

**BAOS Feature**

**Authentic leadership**

‘Authentic leaders are guided by sound moral convictions and act in concordance with their deeply held values, even under pressure. They are keenly aware of their views, strengths, and weaknesses, and strive to understand how their leadership impacts others.’ (1)

In the press, there has been a lot of discussion over the course of this pandemic about what makes a good leader and I think this presents us with the opportunity to self-reflect and see how we manage ourselves in this time of unprecedented chaos and lifestyle change. This is as relevant if you are a clinical director of hundreds or sole practitioner in a dental practice.

I would suggest that the better leaders are those that ‘make a deliberate choice to practice a calm state of mind’ (2), allowing themselves to consider what they and their team may need to be able to function adequately in extremely worrying circumstances. An important role of leaders is to perform well in the face of crises. If the leader panics then this will cause panic for the rest of the team. I think optimism mixed with a large serving of realism is a recipe for success.

I do not think this is a male vs female issue. Indeed, we as a profession don’t need to look far to see disquiet at our own leadership during this period. Therefore, I don’t think Jacinda has fared better than Donald as a country’s leader because she is unhindered by the presence of a Y chromosome. I think it is largely because she ‘refuse(s) to believe that you cannot be both compassionate and strong,’ (The New York Times, 8/9/18), and clearly possesses both of these qualities. The way she manages her team and indeed her country, seems in part related to the fact that she is inclusive and takes them all along on the journey with her. “We have the opportunity to do something no other country has achieved: elimination of the virus,” she told reporters. “But it will continue to need a team of five million behind it.”

Team members need to feel that they are included and relied upon, and leaders must allow themselves to trust their team members to give them a sense of responsibility that they can be proud to be deserving of. So, how have we all

done? As individuals? As part of a team? Clearly, there are a vast number of key issues that make for an extremely complex period. However, I would like to suggest that one of the most important variables to consider is that ‘although we have all been facing the same storm, we have all been in very different boats’, (Damian Barr, May 2020). This might be because of the healthcare role we have played, the team(s) we are part of, the state of our own health and/ or our home circumstances such as having children or other caring responsibilities. I think it has been all too easy to criticise others whilst taking little time to look inward, to consider our own actions and behaviours, and to see how these might affect others over these last few months.



As I look forward to my time as President of this Association, it is not without more than a little trepidation. Partly because I will be following in the footsteps of an outstanding leader that is the current President Paul Coulthard. But also because there is much to learn. I must be compassionate, strong and strive to practice regular self-reflection and regulation. I will not try to mimic great leaders, but will seek to be *authentic*, as ‘our values are often hidden assumptions; revealing them requires an active and honest process of personal reflection. Before we can lead others, we must first lead ourselves’ (3).

1. Peus, C., Wesche, J.S., Streicher, B. et al. Authentic Leadership: An Empirical Test of Its Antecedents, Consequences,

- and Mediating Mechanisms. *J Bus Ethics* 107, 331–348 (2012).
2. <https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/organization/our-insights/how-to-demonstrate-calm-and-optimism-in-a-crisis>.
  3. Open, honest and effective: what makes Jacinda Ardern an authentic leader. Andrei Alexander Lux. Lecturer in Leadership and Organisational Behaviour, Edith Cowan University. May 26, 2020

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Julie Burke

BAOS President-Elect

## Spotlight

As another New Year starts, I am sure many of us are very glad to close the door on 2020 and look forward with hopeful enthusiasm for all that 2021 has to bring.

Facebook kindly reminds us of celebrations from years passed and when I look back on the photos from NYE 2019, I am struck by how none of us were aware of the chaos and upheaval that was just around the corner. I know that all of us have stepped up to the challenges of 2020 in one form or another, maintaining services, working outside of our normal environments, adjusting to various SOP's and PPE, managing our own anxieties, supporting our colleagues and above all caring for patients. In my opinion, we all deserve a pat on the back – please take a moment to do this now while I say “Thank you” for your continued efforts.

In addition, the New Years Honours list has been published and I was delighted to see three colleagues have been recognised for their efforts, Professor Barbara Chadwick, Dr Asha Thompson and Mr Sat Parmer. I would like to offer my congratulations to all of you being awarded an MBE.

However, one of these colleagues is a person who I was lucky enough to work alongside while finishing my registrar training in Birmingham. Sat Parmer was a delight to work with, he was patient, enthusiastic, kind and gave freely of his time and expertise. I am particularly pleased to see his hard work in the field of services to Oral and Maxillofacial cancer surgery being

recognised and wish to say a special congratulations to him!

Finally, I know that we still have challenging times ahead but have faith that together, as a community, we can and will prevail. Wishing you all a happy and healthy 2021.



Rhian Jones

BAOS Honorary Treasurer

**“Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better.”**

I'd like to say that the title was one I created myself, however as some of you may know, the credit lies with Maya Angelou, an American Poet, memoirist and civil rights activist. She was an individual who always had a positive outlook on life and encouraged others to do the same especially when faced with adversity. The title seemed very apt given the challenges and changes we have all had to contend with in both our work and personal lives for more than a year now.

I think that now is a time that we can allow ourselves to feel positive and to look forward to an exciting future for our specialty. Spring is here and the brighter and warmer days are elevating our spirits after a winter that has been darkened more than most. We should pause to reflect on our clinical and academic achievements as individuals and team members during the COVID-19 pandemic, and use what we have learnt to take us ahead into the future.

Innovation and collaboration have been key during this time. Taking this forward, in the North East of England we are excited about the appointment of two Dental Core Trainee Posts in Oral Surgery, commencing in September- a first for our region. We hope that these posts will be a success and look forward to more in the future. Another positive outcome has been increased- albeit virtual- attendance at our local MCN which should enable a more collaborative approach to problem solving locally. Taking this further, we are keen to establish links with other Oral Surgery MCNs nationwide to facilitate a more uniformed approach to navigating our shared future challenges.



Lee Mercer

BAOS Council Member

