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**19 ARTICLES TO HELP YOU TO SUCCEED
DURING DIFFICULT TIMES.**

COMPILED BY **KAREN LEONG** KarenLeong.com | Influence-Solutions.com



BY 19 AUTHORS ON LEADERSHIP, RESILIENCE, INNOVATION, TEAM BUILDING & CHANGE

About This Book

June 2020

A few weeks ago, 55 members of our association each agreed to write a short article that could offer help, ideas, comfort, perspective, solutions, or just a friendly word to someone out there in the world. A person like you, going through this global pandemic with us. You received 19 of those articles, carefully curated by the person who sent it to you. I truly hope this collection inspires you. Because how my community made this has truly inspired me.

Hi, I'm Cathy Johnson, the 2019-20 President of Asia Professional Speakers Singapore. We are a community of speakers, trainers and subject matter experts who speak for a living. Many of our members speak at conventions or train large groups in organisations around the world. And Covid-19 has decimated that part of their business. Yet they are continuing to help, serve, encourage, support, guide and inspire.

Times like these can reveal the true character of a person. And I am so proud of the character displayed by these people and this community.

It's been a tough time to be the President of this association. It's a tough time to be a leader anywhere. But it's the storm that makes the sailor. What makes it rewarding during the storm is the community rallying around you.

I'd like you to know that our community is rallying around you. We wrote 55 articles. You've received 19 of them here. If you'd like to read the others, come and [visit us online](#) where you'll find all 55. While you're there, you can learn more about our amazing members who are all worth connecting with.

If you're a business leader, our speakers may have solutions for your challenges right now.

If you're interested in professional speaking, it's a tough time right now! But we do have a wonderful community, monthly meetings, virtual training, coaching, mentoring, an upcoming virtual convention and an amazing global community that can support your development.

We're here for you. We're rallying around you.



Cathy Johnson
President (2019-2020)
Asia Professional Speakers Singapore

www.asiaspeakers.org

admin@asiaspeakers.org



Asia
Professional
Speakers
Singapore

Acknowledging “I Don’t Know” Can Activate Your Leadership Superpower

by Karen Leong

“I’m a traditional banker. I don’t know tech. But when I landed the role, it turned out to be an enabler.” A leader who heads digital transformation at a major bank once said this at a panel discussion I moderated.

“Had I come from a tech background, I would have operated in the realm of the possible”, she added. “However, because I did not deep dive into the technology aspects, but looked at what customers wanted, I could focus on the desirable.”

Her embracing of an “I don’t know” mantra struck a chord. These were not words you expect to hear from a seasoned corporate leader. The deeper lesson here could be applicable to every area of our life.

And that is, ‘I don’t know’ can activate your leadership superpower.

I know that acknowledging our limitations goes against the grain of everything that we have been brought up to believe. We were told to study hard to ace exams and avoid not knowing in school. When we entered the working world, we were hired, rewarded, even promoted for our knowledge and what hints of competence knowledge provides.

Yet, when we take on the mantle of leadership, this quest to know everything can be counter-productive, even disempowering, in a world of constant change and rapid disruption, where adapting requires acknowledging we do not have ready-made solutions to fresh challenges.

Here are three reasons why:

1. Knowing Can Quash Initiative And Innovation

Steve Jobs famously said: "It doesn't make sense to hire smart people and tell them what to do; we hire smart people so they can tell us what to do." Yet micromanaging is everywhere. When we believe we know everything, we are unlikely to allow others to share their perspectives. This not only prevents new innovative ideas from being surfaced, but also inhibits the professional growth of people we work with.

I once coached a leader who was so beholden to knowing everything that she could even complete her staff’s sentences. Naturally, her team soon stopped speaking up and went along with whatever she said. Then she complained they were not proactive and did not offer any good suggestions.

2. Knowing Can Limit Our Perspectives And Quality Of Decision-Making

When we believe we know we are less likely to ask questions. We tend to talk more and listen less. Talking may help clarify our thoughts, but it is listening that helps us learn, discover more information and options and widens our horizons. Thus *not knowing* broadens our perspectives, enhances the quality of our decision making and often makes them more inclusive.

3. Having To Know Everything Generates Undue Stress

As the world becomes increasingly digital, with new technologies reshaping our world, leaders will lead people smarter than them, in roles that did not even exist just a few years ago. Trying to cope with this and also aiming to be domain matter experts in a dozen different disciplines can be a futile quest.

For too long, we have bought into the invincibility of the all-knowing leader. While this style does have its time and place, its vulnerabilities have been exposed as the world battles Covid-19 – probably one of the most massive disruptions of this age.

Enlightened leadership is having the courage to acknowledge we do not know everything, and the clarity that we do not need to if we have the right team with the expertise working on it and can count on their expertise in critical areas. This point is emphasized by Jim Whitehurst, president of IBM, “Being open about the things I did not know actually had the opposite effect than I would have thought. It helped me build credibility.”

Each one of us can easily unleash our *I don't know* superpower with some fairly straightforward actions. Here are five of them:

1. Learn to say it out aloud. Try it. There! See that wasn't so hard after all. And didn't it feel liberating?
2. Listen when people who know respond to you.
3. As they share, look for those pieces of the puzzle that can help you assemble the bigger picture and make better decisions.
4. Remember, you as the leader have the bigger picture, even though the people you lead may be domain matter experts. You can hone and trust your people skills to coordinate efforts and support them in achieving the task on hand.
5. Most importantly, encourage your team members to learn new things and grow, so that they stay engaged, happy and motivated.

The opposite of knowing is not ignorance, but learning.

Riding the *I don't know* train can be scary. However, when we embrace our curiosity in people and things, we tap into a courage to unleash the power of not knowing. This invites people to jump in with us. It enables us to fully leverage the collective genius, creativity and passion of our teams.

Don't take my word for it. Try it, and experience the difference.



Karen Leong, CSP

A transformation expert, Certified Speaking Professional and the author of *Win People Over*, Karen empowers teams to thrive on change. As the co-founder of award-winning organisational development firm, Influence Solutions, and the global leadership summit *Rise Through The Ranks*[™], she has inspired thousands from over 70 countries.

www.influence-solutions.com

karen@karenleong.com

Why Let A Good Pandemic Go To Waste?

by Scott Friedman

As news about Covid-19 spread across Asia in mid-February, my mother pleaded with me. “Please don’t go and take the risk. Stay in the US and be safe. Don’t make me ground you like I did when you were a kid.”

“Mom, I have to honor my commitments and speak to the groups that hired me.”

“You’ll see, they will all cancel,” Mom replied. And sure enough, my Mom jinxed the trip! All but one cancelled. And on March 18 after my one and only speech, I flew back to Colorado.

One thing I’m grateful for is that every time I face a challenge in my life, my thoughts always turn to what I’m grateful for. When my car was stolen, I thought how lucky I was to have a car and so many of life’s luxuries. When I had a heart attack while at the hospital, I was grateful to actually be in the hospital when I had the heart attack. And very grateful to get a second chance at life. And now this: Covid-19! What’s the silver lining? What’s the blessing?

The Silver Lining

What is it we are supposed to learn? The gift will be different for every person. A good place to start is to realize that things happen the best for the people who make the best out of the things that happen. If you come from the perspective of knowing that there are many gifts in this pandemic, then your focus will be on finding the gifts and making the most of them, instead of playing the self-pity game and longing for the way life used to be.

Things happen the best for the people who make the best out of the things that happen.

So, let’s look for the gifts! What is it for you? What did you learn about your values? What will be different about you moving forward? As we look to create a more meaningful future, I’m reminded of one of my favorite Buddhist prayers:

“Grant that I may be given appropriate difficulties and sufferings on this journey, so that my heart may be truly awakened and my practice of liberation and universal compassion may be truly filled. For it is felt that if we have no struggles in life, we have no opportunity for genuine growth.”

Do you feel you’ve had *too much opportunity* for genuine growth in the past few months?

Turn On Your GPS

As you’re creating your desired future, keep your GPS turned on.

Gratitude

Appreciate the life we have and those with whom we want to share it. Feel the gratitude of making a difference in the lives of others. One idea that I have found helpful in keeping your focus outward and not inward is what I call, “*Hero of the day.*”

Reach out to one person every day and let them know how grateful you are for them being in your life. You can use the actual term “hero of the day” or just let them know you are grateful. Get creative about the way you honor them. If once a day is too much for you, try doing it once a week. It is guaranteed to make them feel better and you as well.

*Fragrance
always clings to
the hand that
gives roses.*

Play

Play starts with accepting our current reality - all the pressure, stress, anxiety, and heartache we may have at any given time. It’s the ability to let go of anger, resentment, blame, and all negative emotions of the past. Focus positively on the present. Play is being in the state of flow, accepting the current moment, and making the most of it.

Play starts with a good sense of humor. It’s learning to laugh at ourselves. If you can laugh at yourself, you will always be amused. Jack Welch, former CEO of General Electric, when asked how he created such an amazing learning environment at General Electric, replied that he encouraged his employees to take their work seriously and take themselves lightly. Good advice for all.

Ask yourself the question, “Do you want it to be fun?” Hopefully, the answer is yes. Then the next question is, “How can I make this more fun?” Create opportunities and take responsibility for making it more fun.

Surprise

This is the element of the unexpected. It’s serving with kindness and empathy. It’s catching people doing something good and rewarding them with something they would appreciate. It’s finding out what’s high on their joy list and honoring them with that. It can be something as simple as finding out their favorite candy or snack and hiding it in their workspace or where they are sure to find it. One of my favorite ways to surprise others is by capturing a photo from Facebook and getting it printed on a mug. Then I will either hide the mug where they will eventually discover it, or drink out of the mug when we are together and see how long it takes them to notice. I’ve had wait staff serve my honorees coffee or tea in those photo mugs, which always brings a laugh when they finally figure it out. Recently, I sent pizza to my six neighbors as a surprise, and to have some fun and lighten up the pandemic a little. We received some fun gifts back, and it seems there are more smiles around the neighborhood because of it.

As you’re creating the desired destination for you and your organization, I highly recommend turning on your GPS - and you’re guaranteed to enjoy more of the journey.



Scott Friedman, CSP, Global Speaking Fellow

Former President of the National Speakers Association, Scott speaks over 50 times a year on employee innovation and engagement, customer experience and how to create a happier, healthier workplace. Scott is author of many books, including *Celebrate! Lessons Learned from the World’s Most Admired Organizations*, *A Celebration a Day! 365 Ways to a Happier, Healthier Workplace*, and *Happily Ever Laughter - How to Engage Any Audience*.

www.ScottFriedman.net

Scott@ScottFriedman.net

Simplify

by Tim Wade

Work, family, health, connections, volunteer, gym, marketing, home fixes, read, learn, do that course... There's just not enough time to do it all! If only everything could stop for a few weeks so I could get stuff done and define my new normal...

ZAP!

And here we are. Then somehow I became busier in different ways, feeling overloaded, frustrated. The usual solutions didn't work. "Increase productivity!" ... awesome, but I got distracted by all the new things I needed to do. "Increase self-discipline!" ... great, but I couldn't quite discipline myself enough to do it. So here's an unusual solution: simplify. Simplifying means removing the overload and creating margin. Then create your new normal EVAs - Essential Victory Activities.

During our Covid-19 isolation we enforced simplification by closing non-essential businesses. Could this work on our non-essential stuff? If we delete, donate, trash and prioritise... we end up with... life alignment. Closing non-essentials in our home, work, and workload management will keep us focused on our EVAs and living life on purpose; improving relationships, increasing productivity and... creating margin.

Margin

Like a margin in an exercise book, or around a printed page, there is a space reserved for nothing. Our lives need that margin too. Space; a buffer of nothing. It's used in design (white space, negative space), coaching and counselling (active silence), in the structure of the universe (er... *Space*), and we need it in our lives too.

Margin requires boundaries; rules so you keep it empty, not filling it with more. Declutter the physical space and the useless busywork, and that to-do-list mind-chatter that steals your focus. That "Too Due" list is weighing you down. Lighten up. Eliminate to illuminate. Keep only essentials: your EVAs. Create margin by removing the overload and the overtime. Own your load, own your time. Simple.

Remove The Overload

Be ruthless. Imagine you're at gunpoint: you have to choose what stays, what goes.

- Work projects overloading? Eliminate 20% of them, decide to defer 60% of the less important ones. What's left will be the most valuable 20%. Work on value. Simple.
- Social media and websites everywhere? Delete dormant and dead profiles and sites. Copy useful content before deleting, to republish on the remaining sites. Simple.
- Business systems chaos? Simplify your creation, connection and delivery systems, and ease of consumption by your audience. Ask IT, or get ruthless yourself. Process review time. Ask for help if you need it. Simple.
- Staring at clothes you haven't worn for years? Recognise that a \$600 pair of Versace jeans from 2004 that still don't fit even after losing weight is worth zero in your wardrobe but a lot to someone else who will give it life. Sell it or donate it to the Salvos. Liberate your wardrobe. Then resolve to give away two items before buying one new one. Simple!

- Too many books? Donate anything you won't read within 24 months. Buy them on Kindle if you must. Use the extra space for clarity not for more unused stuff. Simple.
- Unused stuff? Sell or donate it away if it's without real meaning or value, or is long-term unused. Some unused stuff has value and use, like a fire extinguisher. Obviously keep those. But for other stuff, like my awards or gifts from speaking clients, I take photos of them to use on my website (useful) and store or release the item. The wonderful ones can stay on my shelves. They "spark joy." The generic or thoughtless ones go. Simple.
- Online photos? I consolidated all of them into Google Photos. Amazingly there are over 200,000 in there. Our daughter, Zoe, shouldn't have to go through over a million blurred and irrelevant photos to find some good ones after we die. She might delete them all and miss the good ones. So once a month, my wife and I delete at least 1000 useless photos from our collection. We turn it into a fun, family activity of going through memories while deleting the "meh" and the duplicates. Our goal: an essential 5000. A huge job. And time-consuming. But it needs to be done so we're chunking it down and making it fun. Simple.
- Online business documents? Same idea as the photos, but for business. Trash archived nonsense. Create a quarterly Dropbox Delete Day. Make a competition of it. Simple?

I'll share a *Resource Pack* with more ideas that expand on these (link in my bio below), but for now: simplify. It's like clearing mental garbage. The result: more clarity, more focus, aligned results, peace. Thank me later. You're welcome now.

Completed EVAs Deliver Daily Wins

I love the idea of getting up at 5 a.m. and winning before 8 a.m. ... except I'm asleep then. Besides, some wins can only come after 5 p.m., like family time. Instead ask: what EVA can I complete NOW? You'll need to choose your Essential Victory Values, and then add Essential Victory Activities. For example, my five essential values are Faith, Fitness, Family, Impact and Growth, all underpinned by Fun. I'll share my activities in the Resource Pack where, ironically, I have more space to share my ideas.

Perhaps now is the perfect time for you to define your new normal EVAs. I'm happy to help you define yours, simply connect! But try doing it yourself first. With your EVAs, every day can be a victory regardless of project-driven or trigger-driven work (like writing proposals or delivering speeches). And with margin, you'll find peace, creativity, joy and that me-time you've been missing. But beware of fake essentials that threaten your margin. Our creative thinking comes alive within those margins; even the name Eva means 'life,' and our EVAs create our space for our life-alignment.

So... Simplify. Create EVAs. Cherish your margin. And to start: simplify.



Tim Wade

A multiple-award-winning leading change speaker. Trusted by the world's biggest brands and organisations. And by government agencies, churches and awesome associations. Tim Wade's fun, dynamic, and engaging on-stage and online keynotes, training, coaching, video solutions, and events help audiences embrace, lead and motivate positive change. Click to connect (and get the Resource Pack too) here:

www.timwade.com/ebk20

tim@timwade.com

Acing 2020 With 80/20

by Anupama Singal

You may have heard of and applied the Pareto Principle (80/20 rule) many a time. It states that for many phenomena, 80% of the result comes from 20% of the effort. This principle is named after Vilfredo Pareto. Vilfredo was an Italian economist, and back in 1895, he noticed that about 80% of Italy's land belonged to 20% of the country's population. Upon delving deeper to research on this inequality, Pareto surveyed other countries and discovered that wealth was distributed in similar (dis)proportions in other countries too. This led to the birth of the 80/20 rule.

"80% of the result comes from 20% of the effort." - Pareto Principle

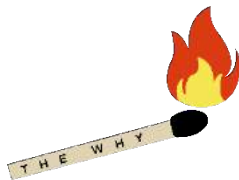
This pandemic has brought a deep sense of realisation for many people and organizations at large, and triggered transformation in our lives. What we focus on now is going to create a big impact on our lives in the coming years.

To cut through the noise, applying the Pareto Principle while making choices and decisions will be more important than ever in the next couple of years. To make it easier to apply, here is a 3-point model I have developed over this pandemic lockdown period. 3 simple concepts to remind us to keep focus on acing 20% of actions that will create 80% of the desired result.

1. The Matchstick

Close your eyes briefly and think about a matchstick.

A short, slender piece of flammable wood with one end coated with a material that can be ignited by heat generated by striking the matchstick against a suitable surface. At some point or the other, we all have probably used a matchstick – to light a candle, start a fire on the stove or for some other daily-life purpose. It is a small and simple tool, it is a trigger, it is a catalyst – to start a fire.



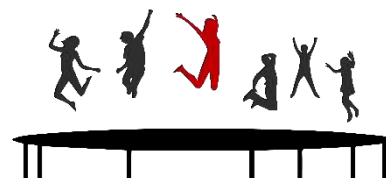
Think about the matchsticks in your life.
What propels you into action and lights the fire within?
What are the reasons behind your actions?
Why do you do certain things?

If you keep the awareness on WHY you are doing WHAT you are doing, your actions will be bolder, and the RESULTS will be more impactful.

2. The Trampoline

Now, imagine yourself to be a small child who is jumping on a trampoline. Visualize who is jumping with you in tandem, who is breaking your jumps and who is clapping for you, cheering you on.

If you abstract this a bit and think deeper, you will realize that your life is made up of tiny fractions of time that you spend alone or with others. What you do when you are alone is your 'being' time and that helps you sow the seeds of personal development, innovation, creativity, and execution.



However, when you interact with others, you are building relationships all the time - and these relationships either boost you, do nothing for you, or pull you down.

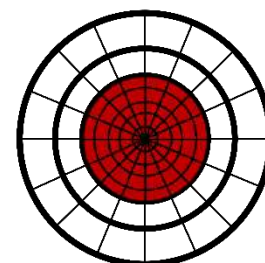
Make a list of 20 people who are constantly inspiring you, creating joy for you, enabling you or cheering you on your path. This is your tribe.

These are the people you want around you when you are 'jumping on your trampoline'.

Who are the 20 people in your life that bring you 80% of your joy and 'aha moments'?

3. The Dartboard

Transport yourself into a game-room and place yourself a few feet away from a dartboard. You are ready to shoot – but before you throw the dart – take a moment to look at your goal. It is a tiny spot at the centre of the dartboard. Now, if that centre spot could expand and occupy more space on your dartboard you could score more points in a jiffy.



Abstract this out and build your dartboard so that you create mini goals clustered around your main goal. With this, with every throw you will be one step closer to your goal.

Create more space for, spend more time on, and give more energy to 20% of those goals that will give you 80% of the result you want.

Dozens of management principles can be applied to life and work, but the 80/20 rule is one of the 20% rules which must be in your toolkit.

We have been given a big jolt, but let's apply the 80/20 rule on our 'whys', our 'tribe' and our 'goals', and focus our actions accordingly to ace 2020!



Anupama Singal

Known for breaking stereotypes, Anupama is a chemical engineer, a post-graduate in fashion marketing, an entrepreneur, a speaker, and an author. She is passionate about body positivity and is on her path to touch a million lives meaningfully. She inspires one to see beyond oneself, live zestfully and purposefully.

www.anupamasingal.com

anupama.singal@gmail.com

Create A New Human Age

by Cathy Johnson

Our world has changed dramatically. For the foreseeable future, we'll live within a series of tightening and easing restrictions. Yet these very different conditions are the opportunity we have to make a deeply profound improvement in how we live. We have the chance to create greater fulfillment for our family and for ourselves.

Slow Down

For more than 20 years, I've watched as people in organizations became more and more imbalanced in their lives. Each year they spent more and more time working in the office as well as at home, and less and less time connecting with their spouses, kids – and themselves. The result has often been distance, irritation and strife within families, and a lack of self-care. When I ask a coaching client what they do to take care of themselves, they often either look at me quizzically, not understanding the question, or they reply, "Nothing, really."

Now we have the opportunity to do something most of us haven't even thought was possible – to slow down and live life at a different pace. To reconnect with our family, to renew the experiences and bonds that we share, and to create new memories. When we get older, in our 80's or so, not one of our work colleagues will remember or speak about the brilliant reports and presentations we now view as important. Not one. Our family will be there though, and they'll talk about how we were so stressed with work we didn't have time for them, or how we would yell at them if they interrupted us.



But it could be different. Your kids could reminisce about what a great dad/mom you are – how you taught her to ride a bike, how you helped him with math and made it fun. Your husband/wife could tell about life challenges where you both supported each other through them. You could develop a real relationship with your family – and with yourself.

Slow down.

Take Stock

The world will never be the same again – which is good in a way, because we have the chance to make it better. Most of us now have time to really look at the "old world," the old way of living before this pandemic, and to figure out what is worth keeping and what is not.

Here's a way of doing this. Find a quiet place where you won't be interrupted. Relax yourself by taking some slow deep breaths. Then, think back on life before 2020, and make two lists.

- Things about my life that were truly precious and energizing for me
- Things about my life that drained my energy and sucked the life right out of me



Think about this in terms of work, relationships, health and balance. The purpose here is to take stock so we can reorient our lives in ways that are more life-giving.

Do It Differently

Maria Branyas, the oldest woman in Spain (113 years old!), got Covid-19 in April, spent weeks in isolation, and is now negative for the virus. When she got out, she wrote this:

"I don't quite understand what's going on in the world. But I think nothing will be the same again. And don't think about redoing, recovering, rebuilding. It needs to be done all over again and differently... but believe me, you need a new order, a change in the hierarchy of values and priorities, a New Human Age."

What kind of future do we want? What kind of home life? What kind of work life? What kind of world do we want to live in? What values and priorities matter? We have been given a precious and expensive gift – expensive because many people have and will lose their livelihoods and their lives to this virus. So it's up to us to use this gift to significantly improve our own lives and those of people around us. We can choose to change how we're being in the world – to slow down and listen, to see people as people and not doers, to show empathy and love, to be inclusive and open with others. To be more truly human.



And that's how we can **create a new human age**.

See people as people and not doers, show empathy and love.



Cathy Johnson, MBA, PCC

Cathy has worked with hundreds of clients in more than 20 countries to develop greater presence, authentic leadership and more effective teams. She is a speaker and President of Asia Professional Speakers Singapore 2019-20, an ICF-certified professional coach, and an experienced facilitator with global organizations, with a focus on developing demonstratable competence in conversations, and sustainable change.

cathy.johnson@lifesupportforce.com

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/coachcathyjohnson/>

The New Normal Or The New Extraordinary?

by Natalie Turner

I've been musing about the term 'new normal.' In some ways it speaks of change, but in other ways I hear a longing for things to return to what they once were. Normal implies 'stasis', a sense of being the same, of not changing. However, the world we now walk into is far from being normal, new or otherwise. If we are honest, our earth was sick, and we were far from knowing how to save ourselves.

Interestingly, according to a poll conducted by the Farming and Countryside Commission and the Food Foundation in the UK, an overwhelming majority hope to see some personal and social changes, with fewer than one in ten wanting to return to how things were before. People are noticing cleaner air, a stronger sense of community, being more in touch with friends and family, if only remotely, valuing food and sharing with neighbours.

We are all trying out new things and noticing differences, at home, and in our work. Personally, I am learning how to use new technologies, build an in-house studio to deliver speeches, and facilitate and train groups to innovate. My husband, who is a professional DJ, has become a global virtual DJ with weekly Stir Crazy LIVE and Sunday Soul Session music events! What have you been learning over the last few months?



Innovation Is Our *Not So New* Survival Skill

Human beings are incredibly resourceful and innovative. We wouldn't have lasted this long if this were not so; and maybe, now more than ever, our ability to innovate, or to create something of worth or value out of ideas that are new to us, is our survival skill. Knowing how we can contribute our skills, and, if we are leading or managing others, to harness the diversity of their skills and mindsets, and passions and experiences, is of utmost importance. We need to collectively create what life will look like going forwards and how to navigate uncertainty and unpredictability. Whether you work alone or with others, here are some ideas to help you do this:

1. Encourage a daily individual and/or team mindfulness practice. This will help to clear stress and tension and move your mind into the sketchpad of the brain, the pre-frontal cortex from where you can strategise, imagine and create.
2. Spend time thinking about you and your team's PURPOSE. Why are you doing what you are doing? What impact are you hoping to create? Promote and encourage conversation that will help you align on a collective purpose.
3. Get to know each other's strengths, through the lens of making new ideas work. Who is good at IDENTIFYING opportunities or IGNITING new ideas? Who is good at INVESTIGATING or getting INVESTMENT? Who is good at getting things done and IMPLEMENTING and IMPROVING? Play to your strengths.

4. Be innovative in how you work. Experiment with collaborative design technologies such as Mural or Miro which will help you to create together new ideas for the future. Create new visual story together.

We need to create a new narrative, a new story, a new vision that brings the very best out of us, and not just any types of innovation, but ideas that are PURPOSEFUL, that can help to promote and uplift the well-being of people and planet.

Create A New Extraordinary

So, as we slowly start to leave our homes, practice social distancing, contact tracing, and plan for business continuity to mitigate the risk of a future pandemics; as spaces and boundaries between home and work blur, and work becomes more about what we do, not a place we go to, let us think about how we reinvent, not only our lives, but, the social and economic systems in which we operate. Let us create new ways of harnessing the skills of the teams in which we work, giving equal weight to each person's unique value and importance. All of them, all of us, are indeed innovators.



Let us not create a 'new normal'. Let us lift our vision higher and create a 'new extraordinary'. An imaginative life that is able to invent, create, sense and make a new narrative for our shared existence.

This calls for dreamers and doers, of those who can identify opportunities, and ignite new ideas, of those who can investigate and invest with courage, of those who can implement and improve and make sure we are learning, continually learning from all that we do.

The earth has turned, and a new opportunity has emerged. Now is the time for us to operate at our very best and live extraordinary lives.

The earth has taken a breath and started to heal itself. Now, in the words of Thomas Berry, 'we must dream our way forwards, we must summon ways of seeing that we know nothing of yet.'



Natalie Turner

Natalie Turner is the author of the award-winning book *Yes, You Can Innovate. Discover your Innovation Strengths and Develop your Creative Potential*. She is also a keynote speaker and the inventor of The Six 'I's® of Innovation.

www.6-i-innovation.com

natalie.turner@entheo.com

Tips To Boost Your Creative Mindset

by Cyriel Kortleven

Attention! The world has changed drastically. Boosting your creative skills becomes more and more important to stay ahead of the competition. Creativity can help you to break your fixed thinking patterns so you can further if you want to access an abundance of ideas, an open attitude and a new world of possibilities.

Welcome To The Never Normal

The world is different. Think on your feet. Adapt to new situations. Keep learning new things on a daily basis. Continuous learning and adapting to new situations has become essential for survival. Creativity and innovation are becoming very important sources of added value. Welcome to the never normal.

Out of the Box or Out of Business?

Move From Idea-killers To “Yes And...”

I have to disappoint you because there isn't a magic formula to get new ideas. A lot of times, new ideas arise on moments when you don't expect them (in the shower, in bed, in a traffic jam). But structured creativity is often hard work. There are a few simple skills that will help you to generate lots of ideas when you need them. For me, the two most important words to develop an open, creative mindset are “Yes, and...” These words combine several values: a positive attitude, openness to possibilities and suspending judgement.

If you can go from a “Yes but” to a “Yes and” attitude then you've already conquered the biggest challenge. And I've made an acronym of the letters “Yes and” with the other basic principles to give a boost to your creative power.

Yes And... Suspend Judgement

Judgement is very important. Your judgement helps you to make thousands of decisions daily. Your judgement is based on your previous experiences and knowledge. By definition, new ideas don't fit into existing schemes of thought so the danger is that judgement very often occurs too fast when a new idea is launched. That's what we call the idea-killers – expressions like “yes, but... no money, no time, it already exists...” In order to process original ideas, we will need to develop a more subtle use of judgement – postpone your judgement and go into a “yes, and” mindset.

Explore: Discover The World With Different Eyes

We trust our perception in order to explore and interpret the world around us. And changing perception is not easy because, patterns creep in. Furthermore, often-repeated patterns tend to become more and more dominant. We can only see what we think is there and science proves that perception consists of information gathered from outside only for 20%; consequently 80% is produced in the brain itself. Exploration or creative perception is recognizing patterns in your own perception and setting yourself free from these. Many changes begin with a new way of looking at things.

Suppose: Use Your Imagination

Visual language is generally less respected than verbal language because most school education strongly emphasises the language of words. This is reflected in companies and organisations where we often notice a lack of visually imaginative skills. But imagination is a crucial skill for a creative thinker. Imagination is the capacity to represent in the mind something that cannot be seen at that moment. It's not only a visual image but also sounds, smell, taste and touch as well as abstract notions such as ideas and concepts. Imagination can be stimulated by asking a lot of questions.

Associate: Create Flexible Connections

Our brain cells are interconnected and continuously transmit signals to one another. Association happens when one thought generates another "this makes me think of..." connection. There's a danger that some connections are stronger than others because they are repeated several times and every repetition reinforces the connection. Forcing yourself to create new connections and associations helps to find less obvious tracks and can generate new ideas. Speeding up while making associations is a good method to find less obvious connections.

Next Idea: Diverge

The first thoughts that arise are based on common sense. That's very efficient and when searching for a solution, we tend to stop when we have found a reasonable solution. Diverging is switching off our spontaneous tendency to stop when a common sense solution has arrived and continuing to come up with ideas. You automatically reach the limits of what you can spontaneously think of and go beyond them. Giving yourself a limited amount of time to diverge is a better way instead of limiting the number of ideas that you want to generate.

Do It Now: Making Ideas Happen

An idea is just a thought of the mind (or some words on a post-it). The real challenge is realizing ideas and making them happen. Making ideas happen is very hard work and having the guts to break some fixed thinking patterns. And you will come across a lot of nearlings. A nearling is a positive word for something new that you did with the right intentions, which has not (yet) led to the right result.

Don't Mind the Change. Change Your Mind.



Cyriel Kortleven

Cyriel Kortleven is an award-winning global keynote speaker on the change mindset. He inspires organisations like Bayer, Nike, IKEA, NASA, and Unilever in 33 different countries on 5 continents. Cyriel is the living embodiment of engagement, using a lot of interaction and humour. Ready for a Belgian boost of creativity?

www.cyrielkortleven.com

cyriel@cyrielkortleven.com

Leading With Freedom

by Meital Baruch

Freedom. Mostly we take it for granted. But when something serious happens that is curtailing our free movement, we suddenly realize how indispensable freedom is to our way of life.

While taking my evening walks near my seaside neighborhood, I began to notice many more wild animals roaming about. It is almost as if they are reclaiming their natural habitat as humans retreat. I even saw playful dolphins the other day!

Could it be that our freedom and industry come at a huge cost to others? My mind then wanders to wild animals who are supposed to live in nature but are in cages. They do not have the ability to demand freedom, but it does not mean that it is not important to them. Perhaps my imagination was taking me too far (or Netflix overdose!) but I even began to theorize that Covid-19 is really the result of a well-executed revenge plan by wild animals.

As I drifted back to reality, I started contemplating the significance of freedom in leading multicultural teams. Specifically, how can a leader leverage the benefits that a sense of freedom provides, to enable a productive and happy team.



A good starting point is asking yourself these questions:

1. Do I Encourage My Team To Communicate Freely?

I often hear western-orientated leaders lamenting about their Asian team members keeping quiet in group discussions. But do they really understand the underlying cause? One technology leader recently shared with me that he was so fed up with lack of active participation in R&D sessions that he decided to stop attending them for a while. He was astounded to subsequently find out about the lively discussions and ideas generated in his absence.

Cultural values play an important role in what and how much we share. In many cultures, people are not accustomed to speaking up in front of their boss. But being too respectful may also contribute to disaster.

In the 1997 aviation tragedy of Korean Airlines flight 801, culture seemed to influence the communication style in the cockpit. The first officer politely pointed to instruments, instead of directly challenging the captain by telling him that the plane is about to crash.

Leaders should foster a conducive environment that encourages team members to express their thoughts, ideas and opinions freely. In doing so, leaders should also be cognizant of the cultural background of the team and adjust the communication platforms accordingly.

Covid-19 is a great equalizer. It affects all regardless of class, race, gender or nationality, making it an opportune time to encourage an inclusive communication culture.

2. Do I Give My Team The Freedom To Choose?

Much has been written in western books about the importance of autonomy and independence at work. Autonomy has been identified as a key factor increasing satisfaction and motivation at work. In Asian scripts, however, the focus is much more on the importance of obedience.

The manifestation of these values can be clearly seen in the reaction to Covid-19 lockdowns. In cultures that highly value obedience, leaders do not generally struggle with people disobeying the rules, contrary to western counterparts.

These values are not necessarily contradictory when leading a team. There is a time and a place for employing both, depending on the team's objectives, agenda and members' attributes.

Many years ago, my new boss surprisingly announced, "I don't care when you arrive in the office or how long you stay, as long as you do your job". This was highly liberating for me and pioneering for the time.

"I don't care when you arrive in the office or how long you stay, as long as you do your job".

3. Do I Allow My Team The Freedom To Fail?

How we perceive failure has an impact on how much we allow others to fail. Some cultures believe that everything must be done to avoid failure. Taking risks is not their preferred style. Other cultures believe that embracing failures and making mistakes is the only way to learn and encourage innovation.

Finding the right balance between avoiding and taking risks is the key. You may not want to turn the office into a laboratory, but by allowing your team to experiment from time to time, you give them permission to grow.

In these unprecedented times, society faces many losses encompassing both lives and livelihood. But on the other side of this crisis, there are profound lessons learnt and distinct choices to make. Could it be our calling to spread more freedom to all forms of lives on our planet? Are you ready to lead with Freedom?



Meital Baruch

Consultant, trainer and speaker with specialism in the areas of cultural intelligence and global mindset

www.global-mindsets.com

meital@global-mindsets.com

Agile Shape-Shifting

by Dee Khanduja

I was abruptly woken by howling winds and a stormy gale, that violently rattled my single-pane window. It was 1987, and the Great Storm had whipped and battered Southern England. Entire trees were yanked from their roots.

At 7-years old, this was my first experience of a natural disaster and terror. I had no idea that winds could be so merciless.

And then the world went on. I went back to school and those fallen tree barks were sawn and repurposed into something else useful.

Tales From My Mama

I remember my mum telling me the story about the India/Pakistan partition. Our family (along with millions of others) had to uproot and move across new borders, leaving their home, belongings, friends and dreams behind.

And then the world went on, and our family repurposed and re-established themselves into their new home.

1990's Recession

As the early 1990's recession hit, I saw my parents lose their business, life savings, hopes, and ambitions. They eventually relocated and pivoted their careers by re-skilling.

Again the world went on, and my parents repurposed themselves into something else useful.

2008 Economic Downturn

In 2007, I arrived in Singapore full of wild ambition to launch an employment agency. Little did I know that 2008 would be the onslaught of a global recession leading to mass redundancies. These were not prime conditions to launch an employment agency.

Still, the world went on. We repurposed our goals and rebuilt our value-stack. We spearheaded a change in conversation with clients.

We repurposed our goals and rebuilt our value-stack

Value-Stack

During a recent call with a client, I invited him to look at his personal value-stack to see if it 'held water' in line with the pace of change, and his company's grand vision. I shared three words to help him focus his leadership strategy. Futurist, opportunity and shape-shifter.

1. Futurist

Imagine what the future may look like for your line of work in 1-5 years? Now visualise a cautious, pragmatic, ambitious, zany (or your choice of adjective) view of the world. How would each of these worlds be functioning?

2. Opportunity

In all imagined futuristic worlds, the most agile shape-shifters will lead the way. Ask yourself what opportunities do you see in all future concepts of the world? What role could you/your company/your team/your family and friends play in a new world dynamic?

Then re-evaluate your value-stack, by up-skilling, re-skilling and growing in value.

3. Shape-Shifter

By definition, shape-shifting is the ability to transform. I believe this will become the most critical skill to master in our work and personal lives. Consider the superpowers of a shape-shifter:

- A shape-shifter can repurpose themselves to take advantage of current times.
- A shape-shifter is agile and can anticipate different scenarios.
- A shape-shifter can emerge from calamities, as they shift their shape just in time.

Make agile shape-shifting a life-long vocation

Repurpose

Imagine, those fallen trees from the Great Storm of 1987, their barks repurposed for fuel, houses, furniture, paper, or perhaps books to inspire the greatest of minds.

It is those who are able to repurpose themselves by constantly re-examining their 'value-stack', who will survive violent storms of change. This is the essence of being a shape-shifter today.

Stacking Value

Whilst anxiety envelopes many of us, I invite you to consider a life-long vocation of being an agile shape-shifter. Continuously growing our value-stack will become the key focus for leaders and organisations, to keep pace with change and really show their mettle.

Who are the people currently focused on shape-shifting? Who is busy repurposing on purpose? Who is evaluating their value-stack?

When this pandemic moves to our history books, so perhaps shall the stories of the agile shape-shifters.

Will you be amongst them?



Dee Khanduja

Dee is an entrepreneur, coach, speaker and writer. Her business has served over 450 corporate clients across Asia. She works with corporates on business development, sales, networking, and story-selling techniques.

www.3CSynergy.com

www.linkedin.com/in/deekhanduja

What's Your Plan B?

by Dhruvi Shah

As coronavirus takes its grip on the world, the air is thick with trepidation. Countries continue to be in lockdown. The number of cases is now in the millions. There are at least a dozen articles every day trying to predict the future. **#newnormal**

If we were in an opera or a musical, as the events unfold, we would hear a dramatic score playing in the background - an ominous tune that spells the advent of an apocalypse.

But, hold on! Let's pause here.

Take a deep breath and look around. What are some of the positives you see? Are you well? Do you have a roof over your head? Is the aroma of a freshly cooked meal wafting through the air? If you answered yes to any of the above questions, then it's time to stop that background music of doom and take back control.

Why Create A Plan B?

As an entrepreneur, you likely know the importance of pivoting when things go awry. To help them pivot, many entrepreneurs create a Plan B or even a Plan C to activate when the need arises.

These contingency plans are key to building your resilience. When you are faced with adversity and when your original plan goes out of the window, you can immediately switch to Plan B.

Your plan B or C may not be the most desirable plan, but they may be necessary to take you through tough times. For instance, certain species of snakes, opossums, and young fire ant workers play dead to throw off the predators. It is about survival. Thankfully, you do not have to play dead, but for you and your business to be resilient, creating an alternate plan is critical.

How Can You Create Your Plan B?

Before you take the steps to create your Plan B, you need to commit to it. It must be as well laid out and as detailed as your original plan.

Ask yourself the following questions to create your Plan B:

- 1. What are you most passionate about?** How can you keep working towards it? For instance, if speaking opportunities are drying out for the time being, what can you do to upskill yourself in the meantime? Is there someone you can partner with to create something unconventional?
- 2. Who can you lean on for personal and professional support?** Approach your circle of trust to brainstorm ideas. You can always reach out for help. All you have to do is ask and you will see a community of people around you who are willing to go the extra mile for you.



3. **How will you achieve Plan B?** Have you set goals for yourself - both short term and long term? Create specific goals, start small and then keep adding to it.
4. **What other information or data points do you need to move ahead?** Are there certain skills you need to develop, some professional institutions or associations you want to be a member of?
5. **What kind of time-frame do you have in mind,** both to activate Plan B (which is ideally NOW for all of us) and to achieve the goals you have determined as part of your Plan B?

Creating a Plan B is not much different than creating your original plan. It all comes down to your mindset. The key is to remain open to possibilities and options. As an entrepreneur, you need to be optimistic and pessimistic at the same time. With one eye on the goal, you need to have the other eye on your surroundings to understand what's changing.

Onward And Upward

There are no brownie points for getting things right the first time. Having a Plan B does not, by any means, indicate that you are not committed to your original plan. In fact, seasoned entrepreneurs and venture capitalists understand and appreciate a Plan B. It is about being future-focused and doing everything under your control to ensure that your business survives and thrives.



Do not be a victim of circumstances. Take control today.



Dhruiti Shah

An international business coach, facilitator, and founder of Metis Learning, Dhruiti's mission is to support organizations and their leaders to become more resilient so they can confront and beat all odds.

www.metislearning.co

dhruiti@metislearning.co

Collective Resilience: Stronger Together

by Jana Dawson

The Covid-19 situation has opened an array of conversations around developing and maintaining our levels of resilience. However, some general misconceptions are floating around this concept. They are the truth, just not the whole truth. Here are some of these myths that deserve a second look.

Myth #1: You have to go at it alone

We are not wired to go through adversity and challenging times all by ourselves. Having strong social networks and reaching out for help, not only helps our resilience levels in the now, but it builds resources that we can use in the future. Reliable social connections are the strongest indicators of our wellbeing and flourishing.

Truth: Reach out and ask for help.

Myth #2: Resilience is an individual's responsibility

So far, organisations have focused on providing resilience training for individuals. No doubt, we have to develop skills that reinforce an agile mindset and enhance our emotional regulation. However, resilience is not just an individual's responsibility. To fully leverage on talents and strengths of their employees, organisations have to develop strategies to build individual and collective resilience simultaneously.

Truth: Leveraging each other's strengths in times of adversity will get us further.

Myth #3: People in crisis are vulnerable

The traditional assumption of human behaviour in crisis is that people panic, are helpless and incapable of organising themselves. This is far from the truth. People have an enormous capacity to collaborate, create, innovate, and help each other.

Truth: Collectively, we are not vulnerable; we are resilient.

Lead Towards Collective Resilience

Leadership plays a pivotal role in creating a culture of hope, efficacy, resilience and optimism. According to research, people who belong to a group where the leader is perceived to have high levels of resilience are more likely to develop individual resilience and an optimistic mindset. Harness the power of your team by moving beyond the individual and towards developing a unified collective. In adversity, having a sense of solidarity and identification with a group is essential to build on collective resilience - a team's capacity to work together to overcome challenges.

Strategies To Start Building A Shared Identity

1. Adopt A Strengths Narrative

When organisations adopt a strengths narrative, they are projecting an image of being resourceful and resilient – this creates a sense of collective efficacy. Choose to focus on strengths to build confidence, energise and highlight what is still working. Identify your organisation's collective strengths by revisiting the times when you were at your best. What are some of the strengths that you displayed? Were you courageous, curious, innovative, or grateful? Make a list and start to weave your top strengths into the stories you tell.

2. Build Social Trust

In times of adversity, lack of transparency, withholding of information and inconsistent behaviours foster a culture of mistrust. Be sure to communicate what you know and what you don't know. Be authentic, transparent and vulnerable. We trust our leaders when they display the 3 Cs:

<i>Competence:</i>	Show efficacy and predictability in the execution of tasks.
<i>Commitment:</i>	Show that you are behind the collective vision and mission, and for the greater good of all.
<i>Caring:</i>	Communicate that you have considered everyone's wellbeing before taking action.

3. Find Collective Meaning

Invest time in developing a shared vision. Involve your team to "dream up" a picture of what it will look like once you have overcome and bounced back from this adversity. Take it a step further and encourage the "dreaming up" process to go beyond returning to normal and towards thriving. Ask the question: "What does our best look like?"

Increase engagement and ensure that the "dreaming up" process is inclusive and a group effort. Ask the question: "What do we all need to do to get there?" From there, you can create clear goals and sub-goals and make sure everyone understands how the team will collectively persevere toward goals and have the confidence to redirect paths when necessary.

Stronger Together

The current situation is not a sprint. We are running an ultra-marathon. This challenge requires a resilient support network and a leader who knows how to leverage on the collective beyond the sum of its parts.



Jana Dawson

Jana holds a Master of Science in Applied Positive Psychology with a specialisation in Psychological Capital. She is a senior lecturer and an academic board member at The School of Positive Psychology (TSPP). As a corporate trainer, Jana has developed and implemented wellbeing programs across diverse industries and cultures.

jana@positivepsych.edu.sg

Five Lessons I Learned Along The Nakasendo Trail That Will Help You Weather The Current Storm

by Su-Yen Wong



As part of our preparation for Everest Base Camp in support of mental health, my husband and I hiked the Nakasendo Trail in Japan last May. Seven days, 130 kilometres (80 miles), with everything we needed on our backs.

The Nakasendo (中山道, Central Mountain Route) connected Kyoto and Tokyo during the Edo period (1603-1868) and meanders its way through 69 post towns which served as rest areas for travelers along this ancient route. The trail traverses country roads; forests of cedar, cypress, and bamboo; and picturesque villages. A number of these

villages have been beautifully preserved, and some businesses there, including *ryokans* (or traditional inns), have been in operation for hundreds of years.

On the seventh and final day of our journey, the weather took a turn for the worse. Instead of the crisp blue skies we had grown accustomed to, we awoke to a thick cover of grey clouds, heavy mist, a steady drizzle, and chilly temperatures. That day, as we braved the elements, I had an abundance of time to contemplate five lessons which I believe are apt metaphors for how we can weather the storm wrought by the Covid-19 pandemic.

1. Don't Let A Little Rain Put You Off

Quite frankly, the day looked miserable from the start. We had 16 kilometres (10 miles) to cover, including what appeared to be a strenuous uphill climb to cross the final mountain pass. It would have been easier to hop on the next train back to Tokyo. However, we agreed that having come this far, aborting the mission wasn't really an option. And anyway, what's a few drops of rain?

Life is filled with uncertainties, and we can find a hundred reasons why we should not wake up early to exercise, embark on a new project, or reinvent our careers. Rather than letting obstacles hold us back, half the battle is about jumping in and giving it our best shot.



2. Push Ahead When The Going Gets Tough

As the hours and minutes ticked by, temperatures fell to a bitter 11 degrees Celsius (51 degrees Fahrenheit) while the incessant rain tested our resilience. Trudging along the dreary path, in silent contemplation, my backpack felt heavier by the minute.

We were soaked, and after six straight days of full-on hikes, my muscles were screaming. And yet we persevered. Don't let the trials and tribulations along the way obscure your end game vision. You, too, can do it!

3. Stop To Help

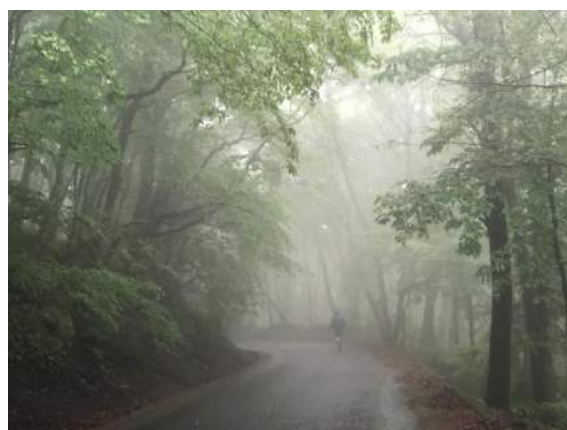
A few hours into our hike, we came across a man - a trauma surgeon from Seattle, we later learned - who had fallen and clearly was in no position to walk. Lending a hand would mean re-tracing our steps (twice!) along the same track that led into the thick forest, which would easily set us back by an hour or more.

We eventually managed to help him get to a road where he was met by a vehicle and taken to the hospital. My hope is that as we emerge from this pandemic, we remember to stop and help each other out, even if it results in a temporary detour from our path. After all, each of us depends on the kindness of strangers.

4. Be Prepared

Over six glorious days of clear skies and sunshine, each time we had to navigate a particularly steep portion of the trail, I wondered (often aloud!) if we ought to have left our rain gear behind. Every extra bit of weight makes a difference. But here we were, day seven, and what had seemed of dubious value turned out to be a life saver.

The time to prepare for the future is now. Reflect on your professional and personal goals and take action to equip yourself for the rainy days ahead.



5. Don't Go It Alone

That day, we hiked in the rain for a total of seven hours. To be honest, I vacillated between feeling like a soggy puppy and a frosty icicle the entire time! Had I embarked on this journey alone, odds are that I would have given up early in the day.

Navigating the headwinds on the horizon will not be easy. Make sure you have somebody by your side who can cheer you on, provide an extra push when you need it, help work through challenges, or simply serve as an extra pair of hands.

No storm lasts forever. As I learned on the Nakasendo Trail, what matters is showing up, staying the course, lending a hand, anticipating change, and having a support structure. Stay strong. Be well.



Su-Yen Wong

For nearly three decades, Su-Yen has helped some of the world's largest, most innovative, and complex organisations navigate the intersection of technology, strategy, and people. She is a professional speaker and board director, and her firm, Bronze Phoenix, provides solutions that help organisations and leaders reinvent themselves.

www.bronzephoenix.com | www.theadvisorscollective.com

suyenwong@bronzephoenix.com



Are You In Your Own Way?

by Cindy Tien

A coaching client of mine, Lily, recently called me and started bawling over the phone. “I’m such a bad mother,” she sobbed. Lily shared that she is having problems managing her behaviours when she is at home, and she gets triggered into rage easily whenever her children starts to get rowdy or fight with each other. And when that happens, she cannot help but to snap, scream or even aggressively hit them. These behaviours have caused her children to be terrified of her and her husband to be cold towards her. Suffice to say, her out-of-control behaviours have brought her family a lot of distress, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic season where they must be home with each other every day.

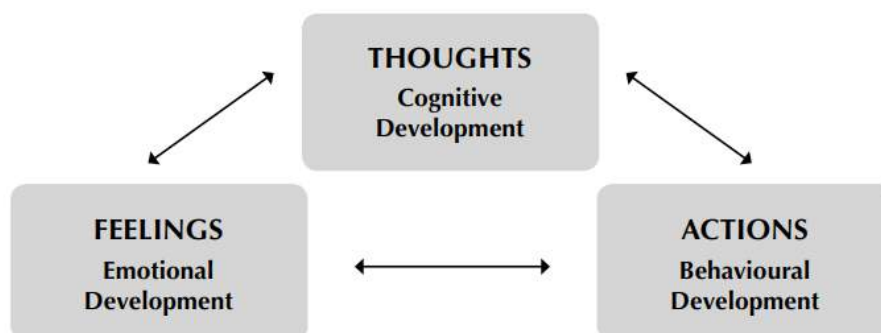
Bad Auto-Pilot

Have you ever been in a situation like that before? Where you go into an auto-pilot mode of doing something which is out of your control? For example, some of us may use profanity when we get irritated, or criticize our spouse when they do things that do not meet our expectations, or hyena-yell at our children when they misbehave. And often our intentions are not bad, after all these are people we love, but somehow we cannot control our behaviour.

If this sounds familiar to you, here’s what has happened: we have developed a pattern of behaviour. And as the word “pattern” implies, it is something that repeats itself. All of us have different patterns that we may not be conscious of. And because we are repeating these behaviours over and over again, they become solidified to such an extent that they become an addictive habit, which is difficult to change. Our patterns of behaviour can lead us to success, failure, or mediocrity. So unless we take the time observe our usual patterns and change them, we will always be a slave to them.

Patterns Of Behaviour

Our behaviours are prompted by our feelings, and our feelings are prompted by our thoughts. And the loop of our thoughts, feelings and actions goes in a continuous cycle until we choose to break this chain.



And it usually starts with one thought. In Lily’s case, whenever her children get rowdy the first thought that comes to her mind is, “Why the hell are you all doing this to me again?” And when she thinks that way, anger rises within her which become an uncontrollable rage, causing her to blow up, resulting in her aggressive behaviours. So our behaviours (actions) really stem from our thoughts.

So what can we do? Here's a suggestion: NIP it in the bud - Nail, Interrupt, Practice.

1. Nail

Nail that thought. When an event that triggers a negative thought occurs, STOP. Recognize that thought and do not react. This requires us to practice mindfulness and to slow down the need to react immediately. Give yourself a minute to observe that thought by walking away, getting a drink of water, or doing something to disengage from the situation. Make time daily to observe your thoughts and to ask yourself why you might think those thoughts.

2. Interrupt

If you know that your thought is not a healthy one, change it! We are not robots, we have options and we can choose. So interrupt that thought and replace it with something else. Using Lily's example again, instead of allowing the thought of, "Why the hell are you doing this to me," to sink in too deep, she could interrupt it by asking herself an empowering question. For example, she could ask, "how can I use my influencing skills now?" Or, "how can I handle this situation in a calm and assertive manner?" Interrupt that thought and change it to something empowering for you. Ask a quality question.

*"The quality of your life
is a direct reflection of
the quality of the questions
you are asking yourself."
- Tony Robbins*

3. Practice

Is this going to be easy? No way! Remember that your patterns might have been solidified for years and it is going to take time to change them. It probably won't be successful the first few times you try to do it, and it can feel frustrating because you are defying your usual pattern. Practice interrupting your thought pattern repeatedly until it becomes a new pattern for you: a pattern of success.

So the next time you sense that your internal fire alarm is about to go off, or when you feel that you are repeating nasty behaviours incessantly, remember to NIP your thoughts before they spiral into a vicious cycle of unhealthy patterns of behaviours. And most importantly, be patient and compassionate with yourself and do not give up!



Cindy Tien

Since 2013, Cindy has inspired corporate clients and individuals to build their personal brands through speaking engagements, seminars, and coaching programs. With over two decades of experience in client-facing roles, Cindy takes pride in helping individuals develop true presence with authentic confidence and external influence. Connect with Cindy at:

www.linkedin.com/in/cindytien

KISS VUCA With Resilience

by Sunshine Irene Kang

Covid-19 came like a hurricane. Many of us were caught unprepared, trapped by the fear of Covid-19 and its impact to our lives. I run a visual consulting company with my husband. We transcribe conversations into visuals by drawing live in M.I.C.E. events and we conduct our Visual Facilitation Lab™ in Asia. Covid-19 halted everything. Many events were cancelled as well as our training programmes. We were caught by a big wave of requests for rescheduling, replacements and refunds. Before we could face the storm, we were hit by a hurricane.



Have you ever felt like that? Let's take a step back. How could we have faced this Covid-19 hurricane differently and learn to fly with it rather than ran from it? Surviving Covid-19 is similar to learning to surf the VUCA wave of Volatile, Uncertainty, Complexity, Ambiguous with resilience. We fail at first, jump back, acknowledge the situation, learn from previous mistakes, and move forward.

Mother Nature teaches us, *the deeper the roots the stronger the tree*, and storms force trees to send their roots even deeper. We can use this Covid-19 storm to deepening our roots to strengthen ourselves too. Storms transform fear, through strengthening resilience and resolve, into wisdom. Then every storm is a welcome doorway to additional wisdom.

Resilience will help us to remain positive with the unknown and consistent change. I see Covid-19 as a fast-forward access card to the future. It pushed us to find new ways of doing things that we may otherwise have taken us years. It has built resilience in ourselves and our teams, and opened us to new thinking (wisdom) and ways of operating (strength).

Let's KISS 🤔 VUCA

Embracing this storm using the KISS model is our way through it. So we mapped the four KISS elements to the four VUCA elements to navigate this Covid-VUCA world: KISS 🤔 VUCA.



"What's one thing I know I can accomplish today that helps me move in the direction I want to go?"

Keep Calm 🤔 Volatile

How do we manage the volatile and ever-changing circumstances? The pandemic outbreak has shown us signs to slow down, the world needs to slow down. During Singapore's circuit breaker, everything slowed down. Staying calm provided space for me to look at the options, resources and solutions to manage the sudden cancellation of events (which meant the loss

of jobs/projects). Resilience grounds us, providing us the firm base to keep learning, testing and building new online solutions for our business. Let's keep calm, contemplate the stressful situation in a broader context, and work to keep a long-term perspective. Start by developing some realistic goals and begin with small accomplishment. Build consistently to move toward those goals.

Instil Trust 🤔 Uncertainty

What do we do when facing what we don't know and what we haven't dealt with before? The outbreak emancipated the leader inside many of us. It's time to step up as a confident leader and remain poised under uncertainty. Trust your ability to solve problems. Every one of us has conquered obstacles and accumulated experience and knowledge. There is resilience inside every one of us. Work with your team to have open, collaborative conversations, build team skills, explore new platforms, encourage one another and build trust. During the first month of Circuit Breaker, our team faced a lot of uncertainty. Resilience taught us not to doubt and instead, to trust our team and trust the process! We picked up new skills, learned new things and developed our work onto new platforms. We worked with new partners and developed new online programmes. Our webinar attracted people from all over the world despite the time differences. Our clients are no longer limited to Singapore and Asia.

Simplify 🤔 Complex

What do we do with the known knowns, known unknowns, and unknown unknowns? Resilience drives us to remain positive and not to give up even when we fail. Every failure can translate to wisdom and a step closer to a new breakthrough. When things get tough and complicated, break it down and simplify the process. In a recent webinar, I learnt from Dr Lim Song Guan, former Group President of GIC, that one way to manage complex situations is to Sense, Analyse, and Respond. Develop your strategic plan. Build your resilience by working through scenario planning. Respond to the scenario that unfolds. The process helps to simplify things, to deal with a complex world, and to enhance capacity. Scenario planning helps us anticipate results, reduce surprise, and reduce project errors.

Seek Clarity 🤔 Ambiguous

How do we address inaccuracy, incompleteness and consistent change? We can use simple visual tools like 5W&1H to address concerns, clarify ideas, break down complex questions into simpler chunks, and find solutions to overcome challenges. And we can give clear, consistent communication. It helps maintain team motivation through many future change initiatives and shifting priorities, reducing resistance and fear of change in us and our teams.

Covid-19 won't be the last hurricane. What are we going to do when the next storm comes? We can play victim and complain or we can acknowledge the situation, learn the lessons from KISSing the Covid-19 VUCA, grab this fast-forward access card, and fly with it!



Sunshine Irene Kang

Sunshine helps individuals and corporates to find confidence, gain clarity and build capacity. Her strength is in transforming lives. Her wisdom comes from life storms such as the pain of a previous marriage that saw her grow her resilience mentally, emotionally and financially. She is now a successful entrepreneur of a thriving visual consulting company, a lead facilitator and an inspiring speaker. And she's also happily remarried.

www.artofawakeningasia.com

irene@art-of-awakening.com

Leading Positively in Crisis

by Sha-En Yeo

News of Covid-19 hit like a huge wave, resulting in closed borders, economic standstill and countries scrambling to contain the virus. Businesses started to face the stark reality - that revenue was going to plummet, and tough times would be coming. In the midst of such crisis, how can leaders continue to lead positively so they can ride atop this wave and emerge stronger than before?

Brain In Crisis

When we experience stress or a perceived threat to our well-being, blood and oxygen flow from the thinking part of the brain to the feeling part of the brain - what psychologists describe as an *amygdala hijack*. As your body gets into fight or flight mode, you may find yourself reacting automatically to the stress, affecting your ability to think clearly, make rational decisions or control your responses.

Be Steady

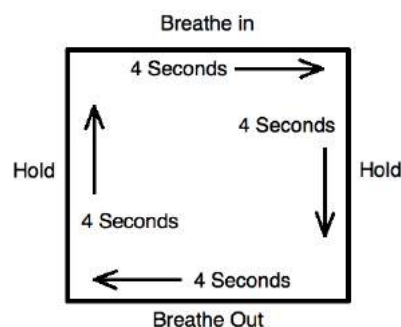
As a leader, it is important to be able to manage this hijack well and remain steady. Your employees will be looking up to you, seeking assurance that you will be able to successfully navigate the crisis. Here's how you can take control of the hijack:

1. Pause

When you notice that you are feeling overwhelmed, pause. Pausing allows you to recharge and temporarily put down everything that's weighing on your mind, creating space for you to do a reset. Like a machine, continuing in overdrive could lead to burnout.

2. Breathe Deeply

Practice box breathing to calm your nervous system. Breathe in for four seconds, then hold your breath for four seconds. Next, breathe out for four seconds, then hold your breath for four seconds. Keep doing this until you feel calmer.



3. Observe Your Emotions

Observe your emotions - as if you are watching these emotions on the television screen, without having to claim them as yours. You don't have to take any action, nor judge any emotion that arises. In this way, you are creating space between you and your emotions, and they no longer have as much control over you.

4. Name The Emotions

The final step is to name the emotions. Researchers have found that naming your emotions, for example, "This feels like anger," can dampen the reactive amygdala, calm your nervous system and reinstate logical thinking.

Going through the four steps above, you are likely more calm, objective and rational. It is in this state of mind that you can effectively make decisions.

Lead Positively

Positive leadership in times of crisis does not mean putting on a smiling face and pretending all will be well. It means providing a light amidst the darkness, assuring your employees that you will there to guide them. Utilize the following strategies:

1. Communicate Clearly, Factually And Transparently

Be clear on your key message, and share the facts of the situation. Share good and bad news, what you know and don't know. Such transparency promotes trust, strengthens relationships, reduces misunderstandings and could lead to problems being solved faster.

2. Empathize And Reassure

Step into your employee's shoes to identify what they might be experiencing. Acknowledge their challenges and struggles so they know you care. Reassure them that you (and the company) are doing all that you can to support them.

3. Show Appreciation

Showing appreciation to your employees will go a long way to boost morale. When you take time to recognize their contribution and effort, they are likely to go the extra mile, remain engaged and stay committed to the company. This could be a personalised note, team shoutout or offering time off so they can be with their family.

4. Convey Hope, Optimism And Unity

Share your vision for getting through this crisis, and engage them on how to achieve it together. This unites them towards a common goal, conveys hope that things will get better and galvanises them into action. Convey optimism by focusing on the strengths, successes and opportunities that exist.

“Convey optimism by focusing on the strengths, successes and opportunities.”

These four strategies can help you maintain the morale of your employees, allowing them then to spend their energy, time and resources into putting in their best work.

Your Role Is Critical

A leader's role cannot be underestimated. In times of crisis, your ability to stay steady and lead positively will make the difference between sinking under its weight or rising strong above it.



Sha-En Yeo

Sha-En is a TEDx speaker, best-selling author and graduate of the Master of Applied Positive Psychology (MAPP) at the University of Pennsylvania. Over the last 10 years, she has designed and delivered corporate wellness programs for over 10,000 people in Singapore and the Asia Pacific region.

www.happinessscientists.com

shaen@happinessscientists.com

Angel Of Delight

by Avi Liran

I could not fall asleep; I had been invited to conduct a workshop for cancer patients and their family at the Mount Elizabeth Hospital. I tossed and turned throughout the night, suffering from a severe attack of imposter syndrome: “Who am I to deliver our light-hearted messages to people who are in combat with death? I was afraid my message of joy might be offensive and hurt their feelings?”

If I were a phone, my screen would be signalling a low charge warning. Driving to the hospital, I was praying for energy, for a sign to ensure me that I could pull this off. I thought about calling in to say that I am sick, then found myself already parking the car at the hospital.

Exhausted and worried I had one more issue. My anxiety was churning my gut to produce a lot of gas. I headed straight for the toilet, opened the door, and saw an incredible sight; an Asian looking man in his thirties peeing and singing a gospel song out loud. “The Joy of the Lord is my strength...” I started laughing and could not stop, it was hilarious. The funny man started to laugh too and for a few minutes we were both laughing like crazy.

I introduced myself and asked, “Do you always sing when you pee?”. He answered with a smile “My name is Onassis. I am a hand therapist and a pastor. I am singing the song that I will be singing for my congregation this Sunday. I work in a very stressful environment. I see patients after trauma, many of them are depressed and exude negativities. Singing also refuels the joy within me, it gives me the strength to continue giving from my Heart to others.”

Our joyous meeting had charged my battery, but I still needed an espresso, so I offered to treat my new friend to a coffee. Onassis politely refused, then insisted that I follow him to his clinic so that he may brew me a coffee in his pantry! I shared with him my insecure fears about performing to a group of terminally ill people and my weariness from sleeplessness.

“Once the patients believe, healing is exponentially faster.”

I noticed a few wooden cylinder sticks like mini ice-cream cones on his table. Each one had different type of surface, “What are these?” I asked. “I use these to help people re-learn to feel and decode different kinds of surfaces.”

I asked, “What is the portion of motivation and physical therapy in your practice?” “80/20”, he replied. “When people come to me, they usually relive in their heads the critical moment when their hand was cut. Many of them blame themselves for their stupidity and cling to the agony of their loss. In that state, they make very little progress even if my therapy session is the best. You see, Avi, many of them are in a very bad emotional state of mind. They are stuck in victimhood, denial, frustration, and depression. Some lose the sense of hope. Their system produces stress hormones which suppress the effectiveness of their immune system. I motivate them by telling them that the light at the end of the dark tunnel is near because there is a curve. Once they pass it, they will see the big light. Now they need to put their other hand on my shoulder and walk after me. You see, Avi, motivation is 80% of what we really do. Once the patients believe, healing is exponentially faster. Now you go to the second floor and do your workshop. You will rock”.

I showered Onassis with thanks, then dashed down to fearlessly deliver one of my best workshops so far. At the end of the workshop, a beautiful lady approached me with her two young daughters and said: "Avi, over six months ago, doctors told me I had only three to six months more to live. Today, in your workshop, I smiled, learned, and laughed with my daughters. The ability for the girls to see me happy and not suffering is a precious gift that you gave us. I hope they will always remember these delightful moments with me today." Tenderly she then took off her shoe to reveal a blister that almost covered almost her entire foot and said. "When cancer pain presents, it can seem unbearable, and this is the result of the medication, but when I can laugh and smile like today, much of the pain subsides, then I am able to sleep without medication. Thank you, Avi, for what you shared with all of us today."

"... but when I can laugh and smile like today, much of the pain subsides, then I am able to sleep without medication."

Onassis was my 'Angel of Delight'. Whether our restroom meeting was divine intervention or coincidence, his compassion, hospitality, generosity, support, and spontaneous coaching made a difference in my life and transmitted an immediate positive ripple effect on to others.



Each one of us has the capacity to delight. Do not underestimate your ability to delightfully contribute. Every action of delight does make a difference.

During the pandemic crisis, millions of people around the world made the choice to contribute to others in need. Their generosity transformed ubiquitous feelings of helplessness, worries and fear into being useful, helpful, and hopeful.

The question is: for whom will you be an angel of delight for today? There is no better time than now to grow your angel wings, to soar and make a difference.



Avi Liran

Chief Delighting Officer

On a mission to delight the world.

One person, one organisation, one community at a time

avi@deliveringdelight.com

www.aviliran.com

Trust – The Core Enabler That Influences And Inspires Your Team

by Jonathan Low CSP PCC

These are certainly extraordinary times for leaders.

What Do Employees Need From Leaders?

In a recent survey, Gallup gathered the Covid-19 strategies and policies from the CHROs of 100 of the world's largest organizations and employees who were asked, "what do they need from leaders right now?" The results showed that the four areas employees are currently looking for in leaders are trust, compassion, stability and hope. (*Source: here*)

Foundation Of Trust

Many would agree that trust is the core that drives motivation, fosters teamwork, influences change and empowers execution for improved performance. This is validated through the Six Seconds Emotional Intelligence (EQ) Leadership Vital Sign (LVS) Assessment.

The foundation of trust is built on the competence (your knowledge, skills and attitude), commitment (what you say and do), consistency (how you walk the talk) and care (how do you show care and compassion).

This unprecedented time of crisis due to Covid-19 has certainly been a testing time for leaders. While some leaders may find it challenging, it is also great opportunity for many to shine during this time, especially post circuit breaker/lockdown. Your employees, associates and teams will be looking at you for the direction into the future.

The research by Dennis and Michelle Reina, PhD goes even deeper into the area of trust building. It is fascinating to work with leaders as we raise their awareness and impact on the 16 behaviours that will build or break trust, in the trust of character, trust of communication and trust of capability. Trust builds the bridge between the organization's need for results and the human need for connection.

How To Inspire Trust

Here are my tips on how you as a leader can demonstrate greater compassion to inspire trust:

1. Communicate transparently at regular intervals to your team. Listen, learn and show your support.
2. Be kind to yourself – self compassion.



Trust builds the bridge between the organization's need for results and the human need for connection.

3. Raise your personal self-awareness in the area of emotional intelligence. Recognize your personal and professional trigger points. This will help you respond and navigate better at home and at work.
4. Connect with your clients and business stakeholders. Communicate, listen and care.
5. Strengthen your mental toughness resilience in the five core areas of composure, concentration, confidence, cope-ability and cohesion.
6. Develop real stories of trust, resilience, courage, optimism and unity for your brand and establishment. This will develop trust among your teams with the recognition.

Tough times do not last, but trustworthy, compassionate and resilient leaders do. This will lead to stability and hope so desired by many.

Final Reflection - Power Self Coaching Questions

Here are three self-coaching questions for you as leaders as you continue to develop trust:

1. What would you like to start doing more of?
2. What would you like to start doing less of?
3. What would you like to continue doing?

Tough times do not last, but trustworthy, compassionate and resilient leaders do.

The future will be great for those who are ready. Preparation starts now. Take action to make it amazing, for you, your team and family!



Jonathan Low CSP PCC

Jonathan centres his conference speaking, training programs and leadership coaching work with leaders and organizations to measurably improve their business performance, sales success, service quality and leadership effectiveness. Having inspired more than 500,000 professionals in over 30 countries, Jonathan believes that increased self-awareness accelerates professional relations and business success.

www.GlobalSuccessLearning.net

jon@globalsuccesslearning.net

Serving The World Starts With You

by Kerrie Phipps

How do I best serve the world right now? This question has both trapped and liberated me throughout my life. It's a question I've been exploring more deeply in recent days and I find joy in challenging times as I explore this and stick to my strengths.

What the world needs right now is YOU, not in the activities that exhaust and defeat you, but in a way that doing what you do and being who you are brings you and others joy. You've probably experienced this joy when you've helped someone in a moment of need. You've possibly also found yourself trapped by expectations of what serving/helping looks like. Let's discover or rediscover the joy that's possible.

What do I mean by "serving the world"? It's different for everyone, so let's explore your world for now, and think about what this means to you. Perhaps you'd refer to it as making a difference, helping the community, or doing meaningful work?

YOU are essential to your world. This is important to remember as you explore how you best serve the world. Serving yourself is like getting your oxygen first, as directed on airplanes in case of emergency. It makes sense that we can be more effective in helping others if we serve from a place of wellbeing. It doesn't serve you or anyone else if you're stumbling around and passing out as you feed others, as you've taken no food or water yourself.

It's about knowing your needs, your gifts and strengths, your emerging interests and awareness of your uniqueness. Listen to yourself to know what's next.

I've grown up in a culture of service, servant leadership and volunteering, although often not in a traditional sense. It involved a family history of military, school, church, and community service. In many ways service was a joy and not at all a chore. However, acting in order to keep others happy, to meet their expectations and try to fit their boxes, I found myself drowning in confusion and fatigue.

At times, roles are created and impressive titles are used to entice people to service, then trapping them in a world of expectations and other pressures that lead to performance anxiety and incongruent choices.

*The Oxford Dictionary defines service as,
"The action of helping or doing work for someone..."
It can be paid or unpaid.*

In 2006 I found myself serving in a way that began with a simple offer to help a friend's company with some calls they needed to make when their National Sales Manager left abruptly. I didn't want that title, and therefore the formality of the role, but from my home office in country NSW, Australia, I unknowingly broke existing sales records for the company, was paid a commission, and was sought after by business leaders in other countries to discover my 'methodology'. I found this surprising as I didn't feel like a skilled sales leader - simply a friend who was sharing a personal story and being a good listener. My enthusiasm, passion and care for people shone through, and I wasn't distracted by the expectations of meeting sales targets. If I'd shifted focus to the numbers, I would lose energy.

Where Do You Gain Energy? Where Do You Lose Energy?

You might not think about this because you're simply enjoying yourself and don't consciously explore what's going on, or if it's deflating you don't want to think of it. However, if you take notice of your internal responses, you sense the insights emerging about how you can best serve the world. The times I act intuitively and from a place of natural energy are usually the times I make a bigger difference than I anticipate.

After leaving my parents' farm as a 17-year-old to become a dental nurse, I found even in unpleasant moments the joy of helping people. Why do we see people collapse into a chair with a smile on their face at the end of a hard day's work or volunteering, perhaps covered in grime, ash, blood and sweat, but smiling? It's the sense of making a difference, of meaningful work.

You might enjoy your efforts because of an innate sense of joy at putting systems in order, following processes to create results, or the sense of connection and gratitude of those who you're helping. We feel rewarded when we give without expectation - even if we're being paid. It's less about the financial reward, and acclaim of others, it's the joy and freedom of serving from a place of authenticity, with your gifts and abilities.

Have you ever found joy in something, then becoming trapped by comparing yourself, feeling the need to do or be more impressive? We can totally lose sight of the fact or be completely unaware, that what people valued in us was our uniqueness.

Covid-19 is a stressful time in so many ways. Let's not stress ourselves more by trying to wear someone else's shoes, hat or weighty coat. Find the liberation in taking time out, even when you have a few minutes going to sleep or waking, to turn your thoughts to, "What is it I do naturally and take for granted that others appreciate?"



Kerrie Phipps

Kerrie is a leadership coach, author and speaker. Kerrie has been serving entrepreneurs, leaders and teams across Asia Pacific for over 20 years. Her passion is connecting and empowering difference-makers to inspire a more connected, compassionate and collaborative world.

www.KerriePhipps.com

www.linkedin.com/in/kerriephipps/

Ready To Reflect For Mother Earth?

by Andrea T Edwards, CSP

We all have a chance, a beautiful opportunity, to create the world anew. While it's a very challenging time, we have been given a *gift* from Mother Earth – the gift of time to deeply reflect. A time to reconsider how we live our lives and how we shape our collective future. It feels like we've been given a big time out and sent to our rooms, asked to reflect and consider the world we create at the other side of this crisis.

Will humanity take this chance to reflect and change our ways? Or will we miss it, waiting for the next crisis to hit, and the next, and the next? Because with the climate crisis and deepening global inequality, if we do not change, we are ensuring a permanent state of crisis. Do you want that? I certainly don't.

"We've all been sent to our bedrooms for a time out, where we are being asked to reflect and consider our actions."

We can no longer ignore the peril we are in. It's predicted that major ecosystems will start collapsing before 2030 – yes, in our lifetime! Yet we continue to chop down life-giving trees, and we glory in excessive consumption, all while the world gets warmer, the oceans too, with emissions going in one direction – up! We continue to pass nature's tipping points and don't seem capable of grasping the impact it will have on all of our lives.

Young People Are Frightened

When my son was 11, he told me, *"Mum, if it gets too hot to be outside because of global warming, I am going to commit suicide."*

That devastated me! Our children know. They see a future of unbearable hardship. Is that all we are prepared to offer them? We cannot wait for our children to grow up and act. We don't have time. The time to act – and the opportunity – is now.

Deepening Inequality Is A Huge Issue

We have other huge challenges too. Deepening inequality is accelerating due to Covid-19. This puts women and children in greater danger of human slavery and abuse, with millions of jobs at risk or gone. We have an enormous human crisis on our hands, with The World Food Program stating 30 million people face famine, while the World Bank claim that 60 million more people have been pushed into extreme poverty.

"The only way to get out of permanent crisis is for us ALL to reflect on what must change."

This pandemic and the economic fall-out is a terrible experience to live through. However, we must claim this unique opportunity to rewrite our collective future. A future where the sustainability and health of all life on Planet Earth is at the centre of our plans.

Questions For Reflection

With this gift of time, let's ask ourselves some searching questions and find the answers, together.



1. Are you happy with your life – family, home, community, sense of achievement and contribution? Is it time for new directions?
2. Are you questioning the frantic pace of life we left behind? Do we want it to continue?
3. Are you proud of the company you work for? Is it contributing positively towards all life on earth, or is shareholder value more important?
4. Is it time we demand business to change dramatically, versus the lack of consideration of earth's finite resources, with no responsibility for the waste left behind?
5. Are we individually ready to face up to our part in devastation and suffering? Do we continue to accept children suffering in mines to make our phones or computers? Women suffering in the garment industry for fast fashion? Companies like Ikea producing #FastFurniture, made from illegal logging, to feed our insatiable appetites for new?
6. Are you wasting less, buying less, saying no to #SingleUsePlastic, consuming less meat, shopping locally, making plans to reduce your emissions?
7. Is your country polluted and full of rubbish? Are you ready to demand action from the businesses who have profited from it for decades?
8. Is it time to close the wildlife markets, while creating new livelihoods for those reliant on their income?
9. What about overfishing and destruction in the seas? What's the real impact? What's the risk to us?
10. Are you working to be part of the solution to end inequality, in all its forms?
11. What parts of life from *before* should we get rid of? I want the false, ego-centric, hero-worshipping, sales-funnel-pushing nonsense gone. I want us to be real. To be meaningful. You?
12. And to the parents, are we acting to ensure our children have a beautiful future?

We face big challenges. Will you join me? Will you reflect and raise your voice to demand change - on social media, in your communities, your company, and on stage? Will you join a rising chorus demanding better for all life on Planet Earth?



Andrea T Edwards, CSP, The Digital Conversationalist

A globally award-winning B2B communications professional, and expert in social leadership, content marketing, and employee advocacy, Andrea works with the world's largest companies on the transformation needed within to maximize business growth digitally. Own your voice, own your future.

www.andreatedwards.com

andrea@andreatedwards.com



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