

## BEACON Chapter 1 - Lesson 2 - Beacon Basics transcript

[00:00:00] Hello and welcome back. This is lesson two of Chapter one, and this is about the basics of BEACON. So what we're going to look at in this lesson is to introduce you to the BEACON framework, which sits behind this series of works that you are involved in. And what you can expect to learn here is a bit about how BEACON began. What makes it different from other approaches? What is BEACON? What's underneath BEACON? How the learning will work and how you can make the best of it. So let's dive in. I'll share my screen again and we can do this together.

[00:00:53] So if you are someone that's heard those words, "I think you need to see someone", you wouldn't be alone. Actually, the research or the data shows that almost half of us adults will experience mental illness at some period of time in our life. I know that I have and I know that for me that came as a shock and a surprise. And if I'm really honest with a degree of shame, I didn't see it coming. I was trying to support others at the time and it was in the process of trying to get them support that professionals turned on me and said that I was experiencing depression. And this is a common story that I hear and it's not so much the fact that we struggle, because it's really important that we acknowledge that to be human is to struggle sometimes. But it's more how we deal with that struggle and the support that we get. And I guess I wanted to speak a little bit here about our approach and how it might be different and in order to do that, I wanted to share a story of let's call her Anna. Anna is someone that I spoke to this week and like so many others she had heard those words. She describes her partner becoming concerned about her, him having had his own struggles and trying to make suggestions for things to think and do and it wasn't landing and eventually he said to her, I think you need to see someone. And so the starting point she courageously went to her GP the very next morning and he was very quick to diagnose her with depression and to say to her that she had quite possibly been depressed for a very long time. And for her, that maybe she hadn't even realised that that was the case. So that was very confronting for her but she gathered herself up, got the referral and went off to see the psychologist. The psychologist, again who did a series of testing with her and further confirmed that she was indeed very depressed and the only course of suggested way to deal with that was medication and Anna was describing her disappointment about that, and she was comparing it with the fact that her father had recently had a knee replacement and that the physio had been able to give her father some small exercises to do every day to give his knee working properly and she was saying, well, why couldn't I have some small activities that would help me to reduce my depression and feel better every day. And that's really the approach that we want to take here, is that wherever you are in the mental health continuum, whether your struggle is deep and has been persistent for a long time or whether it's acute and has just kind of come upon you because of particular circumstances. Our hope is to deal with things differently, certainly in terms of positive psychology my experience has been that a lot of people explained to me that they have been to psychologists many times over many years and that they have tried a lot of things that have not really helped them too budge some of the issues that they're having. So our hope is that in applying the science of well-being and teaching evidence based approaches for thriving and allowing people to think about what's strong rather than what's wrong and to discover their strengths and to think with different mindsets and should think about self compassion, to think about meaningful engagement to life, to think about having a more optimistic rather than pessimistic approach, and to combine that with our physical well-being seems to be very promising in terms of making a difference. And that's what I'm repeatedly seeing and why I'm so enthusiastic about this work. So in my mind, I love this quote. It says "Life isn't about waiting for the storm to pass, but it's about learning to dance in the rain". And I think, you know, for me, in terms of my

own personal experience, but others as well, I think, well, you know, I don't want to just stop the rain coming. I know that's never going to be true I know that in life we are always going to have ups and downs. And what I would like for myself and for my clients and my children especially, is to be able to bolster ourselves with tools and strategies so that when the rain comes, we know how to dance in that rain or to not get as wet. So sometimes with my kids I'll say, when are you going to be able to put the sunshine in your pocket that you know how to bring out on those rainy days. That might sound a bit corny, but I can't promise to take the rain away. I can't you can't do that for them, but what I can do for them and hopefully for others now, through the experience that we have in this research base of positive psychology is to think about some of those ways for dancing in the storms that life brings. And so for me, this started as a journey when I was approached by the director of mental health at a large community health service here in Melbourne. And what she said to me is, I want to create an approach to build the skills, capacity and resources required to live a good life for my clients and the clients of the service, rather than just to focus on the symptoms of ill mental health. And so we developed an approach called 'Alive to Thrive'. And that was something that exceeded the outcomes that we all dreamt was possible. And that's been the foundations of BEACON. So that programme was called 'Alive to Thrive' and here you can see some of the results. So the prior and the post and we were able to run 'Alive to Thrive' programme, which happened over six weeks. People came in and had face to face sessions for two hours, once a week, for six weeks. And the changes for people who had been long term clients of this mental health service at Star Health was quite dramatic. And that's really been one of the things that spurred me on. And one of the participants of that programme whose name is Nadine, she then started to facilitate and run that programme.

[00:07:38] And has been someone who has been yapping at my heels saying, Marie this changed my life and I've seen it change others lives and it's really important that we share this out in to the world. So here we are. This is what we're doing. And this was the sort of birthplace of BEACON. So this is this is our solution and now with Covid and all that's happening in the world, we're figuring out how to bring this to you online and how to make it more available to more people.

[00:08:08] So BEACON is an approach obviously, I really like the idea of the metaphor when we think about our mental health and living a good life I like to think about us shining our brightest and knowing that we influence others around us, whether they be our workplace, our family, our community. And so we are contagious actually in terms of our mood now, energy and the amount of motivation we bring to life. So as you go through this programme in this series, called BEACON my hope is that you will learn to shine your brightest, most often and that that will be felt beyond to others around you. So what is it all about? BEACON stands for belonging, engagement, accountability, compassion, optimism and nature. And when we think about belonging, we are thinking about connecting closely with others. And so one of the most important foundations for thriving is that we are connected. We are a social spaces and we don't do so well when we are disconnected from our herd. And so whether that be micro moments of connecting with strangers or investing in our enduring relationships, it's really important for our capacity to thrive that we stay connected and we prioritise opportunities for that. The E for engagement is really about the opportunity for us to be meaningfully engaged in life. We want to know what our strengths are and our strengths mean the things that we are good at and that we love doing. So we'll have you take the strength so to help you discover what your strengths are, and then we'll support you to think about how those strengths help you to live your best life and how to understand the nuance of what happens with strengths that tuned up too high or turned down too low. And so an example of that is someone who has kind as a strength

sometimes is being kind to everyone else and not as kind to themselves. And so there's some important notes that we help people discover there and also people discovering their mindsets. What kind of mindset in my holding holding a fixed mindset or a growth mindset and thinking about making sure that we have some things that we're doing in life that feel meaningful and that could that life purpose. So that's what we'll do in workshop three. The next one is about accountability and this is about saying I will hold myself accountable for being at my best. I will set goals, short term ones of things that I'll do each day. Small, tiny steps that will help me to thrive. And I will also begin to think about longer term goals, things that I'm hopeful about in the future. And workshop five is about compassion and that is a combination of self compassion and also compassion and kindness for others. Turns out kindness is a well-being superpower and so again we want to understand how we do that and just right amounts. The O is for optimism and this is where we look at Professor Barbara Fredrickson's broaden and build theory, understanding the power of positive emotions to lift us. But also we want to look at the way in which we navigate negative emotions and some of those dark, difficult times that we endure and positive psychology is not just about slapping on a smile and being happy all the time and it's one of the sort of myths about positive psychology that it's really important to bust. That we can't feel happy if we don't sometimes feel sad. We need to have the opposite experience of broken and whole. And so part of optimism is understanding that and how do we sit and learn to be comfortably uncomfortable sometimes, but not to stay in that and move through and some of the things that we can do to shift our ratio of positive and negative emotions that moves our brain chemistry to being the best state possible thing for thriving. And last but not least, is nurture and this is the bit where we look at our physical health and how we can be adopting the latest science around eating, moving, sleeping and also mindfulness and perhaps meditation as well. So that is BEACON and we'll send this out so that you've got this so that you understand what's under each of these BEACON beams. We call each of these a beam, it could be a pillar. But each lesson focuses on one of those BEACON beams. So how does it work? How does this this BEACON programme work? First of all, we want you to do the BEACON star and that is a bit of a measure where we ask you for each BEACON beam to rate where you are now.

[00:13:32] So on a scale of one to five. To what extent do you feel like you have a sense of belonging and close connexion. To what extent do you feel meaningfully engaged, do you hold yourself accountable, etc.? So that's really important because when you take a baseline, when you start. So that we can watch over time as hopefully your numbers increase and you begin to shine more brightly. And so we'll have you do that as a measure and we will also ask you to fill out a pre and post survey that comes from the University of Melbourne in Dr Peggy Kern's work. We will be sending out videos to you such as this one I am creating for you now and we will ask that you watch those videos that's the way that I am teaching in this context, since we can't be face to face. And we will also send out some tip sheets and some playbook's so that you have some resources to read. Sometimes they will be links to podcasts that you can listen to as well. And then we get to the playful bit where we will invite you to an online workshop on Zoom for 90 minutes and that's the time where we get you to play and process the learning and to connect with other people and in a minute, I'll go through with you what we'll do in those workshops. And then in between sessions, we want you to do stuff. The thing about learning to thrive is that it's not a spectator sport. It takes some effort. And just like eating one bit of broccoli or going to the gym just once doesn't make us physically healthy, it's the same for our mental health. We have to actually step in and step up here if we want this to really work for us. And so, you know, that is the one thing that I would say in terms of making the most of this opportunity is be prepared to lean in and give it your best.

[00:15:21] And so when you do come in to the the online workshops, we'll follow this six step process. So we will, first of all, just ground ourself and bring ourselves and thank ourselves for the opportunity being here by taking a couple of deep breaths. And then we will debrief from your home practise.

[00:15:42] So every week we will be asking you to choose something that you work on across the week. And so this kind of holds you accountable because you know that you're going to be asked when you come into the next session. How did it go? What worked? What didn't? What challenge do. And so that's how the debrief happens. And then we will go into discovering the topic of that week. And so that obviously relates to the particular BEACON beam whether it be belonging, engagement, accountability, etc.. We will expect that you would have watched the videos and so most of the learning will be done through watching those videos but obviously, we will just do a bit of a recap and we will have you do a little bit of sharing and make sure that people have caught the main concepts from those videos. And then we will be exploring an opportunity for dreaming, thinking and imagining about the difference this might make if you were to apply it in your own life. And so this is the part where we try and get you to own this and think about in your own unique circumstances, which part of what you've learnt today would you like to try?

[00:16:53] And then we go into the design stage. So what will you do with it? What small habit might you adopt for the week to apply what you've been learning. And then you deliver it? That's the bit that you do between the session, you go away and actually apply that habit using the tools that you've learnt, knowing that the next week that you come back, you'll be asked to debrief that and share it with others.

[00:17:16] So that's what you can expect there. And this is the BEACON star so you will be asked to fill this out in the in the workshop. So just so you know what to expect, ranking yourself on a scale of one to five for each of the beams and this is also a ready reference that you can print out and put up. And the way that you can track your progress over time. And as you say, if you start out with a one for belonging and you moved to a three and, you know, the same with engagement, as you fill it out over the weeks and months ahead you start to see yourself shining more brightly as your numbers grow. So just a reminder, as we close out on this lesson that the difference that we're focussing on here between traditional psychology, that focuses on fixing what's wrong and positive psychology, which offers a shift to what's right. And that's really what we want to think about, as well as the fact that we agree with Professor Martin Seligman, who has said that wellbeing or thriving can and should be taught as an antidote to depression, as a vehicle for increasing life satisfaction, and as an aid to to better learning and more creative thinking. And so our intention here is to offer you the opportunity to learn how to thrive. And so hopefully today you've seen how BEACON came about. That was in response to the fact that we were hearing lots of stories of people's disappointments about the current system that is supposed to support people with mental health issues and struggles and when we had an opportunity in response to a request from a community health service, and we created a system for people using positive psychology, the results were outstanding and that's what spurred us on to create BEACON. And that's the beautiful opportunity that you have to be involved with us here. And I really look forward to working with you as you learn and adopt those principles for thriving. Thank you and I'll see you again soon.