

Kia Handley ([00:00](#)):

In a perfect world every day. You'd be a 10 out of 10 thriving, nailing everything life has to throw at you, but <laugh>, but I think you and I both know that is not always what happens. Maybe you didn't get enough sleep or you're not feeling great, or you have a bit of a stressful day at work. So many things can take that in outta 10 and make it an eight or a seven or a two. But is there a way for the people around us to make it up to 10 and for us them enter the idea of a gap plan, not a gap year, not a gap payment. What is it all about to tell you more about it? Relationship, Coach Tara Thomas is here. Good morning.

Tara Thomas ([00:39](#)):

Good morning. Kia.

Kia Handley ([00:41](#)):

How are you? I mean, what's your score out of 10 today? Or is that too personal? Do we not ask that question today?

Tara Thomas ([00:45](#)):

Today? I reckon so far... I'm an eight.

Kia Handley ([00:48](#)):

Well, excellent.

Tara Thomas ([00:49](#)):

Which is fantastic. It's a nice way to start the week.

Kia Handley ([00:51](#)):

A beautiful way to start the week. So if you are an eight, do I only need to bring two?

Tara Thomas ([00:57](#)):

Well, ideally my darling, you would bring an eight as well. That would be fabulous because then we would just be sparkling...effortless and easy, but I mean, I'll ask you in return. Where are you today on your sliding scale?

Kia Handley ([01:08](#)):

Look, I haven't had much sleep, but I seem to be thriving anyway. So I would say I'm a solid seven.

Tara Thomas ([01:16](#)):

Yeah, bring it. We're ON this morning. So we'll, we'll check in again about three pm though, right?

Kia Handley ([01:22](#)):

Oh, I'll be sleeping. Yeah. I'll have eaten dinner at two 30 and I'll be in bed. <laugh> all right. What is this idea of a gap plan?

Tara Thomas ([01:31](#)):

So the idea of a gap plan fits in exactly what you're saying, where identifying for each individual in a household, or even for yourself in your day to day life, how much time and energy and attention do I have to bring to the things that need to get done. And in this broader context of living in a pandemic at the moment, you know, we're all having the same... We're all living through the same pandemic, but we're not all having the same experience in the pandemic. It depends on your, your social and financial and emotional and physical and mental resources. Um, but as well, outside of pandemic times, it's just natural for humans to live through cycles of highs and lows. We're not always gonna feel good every day. And there are always going to be different factors. That mean maybe you have a lower energy level.

Tara Thomas ([02:21](#)):

I mean, maybe you are someone who has chronic pain or chronic illness and you are never more than a five out of 10. Mm. So the gap plan is about saying we acknowledge and appreciate and honor the fact that we are not always going to feel great and that having a plan in place with your, with the people in your life. So we all know what we need to do to take care of each other when that happens, it means that when it does happen, it's not quite so stressful. You know, you feel supported, we all know what we need to do. And then perhaps that two out of 10 or five out of 10, only last a few days, instead of you having to push through that, you know, that low energy and exhaustion by yourself where it might last a lot longer.

Kia Handley ([03:09](#)):

I'm curious if you think that the last two years in the pandemic has made us more aware of it and more aware of our feelings and maybe a little bit better at communicating that a bit, like, as you said, this was, but perhaps we're better at, at being like, oh, I'm at capacity.

Tara Thomas ([03:23](#)):

Yeah, I think definitely. And, you know, we have a physical expression of that. I think which, which often makes it easier as an illustration and the physical expression of that is when someone in your household is a close contact or has a, a positive COVID result and they now need to isolate in a room. So it's not just, you know, that perhaps they're a two out of 10 with their energy, they're out of the family execution of whatever needs to happen. So we are seeing this really clear illustration of what it means when there are people in our lives. You know, we're seeing it in a broader community context as well when people aren't able to contribute at their normal level because they're physically unable to do their jobs. We're seeing that on a much broader scale and much more concretely,

Kia Handley ([04:11](#)):

All right, let's go through the basics. Who can we do this gap plan with?

Tara Thomas ([04:14](#)):

So I'd like to think that there's a number of different levels. You can have a gap plan... I'm someone who has had chronic fatigue for a long time. And so I have a gap plan on an individual level, but I don't call it my gap plan. I call it my rainy day plan. And I think the nice thing about that is that metaphorically, you can see, okay, it's a rainy day today, but then maybe it will be sunny tomorrow. You know, we just expect these highs and lows. So you can do this gap plan as an individual. You can do a gap plan with your main person, whether that's your partner or a friend, whoever your key support person is, you can have a gap plan within your household. Mm-hmm <affirmative>, you can have one with your sort of friends and family, and then you can have a gap plan with the community or professionals around you.

So it's kind of those, you know, those concentric circles that you sometimes see where the people closest to you, you have a gap plan and then moving out into people who, you know, less and rely on less mm-hmm

Kia Handley (05:06):

<affirmative> what do we, so, yeah, sorry, go.

Tara Thomas (05:08):

Yeah. Beginning, beginning with your individual gap plan and within your household is where I'd suggest you start.

Kia Handley (05:13):

I guess it's going to be different as well, based on, you know, the relationship like Laurise and I, as a team of two will definitely have a gap plan. You know, when one, person's maybe not firing on all cylinders as the other, but that's going to look different than say me and my household.

Tara Thomas (05:31):

Sure. And then also...

Kia Handley (05:32):

My dog doesn't bring much to the gap plan <laugh>. But if I, if I had other people in my household...

Tara Thomas (05:39):

That's right. And also if there are people you don't know as well, maybe your colleagues or, you know, your employer, maybe you're not, maybe it's not safe or appropriate for you to say to them, Hey, I'm a two outta 10. I can't pull my weight and someone else do my job for me. <laugh> um, I, that would be amazing if we lived in the kind of world where that was, you know, the norm. Um, but it's not always, so there are people who you, you won't be saying, Hey, I'm not bringing my A-game today. And what that means is that you're gonna have less energy for other areas of your life. Mm. So when you're looking at the people who you are working with and sharing this gap plan with, ideally they're people who you can be really super honest and open with, where you can say my mental health, isn't great today, my physical or health isn't great today, or I just had a big night last night could be that simple,

Kia Handley (06:21):

Let's run through what, what should be included in the gap plan, how it might work.

Tara Thomas (06:24):

So the first and probably the most important thing is how do you know when you need to initiate the gap plan? You know, often when we get tired or depleted, we're not that good at, at realizing that we're not functioning very well. And sometimes it takes a gentle reminder from a partner or a friend "Hey, you seem like you are, you know, maybe a bit extra tired today. Is there something else I can do?" And, and they can ask at that point "do we need to run the gap plan?" Knowing yourself, firstly, what you are on the scale... And I like that scale of one to 10 or some people do like a green, orange, red mm-hmm <affirmative>, you know, um, red is gap plan. Green is I'm good. And then you wanna just check in like, how are we gonna initiate it?

Tara Thomas ([07:05](#)):

Is it just a matter of when we see each other, just doing a super fast check in, what are you out of 10? I'm a three, I'm a, I'm a seven. Okay. We can, you know, we can manage this between us today. And then you wanna look at what's the most important goals of the gap plan. And, and I would invite you to consider that the most important goal is that you enable each other to rest and reset your nervous system. So when the gap plan is running, you're not gonna be doing extra activities. That's the time when you might be canceling social occasions, you might not watch Johnny's basketball practice. You know, you're just gonna be reducing the amount of things that you need to do. Yep. And making sure you're taking care of yourself. And, and so yeah, you, you're gonna have a, as much detail in there as you can.

Tara Thomas ([07:53](#)):

I like to think of, you know, you can go and have a look at the emergency plan structures for bush fires and floods and evacuations, things like that... like your COVID plan, the more detail you have in there, the easier it is to, to run it. So there's a habits coach called James clear, who I think is fantastic. And he says "you don't rise to the level of your goals. You fall to the level of your systems." So if you have systems in place, you're not gonna completely crash out

Kia Handley ([08:24](#)):

That also allows us to be a bit flexible as well, because not every four outta 10 day is going to be for the same reason or for the same thing. And every day we have different, you know, requests from us as well in life and society.

Tara Thomas ([08:37](#)):

Yeah, that's exactly right. And you just need to be a little bit responsive, you know, you're not gonna be super rigid every time. Sometimes it's just, you had a bad night's sleep. You don't really need the gap plan. You just, you know, make sure you have an early night, so you'll go home and you'll say to the person in your household, or you'll go to work and say to someone on your team, you know, didn't have a great night's sleep. I'm gonna have an early night. But it just depends on what's happening in the day. You need to check in, you know, do I need to tag out of cooking dinner, maybe in the gap plan you're going to have some preparation. So you might have a frozen meal or you might have an agreement that, uh, on a, on a day where the gap plan kicks in that an appropriate take away food is, you know, um, my all time, favorite junction chicken shop <laugh>... so you can bleep that out.. Because they do, you know, beautiful salads. So the idea is when you're feeling a bit low, maybe you're gonna be craving that cafe and, and sugar and fat and all those things that don't actually help reset. So like what's an appropriate thing that you can do just so you all, um, that makes things a bit easier...what are we gonna do about childcare...

Kia Handley ([09:38](#)):

This all sounds amazing in theory, but I feel like, you know, as humans putting this together, it can be challenging. So where are some of the pitfalls? Where are some of the things we need to watch out for as we're having these conversations and putting this gap plan in place?

Tara Thomas ([09:53](#)):

Yeah. I think some of the pitfalls are really around our perception of what it means when all the things aren't getting done. So there's this kind of idea that if there's a gap in what's being done and I'm already maxed out at my capacity, then that means that you are not doing enough. And, and I think a lot of the time we have this, a idea that we should be able to do all of the things all of the time. So, some of the pitfalls are really around, like, what do we make it mean about ourselves and about the other people in our life when they're not able to fulfill what you saw as their commitments and, and do those regular things in the house. Like, what do we make it mean about someone when we go to their house and they haven't done the dishes for a week, or what do we make it mean about our partner when we come home and they haven't cooked dinner, even though they said they would.

Tara Thomas ([10:45](#)):

So it's really around that generosity and understanding that, you know, our value in relationships is not connected to the productivity of us in the house. It's not related to how many chores we do or how much money we make. It's really about taking care of each other. So that's a really big pitfall. And some of the red flags for that are, if you see either shame or blame. So shame is like, oh, I'm not doing enough. I'm, you know, I'm lazy or I'm a bad person. Or, you know, I just need to get my, you know, crap together or perhaps blame when you're starting to look at your partner and say, you are not doing enough. So shame and blame are really the red flags. I think in this context, that something isn't going right, that your attitude to the way that things are happening, maybe needs to be reconsidered. But also having said that, you know, if you are regularly needing to use your gap plan, like every week or every, every day, maybe there's too much, maybe you think you need to do too much.

Kia Handley ([11:45](#)):

It's gotta be even right as well. You can't constantly be the two. Sometimes you've gotta be the eight.

Tara Thomas ([11:50](#)):

Yeah. Well, and I guess that depends on the arrangement you have in the relationship, because some people do always have less capacity, and that doesn't make them less valuable as partners or friends. That just means they have less capacity, but it's about really negotiating, you know, what does that mean for us as, as partners or, and, and when I say partners, not just intimate partners, what does that mean for us in a relationship and how are we gonna manage that? And I guess then, you know, beyond that, like, is this a relationship that, that I can stay in, perhaps if, if Kia between you and I, like, I'm always a two and you always an eight, one of the ways you could balance that is you can go and find someone else who's, mostly an eight to pick you up when you've had to, uh, help care for me. Right. Mm-hmm <affirmative> so without them broadening that support network so that we can say, I love you. You're really important to me. Your capacity is often lower than mine. And so then I need to bring in more help.

Kia Handley ([12:50](#)):

Yeah. Which is so important that one person can't fulfill all our needs anyway. And that's a whole other conversation,

Tara Thomas ([12:55](#)):

<laugh> it is a whole other conversation. And you're absolutely right. But I mean, then, you know, you could have someone who just is lazy and is choosing not to contribute. And that is a whole nother conversation.

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Kia Handley ([13:05](#)):

Yeah I mean, let's not go there. Let's, let's focus on the positive and put together our Gap Plans. My, my dear eight out of 10. Thank you so much for telling us, uh, absolutely about this. I think it's, um, it's super helpful. Especially as we go into a new year at school and families are, you know, getting back into, uh, their regular routine. So it's a, a good thing to try to implement maybe in 20, 22.

Tara Thomas ([13:26](#)):

Yeah. Get the kids involved too, you know, like on a day when you come home tired, get them, get them working, put them to work. <laugh> love it.

Kia Handley ([13:35](#)):

What's the point. If you can't get them to do a job, Tara. That's right. <laugh> always great to catch up. Thank you.

Tara Thomas ([13:40](#)):

Pleasure. Talk soon.