



TurnStones Newsletter no 5

Our newsletters are occasional updates on **TurnStones**; an exploration of how conversations which interact with each other can lead each of us to new perspectives.

We are Jeremy Hinks and Marcos Frangos.
Read on. Enjoy. Join us!

Hello Everyone! Already we are in August 2025 and here is our latest newsletter. This time we are sharing a story from our July TurnStones session. This comes after a summary of the remaining dates in 2025 and signposts to where to get more information.

Available dates in 2025. Remember first timers come free (reach out to Marco or Jeremy for a code) www.alpamayocoaching.com/event-list

Open to all

Tuesday 18th November 1900 to 2030 (GMT)

For members of the HSD community

Tuesday 16th September 0900 to 1030 (BST)

Tuesday 28th October 1900 to 2030 (BST)

For more information about TurnStones try any or all of the below

Website: www.alpamayocoaching.com/turnstones

Video: https://youtu.be/L__qxd6vyUc (about the TurnStones process)

In person conversation: Marcos 07881 425804 or Jeremy 07780 960777

At our recent TurnStones session (see the definition of TurnStones as a verb in the dictionary extract shared below) an international group of players bought issues which were holding their attention, and then experienced how these issues shifted as they participated in conversations and/ or witnessed others holding a conversation.

On this occasion we started out with Marco inviting us into the story of the Celtic Festival of Lammas, celebrated on August 1st in celebration of the first harvest. It's a time for reflection on the cycles of nature and we thought of the cycles of *our own* nature by sharing our experience of the year so far, what has been harvested, what has lain fallow, or what has been ploughed back into our ground to provide future nourishment.

We each shared our stories one after the other. It was fascinating the sense how the telling of the story, despite each being told by an individual, felt like an experience of co-

creation. The attention of the listener influenced the storyteller, and therefore their story. Then there was an influence of the first story on the second, the first and second on the third, and so on. It was like an auditory version of the 'the beholder's share' in the co-creation of visual art; where the viewer of the art is an integral part of the creation of the visual impression the artist themselves initiates with their painting or sculpture. I make a further connection here: conversation *is* an artform!

In TurnStones, even the introductions are given the space to exert their influence on our players. Having done so we invite them to have a conversation in pairs about their issue, a conversation which is held between them alone, in a space where each can share at a depth they are comfortable with.

Having done so we then invited them to listen to a randomly selected recording of a conversation Marco and I have had in the

past (the link to this is shared in a self-guided TurnStones offer at the end of this email). This is a conversation which is spontaneous, unscripted, unedited, and without any intention aside from prompting thinking and

feeling in others. We think of them as ‘a TurnStone conversation’ as described in the noun definition in our dictionary extract below

Turnstile....

TurnStone /'tə:nStəʊn/ *v., n. & adj.* • *v.* the process of layering two or more conversations over each other, encouraging their interaction, as a means of finding new perspectives to enrich thinking and feeling, and lead to action. [from the observation of small wading birds called Turnstones (genus *Arenaria*) foraging for food by turning over stones with their beak. Early 21st century adaptation by Marco and Jeremy where instead of finding food the reason for turning stones is to find new perspectives]. • *n.* a conversation between two people with the express purpose of prompting thinking and feeling in those who listen to it (originally called Wares earlier 21st century), • *adj.* an action arising from engagement with new perspectives (**a turnstone thought, a turnstone innovation**). [See also *leave no stone unturned*, originating in Greek literature and used in English by Thomas More in the 16th century.]

Turntable...

On this occasion our conversation was on our reflections around the phrase ‘always empower the person standing on the critical path’ which I think I came across first in the book by Phillip Sandhahl on team dynamics. It refers to the notion, in process efficiency thinking, of there being a series of step between the here and now and successful completion of an objective. You might think of the shortest route between these two places as being the critical path. Someone, or something, standing on the critical path implies a block to progress, which can be addressed by ensuring the necessary action is put in place to ‘move it’!

In my own thinking over the years, I have used this to remind myself to make sure I ‘do what I need to do to allow people to do what they need to do’, without delay and knowing they are fully resourced to be an enabler rather than a block on the critical path.

It’s a useful mindset, and yet one that causes me some disquiet. Within it I experience a sense of the linearity of time and things, of a strong relationship between cause and effect, which are so often not part of the reality of the complex challenges we face. I’ll come back to that in a moment!

Once people had listened to our discussion we invited them to layer in another conversation with their original partner, the invitation being to see how our recording about the critical path interacted with their previous conversation on their issue.

The outcomes of these conversations were intriguing and many related to people recognising they were in a different place than they had perhaps thought. Whats’ more they did not feel at ease with thinking about where they were on a any sort of time line!

It prompted a discussion about time. The existence of a critical path on a process map

leans into the traditional notion of time being effectively a line, receding into the past behind us and stretching into the future in front of us.

Perhaps this construct does not serve us well in locating ourselves in our journey of change? The practice of Human Systems Dynamics (HSD) thinks not, calling the notion of 'time as a line' one of the Dragons of Complexity (the dragons are constructs which HSD think cause people to get stuck in unhelpful patterns of behaviour).

An alternative is to challenge the thinking of time being a line and instead think of it as a manifold. This manifold exists in your present moment only. Behind it is all your lived experience, and all the lived experience from all that has gone before (a notion which is widely held in many First Nation communities. We might not be able to access all of it, yet we can draw on it to inform our decision on what to do in the present moment.

Ahead of us are all possible futures. Not a line, more an infinite network of future possibilities. When we make a decision on an action in the present moment all those possibilities fold into the single experience arising from the action we have taken. In this

moment the experience we have just had joins all which has already happened. It joins the infinite resource we can draw on in choosing 'what next?' in this present moment, which once again stands at the gateway to an infinite number of futures.

We don't move along a timeline, instead we stand always in the present, with agency over our actions, informed by the past behind us, and realising one of the multiple futures in the moment of our chosen action, from the infinite number which are open to us.

I wonder if thinking of time like this might help us to more accurately sense our progress through the messiness of our everyday lives? To me it certainly reminds me of my capacity to choose in the present, the fact I have huge resources of experience to draw on, and yet my choice will rarely be based on having certainty of its outcome. Taking action without certainty of outcomes. Any uncomfortable feeling, yet a necessary skill.

All of this from one TurnStones conversation....and I was simply an observer. What might it be like for you to participate. Think about taking an action in the present which makes TurnStones a part of your future!

A self-guided TurnStones

Think of this as a gift! Take a minute or two to connect with something in your life which is holding your attention: a challenge, stuckness, a delight, a communication or relationship challenge for example. Hold an awareness of your issue as you listen to us having a TurnStone conversation.

https://youtu.be/_eXf7Q3EJU4

Give space for your issue and our conversation, let the two interact with each other, turning stones in your thinking and feeling as they do. What perspectives come to the fore? What emerges? What might you do?