

CONNECTING
OVER
VIDEO
ISOLATION
DISTANCING

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

COMPILED BY **SUNSHINE IRENE KANG**

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.



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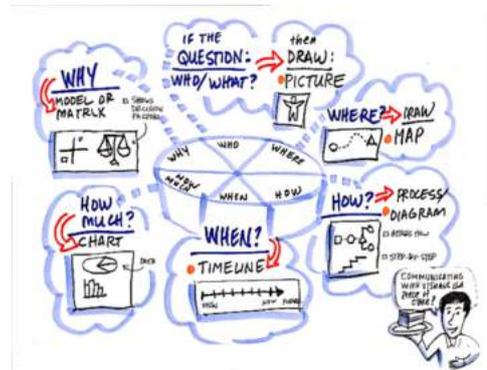


Asia
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KISS VUCA With Resilience

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.

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What's Possible At The Intersection Of Families, Business, and Learning?

by Tim Hamons

Parents, hands up if you have created something surprising and meaningful with your children during the lockdown period? And hands up if you're now ready for it to be over?

One thing is certain: with all the pent-up energy in our children and ourselves, we need to create something for them, with them. It's a question of survival and sanity, both for them and us. I'm sure you've seen many inspired examples of families coming up with cool things with their kids. What can we do with this moving forward? What's possible for children and families in the overlaps between home, school and our professional worlds?

What new worlds of learning and possibilities can open up when we accept the invitation to play?

Kids need active play. When our 4-year-old Zelig asked mommy if she would make a slide, she built him a sturdy, sizeable indoor slide with steps and various features. Zelig played on this so much that it needed to be reinforced twice. After sliding every way he could think of, he would invent new ways to use it - while singing songs, or racing together with various toys, objects, and siblings, as a prop with other games. Zelig also asked for a café, and a theatre, which Irene happily made (each one took around half a day to make). They were both humble masterpieces of foam board construction with moveable and collapsible elements, signage, and accessories.



Our daughters Xaen and Aurora both organized and delivered different levels of tutoring. Xaen would assemble a group of Zelig's favorite stuffed toy animal friends to form a collaborative learning team, and Zelig would call each by name to answer a question. Singing, drawing, and telling stories was a way to encourage and reward behaviors, and reinforce learning and lessons. Even older brother Jeri, who is often absorbed with projects, found the opportunity to bond with and teach his younger brother.

As we begin to shift out of global lockdowns and closures of workplaces and homes, what do we want to keep and create for our families and our children?

It's wonderful to observe and experience all of this happening. Of course, the love for our children will drive a parent to figure out how to do whatever we can for them. But during Covid-19 things were different. The longer duration at home, the combination of social, economic, environmental, emotional impacts, the greater call for redesigning our lives and our world. I have considered how we might form a bridge between our children, our homes, and our professional worlds as a way to bring more fulfillment to their lives and our own, as well as a more meaningful and sustainable future.

So let's look at three ideas. Consider them invitations for you to accept moving forward.

Use What You Have

During this time, we've had to re-think how we get things done. So, when our child asks us for something and shopping is no longer an option, other natural instincts kick in to fill the void. With our love and ingenuity, we will find a way to make something work using only what's available. Cardboard french fries were borrowed from the café to teach math and counting. To build large play structures, Irene used recycled boards from client events. Our planet would be grateful.

Find A Bridge Between Your World And Theirs

Our daughter Xaen reflected that to be a more effective teacher was to be more like a friend, and teach at the child's level. Aurora would make her laugh and tell stories through her toys. Every brother or sister knows they have a different opportunity for teaching and connecting which even the best-designated teachers are not afforded. My observation is that they brought out the best in each other.

Accept The Invitation To Play

Kids are our ultimate teachers when it comes to our creative capacity for play. When my wife's and my own head was too full from work, we would simply step outside and submit to our child's invitations. "Daddy, make my friends talk", was an invitation to a form of improvised storytelling with our child's soft toys and vehicles. For Irene, building a happy play structure gave her mind a joyful reset and a sense of hands-on accomplishment.

How Might We Integrate Kids Into Our Life And Work?

Kids love learning, and they want to be a part of the work we do. We draw and use visual storytelling for our clients. During Circuit Breaker I made short videos sharing a simple drawing and a message of encouragement. Zelig joined me drawing alongside on our giant whiteboard, as a kind of improvised and collaborative storytelling.

Growing means adapting. We have all learned to be more tolerant of the signs of home and family on our work Zoom calls. As we begin to shift out of global lockdowns and closures of workplaces and homes, what do we want to keep and create? What have we learned as parents during this time about working alongside our families, and integrating family and professional life? Can we give incentives for parents to create more home-based learning experiences and platforms? Can families and children play a different role in business?

Zelig will be returning to school in a few days. While I welcome a return of structure (and perhaps a bit of sanity), I know that I will miss his invitations. I am energized with understanding how this time with him has brought out the best of each member of our family, and the possibilities of what we can create together.

What have we learned as parents during this time about working alongside our families?



Tim Hamons

For the past 15 years, Tim has supported leaders and teams to make positive change using the power of visual storytelling and creative facilitation. He inspires individuals to embrace drawing as their best tool for thinking, solving problems, and re-imagining possibilities.

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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.

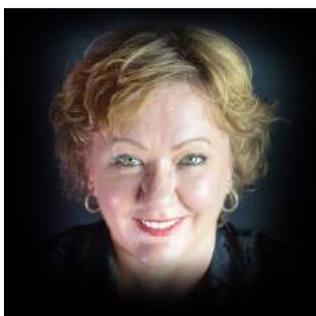
Questions For Reflection

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.

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Pockets Of Peace

by Dr. Gary Tho

Life was a blur. I was numb. Instead of facing reality, I was blocking it out. I was in survival mode. Thanks to Covid-19, my clinic, ChiroWorks, closed. Income stopped, but expenses continued. I needed to find my peace, without having to travel overseas to a hidden beach or mountain top. Even if that had been an option.

But crisis or no crisis, there will always be stress and worries. Short term stress that comes and goes can be beneficial. But persistent, consistent stress? That leads down a dark road, and we wouldn't wish it on our enemies.

I asked myself, "Is there a way to make stress slide off me like a fried egg on Teflon?" Is there a way to live each day happy and peaceful? This was what I set out to accomplish.



Survival Mode

Whether it's stress from Covid-19 or daily life, survival mode manifests in different ways. Some feel irritability, lose their temper, become defensive, anxious, restless or confused. Others exhibit avoidance, numbing or escaping behaviours. Other common ones are insomnia, numbing, and giving up. As experts like Daniel Goleman, Daniel Kahnemann and Joseph LeDoux explain, survival mode is an automatic reaction to stress. Like being hunted by a lion, survival mode helps us get by right now, but it is not a good long-term strategy.

Are you living primarily with automatic reactions? Acknowledging our survival strategies allows us to transition from survival, into growth and happiness. This is what saved me from my numbed reality.

When we realise that we are not alone or that we are not in a scarce competitive world, our thoughts and emotions change.

Connection

Because of the hormone oxytocin, a female's automatic survival reaction may be to reach out to build connections and support systems. Humans are wired for connection, but our *busyness* and daily demands often create a disconnect. Thankfully, stay-at-home measures have made connecting desirable. And this beautiful human trait helps us snap out of survival mode.

When we realise that we are not alone or that we are not in a scarce competitive world, our thoughts and emotions change. Talking with others helps shift our perspective and reassures us that others are willing and able to help.

Who can you connect with to help bring out a better you? For me, I reconnected with an old friend, and it was through that conversation, my passion was re-ignited, and I was inspired to own my knowledge and own my future.

Achievable Actions

Owning my future and doing something about it are completely different things, so I adopted the “Princess Anna method”: *“Break it down to this next breath, this next step, this next choice, one that I can make”* (from the movie Frozen 2). I do a little, because that’s all it takes. If we aim for the lowest hanging fruit and get it done, then repeat it, we build momentum. And when we celebrate each little accomplishment, we gain confidence, clarity and motivation. We learn what drives us, what we like, and if we need to pivot.

I know I’m definitely on the path to my goals. What have you been working on? What are your little wins? What are you learning from them? And how is your learning shaping your future?

Choices

I received this feedback from a webinar I conducted: *“I find most points he mentioned are fundamental and important, yet the most neglected practices of people.”* It’s so true. We have all the answers. We know what to do. It’s not about more books, courses and workshops. What matters most is what we do between opening our eyes in the morning and closing them at night. What we focus on we get good at, and we get more of. Always complain and we become experts in finding fault. Always appreciate and we receive more wonderful things in our life.

Where do you spend your time and attention? What are your intentions when doing these activities? What daily choices support what you want in life?

Pockets Of Peace

I realised that stress is the fried egg and we are Teflon. If we can acknowledge and appreciate ourselves and where we are at, connect with the right people, do little by little, and celebrate and maintain perspective of what we do and why we do it, there’s no way we will be stuck in survival mode. Stress can’t stick to us.

Every time we realign our thoughts, emotions, behaviours, actions and intentions we gain another piece of peace.

Every time we release a habit or thought that doesn’t serve us, we receive a little pocket of peace. Every time we realign our thoughts, emotions, behaviours, actions and intentions, we gain another pocket of peace. Every time we renew our perspectives and relationships with ourselves and others, we receive even more peace.

We can create pockets of peace in our day-to-day life. Everywhere. We are allowed to be happy and we can calm the chaos, Covid-19 or not. And the more we find these pockets of peace, the more we gain, the more our loved ones gain, and the more we can be our best selves.



Dr. Gary Tho, B.App.Sc. (clin). and B.C.Sc.

For the last 14 years, Dr. Gary Tho has inspired, influenced and impacted thousands of people to feel great, play big and live life without limits through ChiroWorks, his pain relief and peak performance chiropractic clinic, and his talks and workshops on building physical and mental resilience.

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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.

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Live Your Best Life Every Day

by Eric Ng

The world changed this year. Lives have been changed too. What is the best response?

"We are not here to curse the darkness but to light the candle that can guide us through that darkness to a safe and sane future."

- John F. Kennedy

It is a momentous time now; what is past is past. The important thing is the here and now, as actions taken now will influence the future.

There is a popular campfire song that goes, "It only takes a spark to get the fire going." May our candles be lighted first and then passed on to guide others through this challenging period.

Here are some ideas to consider. Please use what works for you:

1. Health

Seize this opportunity to take charge of your health with a yearly medical check-up and preventive health screening. Be aware of past family medical history. Health screenings can help with early detection of illnesses before any symptoms surface. Prevention is better than cure. It is great to have peace of mind to enjoy life.

2. Wealth

Know your net worth. Know how much you have and keep track of your expenses each month, each year and also future expenses. Multiply your income stream as inspired by "Rich Dad and Poor Dad" written by Robert Kiyosaki.

3. Family

A strong anchor during rough waters. Love your family. Spend time, be kind and serve one another. Make no room for regrets. Tomorrow is not promised and today is short.

4. Mindfulness

Our brains need a break. Don't be too busy "running" that you forget to "top up your water bottle". Take time to connect with your thoughts, feelings, senses, environments, emotions and also your spiritual side.

5. Learning

Be a student for life. One of the best ways of learning is to teach others.

6. Reading

Reading is to the mind what exercise is to the body. The more you read, the more knowledge is learned and acquired, the more places you'll go. Follow the author. Read ebooks, magazines and newspapers. Start young. Today a reader, tomorrow a leader.



Photo by Ben White

7. Less Is More

This is a phrase often associated with the designer Ludwig Mies van der Rohe. Simplicity and clarity lead to good design. Sometimes, simplicity trumps complication. Applying this phrase in your life may lead to more steadiness, creativity, peace and better quality of life



Gifts to a homeless person in need

8. Reaching Out

There are many in need. Stretch a hand, and offer some help. Look outside. Show them that you care. Let them know that they are not alone. Never underestimate the difference YOU can make in the lives of others. Step forward, reach out and help.

9. Death

Have you given some thought on what happens after your death? Have you written your will? Nominated someone for your CPF? Appointed your power of attorney? Submitted your Advance Medical Directive? Bought basic insurance plans to cover your children's education and family liabilities so that you do not have to burden your loved ones?

10. Life

Live a reverse life. Envision your last stage of your life. What does it look like? Backtrack to the present, plan and work towards your life vision now.

11. Happiness

Do happy things. Avoid unhappy people. Keep happy friends. 😊

12. Journaling

Keep track of the key lessons and milestones in your life. Don't let the opportunity to recollect and reflect pass you by. Through this good habit, you may find clarity in your thoughts and feelings, with enhanced creativity and problem-solving capacity. Take note of the major milestones in your life and the lives of your loved ones, especially your children.

*"Life is 10% what you experience and 90% how you respond to it."
- Dorothy M. Neddermeyer*



*APSS fishing buddies
Kenneth, Eric and Fredrik*

Eric Ng

I am passionate about fishing. It is great way to enjoy the outdoors, enjoy social bonding and is a source of food. I am also passionate about speaking, training and certifying leaders to improve their leadership behaviours in the Positive Power and Influence® Program.

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Be Extra Compassionate With Yourself

by Sha Nacino

How are you during this coronavirus global pandemic?

Maybe you are not as productive as you were prior to the coronavirus crisis. That's okay.

Maybe you're anxious and worried about the future.

Maybe you're feeling a little sad, or maybe you're really sad.

Maybe you even feel like crying.

Maybe you feel disappointed.

Whatever it is you're feeling, be extra kind and compassionate with yourself.

Cry if you feel like crying. Sit with your emotions.

A Familiar Pain

A few Sundays ago, I was in so much emotional pain. I felt so uncomfortable. I didn't understand what I was feeling.

Normally, I'd snap out and distract myself by watching a movie or talking to a friend or doing something else.

But that Sunday night, I sat through my emotions. I honestly didn't know why I was feeling what I was feeling. But I sat through the pain and discomfort.

After probably two hours of crying, I felt so much better.

I also had a breakthrough. I now understood what I've been trying to understand for years! I wouldn't have reached that if I didn't sit with my emotions and I didn't feel my feelings.

Feel your emotions no matter how painful and uncomfortable they are. That maybe the child in you that is in pain and is afraid. Then speak to yourself as lovingly as you can. You can say something like,

"I love you, my love. We'll get through this. I trust you. I believe in you. I'm here for you."

Give yourself a hug.

You are doing the best you can.

You don't need to figure everything out right now.

Celebrate Your Milestones

Celebrate the fact that you woke up and you're still breathing.

Celebrate the fact that you took a bath today. (Did you? Hehe)

Celebrate the sun!

Celebrate how you're becoming a better cook as each day goes by.

Celebrate how you love your family or how your family loves you.

Celebrate yourself!

Give yourself a little treat here and there.

Take care of yourself.

When you're okay, you unleash your creativity and your true potential.

The pandemic hit me emotionally. Because I took time to care for myself, I slowly got back on my feet and I was able to lead my team into launching the HR Summit Global in April 2020. It was a huge success and we and the speakers were able to give value to over 10,000+ participants from 32 countries globally.

Everything will be fine.

Take care of the most important person in your life - yourself.

I wish you love, joy, and peace today and every day!



Sha Nacino

Sha is an author of 12 books and a keynote speaker on gratitude and creativity. She is the founder of the HR Summit Global™, World Gratitude Summit™, and Global Authors Summit™, among others. She helps organizations develop a culture of gratitude and creativity to increase their team's engagement and productivity.

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Outliers Look Within

by Pravin Shekar

Outliers

*A note for you.
For me.
As the only way out
is creatively, together.*

When the world moves one way, we've got to move another.
What to do then, when it doesn't move at all?

It's time to look within, without and all around. The answer as always, lies inside, accessible.
This isn't another positive note. But a fact!

Like our search for our glasses, when it's on our head all the time.
We look around externally, when it's all intrinsic.

What do we do when all that's got to be done,
seems to be done already, by someone else?

Should I switch careers or do that pivot?
Can someone tell me now, or am I that someone now?

*You am I, I am you.
We're in this together!*

When I look at the past, and within, I find so much has been done.
So many snippets, activities, achievements, so much to repurpose and share back.

Who are we, but a sower of seeds, of life, and hope, for those who listen?
I need to sow it for myself then, as I am a knowledge disseminator.

Speaker, trainer, coach and author, our job has been to help others.
As we plan for their future, aren't we planning for us as well?

Books, courses and webinars; audits, ideation and solutions,
Support groups and shoulder giving, options ahead are aplenty.

We know not how tomorrow will be, but imagine, YES, we can.
The wind has no fences and an ocean no borders!

The future will be a curve as with all things economic and perhaps just out of my
understanding reach, as with you.

The number to think of is four,
as options and alphabets,
the scenarios that lie in front of us.

Hunky dory is the V,
where tomorrow normalcy returns.

When it comes albeit slower,
you are staring at a U.

Up and down like a see saw W,
Or a straight drive into Hell, with L!

Plan for each, so we know the moves.
Plan for the L, as that's the base, to get out of hell.

Explore, Experiment, Endure,
as we live to fight another day.
Digging out our hidden strengths.
Plotting our own new path,
as the world in front is raw, uncharted.

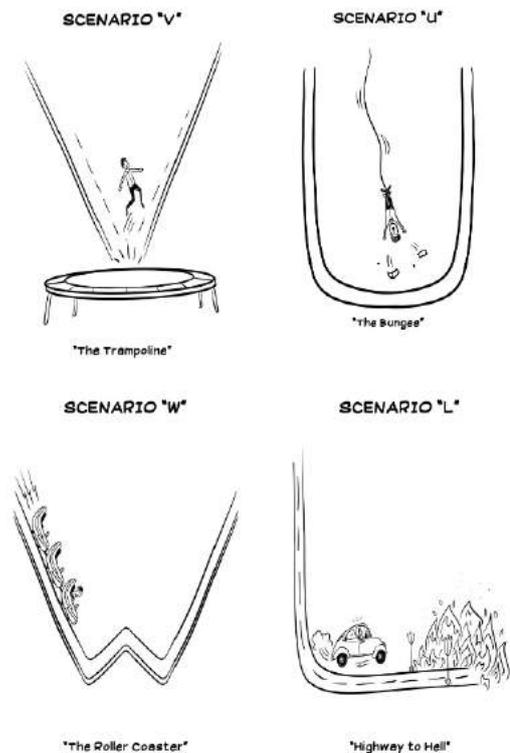
The fresh start that we always wanted, here it is.
To do things any which way we can.

As the old saying goes:

**If I am not for myself,
who else is for me?
If I am for myself alone,
what am I for?**

**Be different.
Be you.**

The solutions lie within!



Pravin Shekar

Pravin Shekar is an *outlier marketer* and a raconteur. Unconventional marketing is his forte. This going-against-the-grain attitude helps him find opportunity in every crisis. A recipient of the American Marketing Association's "Emerging Leader" award, Pravin shakes up your marketing strategy and re-gears growth.

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Four Keys To Thriving In Tough Times

by Karolina Gwinner

If someone told you a few months ago that soon the world as we know it was going to press pause on significant human activity, would you have believed them? Would you have listened to a story of how humans had to stop travelling, going to the office, or even socializing with one another, their own families included?

What sounded like a scene from the thriller movie *Contagion* suddenly became our new reality; a reality so different from what we're used to. It's been unsettling, challenging and hard to predict, as no one knows what the ultimate impact of this pandemic will be, or how long it will truly impact our lives.

Does it mean we should put our lives on hold and wait for better times? Or is there something we can do to thrive in this new reality? From my experience working with incredible leaders, I observed that they perceive challenging times as an opportunity to step up and put their leadership skills to test. They focus on what they can change and take action on their ideas, instead of dwelling on things they cannot change.

As a result, these leaders become wiser, embrace change faster, and shape the new reality for themselves and everyone around them.

Sounds compelling, right? Here are four keys to getting you started on this path:

1. Reflect

All too often we forget to reflect on what really matters to us. As a result, we might be moving ahead, but in the wrong direction. Now, as our life takes an unexpected turn, it's an opportunity to recalibrate our direction. To do that, let's ask ourselves, "what truly matters to me?" Getting some clarity on this enables us to become more intentional about where we're heading, and how to lead our life to get there. Consequently, we start investing more time, energy and attention into things that matter, and ultimately, learn how to let go of things that don't.

Invest more time, energy and attention into what truly matters to you.

2. Reconnect

Humans are social. Our earliest ancestors organized themselves into tribes and communities at the dawn of humanity. It's not natural for us to go through self-isolation, lockdown and physical distancing from each other. Is it any wonder that, when confronted with the new stay-at-home reality, many feel stressed, overwhelmed and even depressed.

However, as we reconnect (virtually of course) with others, we quickly realise that we're all in this together, more dependent on one another than ever before, and that we can empower each other to adapt to the new reality, see new opportunities, and keep our spirits up, despite the lockdown.

3. Recharge

In challenging times, the demand for our support is likely to rise, so we must not forget that our own batteries have limits and need regular recharging to keep us going. There is nothing egotistical about making time for yourself in your daily routine. In fact, successful people emphasize how essential their “me time” is to ensure they can give their best to others, as well as in everything else they do. It also helps them to sustain their performance over time.

If you don't stop regularly to refuel, the lack of fuel will ultimately stop you.

4. Reinvent

Some people keep referring to, “when things go back to normal.” What does that mean? Do we really want to go back to the ‘old normal’, after all we’ve been through? If we did that, wouldn’t it show that we didn’t learn any lessons from this challenging experience?

Before the pandemic, our world was spinning out of control. We were all lost in *busyness*, we let our egos grow out of proportion, and our feelings fooled us into believing we were invincible. Suddenly the world slowed *us* down, so we had to face the reality we created, and it’s given us a huge nudge to change what hasn’t been working for a long time. It’s tested our humanity, and reports around the world indicate we are kinder, more authentic and thoughtful because of this experience. Let’s not go back to where we were - mindless and lost. Let’s use this shift as a stepping stone to reinvent the future, benefitting all life on earth.

Stepping Up And Thriving In Tough Times

I believe that tough times are here for a reason. They have the power to teach us some long-forgotten values, like humility, respect for ourselves and the world we live in. They help us to connect on a deeper level with more care, authenticity and compassion.

Let’s learn these lessons and step up to the challenge of leading the world to a brighter and more sustainable future for ourselves and our children. Let’s ask ourselves: *what if the current pandemic is not a threat, but a golden opportunity for us to recalibrate our direction and reinvent our future?*

What if the current pandemic is not a threat, but a golden opportunity for us to recalibrate our direction and reinvent our future?

Let’s keep searching for ideas that will make us energised, empowered and inspired to take value-driven action. This is how we start thriving in tough times and make a positive impact on the world around us!



Karolina Gwinner

Karolina is a high-energy and performance-driven leadership trainer and speaker. She empowers leaders to thrive in uncertainty, maximise their performance and become more influential. In 2019 Karolina was nominated as the Knowledge Partner of Women Leaders Institute. She is also the Speaker Training Lead for KeyNote Women Speakers.

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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.

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Quarantined Three Times

by Shiela M. Cancino

Quarantine is defined as, “a state, period, or place of isolation in which people or animals that have arrived from elsewhere or been exposed to infectious or contagious disease are placed.” (dictionary.com)

I recently experienced quarantine in the Philippines, in Singapore, and in Hong Kong.

Philippines (January 26 - February 3)

For some reason, my life stopped at the beginning of the year: public speaking, life coaching, chess, and especially my rewarding career. I lived my life as if I had Covid-19. I locked myself up by not doing anything.

My loved ones showed their support, but I was paralyzed – I didn't feel anything until Uncle Rey approached me on February 3. He said, "Shiela, I'm asking God why He allowed this to happen to you. My children and many families would not have experienced good lives if not for your help." He was referring to the scholarship foundation I set-up in the Philippines. He continued, "Shiela, we don't know the answer now, but I believe that everything happens for a reason. There's a reason why He chose you."

"We don't know the answer now, but I believe that everything happens for a reason."

Afterwards, he said a prayer for me. With God's grace, my outlook changed, and my transformation began. The usual me started planning for the next steps: to have a break for three months, to spend the holy week in the Philippines, and to visit my relatives in the suburbs.

I was free from my self-imposed quarantine, and as a reward I bought a ticket to Singapore. My flight was to depart on February 27, and I was supposed to return on March 16.

Singapore (February 27 - April 26)

My purpose was to visit my friend, but since I was already in town, I met recruiters. I was taking my time looking for job opportunities, knowing that I will only start working in May.

It was on March 12, when the Philippines government announced the community quarantine from March 15. My intuition told me that if I went back home, it wouldn't be easy to exit again, due to the rising Covid-19 cases. Since I'm a permanent resident in Hong Kong, I immediately cancelled my flight to the Philippines and booked a trip to Hong Kong instead.

While I had avoided being trapped in the Philippines, I now became trapped in Singapore. And the pressure of finding a job suddenly became higher.

My experience from my self-imposed quarantine in the Philippines helped me. During my lockdown days in Singapore I chose to do something: I resumed life coaching, wrote lyrics, produced songs, started writing a book, and organized weekly educational webinars for our scholars in the Philippines.

*During my lockdown
days in Singapore
I chose to do
something.*

Hong Kong (April 26 - May 10)

Even if I had wanted to stay longer in Singapore, I could only stay for up to sixty days. So on April 26, my sixtieth day in Singapore, I flew to Hong Kong.

I had been so virus-vigilant in Singapore. During the 60 days I was there I could count the times I left my home on one hand. So you might imagine how afraid I was to catch the virus during my flight.

As required by the Hong Kong Department of Health, I underwent a deep-throat saliva test and quarantine for fourteen days. They even put a wristband on me for monitoring. If I didn't oblige, I would be liable to a fine of HK\$5000 and six months imprisonment.

I realized that my experiences in the Philippines and Singapore were preparations for the real quarantine in Hong Kong. Once one can survive self-imposed quarantine, it's easier to survive quarantine imposed by others.

So how did I spend my quarantine days in Hong Kong?

I continued life coaching, writing more lyrics, producing songs, writing chapters of my book, and organizing the weekly educational webinars.

Whether you are in quarantine imposed by you or others, remember that you have options: stay down or get up. Which one will you choose?



Once one can survive self-imposed quarantine, it's easier to survive quarantine imposed by others.



Shiela M. Cancino

Shiela has helped more than 50 youths in finishing their schooling through her scholarship foundation. Using a chess metaphor, she coaches others to *transform from pawn to queen* by assisting them to discover their treasures.

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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:

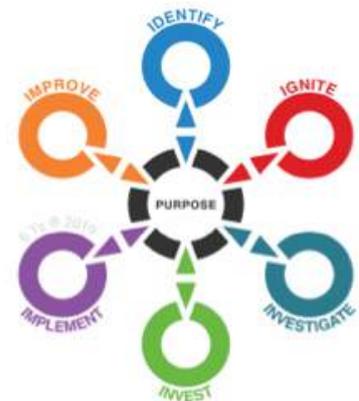
1. Encourage a daily individual and/or team mindfulness practice. This will help to clear stress and tension and move your mind into the sketchpad of the brain, the pre-frontal cortex from where you can strategise, imagine and create.
2. Spend time thinking about you and your team's PURPOSE. Why are 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.

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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 reach 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?

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What Is The Most Expensive Word In Business Today

by Joe Augustin

My article title is the opening line of a commercial. “That wasn’t a question,” the ad goes on to say. “‘What?’ *is* the most expensive word in business today”. It’s a clever take by Denmark’s EPOS who specialise in audio technology.

Poor sound certainly does play a significant part in the customer experience, especially in the new normal of online meetings. According to an EPOS report, bad audio during communications with decision-makers has led to the following outcomes:

- Dissatisfied clients (23%)
- Financial loss due to incorrectly undertaking a task (18%)
- Losing a key piece of work or a deal resulting in financial loss to the company (18%)
- Losing a pitch or tender (19%)

Ouch! The good news is that there’s never been a better time to get your audio into shape. Due to advances in manufacturing, it’s actually quite hard to buy a bad microphone. However, the real challenge is to pick up the RIGHT microphone. And of course, there’s much more to sound than JUST a good microphone.

Listen, Set Yourself Up For Even Better Sound

One of the first things to look out for is your environment. Take a moment to listen intently to what happens in your sonic environment. Is there a fan constantly blowing? What about the neighbour’s dog that barks occasionally? Can you hear the hot water dispenser reboiling the water every hour?

Our brains have the ability to ignore these sounds from our environment so they aren’t distracting to us. But they most certainly can be disconcerting for your audience. When you have taken stock of the sounds that occur in your environment, start making a list of things you can do something about – like turning off the water heater.

The first thing is usually just making sure your windows and doors are closed. That helps to keep the outside world outside. You should also think of the space just outside your door – are there doors and windows that could be closed to reduce the noise coming into the space next door to you?

The next thing you should look out for is how echoey your room is. Again, this is something your brain filters out so you may not even notice it. But like before take some time to listen. Clap your hands once and listen for the trail of sound that follows. The harder the surfaces in your room, the more sound will reflect and bounce around before it eventually dies away. Conversely, the more soft surfaces you have, the quicker the sound gets absorbed.

You can improve the acoustics in your office for clarity, by adding some soft, sound-absorbing elements. Most people imagine that professional acoustic foam delivers the best performance but surprisingly, the BEST sound panel you can have would be made of layers and layers of... towels. Blankets, carpets and even bean-bags can help.

The good news is that for some of you, your work is already done. Now that you have kept out as much of the noise as possible by closing your doors and windows, and kept the internal reflection of sound to a minimum, you should be all set because most modern laptops have some pretty decent mics built-in.

But if you really want to raise your audio game, get an external microphone.

Hear, Hear!

Think of a microphone as an ear. And if you were trying to hear someone better, you would just bring your ear closer to them. It's the same for mics. The general rule for microphone use is: the closer the better. It's a general rule because microphones can also be TOO close.

One of the most functional external microphones you probably already have access to is the one on the stereo wired headset you most likely received with your mobile phone. It's a great option because it also means you can hear what's going very clearly while on the call.

If you're not going to be too far from the computer during your call, I'd recommend a simple wired USB mic. These range in price from as low as \$15 up to several hundred dollars. And they take several forms as well, so which you choose depends on what you would like people to hear... and see. Here are three types to consider:

- **Lavalier Microphone**

Small and unobtrusive, you can wear this on your collar. The sound is usually clear but it tends to sound quite flat. You might consider getting a wireless version of this kind of microphone, although I don't think it's a necessity.

- **Condenser Microphone**

Great for a richer sound, but that comes with the drawback of capturing *too much* detail. It's likely to pick up the barking dog from next door, even through the closed window, and can sometimes be too "rumbly."

- **Dynamic Microphone**

This has the advantage of being a little hardier while having most of the features of the condenser mic but with less detail at the very highest and lowest ends of the audio spectrum (which most of us can't hear anyway). They also allow you to get really close to the mic for that "DJ sound" that some people seem to like.

One final consideration is whether you want the audience to SEE the microphone. In general, it should not block your face or the audience will have difficulty reading your facial expressions and connecting with you visually. Remember, a microphone is just a tool to enhance the effectiveness of your communication.



Joe Augustin

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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

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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.

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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

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One person, one organisation, one community at a time

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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:

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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.

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