Opportunities abound!

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Although as a country and as a profession, we are staring enormous challenges in the face, opportunities abound. How do we even begin to prepare and how to change challenges into opportunities? Except for constant loadshedding (by now maybe old news), there is artificial intelligence (AI) that is both improving and threatening to overtake human intelligence and decision making. How do we make sure that we utilise AI to the benefit of the profession and to the benefit of our patients?

Universal Healthcare is becoming more of a reality with the CUPS (Contracting Unit for Primary Health Care Services) being piloted all around. Are we pro-actively engaging to ensure our inclusion and participation in the process? Then of course, the time for the PSSA National Executive Director (ED) to retire is almost upon us, with all the changes that goes with it. It would be a huge blow to lose the corporate memory and years of knowledge and experience of a highly talented and devoted Executive Director, yet an opportunity arises to bring new ideas and energy into the PSSA, while we still have the opportunity to tap into the wealth of knowledge and experience of the outgoing ED.

Under such trying circumstances, it takes something more than intelligence to act intelligently and although it is said that we should never allow our emotions to overpower our intelligence, we should also never ignore the voice of our emotions. Our emotional intelligence will guide us through each and every difficult situation, if used in combination with our intelligence. The two are not opposites, they complement each other, they allow us to navigate troubled waters without losing our moral compass or drowning in despair.

We need to stand for what we believe in, boldly and without any excuse. We must own up where we failed and show the strength of character and emotional intelligence, to face our own failures and learn from them. This is the core of any future success individually and as a profession.

Society has fallen into the blame-trap. If I were unsuccessful in an interview, it is because I'm white or if the shoe fits, because of racism. Hardly ever will there be an admittance that the successful candidate scored higher than I did. And if I am reprimanded for disrespectful conduct and demoted, it is because the manager doesn't like me! This kind of conduct does not bode well for future leadership. Fortunately, within the profession we have a very positive Young Pharmacists’ Group that fosters and mentors our future leaders and allows them to grow positively! Just have a look at the list of young pharmacists SAAHIP posted during June, it is so inspiring.

Irrespective of where we are at mentally, we have to become more self-aware and understand how to recognise the red flags in our own behaviour. We need to know where to access support and how to vent our frustrations without negatively influencing those around us.

This will help us in regulating our moods and thus our reactions and impulses. It will also enable us to keep our motivation up and hold onto our passion for our profession and the best interest of our patients. We will be able to maintain our empathy for our patients and colleagues. To do this effectively we constantly need to improve our proficiency in managing relationships and building networks. Only as a united profession will we be able to optimise the bountiful opportunities coming our way.

Should this be our focus and our approach, we may realise that what seemed to be the dark days of crisis, has blown over and looking back we may see, much of what threatened our sanity now looks like a storm in a teacup. Time heals almost everything, and it certainly gives perspective!

To be able to move ahead, even after events that were personally exhausting or embarrassing, make peace with the past, don't allow it to spoil the present.

As long as we act with integrity, even if the outcome is less than positive, accept it, learn from it and move on. Don't compare your life and tribulations with others, it is a different journey.

Irrespective of what life throws at us, there will be numerous opportunities, personally and professionally. It mostly depends on how we look at the situation, that determines whether we see a threat approaching or an opportunity.