

## CPA Australia Podcast

### Transcript – Episode 55

Intro: Hello, and welcome to the CPA Australia Podcast, your weekly source for business, leadership and public practice accounting information.

Ben O'Halloran: Hello, and welcome to the CPA Australia Podcast. My name is Ben O'Halloran, and I'm the content and social media manager at CPA Australia. Today we're privileged to have a guest who has worked with many big name Australian and international businesses on conferences, group workshops, training and executive coaching.

He's worked with American Express, Commonwealth Bank, Medibank Private and Volvo, just to name a few. He's also a neuro-linguistic programmer and has helped thousands of people recognise and remove mental barriers to high performance and success in their personal and professional lives.

Today we're joined by motivational speaker, author and mind coach, Anthony Bonnici. Hello Anthony, and welcome to the CPA Australia podcast.

Anthony Bonnici: Thanks very much Ben, a pleasure to be here.

Ben O'Halloran: Anthony, you've recently written two eBooks, which are available on your website, and our listeners can check out the show notes from today's podcast for links to Anthony's site, to grab a free copy. Today we want to take a look at your book titled Brain Blinkers, but before we do that, and by way of introduction, would you like to tell us a little about yourself?

Anthony Bonnici: Yeah, sure. I'm a Sydneysider, a family of six of us, including four children. I've been living here all my life and have had the pleasure of having my business, called Move Mountains, now under the web name of [anthonybonnici.com](http://anthonybonnici.com), for 12 and a half years. So I've been speaking around the world for that period of time.

Prior to that, I was 13 years in the pharmaceutical industry, so straight out of university with a Bachelor of Business degree, moved into a sales role at a pharmaceutical company, then into marketing roles, people leadership roles. Then in 2005 took the big punt and started my own business from scratch and have been going ever since, and loving every single minute of it.

So I really found my passion and my purpose, and very privileged to be speaking to people like yourself and others right around the world. So, yeah, good stuff.

Ben O'Halloran: Would you like to tell us a little bit about that, and give us a few examples of some of the mental barriers or roadblocks in our minds?

Anthony Bonnici: Yeah, sure. Sure Ben. This product, this thing called Brain Blinkers, has been I guess the cornerstone of my work for the last 12 and a half years. It represents a good three quarters of my business. Probably the best way to answer the question is to go back to the genesis of the idea, because about 20 odd years ago, when I was working in the pharmaceutical company, it intrigued me the whole concept of behavioural psychology.

So having studied a little bit about it, and understanding the power of the brain etcetera, and neuroplasticity was only just a new concept. I guess a number of your listeners may not even have heard the term, but the power of the brain and what we now know as its infinite ability to be malleable, was only just sort of coming through.

I was watching it in my sales team when I was a sales manager. Just seeing how people could mould, and basically I created a high performing sales team from a bunch of people who were capable, very capable people, but by changing the beliefs that they held, could have a dramatic and I guess exponential effect on their behaviours.

So, to answer the question, you asked me what are some of the brain blinkers as such. Well, when someone starts off by saying, "Oh, I can't do X, Y, Z. I can't cook, I can't draw, I can't clean. I'm no good with numbers." I mean the accountants in the room would not be saying that, they might be actually saying the inverse. They might be saying, "I'm no good in front of people," or "I'm an accountant, therefore I'm not creative."

Or any of those limiting aspects of our beliefs are in the clump of Brain Blinkers if you like, and I'll explain all three types of Brain Blinkers in a sec, but ultimately anything that gets in our road mentally, of us performing at our best, are Brain Blinkers. We'll go through the three key Brain Blinkers very shortly.

Ben O'Halloran: Sure. When we spoke last time Anthony, you mentioned how limiting beliefs could hold someone back from achieving their potential. Could you talk us through a case where you've helped someone overcome their limiting beliefs, and how they achieved their potential?

Anthony Bonnici: Yeah, absolutely. A very good story is, a guy who's now a good friend of mine, his name is Richard Romano ... I guess we're doing the end in mind here, because what I'm going to share, this example, it's a very personal example. It's not set in the professional context, although the genesis of it was at a big conference where Richard was in the audience, and I got to the end of the session where I talked about the three Brain Blinkers, and I was giving an example, which we'll go through later on, of what I call the ACID test, which is the way in which to remove them.

But I guess if we continue with this story, with the end in mind, I asked someone, "Hey, who's got an example of a limiting belief?" And this guy Richard got up, I didn't know him prior to then, and he got up and said, "Yep, Anthony, my limiting belief is I can't run." I said, "Well, what do you mean you can't run?"

He said, "All of my life I've never run really more than 50 metres. I was the fat kid at school, I was that bloke who was not ever interested in running, consequently I'm not terribly healthy." He was a pretty big guy at the time, and he effectively said to me, "You know what? This belief holds me back." And I said, "Well, would you want to change it?" He goes, "Yeah."

I said, "'Cause that's important to understand." Long story short, this belief was in his way of actually doing something about it. So he had correctly identified it. We then took him through a process of understanding how it limited him, and then ultimately showed him via what I call the ACID test, the four step process of you can be aware of it, then you can challenge the belief.

Long story short, this guy left the session and I went up and thanked him for his example, because it was the first time I'd really used a real life case study like that in front of people to demonstrate the methodology of what I call the ACID test. And he came up afterwards, I said, "Mate, are you actually going to do anything about this?" I said, "I don't get paid any extra for it, but I'm really interested in whether you are going to do it."

And he had this steely look of determination in his eyes, and he said, "Yeah, I am." This bloke who had honestly never run more than 50 metres in his life before, within three months, had taken on a personal trainer, had lost 30 kilo's ... that was within about six months. He lost a whole heap of weight, simply by believing that his barrier, if you like, or the belief that he can't run, was now that was the thing that was holding him back, so he was moving it to one side and actually took incredible action.

This guy ended up running the City2Surf. For those of you in Sydney know that's about 14 kilometres, that same year, so later that year. It was early in the year that I met him, and by adopting this methodology with Brain Blinkers, he ran the City2Surf, not in record time by any stretch of the imagination, but completed it and took a photo of him holding his little Sydney Morning Herald or whatever it was ... badge, that showed that he completed the City2Surf, and then texted me.

I've never been happier with a delegate. Out of the hundreds of thousands of people we've worked with throughout the entire world, this one moment is indelibly printed in my brain, of a guy who identified a Brain Blinker and removed it, and has gone on subsequently to run a couple of half marathons and even a full marathon. So I've encouraged-

Ben O'Halloran:

Incredible.

Anthony Bonnici: Incredible, and this is just one example. And I don't want to say it's an extreme example, because I've had many examples of people who have just decided, because it's not me who's making the change. It's not me who's even instigating the change, people need to make the change themselves, and when we go through some of these beliefs, and we go through the methodology on how to change them, then people become empowered and it's a brilliant thing.

I'd like to take the credit, but it's not me. Richard decided to do it himself. He chose to make the change, and to this day he still keeps fit. Again, I'm not trying to tell you he's the picture of perfection by any stretch of the imagination, he'd be the first person to say no. But he has changed his life, based on a belief that was holding him back, which he then subsequently removed. So, fantastic.

Ben O'Halloran: That's a fantastic example Anthony. I think that leads us on to the next question about our behaviour and beliefs, and the relationship between the two, and how we can start to change our behaviours and perhaps become more action orientated, to break down some of those limiting beliefs.

Anthony Bonnici: That's right, and it all stems from three keywords. I know we've mentioned this very briefly in our work on the influence programme, but for anyone who wasn't listening to that, the three keywords here are believe, think, behave, in that order too. Now there's evidence to suggest that you can reverse the order, meaning if you want to change your self-belief, then act or behave the way you want to believe.

But we're not going to focus on that today. What we're going to focus on; believe, think, behave, in that order. Ultimately what it means is that if you've got a behaviour you want to change, it is no good focusing on that behaviour. This is where a lot of people go wrong. Let's, for example, say they get angry on the road, and we use road rage as an example as we did there.

People say, "I've got to become less angry," or, "I've got to get more patient with other," and they'll be a little bit more patient maybe when the kids are in the car, but they'll still be angry with others on the road. What people have got to realise is that for the behavioural change to occur ... and this is broadly true for change management in general, I do a lot of work with organisations who need tools in how to help people go through change ok?

Here's one of the core, I guess, foundational principles of it, if you want to change a behaviour, go back to the belief that drives it. And again, if we use road rage, and I guess a number of people listening can identify with this, people getting upset on the roads, and even in the last month or so, certainly in Australia we've had examples that had made the news about horrific examples of road rage that's just terrible.

People getting hurt and even killed, it's despicable to be honest. And here's one of the best ways to think about it, and to actually take action. So the behaviour

is you get upset when someone cuts you off, or you get that little bit angry when people ... you let someone in, and they don't acknowledge you or say thanks, okay? So we're all probably in that boat to some extent.

If you've got that behaviour that you want to change, don't focus on the behaviour. Don't focus on your anger. Focus on the belief, or identify the belief that is driving, pardon the pun, that behaviour. So for me, I use this example because personally I believed I was a really bad road rager, and I was, and I believed it was because of a couple of things.

First thing, I have Maltese descent, some people might have guessed from my surname. I have Maltese descent, and I honestly believed that I had a genetic right to get angry, or to have a short fuse. The more I think about that, and every time I speak about it, I laugh, because I used that as a crutch for many years thinking, "Well, that's my descendancy. That's my genes."

And I remember my father getting quite upset on the road when he was young, and still does to some extent. So I used that as a crutch to say, "Well, that's how I'm wired genetically." So I actually dismissed that, I no longer believe that is a reason for me becoming angry. Yet once I dismissed it, I still experience a significant amount of anger on the road, so there was something else.

And Ben, the answer for me was this, I discovered that my belief about people on the road was this, I believed people should drive like me. What I discovered is that's my limiting belief, because I expected everyone else to give a wave to me when I let them in, and ultimately, who the hell am I to think that I control them?

So even though, yes, we want people to be courteous on the road, yes, we have road rules, when we get our heads around the fact that the only thing we truly control is ourself and how we choose to act and react, that very philosophical locus of control stuff, then a bizarre thing happens, we actually become more in control of self, and more able to influence others broadly.

So for me personally, once I realised that the belief of me believing people should drive like me, once I got rid of that and I now know, "I don't believe that." I don't believe people should drive like me. I'd like it if people were polite, but I don't expect it in others, and I don't believe it has to happen. Who am I to know what that person's been going through? Whether they've just gone through a divorce, or just got fired, or whatever happened in their life.

They might be in a medical emergency, and I'm getting upset with them because they didn't wave when I let them in type of thing, it's asinine. So now I believe people drive like they do. So my alternative belief is people drive like they do, I don't control them. I control how I drive. What's happened for me, Ben, is that I've reduced my anger and frustration on the road by a significant amount.

Now, do I still get annoyed with people? Of course I do, but it no longer manifests as anger or severe frustration. It's just sort of annoyance, or mild annoyance. So what I'm saying is, the action or the behaviour of anger and frustration on the road, which in my youth led to me tailgating, chasing, doing stupid things, that behaviour is now completely mitigated by the belief I hold, which is I can control me, no one else. The sense of empowerment I have as a result has had an effect on the relationship I have with my wife, let alone my kids, and let alone how I choose to drive a car, which is a lot safer than I used to be.

I don't tailgate, I don't act like an idiot on the road. So there's proof that in order to change the behaviour, go back to the belief that drives it.

Ben O'Halloran: That's a very interesting point, Anthony. I think something a lot of us can identify with being drivers ourselves, and many of our listeners might be thinking about their own limiting beliefs at this point. Can you elaborate on the common self-sabotage I guess, or the negative thoughts many of us may have?

Anthony Bonnici: Yeah, self-sabotage and negative thoughts, well, I mean I call that Brain Blinker number two. Brain Blinker number one are the limiting beliefs, and that's the, "I can't," or, "I'm not good enough," or, "What if it fails," or, "I'm an accountant, I'm not creative," or, "I can't run more than 50 metres," like Richard Romano.

Those limiting beliefs, if you can identify one of them for yourself, and they're there, they hide, even in the most optimistic people they exist. That's the first step. The second thing you mentioned there is the self-sabotage, or the negative thoughts. In the eBook, you'll read about this, and again, as you'd mentioned earlier, this is free of charge on my website, which I think we're providing the link to that.

So the self-sabotage, I've summarised in an acronym that I call COFFEE, so C-O-F-F-E-E. So six ways that we basically press the self-destruct button without the help of anyone else really. We don't need anyone's assistance in this regard, and that's by definition what self-sabotage is. The negative thoughts is also an interchangeable term here, because in behavioural psychology, they're more often called negative thoughts.

Those thoughts that get into our brain, and effectively stop us from doing things. So they don't have to be a belief that's been held for a number of years. I guess most of the beliefs we have in our brain, if we look at neuroscience, are in our brain by the age of seven. So that zero to seven phase is imprint, so what we've been conditioned to believe, our beliefs about the world, how good we are, our abilities to do X, Y and Z, they're usually imprinted by age seven.

But negative thoughts and self-sabotage can be genetic, no question, but they can also be ... can become a part of our life when we start a new job, or start a new profession. So the COFFEE model, the acronym for COFFEE as people will

read ... there's six words, so if anyone is writing this down, here's the opportunity. "C" is for when we catastrophize. That's when we make much ado about something small.

You might be an accountant, you make a mistake in a PNL, or whatever it may be, and you think that's the end of the world, or you're going to lose a customer based over it, or the project is going to fall over. So we magnify the effect or sequela or the consequence of a certain situation. Everyone's probably worked with a catastrophizer in their past, someone who makes much ado about nothing. It's hard work, especially if they're a leader of people.

Catastrophizers who are leaders of people are exhausting. At the very least they create angst in their group, and at the worst, they can have high levels of quiet turnover as well as staff turnover. So be careful of the first self-sabotage, which is making much ado about nothing, catastrophizing.

The second one, "O", is when we overgeneralize. That's when we put people in a box. You're an accountant, well, you're going to be a nerd, or you're an accountant, you're going to be good with numbers, but not much else. Unfortunately stereotypes in life exacerbate this problem, and accountancy is the classic one in professions. So shaking off that mantle, shaking off that overgeneralization is really important.

It's important to do not only for self, but for others. Don't judge a book by its cover. It's all the -isms that there is, sexism and racism, and I call it post code-ism in my book. The actual book itself, I talk about examples of how I grew up in the western suburbs of Sydney. I grew up in Blacktown, and I remember a girl completely dismissing me because of my post code.

She had judged me based on my post code, and we were getting on like a house on fire and then I had mentioned the B word, Blacktown, and she walked away from me there and then. So that's an example of an overgeneralization. The thing is, the older we get or the more experienced we are, the more we tend to put people in boxes. If we had time, I'd go into the primal theory of evolution here that as tribes, we had to do this. We had to make a quick judgement about someone based on the look of them, or the shape of their tribe, or the types of carts they were pulling, and then make a judgement on whether to attack or not. This is-

Ben O'Halloran: Sure, I guess it's a survival thing, isn't it?

Anthony Bonnici: Absolutely. This is intrinsically linked to survival, and so therefore part of our DNA to an extent. The trick in today's world is to say, "All right, well for myself and for others, how much am I going to judge them very quickly based on what the look like, what their qualification is, where they're from et cetera."

Seven times out of 10 you might be right, 'cause you're experienced. You might say, "people with this type of look, they're going to do this type of behaviour." But the three or four times out of 10 you're wrong, you're going to miss out, and that's one of the warnings we give there with overgeneralizing.

The third one, "F" is for filter. This is when we choose to remember what we want in a given situation. The classic here is when we're getting feedback from people. So you might be getting feedback from the boss, and the boss says, "Hey Ben, you're doing a great job here. This is brilliant, this is brilliant, this is extraordinary. You're doing this so well, la, la, la. This is one thing I'd improve. It's minor in the scheme of things, but it's something you can improve. Congratulations, we love you to death here at CPA."

And what does Ben remember? He remembers the one thing that he needs to improve, whereas in fact you're doing everything really, really well, and you negatively filtered that feedback to remember one thing that you can ... that can change. Now don't get me wrong, filtering negatively can sometimes be mistaken for accepting constructive criticism. I'm not saying not to accept constructive criticism, what I'm saying is take it ... balance it out.

If you've received a lot of good, positive feedback, well, then that's a great thing. Feel good about that. The one thing you can fix, sure, but don't just take away that one negative. That's an example of overgeneralizing ... sorry, I beg your pardon, that's an example of filtering. And then you've got people who forecast, so this is the fourth point of self-sabotage. These are people who are predicting failure before it even has a chance to arrive.

Again, we need to be careful here. I talk about bad coffee, don't drink bad coffee, the acronym of COFFEE. Bad coffee is when you are predicting ... you're knocking down a suggestion from someone before you even have a chance to implement it or give it a try. So the naysayers are people like this, and please, if you're listening to this, don't misinterpret me as saying I shouldn't play devil's advocate. Absolutely, we need to sometimes play devil's advocate, and especially in the accounting role where you are responsible for helping people from a financial or strategically accounting basis.

Sometimes you need to put on the hat and say, "What if this fails? What are we going to do here? Let me play devil's advocate." I'm not saying don't do that, what I'm saying is be very careful not to predict something's going to fail before it has a chance to actually do that, or succeed indeed. So that's the fourth one. The second last one, the "E", or the first "E", is emotionalize. That's where we say be careful of taking things personally.

One of the things that psychologists will work on, is objectifying failure, because what people will do is when they fail, they will believe they're a failure. So a psychologist will say, "Look, no, no, no, hang on. You're drawing a long bow there, what's happened is a failure in a project or a relationship, or you lose your job, or whatever happens" When that failure occurs, people will then tend



to ... or some people will tend to emotionalize that and say, "I'm a loser," or, "I'm a failure, because I failed."

No, what's happened is you failed, so let's look at the failure. What happened? How can we fix it? What are we going to do about it? You as a person are good. Your self-esteem is good. So that's an important thing to discern. Now, don't get me wrong, there's another version of this. Taking things personally, or emotionalizing positively, so people who feel good about doing a good thing. We should be able to do that as much as we can. So when you give to charity for example, that's feeling good about giving to the poor, is a good thing.

So it's quite contradictory here, psychologists will ask you to positively emotionalize as much as you like, in fact, it's good for our self-esteem. Feel good about the good we do, so when you help a mate or you're in the office environment and someone's struggling, and you give them a helping hand, you feel good about that. That's good. Positively emotionalize, that's good coffee, negatively emotionalize, is not good. So don't drink that bad coffee.

Then the final one, final "E" if you like, is when we effectualize. Now when you read that, I've made a note of saying it doesn't exist. That word is not a real word and I'm acutely aware of that, but what I'm referring to here is the work of Smith, Hickman and Connor in their incredible work on what's called the OZ principle. Again, we don't have the time to go into the huge detail here, but if you imagine a horizontal line.

A line, and you say you've got a choice to live below or above this line, not even live, to be in a moment of below or above this line. When you are below the line, you are at the effect of things. So people who choose to be at the effect of things, their behaviour patterns are really similar. They'll blame others, they'll complain endlessly. They'll play the victim, "Why is this happening to me?" They will deny it's their responsibility to fix.

So that's the behaviour associated with someone who is what's called below the line, or at the effect of it. When people are at the effect of something, they can be at the effect of the weather, let alone their job, or their country, or the environment, whatever it may be. So when they're at the effect of something, one thing's for sure, you will fixate on the problem.

So the antithesis of this is to say, "Okay, what's the opposite thing that can happen?" Well, in order to focus on a solution, we need to get above the line and be at cause. So instead of being at the effect of things, be at cause. The way to get there is to say, "All right, I now understand the problem, I'm now choosing not to fixate on the problem, what can we do to fix the problem?"

So whenever you get in a group environment, this happens in meetings all the time in organisations, people will complain and deny, "Marketing didn't do this, the legal team didn't provide this on time," all the below the line behaviour. A

good facilitator will say, "Okay, do we need anymore time to focus on the problem, or the issue at hand?" If people in the room say, "No, we understand it. We don't need anymore time," a good facilitator, or good MC, or a good holder of the agenda will say, "Right, from now on, there is no more discussion about the problem. We're not going to bitch and moan, we're not going to deny it's our responsibility. We're not going to talk about the problem anymore. We are going to completely absorb ourselves in what we're going to do as a result of this."

Then again, if you're running the meeting, if someone strays and says, "Yeah, but marketing ..." you basically shut them down, because they've had their chance to vent. Venting is below the line. I'm not saying don't do it, just spend less time there. So people at the effect of things, sometimes overrun meetings. Be at the cause, looking for solutions. So there's the six. The six ways we self-sabotage, the COFFEE model. "C" for catastrophize, "O" for overgeneralize, "F" for filter, "F" for forecast negatively, "E" for emotionalize, and then the final "E" is for effectualize, which the word doesn't exist, but to be at the effect of things.

They're only six of many, many others ... different techniques of self-sabotage that I know for a fact, having done this with hundreds of thousands of people now, right around the world. If you took a shining to any of those, maybe a few of these, if you can change those, identify first and then remove them, it will have a profound effect on how you do things.

Ben O'Halloran:

So I guess we want to encourage our listeners not to drink bad coffee, as you've heard there with the acronym, and I want to move onto our next point, and I think everyone will be familiar with that, and that's fear. We've all experienced fear at some point in our lives, mostly in, but certainly not limited to when we were children.

You talk a lot about fear in your eBook. One particular thing people fear is public speaking. Can you talk through this, and how fear affects us, especially in a public speaking or a professional setting?

Anthony Bonnici:

Yeah, absolutely, absolutely. Well, in my presenting work, I do a fair bit of ... obviously I present for a living, but we do a fair bit of work with groups who are looking to be able to present better. So, the power of public speaking is noted, and indeed it's the most common fear in the world in any audience.

Doesn't matter if they're sales people, customer service, accountants, lawyers, you ask any group of people what they fear most, and quite often it'll be what you're doing right now Sir in front of people, speaking. So one way to attack this fear, just one methodology that's in the eBook and in further information in the hard copy of the book, is to follow the work of Susan Jeffers who wrote a book called, "Feel the fear and do it anyway."

The principle of that is astonishing, it's wonderful. Many of your listeners would no doubt have come across the concept of the iceberg principle, which is used to explain many things. Fundamentally, what you see in an iceberg is only a small proportion of the actual problem or the actual iceberg itself, and it's a great metaphor.

We use the same metaphor when we're tackling the fear of public speaking. Public speaking is just what you see, it's just the iceberg you see on top of the water, but there is so much more to it. It is actually not the surface level stuff that is the real iceberg. In fact, fear of public speaking relates more towards below the level of water metaphorically, which is about your sense of self, and quite often with people who fear public speaking, and I've coached many of them, very smart people, who just have this thing about public speaking.

Quite often it's about one of three things really. It's not about speaking in public, it's not about presenting, it is about what if I fail, what if I'm humiliated, and what if I'm rejected? Or any three of those in combination, so failure, humiliation, or rejection. If you can accept that it's actually about one of those things, or maybe a few of those things, rather than the actual act of public speaking, you're about halfway there of tackling that specific fear.

You then do what Susan Jeffers very cleverly explains in her book, *Feel the fear and do it anyway*, you do two things. The first thing, the first question you ask yourself is what's the worst thing that can happen, the worst case scenario? And so, I mean I've trained politicians on how to present effectively, and CEOs, and I ask them, "What's the worst thing that can happen?" And quite often the individual will look at me and say, "Well, I could lose my job. If I don't present effectively, the worst thing that could happen is I lose my job."

I say, "Okay, you've just lost your job. It's the following day, are you going to have breakfast?" They go, "Yeah." "Okay, so what are you going to do after that? How long do you reckon it will take you to find a job, or speak to someone in an industry where you might even be close to looking at a job?" They say, "I don't know, a week, a day," or whatever it may be. What we do is start to understand that the worst case scenario, which could happen, it's unlikely, but it could happen, is actually manageable. You're going to be okay.

So the second question you ask is, "If the worst case scenario happened, could you handle it?" Not, "Would it be nasty?" It'll probably be very nasty, the worst case scenario. So the fear of public speaking, when you put it into context like this and do a reframe and say, "Okay, what's the worst thing that can happen?" Quite often a lot of people will say, "They'll laugh at me," or, "I'll really completely stuff it up and I'll look like an idiot."

Okay, that just happened. Are you going to go to work tomorrow? Will your mother still love you type of thing. Have you still got a shirt on your back? Do you still have a job type of thing. They're the questions you ask in order to get them to understand that they're going to be okay. That complete reframe, I've

helped so many people with just that one model, many thanks to Susan Jeffers international best selling book. Huge book, really encourage people. If you fear public speaking, it's a must read.

But in my Brain Blinkers book and in the eBook, I go into it, just in a tiny bit of detail. Understand what the real fear is, it's not public speaking, it is probably fear of failure, fear of humiliation, or fear of rejection. Then if any of those happened, the worst thing that could happen, could you handle it? If you say, "You know what? I could," your fear of that thing drops, it diminishes. I've seen it completely go, but more often than not, it drops and it leaves you able to perform at your best. That's just one model that we could go through, in the book I go through another model on adrenalin, but there's a couple of ways in which we can help people with their fear.

Ben O'Halloran: And our listeners can certainly download your free eBook to get some more insight into overcoming fear, and a few tips and tricks, but we'll move on here to what you call the ACID test. And I understand there's four steps to removing a Brain Blinker, and this is what makes up the ACID test. Can you walk us through those?

Anthony Bonnici: Absolutely, and I use the context, Ben, of the guy we mentioned right at the beginning, Richard Romano, an absolute champion. This is what I did in front of a 150 other people at a conference. I used the ACID test. I said, "Okay, "A", is for being aware of the Blinker." So I said to Richard, "Are you aware that this is blocking you?" He said, "Yeah. I've realised that I'm telling myself I can't run, and that stops me from running."

Very simple, so tick on "A". The second letter of the acronym, so "C", is probably the most difficult one to work with. It's challenging the belief that holds you back. It's not good enough to just say, "All right, well I'm going to stop doing it." It doesn't work. So I said to Rich, "What would be an alternative belief, given that you want to start running?" because his wife and four kids would go for a jog around the block, and he would never join them, so there was his motivation.

I said to Rich, "What would be an alternative belief? We need to challenge this limiting belief that you can't run. What would be an alternative belief?" He goes, "Well, with a lot of effort, I could run two k's with my kids." I said, "That's a beautiful alternative belief. Let's work with that." Now, here's the trick, and in the book I explain it in a little bit of detail. You picture it like a seesaw. If you're looking at an old-school seesaw, on the left hand side, what other benefits to you of changing the belief? In front of everyone, Richard said, "Well, if I now believe that I could run with a fair bit of effort, I'd actually be empowered to make a change."

So you write that down. You write down the benefits of changing the belief on the left hand side of this seesaw that you're going to draw and you'll see it in the book. "What else?" He said, "Well, if I believe I can actually ... with a fair bit

of work, I'm admitting to myself that I'm going to have to change my eating habits and my exercise habits, I'll probably lose a few kilos." Okay, so you'll lose some kilos. "I'll feel better about myself." So that's self-esteem. "I'll fit into nicer clothes, and I'll actually get a bit fitter and possibly live longer."

Now, the interesting thing with this, is that I don't think many people need that evidence anymore. Jenny Craig, and Lite n' Easy and all the gyms in the world sell the benefits of looking and feeling better when you are someone who's either too heavy, or not fit. The benefits of changing the belief, Richard was very in touch with, then why don't we change? If we know the benefits, why don't we change? Well, this is one possible reason why we don't. We've not considered the other side of the seesaw. The right hand side of that seesaw is very important to fill in.

On that side we have to write down, not the benefits of changing the belief, we've already done that on the left side. What are the benefits to you of staying exactly the same? So I said to Rich in front of the group, "What are the benefits to you of continuing to say, 'You can't run more than 50 metres?'" He looked and he said, "There's none." I said, "No, no, there's plenty, otherwise you would've changed already." He thought for a couple of seconds, and he went, "I don't have to exercise. I don't have to fail. I don't have to make an effort. I don't have to risk being someone I'm not. I can eat what I want."

They came out thick and fast, and people started realising, "Right, this stuff is ..." pardon the pun, "it's heavy. It's powerful. It drives our behaviour." If you think of a similar limiting belief that I use a lot, people who say they can't lose weight. This completely is in line with that, so what you do is you write down the examples. You write down ... sorry, not examples, the actual things that you've said, what are the benefits to you of, on the left hand side, changing the belief, and what are the benefits, on the right hand side, of staying the same.

Here's the rub, you won't change until the benefits of changing i.e., the left hand column, outweighs, again pardon the pun, the right hand column. So behavioural change does not occur, in the longterm at least, until the left hand side, the benefits of changing the belief from limiting to alternative, outweigh the benefits of staying the same. I remember looking at this bloke saying, "What side's heavier?" He went, "The left. The benefits have changed." I remember saying to him, "Rich, I don't get paid extra if you have identified this for yourself. I don't get paid extra if you're telling me what I want to hear. You have to be honest."

And he goes, "No, I can see it now. The benefits to me of changing my belief to 'I can't run,' to 'I can run with a bit of effort,' it clearly outweighs." And I said, "Right, well we've just ticked off the second step. The next two steps are easy." The third letter in the acronym of the ACID test is, "I." Imagine what it's going to be like when you change, and so I said to him, "A couple of ways you do this is visualisation." I said, "Instead of just using visual," I said to him, "think of all the senses, don't just think of what it's going to look like."

I gave him an example, "Rich, what is going to be the sound of your children when they see you putting on your joggers to go for a run for the first time ever?" He said, "They're going to shriek." I said, "That's a powerful word. You can hear their shrieks." He's got four girls, beautiful girls. "They're going to be so excited, it's going to be palpable." So then he's visualising. "What's it going to feel like, Rich, when you're running at the one k mark?"

He goes, "I'm gonna be stuffed. I'm going to be sweating like a dog." We laughed, the whole group laughed. I said, "Great. Imagine what it's going to feel like, your muscles are going to be burning, you're going to be panting and that's good, but you're going to look over at your wife, and she's going to be smiling at you." That's a visualisation thing. It's a very, very powerful driver of behaviour. Then I looked at him and I said, "'D' id for do." He just ... everyone ... it was just quiet.

I said, "Mate, there's no more talking on this. There's no more theorising, there's no more planning. Just do it." I had to use the Nike term there, but I also quote Yoda, don't try to do it, don't attempt. Yoda said, "Do or do not, there is no try." It's so true. Don't try and do something, just say you're going to do it. I used a little bit of NLP, neuro-linguistic programming on him. I said to him, "Rich, it's now tomorrow, it's four o'clock, or five o'clock or whatever time you get home from work, and you're going to walk in the door and you are actually putting on your joggers going for a run. How does it feel?"

He goes, "I can see it happening now mate, I'm going to do it." I said, "Good. Well, that's your commitment." And that's the test, and just as a corollary to that, I mentioned early on what he went on to achieve, but Richard's not a spectacular man. He is just an ordinary bloke. He's the first person to admit it, and I did a little DVD with him that's available in one of my AV kits that's on the website. And when I interviewed him, he's just a knockabout bloke like you and I.

He's just an ordinary guy, and he said it was when I put to him, "Right, you're doing it tomorrow afternoon," that it clicked into action for him. It's not magic, none of this is magic. I'm not even playing with the subconscious mind with this. I just used a very conscious cognitive tool with this guy, for him to realise that the change is in his hands, and the change is very doable once you follow the very practical and pragmatic guidelines of the four step process of ACID.

Be aware that you've got a belief that holds you back, challenge that belief, imagine what it'll be like if it changed or when it changes, and then go ahead and do it. So they're the four steps in removing a Brain Blinker.

Ben O'Halloran:

Fantastic, and just before we wrap up Anthony, is there anything else you want to say about the Brain Blinker?

Anthony Bonnici: Brain Blinkers are common. I'd just encourage people, you might be listening to this thinking you're the most optimistic person in the world, I thought I was too, and I do a lot of self-awareness work on myself. I'd encourage you to download the free eBook, it's free, so there's no reason not to.

Have a look at it, share it with your loved ones, and if you want to make change in your life, this book really is about helping you make that change so that you can perform at your best and make the connections in life that are most important to you. We do this programme right around the globe from small group workshops and training, through to exec coaching. I do a lot of talks at conferences, groups like the CPA where I spoke at last year. I look forward to working with people in the future on this wonderful little programme of mine.

Ben O'Halloran: Anthony Bonnici, thank you for joining us today and being so generous in sharing this valuable information. You can find out more about Anthony and get his free eBook by visiting [www.anthonymbonnici.com.au](http://www.anthonymbonnici.com.au). To find out more about today's episode or for a transcript, visit your website at [www.cpaaustralia.com.au](http://www.cpaaustralia.com.au), and make sure you don't miss an episode by subscribing to the podcast on iTunes and Stitcher. Anthony, thank you so much for your time today.

Anthony Bonnici: My pleasure Ben. It's been fantastic.

Ben O'Halloran: Thanks Anthony.

Outro: Thanks for listening to the CPA Australia podcast. To download the transcript and to find more information on today's episode, visit [www.cpaaustralia.com.au/podcast/55](http://www.cpaaustralia.com.au/podcast/55)