

WATCH OUT!
THE ELEPHANTS ARE COMING
e-book



A CLOSE LOOK
AT THE THINGS THAT CAN

UNDO YOU IN 2018

This e-book is a condensed version of the online course being offered at:
www.robertcommandeur.com.au

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:



Robert Commandeur has been in the 'people business' since 1980. During the last 30+ years he has been a church minister, professional musician, business CEO and has a photography/cinematography business. Over the last two decades he has been involved in the nation of India and been able to raise hundreds of thousands of dollars for both ministry and humanitarian projects. He founded 'Elephant in the Room' this year as an initiative to help others face the 'elephants' that are difficult to deal with in both personal and professional life. He has successfully changed cultures in organizations over the years and problem-solved crippling debt. He has extensive experience in dealing with challenging situations in the workplace.

Robert married his wife Melissa 36 years ago. They have four children and four grandchildren, and reside in Queensland, Australia.

INTRODUCTION:

As we navigate through life, we discover that everything we do- be it personal or business- is greatly influenced by people. They can make our life a great joy or can make things very miserable. It is our ability to deal with people (or the lack of it) that will determine the level of success we will enjoy.

Although we are living in a digital age, people have not changed that much intrinsically. There are still the office politics, personal agendas, resistant influencers, gossipers, lazy employees and unresolved conflict both in the home and in the workplace.

Because of our reluctance at times to effectively deal with these 'elephants in the room' we do ourselves, and the people we do life with, a great disservice!

Life has taught me that things left unsaid, untreated and hidden in darkness do a great deal of damage. Imagine a festering wound, beautifully wrapped by pretty white bandage. Looks fine on the outside, but over time, disease and a certain smell will start to permeate the air. Wounds need to be cleaned and *then* bandaged.

It takes a certain amount of courage to be real, honest and candid, and deal with elephants in the room – whether they are in your own life or the organization/business you are leading. I do believe you have that courage, or you would not be reading this; you want to deal with the elephant.

In this e-book, you will discover keys in both your personal and business/organizational life that can be applied with great success. These keys are not a rehash of some popular book, but proven methods and actions that have stood the test of time in my own life. I have been in the 'people business' for over thirty years and am excited to equip you with the tools you need to navigate difficult and sometimes treacherous terrain.

This e-book is about things that really matter and of great importance. Ignoring them may undo you in 2018...

Get ready for an adventurous ride!

Robert Commandeur,
CEO – Elephant in the Room.

This e-book is divided into two parts:

YOUR PERSONAL LIFE
YOUR PROFESSIONAL LIFE

YOUR PERSONAL LIFE:

There can be no change in the work place unless it has happened in our own life *first*. It is quite liberating to discover that all problem solving actually begins with us. It is quite common for people to play the 'blame game' and put the responsibility of their lack of success on others; but any kind of growth and success is dependent upon taking personal responsibility for our attitudes, decisions and actions. Therefore, a rigorous approach to our own personal development needs to take place *first*.

LETS START!

1.

HOW TO EFFECTIVELY PLAN

Planning determines whether you will succeed or not.

WHAT DO YOU WANT?

If you do not have a very clear idea about what you want, you will live in mediocrity. I am amazed how often people will have 'an idea' about what they want, but have not thought about it in detail, let alone planned for it! So, let me ask you: *what do you want?* Think about this and be as clear and descriptive as you can. Do not make the mistake of making it too broad – be specific!

USE YOUR IMAGINATION

Using your right brain.

To effectively plan, you need to visualize your future. What does it look like? Athletes train this way; they visualize their stellar performance before the event. They pre-play their performance in their imagination and when the event takes place, their performance is often exactly as they had imagined it to be.

The body cannot distinguish the difference between strong imagination and reality. Visualize your future! What does it look like? Use your imagination to see it clearly. Imagination is our God-given gift, because when we start to visualize the future, we will find that over time we will move *towards* that future.

WRITE IT DOWN

Using your left brain.

If I could give you just one piece of advice about planning, I would say: *write it down!* The best thing I did way back in 1986, was to write down my life goals, right up to 2040 when I will turn 80 years old! I wrote down all those things I wanted to happen in my career, buying a home, my career influence, and so on. I also included time frames.

What I find so amazing is that 99% of the things I wrote down to this point have already come to pass – I did have a goal of buying a small aeroplane, but I might have been too ambitious with that one, it never happened!

There is a well-documented Harvard MBA Program study:

Harvard's graduate students were asked if they had set clear, written goals for their futures, as well as specific plans to transform their goals into reality. The result of the study was only 3% of the students had written goals and plans to accomplish them, 13% had goals in their minds but did not write them anywhere and 84% had no goals at all. The study stated that the 3% earned 10 times more than the remaining 97%!

The way our brain works, is that when you write down goals and are committed to them, the mind will start thinking about ways to execute them. It is both your right *and* your left-brain working together, which packs a powerful punch! For instance, I wrote down the goal of owning our own home. This was back in 1986 while we were renting a small two-bedroom home in Sydney with very little money. I imagined that quarter acre block in the countryside with a 4 bedroom home on it... On my timeline, I had written that it would happen by 1992. In 1991 we stepped into that very home.

Write your goals down!

2.

WHAT YOU SAY, MATTERS

Words shape the world around us.

What is a word? It is a thought clothed with vocabulary.

In a world of uncertainty, we can count on this one thing for sure – what you say matters a whole lot. Watch what happens when you speak an encouraging word to your partner, children or your work mates. Your words affect others. What happens inside of you (your thoughts) affect the world around you (through your words).

HOW MUCH CONTROL DO I REALLY HAVE?

'Mental Health' is a much-used term these days.

It is our thoughts that either make us sick or healthy! This is a medically proven fact. A neurologist once told me: 'your brain is about structure and chemicals'.

I am no expert on mental health science, but I do know one very important thing: we are more in control of our thoughts than we think! We may not be in charge of the chemicals and reactions in our brain, but we are able to think the right thoughts.

Self-talk is the constant conversation that plays in the background of your mind. Thoughts like: 'I am not good enough' or 'why I am so incompetent?' or 'I like being around people' or 'Yeah I definitely can do this'. If you think deprecating thoughts about yourself, you will say deprecating words, which will reflect in your behaviour, *which will affect how people treat you*, which will affect the quality of your life! The converse is true also: think good about yourself, say encouraging words and it will be reflected in your behaviour, *which will affect the way people treat you*, which will affect the quality of your life! Your thoughts and your words define you.

You may for a time, think or speak differently. But it is those thoughts and words that are *permanently in you* that will make the real difference.

Lets face it: We cannot consistently behave in a way that is inconsistent with who we are.

I would like to suggest that you do a 'thought audit'.

Become aware of the thought - the 'background music' that is constantly being played in your mind. When you discover thoughts that are not in line with who you are or want to be, begin to change the way you think! Take charge of your thinking and don't believe or accept every random thought that pops up in your head!

Do you know the difference between a car headlight and a tail light reflector? The difference is that a headlight has its own source - it just shines. Reflectors are different. A reflector does not have any light whatsoever, but instead reflects the light that is directed towards it.

I remember as a kid finding a red, plastic reflector on the side of the road – probably from a car tail light or those little reflectors that are sometimes glued to the side of the highway. Boy, did it look pretty when you shone a torch onto it!

What I am saying is: do not be like a reflector! You can be a light by *choosing* what you think, rather than a reflector, where you let other sources choose *for you*. Is it not better to take matters into your own hands and take personal responsibility for your thoughts and words? That way, you are not reliant on what people may or may not think about you, you take control. I know from observing people for many years that it may seem easier to be a 'victim' and play the 'blame game' - but it is way more destructive in your life.

3.

HOW TO BE A GREAT LEADER

People are crying out for strong, decisive leadership – you can provide it.

Just by downloading this e-book shows that you are interested in self-development; you want to do something and make a difference somewhere.

LEADERSHIP STARTS WITH A VISION AND A CAUSE

We have already talked about planning – but where does that planning *originate* from? What decides what you plan in the first place? It is what you see, also known as vision. As a young man, (and to this day) I have a vision to influence my world and wanting to make a positive difference. I want to help people in all sorts of ways. This is absolutely essential to good, effective leadership.

So let me ask you: what is your vision? What do you see? *That* will determine whether you are a leader or not.

LEADERSHIP IS PROACTIVE

Leaders are doers. Period. Others wish.

There are a lot of well-meaning people who have great ideas and vision, but do not follow through – it takes a leader to do that. Sometimes people start the journey,

but rarely get past the gritting-of-the-teeth stage. Leadership requires tenacity and consistency. Ask yourself this: what am I *doing* right now to see my vision come to pass?

LEADERSHIP DETERMINES DIRECTION

There have been many situations I have been in, and people that I have known, that have tried to steer me off course. It almost seems like life puts obstacles in your way to test your resolve. Not to discourage you, but to develop you. Your strength of will and vision will get you over the line.

It is leaders who set the direction, no matter who or what stands in the way. The first responsibility we have is to lead our own life. Leading others will be covered in the next section.

4.

HOW TO MANAGE PRESSURE AND AVOID BURNOUT

Being intense and having a strong work ethic can lead to some unpleasant side effects.

Another word that is often used these days besides mental health is the word *stress*. Over the years, I have had some skirmishes with stress and pressure to such a degree that I burned out a couple of times in my life. Part of the reason is that I am a bit intense in my personality and my speed is usually 100mph. I have personally endured (and overcome) anxiety and depression. I well remember some years ago when a psychologist said my depression was bordering on being *clinical*. So I feel qualified to speak a little about pressure, stress, anxiety and depression.

PRESSURE IS INEVITABLE

If we assume that life can be without pressure, we are being unrealistic. Some people think sitting on a beach, with the warm winds blowing and having a cool drink in their hand is bliss. For me, that is pressure! I would rather walk the busy streets of New York in winter with all the activity and sounds. But that would cause someone else pressure! We all experience pressure in different ways. I think mainly because we are all so very different in our personality and backgrounds. What about the pressure of beating a deadline, a difficult conversation, a perfectionist attitude, people's expectations, working too hard and often, being misunderstood or being too sensitive... and these are just some in my own life! (*Insert nervous laugh here!*) Pressure is inevitable; It is how we *handle* it that matters.

MANAGE UNREALISTIC EXPECTATIONS

I am a bit of an optimistic idealist. While it is good to be optimistic and have ideals, in reality, we need to be armed with the fact that we live in a world that is far from perfect. It is those unrealistic expectations that will undo you. It certainly did me in some time back. A lot has to do with control. Yeah, that is another thing to watch out for: being a control freak. We may have high expectations but we cannot

demand those over other people. As a matter of fact, once you discover you cannot control anyone but yourself, it will bring instant relief. I cannot control, but I can *influence others*. Whether they choose to be influenced or not, is out of my hands.

HAVE REGULAR BREAKS

Because I am laser-focused on projects, work, etc, for a long time I thought 'having a break' was not necessary, because there was just too much to do. I actually thought it was wrong to think about breaks and holidays because '*there are so many important things to do that I can do only because these things are so important! I have vision! I must succeed! People are counting on me, they are important and even if we are on holidays I am there for them!*' You get the picture. My wife just loved the way I was thinking about taking breaks and holidays... yeah right!

Luckily, I have the best wife in the world who has more wisdom in these situations and is not afraid to 'gently instruct me' when I am wrong. I wish I could tell you how awesome I am, but I have been right *and* wrong so many times.

As a result, I felt my kids were missing out on 'dad time' and also, I started having nightmares and became anxious and depressed. I wish I had taken more meaningful breaks with the right mental attitude when I was younger. My body and my mind would have loved me for it.

Let me finish this section with some honest words from my heart: as a young man I was so driven and so busy and so full-on that some of life's beauty passed me by unnoticed. Please, as tempted as you may be to go *full bore*, take time to reflect, to think, to take time out, to dream, to pray and to truly connect with others. After I burned out, the *first* thing I did was to connect more with my children. We have four kids and four grandkids and family life is now very good. I wish I could say that I have been successful all of my life, but that is simply not true. *What I can say is that I have never stayed down.*

If you are in dangerous territory because of your work and your drive to succeed, take stock and slow down.

YOUR WORKPLACE LIFE:

We have looked at your personal life and things you can do to change the course of your life for good. The next challenge is *dealing with people*.

People can be so invigorating and they can be exhausting as well. As soon as there is more than one person, the odds of conflict and elephants in the room go up exponentially as we all have ideas, opinions and mindsets. Not that this is bad in and of itself – it is when those things are *out of sync* with the direction of your business or organisation that problems occur and elephants need to be confronted and dealt with!

5.

HOW TO EFFECTIVELY LEAD

Without this, your ship will go anywhere (and it won't even be your ship anymore).

Over the years, I have had to endure some pretty nasty stuff as I was moving forward. Sometimes it was friends who deserted me during tough times, (you will know who your friends really are when you go through a storm together) other times, it was influential people in organisations and business who had different opinions and ideas. My job was to positively change culture in organisations and business. It was a very clear vision and clear direction that got results in the end.

Make no mistake about this: if you do not lead, other people will take your business/organisation where you do not want it to go. I have gone into situations where this is exactly what had happened. Certain strong willed individuals had basically steered the ship because there was weak leadership. The result was that eventually, those people were out of their depth, as they took on a role for which they were not equipped. This led to poor decisions, which led to significant debt, which led to me coming in and systematically restoring the order of things. This cannot be done without leadership. Strong leadership. Period.

DIRECTION, DIRECTION, DIRECTION. WHERE DO YOU WANT TO GO?

What do you see? Where are you going? What mission are you on? What is your destination? What needs to be done?

These things need to be spelled out all the time. We need to constantly remind the people that we lead of the direction that we are going. We sometimes think that our workers, admin, managers, employees or volunteers are just going to 'get it'. The reality is that the direction you want to go needs to be communicated again and again in all the various forms that you can think of. Whether it is verbally, slogans, memos, through logos, video or photos. You need to stay on top of it at all times. You choose the direction you want things to go, then implement ways to continually communicate that particular direction.

PASSION & CONVICTION

Nothing gets accomplished without passion and conviction.

Maybe it is my personality, but a person with passion and conviction always gets my attention. I often check a person's 'passion level'. I have discovered that without fail, every single time, that a person with 100% passion will succeed, no matter how much they know or *don't know*. Conversely, I have discovered that people with little passion and conviction do not fare that well. They lack that staying power when things get tough – and believe me, things can get tough.

To be honest, I feel we have a shortage of people and companies with real conviction. We have plenty of people and companies who put self-interest, being popular, being trendy, being with the 'in' crowd at the top of their list. These are the fake, the phony, the compromising and the constantly changing crowd, hungry for affirmation and 'likes'. (Thank you, social media) These are the companies who put

profits before people and produce great TV ads with smiling faces, while at the same time ripping off Australian people.

If we are going to make a positive difference, then lets do it with a bang!
If you want to be a leader, no, a *great* leader, then passion and conviction needs to be a part of you. If it's not, there are other forces out there that will want to steer you off course. It is that passion and conviction that will enable you to stay the course and navigate through turbulent waters.

6.

HOW TO CHANGE THE CULTURE IN YOUR ORGANIZATION/BUSINESS

It's all about seagulls...

Have you found that certain work places have a particular culture? It is the way customers are greeted, the way a client is ushered into the office, or the way the furniture is arranged. What about walking up to a counter and being greeted by a person who clearly does not care about your existence and treats you as an afterthought? Amazingly, I have come across a *lot* of businesses like that! Sometimes I shake my head and think: 'without customers, your business will suffer. Do yourself a favour and look after them!'

So when we take up a leadership position in an organization, business or company, how exactly do we go about positively changing a work place or organizational culture?

DEAL WITH INFLUENCERS FIRST

We live about 70km from the beach and occasionally we go there for a coffee and some fish and chips. There are special areas where you can sit down and eat while enjoying the view of the open ocean. We love doing this and it really feels like we are on a mini holiday.

Lets talk about seagulls. Yeah. Powerful lesson coming up... stay with me.

Have you noticed that when you throw a chip on the ground how the seagulls swarm the place? Now look at that group of seagulls. Every one of them is screaming 'mine! mine! mine! mine!' There are the more aggressive ones who are at the front with the main aggressor at the front, in the middle. The seagulls around them try in vain to get the chip as the main aggressor will walk sideways and bite the seagull on the side trying to go for that luscious, golden, succulent chip. It is called the 'pecking order'. By the way, I always throw my chip to the seagulls on the outside, because they will have no other way to receive the coveted chip!

So what is the lesson? Within an organisation or business, there are people who have influence. They may have been there longer than you have. At times, they may even know *more than you*. These are strong willed, stubborn people who for the most part, have the best interests of the organization or business in mind. They have

agendas and strong ideas about what should be happening. They are not bad people, but they have been inadvertently allowed to set the culture of the workplace through lack of leadership.

But they are not responsible for the direction and culture of the workplace. You are. Usually, these people will change as they see strong leadership and clear direction. Other times? No.

Dealing with influencers who are resistant to a change of direction takes a lot of work. Please understand that leaving things as they are is like staring down a huge elephant in the room, but doing nothing. It is during these times, that people get political. They will start to garner support for their 'cause', and they will resist your direction. Outwardly, they are smiling and seem to be 'on board' but in reality this is far from the truth. I often see world leaders who are clearly in conflict because of foreign policies or human rights abuses, smile at each other, firmly shake hands and at times even put their arms on the other person's shoulder. Is it real? No. It is political. Beneath the surface there are different thought processes and agendas.

The reason I am going into depth a little is because dealing with the main influencers is the first thing you have to deal with if you want to change the direction of your business or NFP organization. NFP organizations are harder because you will be dealing with volunteers at times.

There are more things to consider when changing the workplace culture, but they will be covered by the course. Things like: changing the language in the workplace, developing teams, finding the right fit for people, communicating people's significance and value in the workplace, to name a few.

7.

HOW TO CONSTRUCTIVELY CONFRONT OTHERS

Meet 'the boss'.

When my kids were little, they used to play a video game called 'Sonic the Hedgehog'. As with most video games, there is always a 'boss' to defeat at the end of a level, in order to go on to the next level, or to finish the game. It is that tense, scary climatic event before other levels open up to the player. I used to love hearing the shrieks of 'we beat Dr.Robotnik!' emanating from the kids bedroom.

For many people and organizations, that 'boss' is *confronting another person*. In our Australian culture, confronting someone is often seen as an unpleasant and difficult task. We would rather tiptoe around the 'elephant in the room' and stay in the 'safe zone'.

But just like beating the 'boss' in a video game, it is often *after* a person is successfully confronted that things go to the next level and improve. Whilst it is not an easy thing to do, when it is done correctly, it reaps great dividends in your organization or business.

WHY IS CONFRONTATION SOMETIMES NECESSARY?

Because success depends more on people than we think.

If for instance, you want to positively change your workplace culture, you may need to confront current behaviors, systems and the way people communicate. I have found that in *every single case* of a negative culture *or* positive culture, it is people who are the problem and it is also people who are the answer! I have also found that the ones who either create negative *or* positive cultures are strong influencers, so confronting someone like that is not for the faint-hearted. These strong influencers have the mindset that 'the world will never be changed by the mildly interested'. In other words, these people are passionate about their cause. They are incredible assets to your business/organization, but may need some adjusting in their mindset by *confronting* that mindset.

Confronting an issue provides clarity.

One thing that is essential in a healthy work environment are clear expectations. Sometimes an employee or volunteer may not be fully aware of them. Other times, they may display behavior that is not in keeping with the workplace culture. Clarity is essential, and while flowcharts will provide some information and direction, it is the personal touch that will always communicate best. Some CEO's and managers rely heavily on charts, tables etc to 'steer the ship' when in reality, it is the people in your organization/business that need direction and clarity.

Confrontation clears the air.

How often have you felt that the air needed to be cleared? In one organization, there was a sub-culture, which was not part of the overall direction the business was heading. Whilst they were good people, the air needed to be cleared and their words/behavior in the work place needed to be in sync with the direction of the business. So I sat with each one and we talked about the direction of the business and the part that they were there to play.

HOW DO WE CONFRONT?

It is one thing to be convinced that confrontation is sometimes very necessary and helpful, but it is quite another to confront in a way that not only addresses the issue, but leaves the persons dignity intact also! So here are four ways to confront someone successfully and it goes without saying that it is *always* done face to face:

1. Confrontation always starts with praise.

Sometimes, people dive right in and start confronting. This however, does not take into account that they are dealing with a person who has feelings. This is not a ploy to get the persons cooperation, but rather, they are valued in your business/organization. When we start with praise, a person is much more likely to respond favorably.

2. Be very clear in your communication.

It is always best to confront in a clear and concise manner. Too many people 'beat around the bush' which actually make things much harder for everyone involved. If it

is a behavior that needs confronting for instance, then name that behavior. I used to have a tissue box in my office and occasionally waited for the person to compose himself or herself and then continued with the matter at hand.

3. Give them direction, not ultimatums.

We help the person by giving them options in how to deal with an issue, rather than saying: 'if you don't do this, then...'

Let the other person be involved in the solution and be there for follow-up and support afterwards.

4. Always finish with praise.

See confrontation as a sandwich. Praise is the bread, confrontation is the filling. We can confidently confront when we know, *and they know* that we have both the persons and our business' best interest at heart.

Don't be intimidated by 'the boss' like Dr.Robotnik! Confront when and where necessary and see your business/organization flourish!

8.

HOW TO SUCCESSFULLY RAISE FUNDS FOR YOUR NFP ORG/CHURCH PROJECTS

The problem is *never* money. Period.

A NEW APPROACH

Can I be honest and open with you? How you view money- and how you view people's attitude towards it- will determine your fund-raising success.

Years ago, I used to think that money was scarce and only plentiful in certain sectors – I am happy to report that I no longer think this. You see, people will always give or spend money on those things they believe in, or the things they want. If they do not have the money, they *will find ways* to come up with it.

Over the last 20 years or so, we have been able to raise hundreds of thousands of dollars for humanitarian projects in India. Ordinary people like you and me are *continuing* to give to this project.

What I am asking you to do is to approach fund raising from a different angle. Fund raising is definitely a skill and an art. It is not for the faint hearted, nor the mildly interested. There are certain qualities that you must develop and possess before you can successfully raise money for your projects.

Before we look at the 'how to', I do get the occasional enquiry from NFP organizations, to film a project. Recently, someone contacted me to film a story about families living with disabilities. When I asked her what the budget was, she said that they needed to get a grant from the government to cover the cost of the documentary. Just to be clear, how to pitch for government grants is *not* what this article is about. I am also assuming that you have a network of people that you are working with.

So here are the 5 undeniable, proven principles that I live by:

BELIEVE RIGHT

If you start your fund raising efforts with a wrong belief, you have sabotaged your efforts right from the start. But if you approach fund raising with the right view, you will find people will respond to what you believe. Isn't that interesting? What you believe - really believe - is what people will respond to. I have seen this again and again over the years. *Money is available for your project.*

PASSION

I am constantly amazed how some fund raisers come across half-hearted and think that people are going to be more passionate than they are! Without passion, you will *not* succeed. You need to *own* the project, *believe* in the project and be *passionate* about the project. It needs to be a part of you. Seeing a project as 'something I gotta do' is doomed to failure. It is not knowledge and logic that motivates people, but passion. When you watch a great performance in music for instance, isn't the passion of the vocalist or musician the thing that moves you?

INVEST YOURSELF FIRST

Over the years, my wife and I have personally given thousands of dollars to the projects we believe in. If you do not want to invest yourself, how can you motivate other people to give? Too many are excited about the project, but not willing to invest themselves. Ever heard the saying 'What you do is speaking so loud that I cannot hear what you are saying'? Be the example others can follow...and they will.

CLARITY OF MISSION

I always communicate the 'why' of a project. This is so important! You need to be crystal clear in communicating exactly what is going on and why people are giving and how their giving will positively impact the project. We can never assume that people are just going to 'get it'. I always make it my aim to paint a very, very clear picture. For instance, raising money for a building isn't that exciting until people understand it's an orphanage building. Then they will give.

APPEAL TO EMOTION NOT LOGIC

It is how we feel about a product or a cause that motivates us into action. That is why believing right, and passion, are so incredibly important. You know that people are not unfeeling, logical robots (unless you are a sci-fi fan like me – they give robots real personalities!). I have been to some of the poor areas in India and have seen firsthand the generosity of the people who have very little, but are deeply moved emotionally. Appealing to people's emotions is not a ploy to get them to give as though they are caught in a futuristic 'tractor beam' trance. When a project is properly presented - passionately, clearly *and* with conviction, people *want* to give.

CONCLUSION

Hopefully this e-book has helped you discover some tools that you can start to use straight away. It is not in having knowledge, but executing the knowledge that you have, that will make a difference.

Go forth and conquer!

END



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For further instruction and help, an online course is available at the above website.

You also have the option of personal one-on-one discussion, accountability and support on the Elephant in the Room facebook group.