within their teams to safeguard a healthy organizational culture, creativity, and success. Modern leadership begins with nurturing the heart of the organization.



Ancient Wisdom for Modern Leaders Continued

Why ancient wisdom is relevant in today's world

In an age dominated by artificial intelligence, automation, and data-driven decision-making, the lessons of ancient wisdom are more relevant than ever. Here's why:

Rising disconnection in a digital world

While AI and digital technologies have made communication faster and more efficient, they have also contributed to a sense of disconnection. A virtual meeting can transmit information, but can it truly capture the energy of a room? An algorithm can analyze team performance, but can it sense the hesitation in a voice, the fatigue behind a smile?

Are you using technology to amplify human connection, or is it unintentionally creating more disconnection in your team? Rituals and storytelling can bridge this gap by fostering deeper human connections, helping teams feel valued and understood.

The need for empathy in AI integration

As AI systems take on more roles in decision-making, from hiring to customer service, there is a growing need to balance technological efficiency with human empathy. Ancient practices like Ubuntu and Dadirri emphasize listening, shared purpose, and interconnectedness – qualities that can guide leaders in using AI responsibly and ethically.

For instance, AI can process vast amounts of data to identify patterns of burnout or disengagement in an organization. However, human leaders must step in to address these issues with empathy and care, using storytelling and rituals to rebuild trust and purpose.

Addressing burnout and purpose fatigue

In today's fast-paced world, employees and leaders alike are grappling with burnout and a loss of meaning in their work. Ancient wisdom offers tools to reconnect with purpose:

- Rituals, such as team check-ins or mindfulness practices, create space for reflection and renewal.
- Storytelling helps individuals see themselves as part of a larger narrative, reminding teams why their work matters.

Reflecting on these questions can help us lead with purpose and a deeper connection to our teams:

- What rituals could you introduce into your organizational culture to combat burnout, disconnection, and fatigue?
- In your leadership, are you addressing the root causes of burnout, or just treating the symptoms?
- How can ancient practices like reflection, mindfulness, and storytelling help solve these challenges

Long-term thinking in a short-term world

Short-term thinking drives much of modern business, yet ancient wisdom urges us to look further – not just to the next quarter but to the next generation.

The Seven Generations Principle teaches that the decisions we make today must serve those who come after us. These principles are critical as organizations face growing pressure to adopt sustainable practices and address climate change.

Balancing human and machine

As machines take over repetitive tasks, the uniquely human skills of creativity, emotional intelligence, and connection become even more valuable. Rituals and storytelling tap into these strengths, equipping leaders to navigate the complexities of a hybrid human-AI workforce.

Ancestral wisdom across continents: Lessons for modern organisations

Ancient practices across the globe offer profound lessons for addressing modern challenges. By looking at ancestral philosophies across continents, we can see how timeless wisdom can inspire businesses to foster connection, collaboration, and long-term thinking.

Africa: Ubuntu (Southern Africa)

Ubuntu means "I am because we are," emphasising interconnectedness and community well-being. Traditionally, it shaped communities through shared responsibility and empathy.

Modern parallel:

In modern organisations, Ubuntu promotes collaboration and a culture where success is measured by collective well-being. Companies that embrace Ubuntu create workplaces where trust, inclusivity, and shared purpose drive performance. Companies like Patagonia embody Ubuntu by prioritising employee well-being, customer care, and environmental responsibility.

How to Apply Ubuntu

- Celebrate team wins over individual achievements.
- Encourage mentoring and shared learning across all levels.
- Build a culture of empathy through open communication.

Asia: Kaizen (Japan)

The Japanese concept of Kaizen, or "continuous improvement," focuses on incremental changes that improve efficiency and innovation.

Modern Parallel:

Toyota exemplifies Kaizen by empowering employees to suggest and implement small, impactful improvements that boost long-term productivity and creativity.

How to Apply Kaizen:

- Create systems for employees to propose workflow improvements.
- Celebrate small wins to reinforce sustainable progress.
- Build a culture of adaptability, growth and learning.

Europe: Stoicism (Ancient Greece)

Stoicism teaches emotional resilience and focusing on what is within our control, helping leaders maintain clarity during uncertainty.

Modern Parallel:

CEOs like Jeff Bezos and Satya Nadella draw on Stoic principles, staying calm and focused during market disruptions and organisational shifts.

How to Apply Stoicism:

- Encourage reflection and journaling to improve emotional resilience.
- Teach teams to remain solution-focused in high-pressure situations.
- Lead by example, staying composed and decisive

North America: The Seven Generations Principle (Indigenous Wisdom)

The Seven Generations Principle, rooted in Native American traditions, emphasizes decisions that benefit future generations, promoting sustainability and long-term thinking.

Modern Parallel:

Corporations like Unilever integrate this principle into their sustainability strategies, ensuring long-term environmental and societal impact.

How to Apply the Seven Generations Principle:

- Develop policies that prioritize environmental responsibility.
- Align business goals with long-term societal benefits.
- Cultivate a culture of ethical decision-making.

South America: Ayni (The Andes)

Ayni, a concept of reciprocity, teaches giving back to communities and the Earth to maintain balance and harmony.

Modern Parallel:

Ben & Jerry's demonstrates Ayni by investing in community initiatives, promoting fair trade, and supporting environmental justice.

How to Apply Ayni:

- Establish programs that give back to local communities.
- Support employee well-being with equitable benefits and recognition.
- Align corporate impact with environmental balance.

Australia: Dadirri (Aboriginal Wisdom)

Dadirri, or "deep listening," emphasizes mindfulness, reflection, and an understanding of others, strengthening relationships and communication.

Modern Parallel:

Companies like Google implement mindfulness programs to encourage active listening and empathy, improving team collaboration and overall well-being.

How to Apply Dadirri:

- Train leaders in active listening and conflict resolution.
- Encourage mindfulness practices for better focus and communication.
- Create safe spaces for employees to share concerns and ideas.

The role of AI in supporting rituals and storytelling

AI can complement ancient practices in meaningful ways. For example

- AI-driven platforms can facilitate storytelling by collecting and sharing employee success stories across global teams.
- Algorithms can analyze team dynamics and suggest rituals to improve collaboration and engagement.
- Predictive analytics can identify stress points within organizations, helping leaders intervene with intentional rituals to reduce burnout.

However, AI should never replace the human touch. Leaders must view technology as a tool that supports, not replaces, the emotional intelligence, empathy, and creativity that define great leadership. How can you ensure that AI complements rather than replaces the emotional intelligence required to lead effectively?

The future of leadership: A call to action

Practices from ancient wisdom have been rediscovered as solutions to today's challenges. As the world becomes increasingly fast-paced and complex, leaders must find ways to ground their organizations in connection, purpose, and resilience. Is your leadership vision focused on the next quarterly report or on building a legacy that endures for generations?

Leaders today are stewards of culture, mentors of purpose, and guardians of well-being. When practices passed down by ancient civilizations merge with progressive modern insights and cutting-edge AI, leaders can shape workplaces where innovation and well-being coexist. How will you merge ancient wisdom with modern innovation to create a workplace that thrives on both connection and progress?

The future of business is not just efficient; it is empathetic, sustainable, and grounded. How will you lead the way?



Sports Psychology

CHOREOGRAPHY AS A MENTAL TRAINING

How learning choreography is a mental workout: memory, spatial awareness, adaptability under pressure. BY: NATOLA MSIDI

Dance is often an overlooked sport. This is mostly because of its artistic nature. But the process behind learning routines in 30 minutes to an hour and performing them then, after is often overlooked. Dance and the choreography aspect behind it is not just an artistic practice but also a rigorous form of cognitive and psychological training that parallels principles from sports psychology. Being a dancer requires development in 3 main areas: memory, spatial awareness, and adaptability under pressure.

Dance and Memory

There are 3 types of memory essential in dance (procedural memory, working memory, and muscle memory). These three interact in dance as a cognitive exercise accompanying the physical workout. Procedural memory is the mannerisms and skills that a person develops through rehearsal and replication of an action (Bouyeure & Noulhiane, 2020). Working memory is a limited capacity system that holds and uses information for active complex tasks and is necessary for learning, reasoning and problem solving (Cowan, 2013; Furley & Wood, 2016). Muscle memory is the unconscious replication of a movement after practice (Pujari, 2019).



In dance, part of muscle memory is using feedback and cues to consolidate muscle memory and better motor performance (Pujari, 2019). “Muscle memory plays a vital role in skill acquisition and performance enhancement. It enables athletes to execute complex movements effortlessly and accurately” (Pujari, 2019).

The interaction between all 3 in dance :

In dance Procedural memory would store information like how to do a specific move, how to stay on beat, or how to land a jump. Once learned, these skills can be performed automatically through muscle memory. Working memory would then help in holding and processing new information in the moment such as last minute changes which we will discuss further in the adaptability section.

Memory plays a role in dance similar to how athletes memorise play strategies or sequences like gymnasts, rugby players or synchronised swimmers. Another aspect of memory that I've experienced dance interacting with is the experience of the process of “embodied memory”. This is recalling movement through sensation rather than verbal cues (Iani, 2019).

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Spatial Awareness and Kinesthetic Intelligence

embodied cognition suggests that athletic expertise emerges from the integration of bodily dynamics, perception, and social interaction, offering sports psychology new ways to understand performance (Shapiro & Spaulding, 2019).

In athletic performance, especially in the context of embodied cognition and dance, proprioception, kinesthetic awareness, and spatial cognition are especially important. Proprioception tells the dancer where their body parts are without looking, is crucial for balance, alignment, and executing movements smoothly and it ensures precise joint positioning for safe and efficient performance. Kinesthetic awareness builds on proprioception but emphasises how the body is moving through space by allowing dancers to adjust speed, force, and rhythm of movements in order to maximise impact. It also supports fluidity and timing during complex sequences. Spatial cognition involves perceiving and predicting the position of self, objects, and others in an environment. Dancers use it to judge distances so they can stay in position and also to avoid collisions.

This helps in the development of an acute “sixth sense” of where the dancer's body is in space relative to others. This is essential in both group and solo performances. This is similar to how athletes read the “field” or “court” environment in dynamic motion.

Adaptability and Performing Under Pressure

The Yerkes-Dodson Law and Attentional Control Theory explain why moderate pressure sharpens focus, but excessive pressure leads to mistakes and reduced performance. This is why stress management and positive coping mechanisms become essential in a dancers life in order to maintain adaptability.

Adaptability is especially useful in competition dance as in that environment we often have to adapt when choreography changes at the last minute, when cues are missed, or when performance environments change. We are required to think on our feet, similarly to how athletes in sports such as rugby, basketball and soccer need to adjust mid-game in order to counter the opposing team's strategy.

Choreography as Holistic Mental Training

Memory helps recall choreography even when nerves are high, reducing the risk of blanking out. This strengthens pathways and is like mental endurance training. Spatial awareness is like coordination training and keeps us as dancers grounded on stage, preventing collisions or misplacements even when adrenaline distorts timing or perception. Adaptability is our high pressure problem-solving and lets us recover smoothly from mistakes, unexpected spacing issues, or partner errors without breaking flow. Under pressure, these three work together: memory secures the routine, spatial awareness maintains precision, and adaptability keeps the performance seamless. When balanced, they allow the dancer not just to survive pressure but to thrive, using nerves as energy rather than distraction.

Each rehearsal and performance strengthens neural pathways for memory, spatial reasoning, and adaptability, so over time, dancers' mental resilience and precision improve.

If choreography can train the mind as much as the body, should dance be integrated more purposefully into mental skills training programs?

References Available upon Request

The intersection of gender and mental health: Unique challenges faced by South African women

Jenna Butow (BSocSciHons Psychology Graduate)

South African women face unique mental health challenges due to a confluence of societal, economic, and cultural factors. Gaining an understanding of these challenges is therefore crucial for developing effective support systems and interventions.

Prevalence of Mental health Disorders Among South African Women

Studies indicate that South African women are disproportionately affected by mental health disorders. Research conducted in urban informal settlements found that nearly one in five women reported moderate to severe levels of anxiety. Another study conducted in the Eastern Cape reported a lifetime prevalence rate of depression at 31.4%, whereas a national survey indicated that 24.7% of men reported symptoms of depression in South Africa.

Factors contributing to Mental Health Challenges

Several interrelated factors contribute to the mental health challenges faces by South African women which includes gender-based violence (GBV), poverty and economic inequality, traditional gender roles, as well as the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

South Africa has alarmingly high rates of GBV, including intimate partner violence and sexual assault. Exposure to such violence can significantly increase the risk of developing certain mental health issues, such as depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder. In the Vhembe district, women reported experiencing depression, feelings of worthlessness, social isolation, and anger towards their children as a result of GBV.

Economic disparities can also exacerbate mental health problems. Women in lower socioeconomic brackets often face increased stress levels due to financial instability, unemployment, and limited access to healthcare services. These stressors can lead to higher rates of mental distress.

Persistent traditional gender roles place a disproportionate burden to women. These roles typically place women in caregiving and domestic positions which can severely limit levels of independence and financial freedom.

Women are also at a higher risk of contracting HIV in South Africa, and the stigma associated with the disease can lead to social isolation and mental health challenges. The intersection of HIV and mental health is significant, as mental health disorder can impede adherence to HIV treatment regimens.

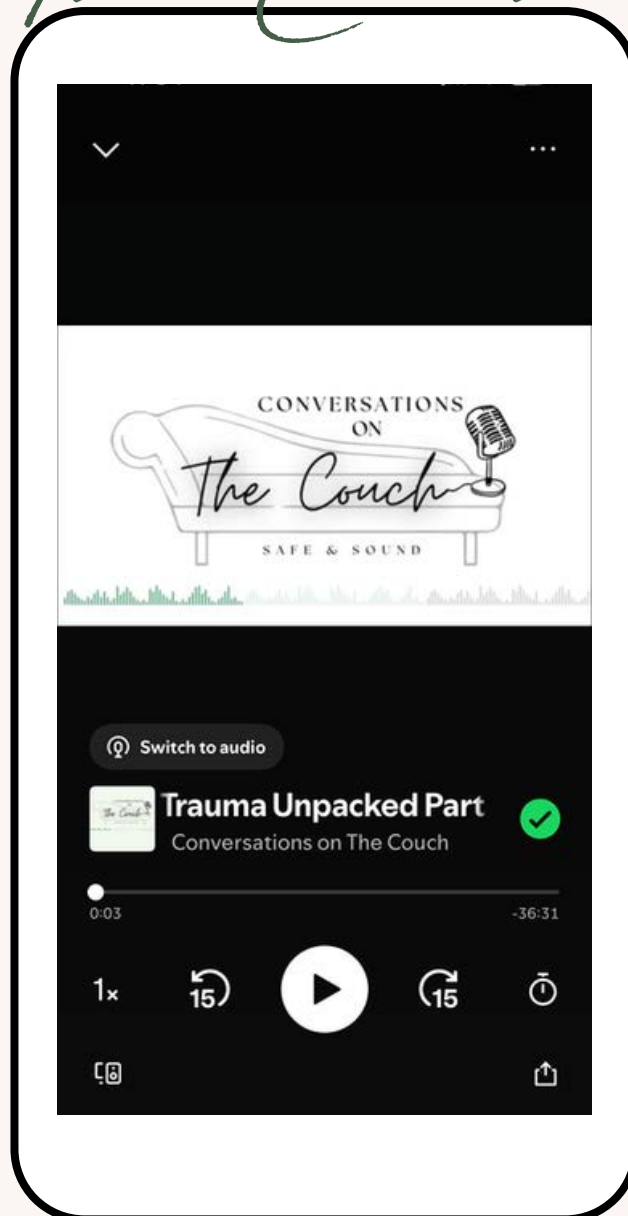
Addressing Mental Health Challenges

To mitigate these challenges, a multifaceted approach is necessary:

Enforcing and strengthening policies that protect women from violence and discrimination is crucial. This includes implementing comprehensive GBV prevention programs and ensuring access to justice for survivors. Initiatives aimed at improving women's economic status, such as skills development programs and employment opportunities can help alleviate the financial stress that contributes to mental health issues. Lastly, expanding access to mental health care, especially in underserved areas is also essential. Culturally sensitive counselling and support services also need to be made available to address these unique challenges faced by South African women.

Tune into our latest episode of Conversations on

The Couch

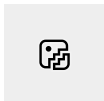


In this episode clinical psychologist Deborah Olusola and occupational therapist Emily Makhlouf explore the crucial role of occupational therapy (OT) in understanding and addressing trauma. They discuss how OT helps individuals navigate the effects of trauma on daily life, and practical strategies for fostering resilience.

Thank you for being a part of our Couch Community. Stay tuned for our next newsletter - the October 2025 edition of the Psychology Couch Newsletter.

Until next time, as always, our wish for you is to heal, learn, and grow.

Get involved and stay in touch via our social media platforms:

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