
The 'Journey of a Hero' and sustainable development

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Abstract: In this paper, we propose a sustainable lifestyle process for individuals as economic agents that will lead to sustainable economic growth. A lack of fit between individuals and their environment influences them to distinguish between human and non-human elements of the planet. We therefore propose that a distinction between economic agents and planetary boundaries delays the process of achieving sustainable goals. Based on the academic literature and extensive experience of the authors, in this paper we develop a three-stage 'Journey of a Hero' model that when applied will reduce the resistance to change by the individual, support businesses of any size and enable policymakers to achieve goals for sustainability for their countries in the near future. The findings of the study will contribute to the academic literature related to training, sustainability, psychology, wellbeing and corporate finance.

Keywords: training sustainable development; P-E fit model; courage; actor network theory; planetary boundaries; resilience.

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Biographical notes: Britain Stelly is Founder of Creature Courage (<https://creaturecourage.com/>). She is currently the UK's leading specialist in animal phobias, helping people to overcome their fears in as little as just one day. She is now expanding this vision to help people overcome all fears that inhibit living life to the fullest and pursuing meaningful purpose. Previously, she ran a charity that helped people find courage and friendship in a group therapy setting. She is also a published illustrator.

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1 Introduction

In this research we propose a framework to develop a sustainable lifestyle that will lead to socioeconomic benefits. We argue that immense courage by individuals is required to motivate greater change in their behaviour as economic agents. To unlock complex social challenges, it is important for individuals as economic agents to understand and function in harmony with planetary boundaries (Rockström et al., 2009a, 2009b) and encourage individuals to fit within the environment (P-E fit model) (Eulberg et al., 1988) with a sustainable lifestyle. Economic growth is possible when there is a harmony between persons¹ and the environment (P-E fit model) which will enhance the value of the operation of the individual (Bailey et al., 2018). However, it is difficult to understand how best to go about this given the effect of the Covid-19 pandemic as there are few academic studies that focus on the connection of the impact of a pandemic on sustainable economic growth (Jordà et al., 2020). In addition, there is an extensive gap in the existing studies about how the sustainable lifestyle of any economic agent can generate a dynamic market to encourage the growth of the economy (Jaworski et al., 2000).

Since 2015, the 'nine planetary boundaries' framework developed by a team of Earth system and environmental scientists has been used by the UN as the basis of its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and is widely used by various countries to create plans for a sustainable future (Bebbington and Unerman, 2018). For a sustainable society and for the stable functioning of the earth system, these boundaries always need to be considered in a comprehensive framework' (Steffen et al., 2015; Li et al., 2019). However, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) executive director has recently suggested that human beings generate severe pressure on the natural world, leading to destructive outcomes (Carrington, 2020). She indicates the Covid-19 pandemic is a 'clear warning explosion' and mentions that human behaviour is a major reason for

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the pandemic. The reasons for the financial crisis of 2008 also correlate with how human beings interact with nature and within society (GPO-FCIC, 2011, p.xxii). This strand of research has motivated us to develop a framework to enhance the involvement of economic agents in the planetary boundaries' framework, which will explain how every individual can balance their work and fit within the environment.

In this paper we apply an interdisciplinary approach by understanding and using concepts from psychology to explain how appropriate training and coaching can influence individuals to take courage to create a fundamental long-lasting shift in their perspective and thereby achieve a balance between the environment and economic agents. The findings of this study will extend the existing research related to the importance of training in reducing the gap between learning and behaviour of individuals (Grossman and Salas, 2011). In this paper, we focus on three primary systems of responsibility of an individual: personal development responsibility, internal responsibility and external responsibility. In the following section, we define in detail each responsibility used in this paper.

Personal development responsibilities are the actions taken by an individual to constantly provide for and nurture themselves when they interact within the environment around them (Sankey and Machin, 2014). Personal development responsibility is not selfish or self-centred; rather, it is the basis of self-care and personal growth, and leads to greater individual development, self-awareness, better relationships through a matured and heightened sense of empathy and connection to others, and an increased ability to build resilience and fortitude in a world that by its nature is indifferent. Personal development responsibility is cultivated through four aspects of individual fulfilment: physical, emotional, intellectual, and identity. See Appendix 1 for the definition of each aspect of personal development and fulfilment used in this paper.

Internal responsibility are actions taken by an individual for their perceived family, either biological or social (friends), whom the individual cares for and values greatly. These actions can include but are not limited to: earning an income, providing food and water, and securing shelter and maintaining a safe environment for their family to grow and thrive. Once internal responsibilities are achieved it creates more psychological freedom (Van den Broeck et al., 2010), which in practice allows the individual to develop their skills and gain more knowledge (Gegenfurtner et al., 2016). The development of internal responsibility can stagnate or completely degrade based on a lack of personal development responsibility.

An *external responsibility* extends an individual's actions beyond the family and into the world. Individuals become aware of external responsibility when they understand that in order to earn an income, provide food and water, secure shelter and maintain a safe environment for the family to grow and thrive, they need to limit the external risk factors. Food and water cannot be supplied should agriculture fail. Shelter cannot be secured if the economy collapses and the market fails. A safe environment cannot be maintained if the environment becomes hazardous to human life (such as with global warming). Thus, with a perceived threat to the external environment that directly affects the individual, the individual begins to take actions that have an impact on the external factors. Following the Human Resource Development literature, we argue that usually individuals link their personal development with external responsibilities (Fenwick and Bierema, 2008). As with internal responsibility, external responsibility cannot form without a foundation of strong personal development responsibility.

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We propose that the strength of any individual's personal development responsibility will determine how well they can perform and contribute to both internal and external responsibilities. Without personal development responsibility, it is almost impossible to develop or to maintain internal or external responsibilities. Individuals cannot concern themselves with providing sustenance for a family when they are unable to look after themselves. An individual cannot be expected to take responsibility for the environment and understand their impact on it when they cannot look after their own health. Thus, we observe the United Nations and other world policymakers are proposing to focus attention towards personal development of human beings as a tool to generate higher socioeconomic benefits for any member state.² Following the literature on sustainability and its links with individuals (Brandt et al., 2021), we find that the notion of trying to convince people to change behaviours, actions and habits without addressing the internal factors that disconnect an individual from the world, society, their families and ultimately themselves will not provide long-lasting sustainable or scalable change, not for the individual and certainly not for the environment or the economy. Base-level targeting of the fundamental issues is needed to help in developing individuals to achieve greater fulfilment that ultimately allows for the actualisation of both internal and external responsibilities. The strain on mental health caused by the pandemic makes the need to address these issues even greater as the knock-on effect of people becoming less able to care for themselves means they will grow less able to contribute and care for others and the environment.

After analysing the gap in existing studies and the non-functional aspects of policies related to the planetary boundaries framework, and carefully observing the response of economic agents to the Covid-19 pandemic across the globe, we identify that the core problem with achieving a sustainable economy lies within a failure to recognise the connection of wellbeing and psychology to the wider context of humanity specifically, the ability to make lasting positive changes towards sustainability (Frisk and Larson, 2011). There needs to be a connection with wellbeing, self-awareness/care, and an ability to empathise for economic agents to take the next big step of making sacrificial changes that are necessary to evolve society into a more sustainable direction. Thus, in this exploratory research we ask: how can individuals transform themselves and their lifestyles to work towards the goal of global sustainable development? Essentially, how can an individual ultimately change from a state of apathy to find motivation to become an 'everyday hero'? For the drastic change necessary for humanity to live within the planetary boundaries many more people must fundamentally shift their mindset and mature their personal development responsibility than do so currently. This change is rooted in the ability to act courageously and to be mentally well enough to change.

To answer our stated research question, we propose a three-step approach. The proposed 'Journey of a Hero' system aims to tackle the problem of societal apathy and environmental dissonance by focusing on the growth of personal development responsibility within the individual – namely, by raising the levels of all four aspects of the personal development and fulfilment aspects of human growth mentioned in Appendix 1.

In the *first step* of the 'Journey of a Hero', we will expand to include this new branch of support within our current phobia treatment. It will aim to coach and provide training to economic agents on a structured course (individually or collectively) to tackle the key issues that create barriers to change within the mind. It is established in the literature that effective coaching leads to favourable outcomes (Carter et al., 2017). We will achieve the

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desired outcome from coaching by using both the most up-to-date techniques and research in psychology and knowledge developed by the authors through years of treating phobias. The goal will be to guide people on a structured journey of personal self-development to equip them with the tools they need to increase self-awareness, build courage, become resilient, break bad habits, develop empathy and compassion and build a strong mental health foundation. The mentioned guided course will also take individuals on a journey to redevelop their moral codes and awaken a passion and desire for meaningful purpose that can impact the world in positive and sustainable ways, which will be further developed in the second step.

The *second step* of the Journey of a Hero will guide individuals on a second course and coaching programme to re-frame their feelings about contributing to sustainability. Following the literature, we will help develop a new perspective that guides the individual to address and recognise dissatisfaction through coaching (McWilliams et al., 2006) instead of viewing individual contributions to sustainability solely as stress, hard work and sacrifice. Through this awareness and acceptance of dissatisfaction, an individual can be motivated to change and pursue meaningful purpose to become a 'hero' in their own unique way. Then on the course they can be guided to see how their skills, knowledge, passions and dreams can become part of a bigger picture to contribute positively to sustainability. This helps the individual find fulfilment and happiness whilst also contributing to helping the environment.

With the support of a mentor, individuals will be inspired to make a positive difference, something they might not otherwise achieve alone. The first step will also increase the individual's resilience through various proven fear-/stress-fighting techniques that will equip the individual to take the needed action to become an 'everyday hero'. The techniques will give individuals the inner strength to overcome challenges and make choices that they feel are more sustainable and are in line with their newly developed moral code. Lastly, the coaching and training program will be aligned with the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. Therefore, individuals on the course will get additional help and support through being guided to redesign their contribution towards society during the Covid crisis and its aftermath or any other future uncertainties. The proposed structured process alongside the support of a coaching mentor makes these steps of change easier to follow and less overwhelming.

Human beings have been proven to physiologically and psychologically take 'the path of least resistance'. This is a remnant of an ancient survival technique to conserve calories and play it safe by repeating actions and strategies that have avoided danger and preserved life previously (Schelly and Stretesky, 2009). Thus, by breaking down the pathway to change into small and achievable steps this framework makes a huge and perceived 'impossible' change into something less complicated and manageable. By giving this clear structure alongside an accountability mentor, this research will enable all economic agents to walk a realistic pathway to start becoming proactive about the challenges imposed by the planetary boundaries' framework. The approach in this paper will also create an overall shift in attitudes about sustainability. From the previous experience of the mentors in the team, we believe that the two steps mentioned above will prepare economic agents to implant themselves into the bigger sustainable picture as they will start to feel connected and balanced within their environment. The framework presented in this paper addresses the fundamental building blocks of personal development responsibility, which form the foundations of other responsibilities that ultimately connect every economic agent with the planet.

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Completing the first two courses and coaching programmes will prepare individuals with the skills to approach the final and *third stage* of the journey which involves downloading an app that has been developed for course graduates. The initial two stages will have helped the user to have defined a clear life purpose and direction. The app will help individuals to use their new-found personal growth and courage to go beyond their own self-development and start to apply and expand their new skills practically into external responsibility and sustainability in a way that resonates with their own skills, interests and passions on an ongoing basis. The app will also be vital to help assure the success of this by continuously keeping the course material from the initial two stages fresh in the user's mind, thus keeping the user's mental health and inner resilience strong. The app will accomplish this by continuing to support the users with coaching exercises, giving access to an online community, and allowing the new 'heroes' to measure their contributions towards the sustainable development of society. It will also provide useful resources and connect with other like-minded people/organisations/businesses to enable users to collaborate and work together on joint goals. In addition, the 'Journey of a Hero' framework will assist policymakers in identifying areas where more attention is required to overcome the challenges posed by planetary boundaries. It will also create understanding that by involving 'heroes' from society they can expedite approaches to attain SDGs.

To achieve the UN Sustainability Agenda 2030, the 193 member states are required to develop at least one Voluntary National Review. The report should focus on the assessment of national progress in sustainability goals.³ The main challenge here for any country is to involve as many citizens as possible in sustainability initiatives and then assess nationwide progress to identify what more can be done. There is a desperate need to introduce considerable changes in social practices and behaviour of individuals, communities, and public and private organisations.

Thus, the steps mentioned in our research will guide policymakers towards finding a feasible model to influence citizens (both individual and corporate) effectively. The app will help organise and collect important data on how people's personal growth can then start feeding back into society and the environment, with the user's full consent, with the objective of helping governments move towards sustainability.

Through coaching, resistance to change can be reduced extensively and help citizens to measure their contribution towards their country's SDG goals through the app. Adopting the app can assist governments to prepare their national review reports, and thereby helping world leaders to assess the progress of their nations, and will also allow them to influence the attitude of other nations towards Agenda 2030. Information and statistics gathered from the app, with the user's permission, will help governments to make more sustainable choices and unify populations with their government on important sustainability issues and how to address them.

To develop the above-mentioned approach, we follow the P-E paradigm. This practice-guiding model explains how to assess individual behaviour while discussing the environmental contexts in which the individual lives. According to the model, when an individual fits optimally within the environment, they feel associated with the environment and prefer to contribute to society. Thus, we consider the principles of this model to develop the framework of the 'Journey of a Hero'. The main objective of the study is to identify a process through which every individual can take part in government sustainable development initiatives in their own way that can play to their strengths and interests and help them feel connected to a bigger force of positive change. Thus, the

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world of sustainability and the fight against climate change must be combined with the world of psychology. This will allow for therapeutic personal growth within the individuals of society, leading to a world where people are mentally well enough to care to help each other, the animals and the planet. By combining human and non-human elements, the 'Journey of a Hero' framework will increase the probability that individuals will make lasting changes to positively contribute to society and the environment as well as being happier and more engaged in life.

Thus, the 'Journey of a Hero' framework will use the Actor Network Theory (ANT) to support the P-E fit model. According to the ANT, there is always a network between human beings and the natural world (Barter and Bebbington, 2013). The ANT theory proposes to 'clear the state of nature-culture dualism' (Ivakhiv, 2002, p.391) which will allow the hero an opportunity to mingle with their environment by mitigating the challenges associated with the planetary boundaries (Steen et al., 2006; O'Connell et al., 2009). The theoretical framework also captures the connections that are made continuously (Steen et al., 2006, p.207), which allows the 'hero' to adopt a new practice or a system by making changes in their mindset and thus also in their behaviour (Whittle and Mueller, 2010). In summary, we propose that by applying the P-E fit model and ANT together, we can observe how an economic agent is transformed into an 'everyday hero' and contributes towards the sustainable development of the nation.

The proposed 'Journey of a Hero' framework postulates that if interventions can be made now to identify the extent to which planetary boundaries can be applied via the phenomenon of large populations increasing personal development responsibility through the use of coaching and user-friendly technology, economic agents can make adapted changes. Corporate initiatives play an important role in assisting any country to achieve its sustainability goals and so adopts various tools to integrate sustainability into the corporate system (Witjes et al., 2018). Recently, we observe that corporations are considering sustainability approaches, such as using renewable energy etc., when they revise their capital budgeting techniques, and conduct risk assessments or develop risk mitigation models in their risk-adjustment processes (Hürlimann et al., 2019). The changes achieved by synchronising human and non-human approaches in a single model will lead to sustainable economic growth. The human-environment compatible view presented in this study will enhance the knowledge of scholars in the area of sustainable development, wellbeing, business and other related fields. The findings will support businesses as the 'Journey of a Hero' framework will assist the stakeholders of companies to adapt to sustainable lifestyles, which will support businesses and government initiatives for a more sustainable world.

In the next section we discuss in detail the steps of the 'Journey of a Hero' framework. In the following section we conclude by describing how to apply the proposed framework and mention the associated future plan of this research.

2 The 'Journey of a Hero' framework

The various dimensions of the 'Social Foundation' are: health care, jobs, security for food, income, education, energy, water and sanitation, resilience, social equity, voice, and gender equality (Cole et al., 2014). To resiliently maintain the earth system, there is always a need for a framework that can maintain a coordinating effort by human and

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non-human elements of the environment (Steffen et al., 2015). The planetary boundaries framework explains the important role the individual plays in the social foundation.

In the research on the planetary boundaries, there are various initiatives taken at micro and macro level that are not able to produce desired levels of success (Milne and Gray, 2013; Sullivan et al., 2014). Along with corporate failures in delivering SDGs, policymakers (such as UNEP) highlight the irresponsible behaviour of individuals still solely motivated by profit as a main reason explaining the slow attainment rate of sustainable goals. The application of the ANT is limited when individuals perceive the coordination between human and non-human elements is not optimal, which also restricts how the P-E fit model is applied in practice. The resistance of human nature to change is identified as the main reason for such a complex situation. To address this critical issue, we develop a paradigm to support individuals in identifying their need for change and to develop the courage to make it happen in their behaviour to start the shift towards thinking like a 'hero'.

2.1 Process to start the 'Journey of a Hero'

The framework will take a multi-therapeutic technique approach to attain the highest success rate. Different approaches will help resonate with individuals in different ways, so a variety of proven therapeutic techniques in one course will be the best approach for the highest success rate. This has been proven with the authors' approach in radical phobia treatment, which cures people of extreme phobias in just one day.

Individuals will go on a course that is developed to work alongside coaches and mentors. The course will last six to nine weeks and will guide individuals on a path of emotional growth that will heighten self-awareness, teach resilience skills, help recognise and change unhealthy mindsets and behaviours, and grow empathy for other living beings. The idea is to increase positive mental health but also instil a new sense of purpose and moral code through an inspiring process of transforming into an 'everyday hero' in areas that excite and inspire the individual. Most importantly, it will give individuals the power to fight fear and build their overall courage to live a life they believe in.

The course will be digital, and participants will get a weekly online mentor to coach them through the material to ensure the course is successfully completed, as it is proven scientifically that people will work harder for others than for themselves (Graham et al., 2020). Each week a new concept will be taught alongside suggested activities and techniques for participants to complete that will support each concept. Individuals will track their progress and developments in a journal. The coach will meet once a week with each individual on the course to reflect on what participants have recorded and give insights on improvement and new ways of thinking. The design of the course will be creative, making the material fun and engaging to keep individuals motivated and focused.

2.2 Key concepts/techniques covered in stage 1

- Educate and create understanding about the psychology of the mind and how our ancient survival instincts of fear and resistance to change operate in our nature. Through this understanding of our mind's nature, we will teach techniques to get the

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mind to work for us instead of against us to beat fear and anxiety and build confidence and courage.

- Hypnotherapy: 'Consciously accessing the subconscious' to change attitudes and beliefs where they exist in the brain. The brain is like a computer and you must open the correct file to make changes to it. This is often why people prove stubbornly resistant to change as many try to make changes without opening the correct file within the mind to accurately do so. The power of hypnotherapy allows us to go into the subconscious and open the exact files that need changing (Matthew et al., 2017). The goal is to have a different reaction to the same fear stimuli.
- Anchoring: (a key imagination exercise) We use this technique to draw on past memory sources of courage and fascination to overcome fear and anxiety. Based on the cognitive dissonance theory that you cannot feel two conflicting emotions at exactly the same time, we can condition ourselves to tap into positive emotions that we prefer to feel in any given situation.
- Positive affirmations: The brain is naturally goal-seeking, so we can become mindful of this nature and feed it the positive life-changing goals and affirmations it subconsciously seeks. If we consistently (on a daily basis) meditate on clear and concise goals, our brain will work to achieve those goals in creative ways (Harris et al., 2017). There is a part of the brain that is dedicated to doing this called the Reticular Activating System (Sarter et al., 2006). This part of our brain can help us reach goals by filtering and processing millions of impressions, images, sensations, messages and thoughts and then passing the most useful information on to your conscious mind, which will then help you achieve your goal (Walter and Shaikh, 2014).
- Art therapy: Art therapy is much like the power of writing things down – something dynamic cognitively happens when you take something from inside your mind and make it manifest into the physical world. Individuals process the information in a very different way when it is not only visually seen but also visually created; there are multiple cognitive processes happening that help us absorb the information better. This helps process emotions in a powerful way and demonstrates visually how change can look. The process has been proven to calm and help heal people emotionally and then also physically through an improved mental state in many different studies. An example of one similar study is explained in Appendix 2.
- Create a higher change threshold: People only seek change when they reach some sort of pressure point or 'threshold' (Chan, 1997). Our ancient survival instincts tell us subconsciously that playing it safe and doing things in the way we have always done is the safest option. Our brains were not developed to make us happy, only to survive (Oleson and Hora, 2014). Obviously, this is not always useful for us in a modern environment, especially during a pandemic that creates an even stronger need to urgently become more sustainable. When individuals do change, this happens for one of two reasons (sometimes both): either their dissatisfaction or discomfort in life builds up so much that change becomes the safest path forward, or there is an opportunity so advantageous that it justifies changing the status quo (a positive form of dissatisfaction). But until people reach a change threshold in either direction, it is rare that change will happen.

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So, we would help people understand this on a conscious level and thus help them build their change threshold/breaking point more quickly as this is usually an unconscious process. This is done by helping them understand what the failure to change is costing them in the present, what it will cost them in the future, and why they cannot afford to remain as they are. This is also strengthened by applying cognitive dissonance techniques through meditation and positive affirmations. Cognitive dissonance occurs when a person holds contradictory beliefs, ideas, or values, and is typically experienced as psychological stress when individuals participate in an action that conflicts with one or more of these beliefs (Fenwick and Bierema, 2008).

- Tailored meditation techniques to powerfully move the centre of conscious processing out of the amygdala (the part of the brain that processes fear) and into the prefrontal cortex, a different part of the brain that is associated with safety, creativity and thinking ‘outside of the box’ to imagine unique and positive solutions to life’s problems (Lilova and Poell, 2019). Meditation has been proven to help people do this (Tang, 2020). Once this has been accomplished, individuals can recognise and be honest about their own dissatisfaction with life. This will then create structural tension through cognitive dissonance, which the brain will desperately want to resolve. Because of the meditation, the mind will be operating from the prefrontal cortex and be more likely to find a solution to provoke change in thought processes that might otherwise not happen. This is a powerful mental stimulant to awake individuals out of apathy and change a comfort zone into a discomfort zone, thus enabling and empowering them to find their own motivation and courage to start changing in positive ways, growing in self-awareness and increasing empathy and compassion for themselves and others.
- Storytelling and art: The module will teach these ideas not only cognitively but also emotionally to increase the user’s sense of empathy and connection to others, animals and the planet. It will accomplish this with visual experiences and stories to engage and connect the principles with real-life examples and create meditations where the individual becomes the main character in the story and emotionally experiences the story to effectively and powerfully create a shift in perspective. The module will also employ art therapy to unlock creativity and relaxing activities to build healthy coping strategies.
- Train individuals to be mentally aware and take responsibility for their actions and their lives in order to recognise and defeat unhealthy mindsets and behaviours to be able to change. This will also create resilience and good mental and overall health with a holistic⁴ approach. Individuals will be able to powerfully break bad habits and find new positive ways to change and experience life. With a holistic approach, the module gets individuals to take responsibility by considering all aspects of their life (including the environment) in their path of wellbeing. The module will encourage participants to factor in healthy sleep patterns, eating habits, exercise, drinking enough water, living with healthy air quality, etc with the progression of change.
- Guide individuals to create and live by a new moral code that helps them become the hero they believe in.

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- Help individuals recognise when they are unhealthily using distracting/escapism mechanisms to avoid the effort it takes to create change within their lives and how to overcome it. Different tasks will be given to help train individuals to become 'heroes' and this will include overcoming the temptation to do nothing because it is easier. They will be consciously aware when they are choosing to do nothing and thus creating more structural tension. This will be because they have defined a new moral code for themselves and will be consciously aware when they are breaking it thus being internally pressured to take responsibility.
- Help individuals to identify their life purpose, who they really want to be, who they do not want to be and what world they really want to live in. The module will then connect this with personal interests, passions and dreams to find a way to create meaningful purpose that not only fulfils the individual but also contributes to making the world a better place with their unique attributes.
- Immersive therapy and taking action: The Oxford English Dictionary defines courage as:

'The ability to do something that frightens one; bravery. The strength in the face of pain or grief.'

In other words, to feel afraid but to take action anyway.

To build courage, the module will train people to confront their fears using the resilience techniques taught to them to dispel the myth of what they are afraid of. Adrenaline can only run for 15/20 minutes or so; if an individual is exposed to the fear stimuli longer than this, the anxious feelings start fading and confidence and courage start building. This will then create a new neural pathway link in the mind based on the new reaction and the anxiety around the trigger will dissipate (Kok et al., 2018).

- Goal Setting: Goal setting gives individuals clear ideas of what they want to achieve and by when. Then, by further breaking the goals down into manageable steps, it shows how goals can be achieved. Achieved goals ultimately mean achieved change and the hope to continue to change as new neural pathways are created in the mind based on a new past history of experience, i.e., 'change is possible'.
- Use the power of questions (and physically writing them down) to allow individuals to explore all these concepts and take responsibility by being faced with the process of thinking through an answer. Researchers have found that asking questions will get individuals to cognitively explore a new idea in a more dynamic way than just telling them in a statement (Spangenberg et al., 2016). Neuroscience has also proved that learning and retaining information is massively improved if it is written down.

When individuals write things down, two things happen that improve the chances of remembering them: 1. The process creates an 'external storage' by physically creating a visual reminder that is accessible and easy to review at any time; 2. It creates 'encoding'. Encoding is the biological process by which our sensory perceptions travel to the hippocampus within the brain, where they are analysed. From there, decisions are made about what gets stored in our long-term memory and, in turn, what gets discarded. Writing improves that encoding process. In other words, thoughts that are written down have a much greater chance of being remembered.

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Neuropsychologists have also identified the ‘generation effect’, which has proven that individuals demonstrate better memory for material they have generated themselves than for material they have merely read (Rosner et al., 2013).

See Appendix 3 for example of questions used in the module to create cognitive dissonance and to inspire courage.

- We will also use other various proven techniques from cognitive behavioural therapy and neuro-linguistic programming.

2.3 Stage 2: applying skills to external responsibility

This stage will help individuals understand how their new self-growth and unique skills, passions and interests can be practically applied in the real world. This will also help inspire individuals to find the courage to learn new desired skills and how to connect with others to make a larger and more forceful positive impact. Mentors can then help connect people to relevant organisations, businesses etc, to find a way to be an effective hero in the world around them as well as help generate ideas of how businesses can also go on the ‘Journey of a Hero’. So, if individual participants are business owners or are part of a business, they can discover ways for their business to also be a hero for the planet. The mentor can help the individual generate ideas and connect with resources to transform businesses or come up with new business ideas that help support the planetary boundaries in positive ways.

Alongside the ideas and support for taking action, there will be additional meditations, activities and journaling. Individuals will also be guided to develop an action plan for their lives that is broken down step by step to reach a defined set of goals for the economic agent to become a ‘hero’ in the real world whilst also fulfilling interests, passion and meaningful purpose. We will guide the person to understand true personal fulfilment and that helping others/the planet are one in the same thing. The framework purposes that everyone has a passion or interest that can contribute positively to the planet and society if the right help can guide them to understanding how.

Samples of questions for Stage 2 are given in Appendix 4.

Finally, our mentors acknowledge the participant as the hero of their life and clearly identify them as a contributor of positive social development. This can be done by giving an award of recognition or by other encouraging models.

2.4 Stage 3: application of the app

Individuals will have a higher rate of success both initially and in the long term if they feel they are continuing to receive support. An app would be a way to continue to support individuals and keep them connected to a wider support group after completion of the course. It will not only connect them to a community of other users but also act like a digital AI coach to help keep individuals feeling supported and to continue to take responsibility for their impact on and contribution to the world around them. It could also connect them to real coaches if needed. Users would get daily ‘hero actions’, meditations, personal growth questions and activities that would help them to continue the good habits of healthy wellbeing that they had learned whilst also getting them to start actively applying their identified life purpose in relevant activities promoting sustainability. Through the model of coaching, it will help them to find creative and fun

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ways to do this despite individual circumstances. It would also allow them to track their positive contributions and show it in visual ways, such as charts and graphs, which could also be shared on social media. Information that can be tracked, such as carbon footprints, can also be shown each day with a variety of ideas of how each user can reduce their own carbon footprint.

People are inspired to keep changing positively if they can see results and understand visually the impact of their contributions, in much the same way that numbers lowering from day to day on the bathroom scales will help people trying to lose weight to resist the next temptation. Proof of this concept is shown in studies that aim to measure the effectiveness of using wearable devices for tracking physical exercise habits and the wellness of a population. In these studies, the researchers concluded that there is an improvement in physical activity amongst the users of such devices, proving that the concept of pre-intervention physical activity is effective (Schrager et al., 2017).

Based on the evidence of using tracking information to influence change, we would also use elements of 'gamification' and a friendly interface to make achieving the visual results more enjoyable and competitive. Users can compare statistics and goals achieved and use this as an additional motivation. Certain tasks and activities can be put into a gaming context on the user's phone once completed. When certain levels of sustainable actions are completed, new games can be unlocked that are based around the next level to come. The games would be designed to be fun but also educational about sustainability and would incorporate features to continue to build empathy and compassion. Users will be able to create 'hero' avatars to personalise the app as well as strengthening the concept of becoming an actual hero. This would also psychologically create positive associations with the app as well as being another way to connect app users together.

Much like recent games such as 'Pokemon Go', the app will encourage people to get out and meet one another whilst still playing a game on a screen. Individual groups, towns and cities, and even countries can combine efforts in a global/national/local leader board. Competitiveness has always proven to be a huge motivator psychologically; the proposed app can awaken the competitive side of individuals but harness that energy in a friendly and positive way. Competition also has an advantage of making aspects of learning perceived as 'boring' more fun. Another benefit of gamification is the additional ways it can help contribute to measure, track, and record results.

In a study entitled 'Does Gamification Work', researchers took an in-depth look at this concept as many businesses and organisations are looking at this approach to support user engagement with products and services. The outcome was that gamification does produce positive effects and benefits, but these depend greatly on the motivation of users (Hamari et al., 2014). The motivation we use for the 'hero' app is the positive change and goals achieved by the user, but other rewards can also be used, such as points and badges, a possibility to earn more one-on-one coaching time, and so on. We would not base the entire concept of the app on gamification but rather use it as one aspect that can be accessed to appeal to those who would benefit from learning and accomplishing their goals through that medium.

Those who have completed the course can form a support group on social media channels provided by our company and create an online platform where people can help each other generate ideas to creatively implement sustainability within their personal and business lives. It could even become its own social media platform and become a massive networking hub, like an eco-green version of LinkedIn, with a main objective of supporting and collaborating with others to become better heroes for themselves, others

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and the planet. The app will differ from other similar apps as it will tie in and support the importance of mental health with environmental issues and sustainability. It will recognise that people will not be inspired to change the planet without the support and learning of how to positively change within themselves first.

3 Conclusion

In this research we highlight that the lack of coordination of wellbeing and psychological aspects of economic agents is a major reason contributing to the failure of achieving sustainable goals. We propose that when an individual can take care of their wellbeing through self-awareness this gives them the ability to further develop empathy for others and the environment that sustains them. When a person can care for their own personal development responsibility, they have resilience and the understanding that enables them to take the next big step of making changes that might entail sacrifice to develop a more sustainable society. Self-awareness creates greater awareness overall and allows individuals to connect with the bigger picture beyond immediate gratification.

In this paper, we establish a link between the individual/economic agent and planet Earth to explain how individuals can contribute towards sustainable development. The proposed comprehensive and feasible model will enhance the existing person-environment fit model in practice for the development of the businesses of various sizes. The model will allow a better fit of people within the planetary boundaries, which will reduce the differences in profit and non-profit aspects of business. We find that following the stages of the proposed 'Journey of a Hero' framework, the individual will be able to associate themselves with the economic significance of sustainability practices. Development of the app will enhance the flow of information from business to individual and vice versa. The advanced flow of quality information will reduce the cost of processing information, will generate good examples for future generations and will assist policymakers to understand what changes are required to achieve sustainable goals in the short term.

The stages of the 'Journey of a Hero' are unique, and to the best of our knowledge such a comprehensive framework is not discussed in the existing business academic literature. The combined application of P-E fit and ANT theories to explain the theoretical underpinning of the research question will allow researchers in business, wellbeing, coaching, sustainability, corporate finance and other related fields to understand the importance of applying an interdisciplinary approach to address sustainability issues, which in turn will affect the profitability of business.

The practical application of the model proposed in this paper is far reaching. The main advantage of this coaching course and app is its versatility. It can be adapted to every individual as well as small businesses all the way up to the corporate level (Goyal et al., 2018). It can also be used in schools, charities and a variety of other organisations that all have the same objective of helping people, animals and the planet.

The study suffers from some limitations like any other research. Arranging training for individuals at various age groups, from different religious backgrounds and considering country governing factors can enrich the model. We aim to develop the app by including the feedback from Stage 1 and Stage 2. After applying the proposed model for businesses of various sizes, we expect to overcome the above limitations in our future studies.

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Notes

- 1 We use person, individual, economic agent simultaneously
- 2 <https://www.roche.com/investors/non-financial-reporting.htm>
- 3 <https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/uk-voluntary-national-review-of-progress-towards-the-sustainable-development-goals>
- 4 The World Health Organization (WHO) defines holistic health as:

viewing man in his totality within a wide ecological spectrum, and ... emphasizing the view that ill health or disease is brought about by an imbalance, or disequilibrium, of man in his total ecological system and not only by the causative agent and pathogenic evolution.

Appendix 1 Aspects of Personal Development and Fulfilment

The *physical* can be defined as: exercise, the health of the body, recreational sports, ability to move and perform to an intended level. It includes diet and nutrition, maintaining a desired weight and appearance, sleep/rest and self-image.

The *emotional* can be defined as: love, connections with other people, friendships and family, a developed sense of compassion and empathy, a sense of belonging and community, self-worth and value, psychological health and the mental capacity to cope with pressure and remedy stress in ever-changing life situations, wellbeing and resilience, emotional maturity and self-awareness, eliminating the negative and nurturing the positive, developing passions, and healthy interactions with other people. It is also an understanding that we are responsible for our actions, the ability to self-reflect and come to a desired resolution.

The *intellectual* can be defined as: education, learning new things and evolving our understanding, developing new skills and interests, challenging ourselves and pushing beyond perceived boundaries, having a job that challenges us and leaves us feeling fulfilled, progression in our careers or to be able to push into new projects and ambitions. It is the contentment of knowing that the day was used in some way to develop ourselves and become better than we were the day before.

Identity can be defined as: style, culture, sexuality, faith, religion, spirituality and non-religious acts of exploration of the soul. Identity also revolves around purpose and meaning to one's life. It answers the question of 'why am I on this planet?' It is the feeding of our curiosity and the evaluation of our lives beyond the day to day and into the metaphysical. It includes philosophy, morals and ethics, and the pursuit of a greater understanding to our lives.

Appendix 2 Example of Art Therapy: Effectiveness on Improved Health

'In all four areas of creative artistic expression reviewed here, there are clear indications that artistic engagement has significantly positive effects on health. Despite methodological and other limitations, the studies included in our review appear to indicate that creative engagement can decrease anxiety, stress, and mood disturbances. Use of the arts in healing does not contradict the medical view in bringing emotional, somatic, artistic, and spiritual dimensions to learning. Rather, it complements the biomedical view by focusing on not only sickness and symptoms themselves but the holistic nature of the person. When people are invited to work with creative and artistic processes that affect more than their identity with illness, they are more able to 'create congruence between their affective states and their conceptual sense making'. Through creativity and imagination, we find our identity and our reservoir of healing. The more we understand the relationship between creative expression and healing, the more we will discover the healing power of the arts.' (Source: Stuckey et al., 2010)

Appendix 3 Sample questions to create cognitive dissonance and inspire courage

- Define what a hero is to you:
- Do you have any heroes in your life? What type of person inspires you?
- Are you taking responsibility for your actions and where you are in life?
- What do you think courage is? Remember a time you took action even though you were afraid. What did it feel like afterwards?
- Are you living a life that you truly believe in and inspires you? If not, what would that life look like?
- What does fear cost you?
- What holds you back from taking action to change?
- How do you want to see yourself within our earth's system?
- (Explain the planetary boundaries) Which planetary boundary is most important to you?
- Do you have any big fears related to any of the boundaries and are you adversely affected by any of the aforementioned boundaries?
- What changes do you want to make within these boundaries?

Appendix 4 Sample of questions for Stage 2

- What inspires passion and meaning for you?
- Are you including these aspects in your life?
- What new skills do you want to learn and what has stopped you from learning them?
- What sustainability issues resonate the strongest for you?
- How can your skills and passions be applied to changing the planetary boundaries?
- Have you tried to help or contribute to environmental issues important to you?
- What would make it easier for you to contribute?
- What resources and support do you feel you need to apply the changes you want to see in yourself and in the world around you?
- What other people/organisations/businesses are around you that offer opportunity of positive change that inspires you?
- How can you apply your courage to be a hero that can create a positive change?
- How do you see you can take action as a hero mitigating the planetary boundaries?