



Goodbye Workaholism!

from 6.00pm on Thursday, July 11th 2019
until 3.30pm on Friday, July 12th



Background Paper and Agenda for our 35th Leadership Conversation

Society of Leadership Fellows, St George's House, Windsor Castle

**It's
easier
to be
a workaholic
than to
have a
truly
balanced
life.**

Quentin Bryce

Goodbye



Introduction to the Conversation

This Leadership Conversation is a follow-up to our 2018 Conversation on *Rebalancing our lives as leaders* and written up as **Chapter 6 in Volume 3 of Nurturing Wisdom**.

In many ways, that was our most exciting Conversation last year and a number of us who were involved in it regarded it as truly life-changing.

In July we hope to move on to the next stage and be even tougher in challenging ourselves about the tendency towards workaholism that a good number of us possess.

In denial

One of the reasons why last year's Conversation was so powerful was because quite a number of us were in denial about the extent to which we were workaholics!

Just the simple fact of owning our workaholism was itself a major breakthrough. It resulted in the Conversation feeling so liberating for many of us involved in the group!

So if you think that you might be in denial about the extent to which you have sacrificed balance in your life for the sake of a pretty single-minded commitment to all that you are trying to achieve in your professional life as a leader, why not join us, open to this possibility?

If you find that you genuinely have as much balance in your life as you believe you have, what a great outcome would that be!

If your life is actually less balanced than you've allowed yourself to acknowledge, you will be in the right place to achieve some rebalancing, alongside other Leadership Fellows going through the same process.

Goodbye



Rarely ever a single right view

Our approach towards these Conversations is to ask questions in such a way that makes it possible for us all to confront any areas where we are in denial, in our own way and our own time.

One of our guiding principles is that “there is rarely ever a single right view” and this guides our approach towards workaholism just as it does towards everything else that we explore at Leadership Conversations.

Workaholism – and the extent to which it results in us neglecting our wider responsibilities in our lives towards our families, friends and ourselves – is one of the key challenges faced by so many leaders.

We very much value being able to deploy the “safe space” of the Vicars’ Hall to face this challenge together.

Pete Ashby
Society of Leadership Fellows
St George’s House, Windsor Castle
February 2019



On a scale from 0 to 10

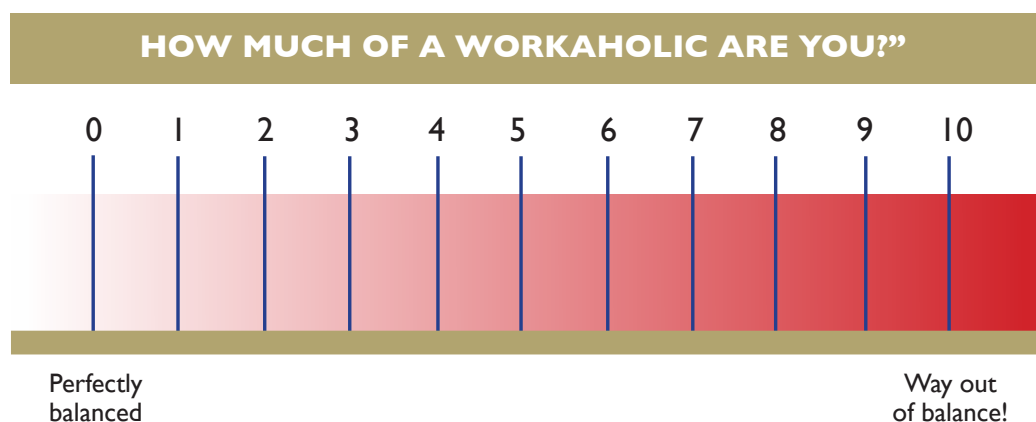
This will be our 35th Leadership Conversation since the House established the Society of Leadership Fellows in 2016. So we will trust ourselves to draw on our experiences of our previous Conversations in this series in shaping our discussions together with those Leadership Fellows who join us in Windsor on July 11-12.

Once we have introduced our Guiding Principles for the Conversation and asked you to endorse them as the basis for us working together as a team that is there for each other, we want to break into our first round of small (standing) groups to help us all be “fully present” and really focus on our core challenge.

I hope to be able to talk to most of you on the phone in the days running up to the Conversation, and we are always open to the idea of fine-tuning the opening question in light of these telephone conversations.

At this stage, we are thinking that the opening question for small groups should be:

“On a scale of 1 to 10, when 1 is incredibly low and well-balanced and 10 is seriously high and pretty unbalanced, so much so that you might be wanting to compose a few emails on the sly while the small group is underway ...



Goodbye

On a scale from 0 to 10

continued

When you have a chance to read Chapter 6 of Volume 3, you will see that last time we developed some indicators of high levels of workaholism, such as:

- **Not being fully present** in our personal lives outside work, because we are constantly thinking about what work we need to do when we let ourselves get back into work mode
- **Feeling guilty** when we enjoy ourselves and briefly forget about the work that is waiting for us when our burst of time out comes to an end!

In your group, please make a point of asking each other why you come up with whatever number you come up with.

So often, it's the reasoning behind the answer that people give, rather than the answer itself, that provides us with the insights that we can draw on as our discussions move forward and we learn from the experiences and wisdom of other Fellows.

“If you're a workaholic, surely you enjoy the small amounts of time you have when you're not working?”

“You must be kidding – I'm feeling too guilty! And the family say that my mind is somewhere else most of the time I'm with them”



Goodbye



Choosing the question to explore over dinner

After this round of standing groups we hope that as many Leadership Fellows as possible will contribute to the discussion in the Vicars' Hall before we break for drinks in the Sitting Room and then a working dinner in the dining room in the House at 8.15.

Before we break we will agree on the question that we engage with over dinner.

We are keen that this should emerge from our discussion, as part of our process for creating the agenda together as we go.

Keeping our inner workaholic on a short leash

One of the most powerful features of our Leadership Conversations to date has been the extent to which we have all felt able to learn so much from each other.

At this one, we hope that those who assess yourselves with a relatively low score on the scale from 0 to 10 will be willing to share with the high scorers some of the ways in which you keep your inner workaholic on a fairly short leash!



Goodbye

Keeping focused on the big picture

By the time we are back in the Vicars' Hall, at 8.15 on the Friday morning, we should each be sufficiently relaxed with others in the group to feel that we can share our concerns and anxieties, as well as asking each other for any tips and "workarounds" that could enable us all to engage more with our inner workaholic.

Through this process of sharing ideas and tips, we will be able to identify a challenge for the next round of standing groups to enable us all to focus on the one or two significant steps that we might each take to persuade those people who are most important to us in our family, social and work lives that we really intend to get a better grip on our personal tendency towards workaholism.

At this stage, and for the remainder of the Conversation, we will be careful to keep focused on the big picture, and the simple fact that our role as a leader occupies only part of our lives.

The big picture embraces **all of the non-work parts of our lives** that can so easily become eclipsed by unbridled workaholism in our working lives.

WORK

FAMILY

ME TIME

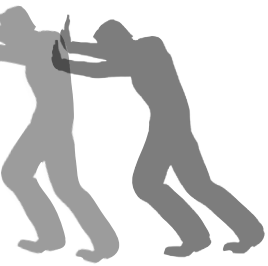
FRIENDS

VOLUNTEERING

Goodbye



Creeping workaholism



Leaders who seem never to be able to say “no”, and are constantly arriving at work that bit earlier and leaving that bit later, are so at risk of the creeping workaholism that gradually pushes all of the non-work elements of their lives to the margin.

Over time, everything else becomes regarded as the “residue” – that which is left once the workaholic has given everything that they have to their working life.

The “residue”

It’s no surprise to any of us that the engagement and enthusiasm that a workaholic can offer back to the “residue” will be limited indeed.

Somehow it needs to be redefined as vital, so that this time for family, friends and self sits alongside leadership time at work as important and necessary **in its own right**.

These and other issues linked to the challenge of managing our inner workaholic will be part of our agenda as we move forward during discussion on the Friday.

Challenging ourselves

You will see from the agenda on page 11 that we want to keep focused on generating ideas that we can share with each other as we go, ready to challenge ourselves that much more as we move into the most stretching part of the Conversation leading up to our departure time of 3.30.

Goodbye

Taking away your own personal strategy

At the end of a Leadership Conversation we are always careful to say that we want every Leadership Fellow to take away your own personal development strategy that is entirely customised to what you see as your needs as a leader.

There is never any pressure to come up with some general propositions that we can all sign up to; on the contrary, our approach is that the more we support each other in sharpening up insights and ideas that are tailored to our own requirements as leaders, the better.

In this final stage we always stress how much we want everyone in the group to try and “stretch” all that you feel you have already taken from the Conversation, to see if this might trigger some breakthroughs in your personal thinking.

It is remarkable how much we can all gain from this final hour together, not least because our “no recycling” ground rule means that it’s not an option for anyone to repeat anything that they have already shared with the group!

Powerful energy

We work on the basis that the more progress we make during a Conversation, the harder we should push and challenge ourselves right through to the final few minutes.

As you will see, this is why some of the best insights often come in the closing minutes of a Conversation.

They draw on the powerful energy that we have created among ourselves as a group by then.

Goodbye



Agenda

Thursday, July 11th 2019

2.30pm+	You are welcome to check into your room in St George's House
4.30pm	Tea in the House for those joining Evensong in the Chapel
5.05pm	Evensong (optional)
6.00pm <i>Vicars' Hall</i>	Refreshments, then start of the Conversation. After agreeing our guiding principles for the Conversation, we break into small (standing) groups to consider our opening question (page 5)
7.30pm	After feedback and debate, we agree on one or two key issues to explore over dinner
7.40pm	Free time/ drinks until dinner is served promptly at 8.15pm
9.45pm	Private floodlit tour of St George's Chapel (optional)

Friday, July 12th

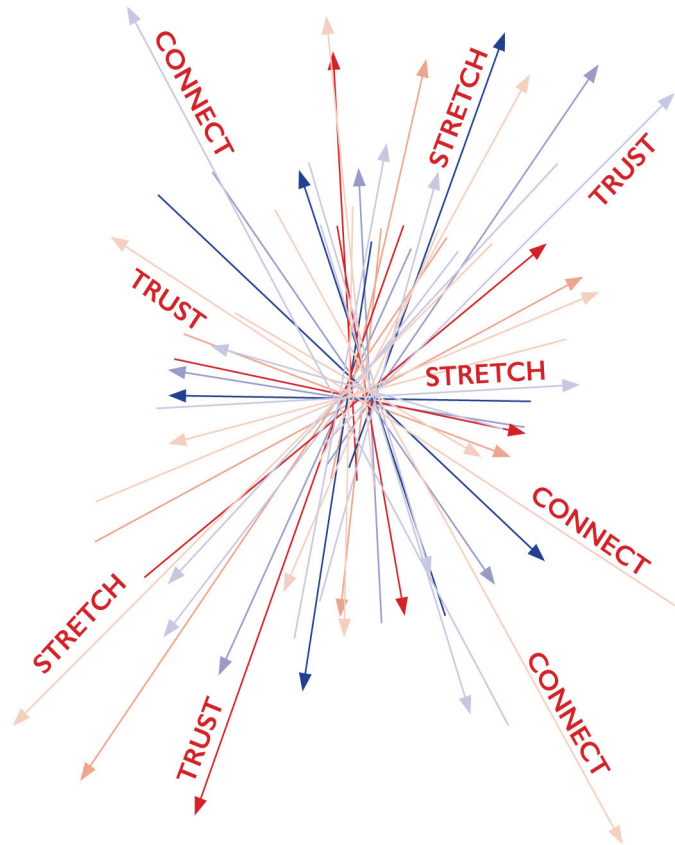
7.45am	Breakfast is served in St George's House
8.45am <i>Vicars' Hall</i>	We hear any overnight reflections before we connect more deeply with some of the issues that have been raised. We then agree on the key question for our next round of small groups. Back in the circle we hear what insights you take from your small group discussions and build up from there, being careful to concentrate on those key issues that are most important to your personal strategies for achieving a better measure of balance across the whole of your life
12.30pm	A hot buffet lunch is served in the Vicars' Hall and we work together in our groups
1.15pm	We hear your feedback from your lunchtime discussions and seek to stretch ourselves in drawing out any challenges that we are not confronting head-on. We aim to sharpen up any personal choices that we need to make if we are each to end up with clear personal resolves that are both challenging and deliverable
2.10pm	Last round of small groups in which you sharpen up your top personal resolves to share with us in the "final lap". Tea, coffee and cake available
2.25pm	In this final session, we ask you to adopt a ground rule of 'no recycling', under which we all agree not to repeat views that we have already shared. As we share our resolves there is time for positive feedback and challenge across the group before we draw together our key outcomes and conclude this Leadership Conversation on the dot of 3.30pm

Video link-up: Thursday, 10 October 2019

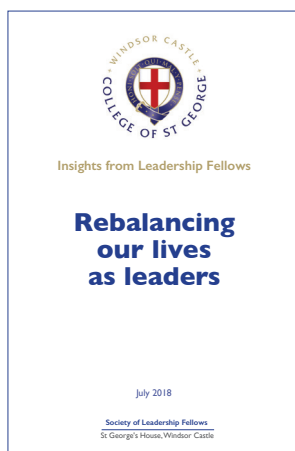
In the final minutes of the Conversation we will also arrange a time for a follow-up video link-up in October to swap notes. This will give us all a chance to hear how much progress we have each made in taking forward our resolves.

The key to us making the best possible use of our time is for Fellows to share a brief email beforehand updating the rest of us on how you have acted on your resolves, and especially which ones you found the most challenging – and we then take it from there!

Suggested time for Video Link-up:
3.00 to 4.00pm on Thursday,
10 October 2019



Key background reading



Goodbye



"See you, workaholic...
missing you already!"

