

The Wellbeing Conversation

With Dylan Alcott, Brad McEwan and special guests

Opening up to COVID normal with Sarah Soncini, Emily Wandel, Kriston Schalken and Brendan Rinaldi

Brad McEwan: Hi, thanks for your company and welcome to The Wellbeing Conversation. This chapter is a little bit different. This is our Wellbeing Conversation Wrap where we look back on the series as a whole and we've got some special guests to introduce to you today. First off, though, I'd love to welcome once again my co-host throughout the series, ANZ ambassador, Paralympic gold medalist and now two-time French Open champion Dylan Alcott. Dylan - hello and congratulations!

Dylan Alcott: G'day Brad. Thanks mate. Look, I got some props just sitting next to me. This is the French Open title. I'm currently in hotel quarantine, so I'm on day 13 of day 14. So it's been a long two weeks, but mate I've really enjoyed the series. And looking forward to this little wrap party.

Brad McEwan: It is a wrap party. It is a wrap party. It is going to be a lot of fun. Now, joining us today, our guests are members of the ANZ team. So we'll go through them. Joining us, we have Sarah Soncini. Sarah, thank you very much for joining us.

Sarah Soncini: Thanks for having me, Brad. Great to be here.

Brad McEwan: Great to have you here. Also joining us today, Emily Wandel. Hello, Emily. Thank you for joining us.

Emily Wandel: Thank you, Brad. Very excited to be here.

Brad McEwan: Third cab off the rank. Joining us today from ANZ, we have Kriston Schalken. Hello, Kriston.

Kriston Schalken: Howdy Doody. Really been enjoying the Wellbeing Conversation and great to be part of it. And also joining us today, let's welcome also from ANZ, Brendan Rinaldi. Hello, Brendan.

Brendan Rinaldi: Hey Brad, good to see you again. And well done Dyl on your recent win.

Brad McEwan: Well done indeed, now, it's great to have you all with us before we move on and we get your thoughts on a little bit about the Wellbeing Conversation, but also on how you've been going through the whole COVID experience. Let's just recap and give everyone a little taste of what we've experienced and enjoyed the past few months.

[Edit from previous episodes]

Dylan Alcott: *And here's a little taste of what's coming up on the next episode, the Wellbeing Conversation.*

Georgia Murch: *I've seen a lot of people struggle with their identity.*

Dylan Alcott: *Am I the only person that has no purpose? Am I the only person that is feeling this? Am I the only person that isn't sure about what's going to happen next?*

Dominic Price: *And I think right now, with the changes we're going through, if we can't find a way of unlearning the old habits and rituals, we'll never have the time to learn new ones.*

Ben Crowe: *We are the stories we tell ourselves about ourselves.*

Dr. Pippa Grange: *When we allow that to be just a currency that we operate with and allow it to be laced with this idea of not being good enough as a human being. That's where it goes wrong.*

Dylan Alcott: *As soon as you release that emotional baggage and started talking about it, my life honestly changed immediately.*

Ben Crowe: *It's our decisions, not the conditions that determine our mindset, our self-worth and our attitude.*

Dr. Pippa Grange: *You can author your own story rather than wait for the news channel to tell you what's next or, you know, the rule book. As we were saying earlier, it's not it's not necessarily going to come in a straightforward way.]*

Brad McEwan: A lot to digest from the Wellbeing Conversation, it's certainly been a past few months that we haven't really experienced before. We'll start with Sarah. Sarah, have you found the last few months?

Sarah Soncini: Well, I've actually come back to work from parental leave during the pandemic, so challenge upon challenge. So it's a bit difficult to explain to a one-year-old while yesterday you were walking in the kitchen, you're available, and then the next day when you walk into the office, you're no longer available to them. It's I guess that's been pretty challenging. Lots of ups and downs. When I came out and spoke about my mental health condition at ANZ and created the Mental Health Network, it was when I started to feel like I had a purpose in life and by being vulnerable, particularly during this pandemic, I think it's really helped a lot of other people to share about how they're feeling and how they're coping with it.

Brad McEwan: Look, that's fantastic feedback, Sarah. It really is. Emily, what about you? I mean, Sarah touched on her experience, but as we heard throughout the Wellbeing Conversation, we're all different and it's impacted us all differently, hasn't it?

Emily Wandel: Yeah, absolutely. I can completely resonate with Sarah, though, because obviously when it was that we were all working from home, we were, you know, home schooling, plus throw in a toddler that thinks that this is just fun and games that they can play with you all day long. It really is super challenging. And I think it was a daily often struggle to just not be and feel completely overwhelmed by the whole situation. So it was a- it was a day by day process and one that I think the biggest thing I took away from it was that every day is allowed to look different. Nobody needs to be the same. Just do what you have to do to get through it.

Brad McEwan: What about for you, Kriston? Did any days look the same or did they all just blur into one another?

Kriston Schalken: Oh they were all very different. You know, I very much reflect on the period we've been going through as just very character defining. You know, I often reflect on sort of how it all came to play for me personally. And it was interesting as things got really, really material in Victoria during March. I had my younger brother just about to get married in Wellington, and I was the best man at that wedding for our family who have been very separated because my parents sort of separated when we were relatively young. It was a big deal. And I remember that weekend coming into the nineteenth of March and, you know, we had ScoMo on the TV telling us about the border closures and things like that, which effectively meant we had to bring forward that whole trip. And there was tears and family meetings and Zoom calls and some really, really challenging decisions that needed to be made, but one that I think tested us all, but has very much shown true colours and probably brought a lot of the things that we've been aware of sort of subconsciously to the surface has been sort of our core values and our true purpose in life, things like family. So it's been interesting, but I think very productive at the same time.

Brad McEwan: And Brendan, one of the chapters was all about resilience and perspective. And I think it's fair to say for so many of us, if not all of us, our perspective can't help but change through what we've been through the past few months.

Brendan Rinaldi: Yeah, totally. And I think one of the quotes by Georgia earlier in the piece was: "what if this is happening for us, not to us?" So if you shift the perspective in these things that it can help. And I think that's the brilliant thing of this whole conversation series, is there's been various different perspectives from different speakers and, you know, yourself and Dylan included in that. And, you know, it's been such a rollercoaster for different individuals, for different states even. Kriston's been in Victoria and living through a very different environment to what we have here in South Australia, for example. So different for everybody. I mean, for me personally, I loved it early on to be to be honest, apart from the initial anxiety of what's this going to mean for all of us? But then just being at home was kind of, you know, I've got a I had a one-year-old at home. She's now 18 months. But to see that growth. You know, the paternity leave, I never, never got to have right? To be at home with the kids. But then from a work perspective, it was more around, you know, taking on the challenge from a leadership perspective and all the leaders that I'm associated with, you know, we all stood really close together and we - we're not experts in wellbeing, but we have got a responsibility to bring these conversations to light, which we have through this series, but also even within our individual businesses. We brought resources and we've got an amazing support network of organisations and people that we can bring to help our people through times like this. And I think that's sort of adds resilience to the team. And yes, we're having these conversations and education as the tools to lean us really help through this.

Brad McEwan: And Dylan, the feedback that I've had from so many people is you have helped them because you are an open book. You're just happy to just let everyone know how you're feeling and what you've struggled with.

Dylan Alcott: Yeah, for sure. I think that's probably one of the most important things that I learnt early on in my life that I reflected throughout the series. But, you know, as I said, throughout it like it when COVID hit, you know, I probably wasn't being true to myself and talking about my feelings with the people that I loved. And as soon as I started communicating that, I started feeling a little better. I've also now had a very different journey. I've just got back from six weeks overseas. So I know what's going on around the rest of the world as well. I spent 10 days in New York. I've been in Paris for a month. We

flew home through Japan and seeing the different ways that people have been handling the pandemic was pretty eye opening. And it was also pretty scary at some points, like we were in a bubble when I was playing tennis. However, you know, there was 30,000 cases every day in France when I was there. And everybody's wearing their masks on their elbows and not on their faces. And, you know, that can be quite - the anxiety while being there was quite high for my partner Chantelle and I, you know, not really wanting to be safe, but, you know, getting tested, to be able to do my job at the Grand Slams and things like that. So it was a whole nother experience. And, you know, I'm from Melbourne, which is a part of the world. It's been in the longest lockdown in the world, you know, so my heart goes out to everybody that as has been struggling and things like that. But perspective's everything. And I know where I'd rather be from, which is the place where I know I'm safe.

Brad McEwan: Great feedback as always. Sarah, how did you find the whole experience and Brendan touched on it that, you know, in Victoria, ANZ, people were impacted more heavily than in other states or even overseas, where you really relying on each other right around the network?

Sarah Soncini: Well, I'm in Victoria, so, yeah, still in sort of partial lockdown. But I think what was really important is that we were really open about how what we were feeling. So I think early on there, when I came back from parental leave, I was plodding away for pretending life was normal and expecting to get the sort of same outcomes. But I wasn't and I would notice that I would burst into tears over the smallest things. And the thing is, we've had people rally around you. I remember in one meeting someone said, oh, it must be hard to be raising your son without getting to see your mother, because my mum was in regional Victoria and I remember bursting into tears with then everyone rallying around me and saying, well, I feel like this and I'm going through this. And this is really hard. And I think that's what this conversation's talked about, is that the importance of talking about it out in the open. And once you start to do that, everyone starts to realise, wow, I'm normal, I'm going through this as well. It's OK to feel these range of emotions. So I think the network in particular has been great because we've been able to share how we're feeling. And a lot of people who may be experiencing poor mental health, maybe the first time in their lives can actually see that there's ways that you can do to manage, you know, getting out in the sun and eating well, exercising, meditating, gratitude, all those amazing things that you can practice daily to help you through this sort of pandemic.

Brad McEwan: Yeah, absolutely. And there's been so much sharing that's going on. As Sarah's touched on there, Emily, I bet now, you know a lot more about yourself and a lot of your colleagues for what you've experienced together the past few months.

Emily Wandel: Absolutely. I think I'm a little bit of a social person as well so for me, it was quite challenging not having that constant interaction with people around you. So it was about I guess it was an opportunity to come up with different ways to show people that you care about them and you're thinking of them. But virtually instead of that sort of face to face coffee conversation, so and that worked with not even just that with staff and clients. And that was a real challenge, but an exciting challenge for me to really consider how I could support my wider team, because, as you said, getting through it, you started to realise who was, I guess, withdrawing, who was picking up the phone more often. Who was sending me emails. So it gave you that real opportunity to consider how are we going to bring our team and our clients together and make sure that everyone is doing OK and feeling OK, because I think everybody deals with mental health and mental wellbeing in very different ways. For me, it wasn't a matter of making sure I was getting my exercise in

or not. It was, I guess, keeping my mindset right and positive and I guess looking to the future rather than sort of getting stuck here in that moment.

Brad McEwan: And, Kriston, what we know is, as Emily's touched on there; getting the mindset right, it's not always easy, is it?

Kriston Schalken: No, it isn't, and, you know, I think we've got to start by very much acknowledging how people are feeling and very open and transparent feeling and unlocking those sort of challenges. And, you know, I think as an individual and also as a leader, bringing that humility and transparency in relation to what you're going through really opens up those conversations because everyone's very much impacted differently. And, you know, when I reflect on some of those early periods within COVID, one of the best things that we did as a team was very much rotate the chairs on daily discussions to allow people to bring different experiences and perspectives. And it very quickly made people feel like they're not alone. And as a result of that, and through those conversations, there was a very much a powerful movement in relation to being together and working together to actually make sure that we all got through this together.

Brad McEwan: We talk about perspective, Brendan. It was fascinating early on to hear Dom Price talk about, you know, it doesn't really matter what business you're in, whether you're banking or IT, automobile industry doesn't matter. You're all in the people business because without your people and if you don't look after your people, you can't do anything. You can't achieve anything.

Brendan Rinaldi: Yeah, I think another great thing you said was our role as leaders or organisations is to return our people in a better state than when we found them. So, yeah, it's been all about the people. And as Kriston touched on everyone's experience differently, experience this differently. And I think that's been really important. And, you know, one thing that we've all learnt is to adapt technology a lot faster than probably what some of us used to do. So it's been great to join various teams that you probably otherwise wouldn't over Microsoft Teams or Zoom and checking on everyone, like normally you would just pick up the phone and call someone. But it's been great to get on on team calls with everyone and check in and have a bit of a laugh from time to time. And that's been really important.

Dylan Alcott: I've just been proud of the way that people, especially where we live here in Australia, the way people have come together and look after each other, you know what I mean? And to be a part of not just saying this because we're all part of the family, but for ANZ to stick their neck out and make some content around this is important I think. Because it shows not only people internally, but also, you know, people out there and in the wider world as well, that it's OK to be vulnerable. It's OK to look after each other. And when you do, you know, positive things come out of it.

Brad McEwan: Is OK to be vulnerable. And a question for everyone, we'll start with you, Emily, in regards to that. Maile Carnegie, I thought was fascinating in that she said she has to work really hard to be open about her vulnerabilities. It doesn't come naturally to Maile. Now, I'm not going to ask you to share your vulnerabilities, but how do you go with sharing a side of you like that?

Emily Wandel: That was quite a significant chapter, to be honest. So that really did sit with me. I actually watched that one multiple times. So for myself personally, vulnerability has been quite a challenge to just put myself out there to try to, I guess, make that

decision as to how I was going to show up and how I wanted to be seen. Am I going to be perceived in the wrong manner or the wrong light is what I'm trying to put across what I'm hoping to? So I think it is a daily challenge to make sure that I am stepping up in a way that I hope to leave a legacy behind about the things that I'm passionate about and to share my voice and to truly be seen amongst my peers and my family, my friends, the whole works. So I constant certainly an ongoing challenge for myself and one that really set quite well with me.

Brad McEwan: What about you, Sarah? Because I'll be interested in your answer, because you earlier mentioned that you've opened up about your mental health. So was it - is that something that you're more familiar with, do you think?

Sarah Soncini: I think in some ways I was lucky because before the pandemic, I made the choice to, I guess, be vulnerable and start talking about my mental health condition openly at work in front of hundreds of people. And by doing that, I think we've touched on it in the series as well. I was able to be authentic. I was able to then start to think I don't have to hide this part of me, I can be myself. And then from that amazing opportunities present themselves, like being here today, like creating a mental health network at an organisation, when now we really do need it and people need to hear about these things. And every day I can get up and be myself and not fear that I'm hiding part of myself. So anyone out there that's thinking, well, I don't know if I should share who I am. I think the day that you start to share who you truly are and any sort of vulnerabilities, the day that you get to truly be yourself and happy, it's like a weight gets lifted off you.

Brad McEwan: Great insight. And just great to know that that's how you're feeling, Sarah. So thanks very much for sharing that with us. Kriston, are you as open about sharing a part of yourself, your vulnerabilities as Sarah is?

Kriston Schalken: Yeah, absolutely. You know, I was talking earlier about the challenges we had as a family in terms of getting to my younger brother's wedding and the stress and strain that sort of caused. And that was something I shared with the team very early on. And my wife has her own business she's in beauty. So she has beauty salons, which have been one of the most impacted industries here in Melbourne. And, you know, I was right there with her sort of seeing her emotional reaction to a lot of the announcements that were coming through in terms of having to close and I sort of helped with the admin in that business and I was typing out the stand down letters for the staff and part of those conversations with those staff and sort of seeing how that was impacting them. So and all of those things that I was sort of experiencing, I was sharing with my team and sort of how it felt made me feel. And, you know, those sort of vulnerabilities, you know, I think for my team, you know, demonstrated that I was, you know, aware and connected to what was going on and. And also open to how they were feeling and how many people sort of reached out and sort of said, are you feeling okay, how are you dealing with it? Anything I can do was just very, very warming. And I think those sort of that authentic approach very much is what sort of connects people. And, you know, one of the things that I've been reflecting on a lot with my team is the opportunities in all of this. And I think Georgia, one of the things she said, you know what? If we think about this or reframe this like it's not happening to us, it's happening for us and, you know, that that reframing very much opens up this possibility is what more can we actually do to make us better throughout this period? So, you know, I think I think being more real is absolutely part of that. And, you know, the working from home thing has been so good for that. I've got the five-year-old and three-year-old, the home schooling thing, you know, and to see people with kids on top of their shoulders and, you know, typing, you know, has been great to actually share

with other members of the ANZ team. It's very much sort of brought family to be part of the ANZ workplace. And it's even deepened the connection with a lot of our customers who had those sort of experiences. And it's a bit of fun. It's a bit of a joke. But I think what I'd like to say, you know, if you jump onto something like LinkedIn, instead of it being a picture of Kriston Schalken, in his suit and tie, Kriston Schalken and Anton, Allegra and Steph my wife and actually being more aligned to what we actually represent as ourselves in social and family connections and community connections. So all of that, I think, is one of the great positives of COVID.

Brad McEwan: Absolutely. And Brendan, as Kriston's touched on there, it's been real, like, know, if kids are running around or someone knocked on the door or your zoom connection drops out or I know a couple of times our cat Muffin starts to walk across in front of me and I'm like, what? And then I find myself going, who cares? Half of us has got pets. This is what's happening. This is the world we're living in. And that's the case, isn't it?

Brendan Rinaldi: Yeah, totally. I think we've learnt to love that part of these calls over Zoom or Teams is when you see the kids in the background and, you know, prior to COVID we'd probably all apologise for it but we don't need to apologise anymore, like, it's just part of the way we go about our business. And, you know, it's great to see kids come in and Mum or Dad put them on their lap just for a few minutes while we're still talking. You can be on mute and you can still pay them some attention and things like that. Or you can take pick the dog up and, you know, it does bring a smile to everyone's face and it might change the subject for for a small second. But it does bring joy to people's lives. I think that's been such a silver lining in all this that we have been able to share more of ourselves and more of our families, with our colleagues and like Kriston said vulnerabilities connect us and I think sharing more about us certainly does help that connection, which does build great teams and resilient teams and does help you get through times like this.

Brad McEwan: About to wrap things up, I want to put a question to all of you as we as we finish. So we've gone through COVID, Spanish flu was give or take 100 years ago. Let's say, once all going well, we move on from this. Fingers crossed. Let's say something happens in another hundred years of a similar nature. What would be your advice if you could record something or write something down to say to somebody in the future if you encountered what we went through, here's my one piece of advice. And I know it's a it's a mighty question, but I have faith in all of you to give us a fantastic answer and I have enormous faith in Sarah. What would be your single takeaway that you would pass on?

Sarah Soncini: I think it would be to slow down, embrace life and just do some work on finding out who you are and what you want from life and what's important for you, because I think this is a great opportunity to do that, to slow down and not get caught up in the hustle bustle. And I have to do this and I have to be there and I have to go there and just slowing down and going, who am I, what do I want from life and what makes me happy? And then and then coming out the other end, you know, working towards that definitely.

Brad McEwan: Which is exactly what Georgia touched on, didn't she? What is happening for us, not to us? Emily, what about you?

Emily Wandel: Oh, absolutely just be true to your why, I guess, at the end of it. So stick to what really matters and what gives you that fire in the belly and just continue to challenge yourself, but shift your expectations. There was a lot of conversation about armour. And I think knowing what your triggers are and then being able to control your approach, given obviously that we can't control the circumstance. So I think that's really important.

Brad McEwan: And the sage advice from Kriston?

Kriston Schalken: Would be, be genuine with how it's impacting you because you won't be alone and encourage that togetherness. The other thing I would say would be just focus on what you can do to stay connected and live to those big rocks, those things that really drive your purpose, whether it's family, community or something else from a professional perspective, to keep those things alive and well.

Brad McEwan: And, Brendan, what about you?

Brendan Rinaldi: I think the key bit of advice, Brad, is just control what you can control and focus on that and spend less time worrying on what you can't control. I think Pippa put it perfectly in her episode around fear and not, you know, controlling your emotions and not worrying about what could happen, but just working what you know today and focus on what you can control. And I think from a leadership perspective, it's all been around focusing on the wellbeing of our people. I think one of the leaders in our episode said that 5 or 10 years ago, if you spoke about wellbeing, it was just one of those subjects that wasn't potentially on the radar that I think Kriston will recall we had a leadership conference only back in 2018 and really talking two years ago, and wellbeing was a topic that came up on day one in one group is an area that we should be improving. This was one group out of 12 and it was still seen amongst that group a little bit as a topic that people are a little bit uncomfortable talking about. But the following day when we got split up into our 12 groups together, we all had to pick one thing that we wanted to improve in our business. Nine of those 12 groups said the wellbeing of our people. And from that point, we've come along in leaps and bounds as an organisation. And I think the other great thing about COVID in a way is it's bringing these wellbeing conversations to light a lot more. So these conversations were important, pre-COVID, they're super important during COVID, and they're going to be really important post-COVID. So I think that journey in itself has been great and that would be a key message to people going through this. Again, focus on your people in the wellbeing and educating them to get through the anxiety, to get through the what ifs and really focussing on what you can control and doing those little things, going for a walk, getting your diet right, just staying on top of your health and wellbeing's super important.

Brad McEwan: Absolutely. And Dylan, I imagine you won't leave us with a quote. You'll be leaving the next generation a book wouldn't you?

Dylan Alcott: I don't know about that, I mean, I can't say any better than what's already said that the two things would don't panic first and foremost. And secondly, it's about we, not me. I think as soon as people started to realise that it's about your families, your co-workers, our community, our country, you know, that I think that group mentality made everyone feel a lot better by checking in on everybody else. As soon as, you know, I started doing that, I started feeling better about myself. But everybody around me and as a team, we can get through this and we have got through this. And my last advice is make sure you get a haircut on day one of the pandemic because hairdressers close for two hundred eight days and you end up looking like this Brad. So I'm excited for Melbourne to start opening up so I can finally go.

Brendan Rinaldi: I think another good thing, Dyl constantly said throughout the series talking about it makes you feel better. So the conversations you can have with people around how you're feeling super important.

Dylan Alcott: Yeah. You're right and that's going to go on beyond when COVID's finished, hopefully, you know what I mean? So it's not just about during a pandemic. Hopefully these things that we've learnt continue on in business, but also in our personal and professional lives as well. Because you're right, there's so many great learnings Brendan and it's just nice that this just a lot of people, hopefully for the positive one all or the hard times and done so. Yeah, it's been it's been a tough time. But I think, as you said, there'll be some definitely there is light at the end of the tunnel now, but I think we'll be better people because of it.

Brad McEwan: And my two bobs worth kindness has always been so important. But we have seen firsthand how positively it can impact people and help people that really need an act of kindness the past few months. So it's been fantastic for their mental health and wellbeing and ours as well. Before we finish, one thing I should reveal is that. As much as the final product came up really well, and we're really happy with it. It didn't always quite go to plan.

[Bloopers and outtakes unaired from previous episodes]

Brad McEwan: Yeah, we certainly had a lot of fun and a few takes there along the way. To all of you today, thank you. Thank you for your wonderful feedback for Dylan and I and everyone involved it. It warms the cockles of our heart to know how much you got out of the Wellbeing Conversation. And that's what it was there for. It was there for you and all of the ANZ people and your extended family, friends, anyone that wants to watch it. So thank you very much. So to Sarah, Emily, Kriston, Brendan and of course, Dylan, thanks very much. We've certainly really appreciated your time today. Good luck for everything and to everyone, everyone that's enjoyed the Wellbeing Conversation. Thanks for watching.