KEY POINTS

- Dietitians may have limited their potential to achieve at a higher level.
- The Personal Empowerment Framework enables you to uncover your worth and potential to achieve outside of your comfort zone.
- If you do not put any energy into stepping into the unknown you will be limiting your experience and opportunities to learn thus reducing your capacity for personal empowerment.
- Personal empowerment is the catalyst for enhancing positive outcomes for personal, professional and academic achievement.

Behavior change is one of the core modalities in dietetic practice and much is being done to improve and maintain this all important skill. But how empowered are we to effectively deliver behaviour change to our patients?

I wonder if it’s time to take a step back and review how empowered we are as individuals and invest some time and effort in facilitating our Personal Empowerment (PE). The word ‘empowerment’ means to ‘equip or supply with ability’ so PE is about enabling a person to function and perform at the highest level in all spheres of their learning and development.

Very recently we have seen the launch of the ‘Know Your Worth/Trust a Dietitian’ campaign providing the dietetic profession with an excellent opportunity to reflect on what we do which directly relates to how empowered we perceive ourselves to be as individuals and professionals and acknowledge the pivotal role we as dietitians play in improving health outcomes for our patients.

Equally, how we are perceived by the ‘outside world’ and the impact and influence we exert on the ‘outside world’ is under constant scrutiny and campaigns like ‘Trust a Dietitian’ and the launch of ‘Dietitians Week’ provides a timely platform for us to review what we do and showcase our unique selling points.

However, according to Anne Holdaway (Freelance Dietitian) at the 2014 BDA Live event, more effort is needed from dietitians to rise to the occasion and be a ‘visible force’ with an ‘audible voice’ clearly demonstrating our worth as dietitians and to be actively involved in policy-making and change. In a similar vein, Linda Hindle leads by example as the Allied Sickle Cell and Thalassaemia Liaison Worker, Homerton University NHS Foundation Trust.

Claudine Matthews

"Don’t go where there is a path rather go where there is no path and leave a trail” Emerson
The function of reframing, a neuro linguistic pathway has allowed me to take a new perspective in the way I used to do things, my thought patterns and even my attitude to new tasks and challenges. Reframing has fuelled my desire to learn and engage in activities I might normally avoid. Reframing and reflection both facilitate the learning process; reframing engages new neural pathways which have a lasting effect once the new neural pathways have been laid due to continued practice. Both these elements contribute to learning, behaviour change and positive outcomes.

Health Professional (AHP) Lead for Public Health England, encouraging all dietitians to ‘make every contact count’.

Reflecting on my personal experience there were a number of factors which prevented me from knowing my full worth as a dietitian, one of which was a limiting self-perception and mind-set. Self-perception relates to the way we see ourselves and embeds what we believe and how we come to understand who we are. I suspect that I may not be an isolated case and that other dietitians may also have limited their potential to achieve at a higher level.

DEVELOPING THE EMPOWERMENT FRAMEWORK

To address my personal struggles and limitations, I developed a Personal Empowerment Framework Model as part of my MSc final project to attempt to provide a comprehensive insight into how I’ve developed since starting the master’s programme. This Framework provides an in-depth enquiry into my personal learning and development and the various facets which led to achieving my PE. The PE Framework Model comprises four practical reflective strategies highlighted in the diagram opposite (Figure 1) which enabled me to uncover my worth and potential to achieve outside of my comfort zone, creating positive outcomes for my personal and professional development.

PERSONAL EMPOWERMENT

Just imagine for a moment you find yourself stuck in a rut professionally and an opportunity presents itself which could potentially change the course of your career, but the challenge is you have to take a risk and accept a role you know very little about, in fact it’s a newly created post where your knowledge is minimal. This was me in 2012. The dilemma provided the ideal scenario to test out the efficacy of the PE Framework. The outcome of my decision was astounding and is still unravelling today; this could be your story.

Armed with a newly created ‘personal culture’ resulting from a new mind-set as I perceive and convert obstacles into learning opportunities, I was able to reframe my thinking into accepting a new role in sickle cell disease. Using my knowledge of learning styles, particularly my Myers Briggs classification as an ENTJ, ‘natural born leader’, I silenced all doubt and literally stepped into the unknown world of sickle cell.

REFERENCES

9. Lab. 1 and Lab. 2. The犰tual Elevated Dr. B. Copyright-Registered B. University of California Western Training Lab. 1990.
10. For Myers Briggs Foundation.