



LEADING THROUGH CRISIS & TRANSITION

*A COVID-19 toolkit to help you lead
with strength, intention and grace*

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Free source for leaders committed to
building healthy and resilient organizations

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 03** **Why did we write this toolkit?**
- 04** **Section I - Leading during crisis**
The problem and the big question
COVID-19 a trauma?
- 06** **Step 1: Recognizing your old & new brain**
- 07** **Step 2: Understand what is going on**
- 08** **Step 3: Name it, put a word to your experience**
- 09** **Step 4: Express what you're feeling**
Optimize your energy
Exercise & sleep
- 12** **Section II - Leading through transition**
Where to begin
- 13** **Re-evaluating your 'why'**
Organizational purpose
Define the 'why'

TABLE OF

CONTENTS

cont'd

14 **The great transition**
Key people objectives
Why psychological safety is key
Four types of psychological safety

16 **Emotional trust**

17 **Leading with determination**
Slow down
Self-awareness

18 **Closing thoughts**

19 **Get to know the contributors**



WHY DID WE WRITE THIS TOOLKIT?

As psychologists and leadership consultants, we focus on the most precious asset of any organization, people.

We start at the top, building leaders of distinction whose calm infiltrates the psyche of their people and fosters next level human engagement, strategic brilliance, risk-taking, and well-being.

As we support our clients' through Covid-19, our own quest for meaning-making kicked in. This toolkit evolved as a natural response to our tribal instinct to reach out and connect.

We believe what leaders need right now is the **'why'** and **'how'** of cultivating psychologically safe organizations.

Psychological safety is a term that leaders may not be highly familiar with and that knowledge is power. And knowing how to put that knowledge into practice yields greater power yet.

THIS TOOLKIT IS:

- ▶ **Practical**, filled with "leadership tips" for you to bring back to your teams;
- ▶ **Grounded**, in neuroscience and emotional intelligence;
- ▶ **E-friendly**, you can save and come back to;
- ▶ **Dynamic**, point and click for direct access to resources (e.g., articles, books, podcasts)

Most importantly, our goal is to **equip leaders to take the first steps** toward rebuilding psychological safety during and post Covid-19. Content is divided in two sections: 1) leading during crisis and 2) leading through transition.

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LEADING DURING CRISIS

SECTION I

We're in the trenches of Covid-19 and the world as we knew it, is gone. The effects of this pandemic have shifted our global climate to new levels of **VUCA** (defined below).

▼ VUCA

- **V** (Volatility)
- **U** (Uncertainty)
- **C** (Complexity)
- **A** (Ambiguity)

Leaders are tasked with complex problems, that require ground breaking innovation, strategy and people skills. As leaders navigate information overload, how do they mobilize for next level strategy and action? **We contend that how leaders support others and build psychological safety will set teams and organizations apart.**

As behaviour and emotion scientists, we believe it all starts with psychological safety. For leaders to quench the wildfire of Covid-19, they **need to calm the storm inside first.**

COVID-19 HAS THREATENED SAFETY IN MANY WAYS:

- **Uncertainty:** Few experiences in history have matched this level of uncertainty, giving new meaning to the human stress response.
- **Sudden and rapid onset:** Within weeks, Covid-19 hit every organization leaving little time for the brain to digest what happened.
- **Pervasiveness:** Covid-19 has affected all of our systems.
- **Universal/Invisible:** Covid-19 is everywhere and is untouchable and invisible.

A recent [Gallup](#) study found that what employees need right now are: trust, stability, compassion and hope. This requires human-centered leadership and begins with you understanding your emotions and how you show up as a leader.

“High standards in a context where there is uncertainty or interdependence (or both) combined with a lack of psychological safety comprise a recipe for suboptimal performance.”

Dr. Amy Edmondson, Harvard Researcher

THE PROBLEM

We are going through "collective trauma"

COVID-19 A TRAUMA?

When we think of *trauma* we think of actual or perceived threat to human life (e.g., war, natural disasters, violence etc.). However, trauma encompasses a *range of threatening human experience*. We believe that Covid-19 has triggered a massive stress response in the human brain and is compromising organizational well-being.

The brain is designed to organize information and make sense of what's going on. When it can't do its job, it stresses and readies itself for survival. **This stress response is designed to last for moments, *not* weeks, or months.**

THE PROBLEM

Covid-19 is not a sprint, it is a marathon leading to burnout and exhaustion that will have multiplicative effects on teams and organizations. As leaders, we can stop the spread of unnecessary anxiety by building psychological safety.

CURRENT IMPACT ON LEADERS

As the stress continues, leaders are pressured to ramp up their leadership Jedi but how do they do that when their own psychological safety is threatened?

THE BIG QUESTION

How to regain control?

INDIVIDUALS

When we're under high, chronic stress our rational brain is being cognitively-taxed and consequently isn't functioning optimally. Using our rational brain when stressed is cognitively-demanding. The end of Covid-19 is unclear therefore quieting your stress response will be hard but is key. This toolkit will help you do that.

TEAMS

Covid-19 requires 'next level' human co-operation, altruism, compassion, and solidarity. Leading your team *effectively* through this pivotal time is one heck of a growth opportunity.

ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

Across departments, industry, and borders, it's time to work together. If we're to emerge from this pandemic stronger, wiser, and more capable, we need to work together.

Regardless of your role, our message is clear. Creating a culture of psychological safety is contagious - and it starts with you.



Step 1

Recognizing your old & new brain

Let's talk about the human brain. It fosters good things (learning, growth, achievement, connection, love etc.), and painful things (self-criticism, fear of failure, catastrophic thinking etc.). A first step in mastery, is to understand, communicate, and regulate your brain.



Think of your brain as having two parts, the **old brain** and the **new brain**.

Your **old brain, the protector**, evolved hundreds of millions of years ago. It's responsible for motives (status, harm-avoidance, food etc.), emotions (fear, shame, anger, joy etc.), and behaviours (freeze, flee, fight, love etc.). These processes are hardwired and we're all created this way. Your **new brain, the thinker**, evolved about two hundred thousand years ago. It fosters innovation, analytical thinking and creativity. However, when chronically stressed, we can overuse it and worry too much and the result - our imagination run's wild with catastrophic thinking.

When the crisis hit, our old brain came alive and took control. It was time to prepare for survival. When this drive kicks in, the new brain may lose its ability to think clearly or be overused and over worry. Either way, it's over. **You've been hijacked by your old brain.**

When hijacked, you need to **STOP AND RECOGNIZE** that something big is going on inside your mind. **Self-awareness** is the first step. You may not feel like the captain of your ship yet, but self-awareness helps put your hands back on the wheel.

LEADERSHIP RESOURCES

(clickable)

[Carol Dweck Tedtalk](#), author
of **Growth Mindset**



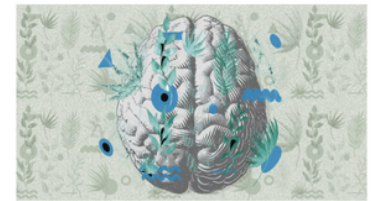
Carol Dweck

The power of believing that you can improve

[Fast Company Article](#)

This is what leaders often get wrong about growth mind-set

Whenever we learn something new, our instincts may lead us to internalize dangerous myths and mistakes.



LEADERSHIP TIP

Developing a Growth Mindset

When we think from the perspective of possibility, we're operating from a **growth mindset, which frames uncertainty as challenge**. This helps the new brain think clearly. When this happens, the new brain can help the old brain to feel safe. We're now building psychological safety.

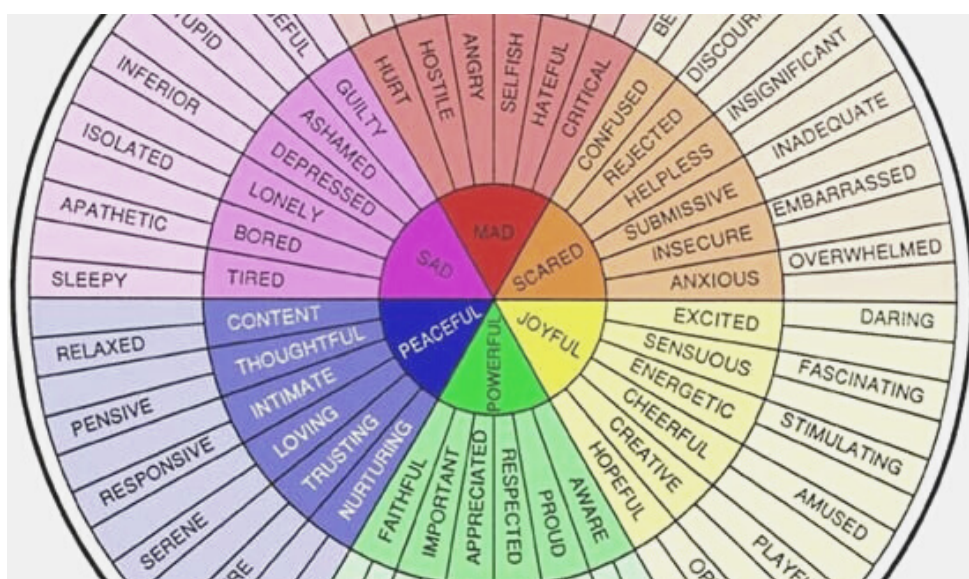
REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

- *What are your beliefs around your capability to manage the storm of COVID?*
- *How might these beliefs be holding you back?*
- *Is there something you need to learn to help you lead? What? How?*

Step 2

Understand what is going on

Once you've recognized that something powerful is happening in your brain and you've ignited your growth mindset, you're ready to work with emotions. Fact, difficult emotions don't disappear on their own. They shift when we work with them.



Emotions lead the way. Neuroscientist, **Dr. Antonio Damasio** posits that we are emotional beings that think, not rational beings that feel. To develop self-regulation skills, you need to know: *What part of my brain is in control? Do I understand my own emotions? How do they influence my decisions and behaviours?*

To lead with emotional intelligence, we need to understand them. **Emotions are biological processes that send energy through the body and provide important information** (click [here](#) for "Feeling Wheel" image above). They alert people to important intel about needs. When they kick in, especially the strong ones, we have to stop and reflect, by asking ourselves:

- **What emotion am I experiencing? (Tip! Refer to the Feeling Wheel)**
- **How does this emotion direct your attention?**
- **What is your first action impulse?**
- **Is it aligned with how you want to navigate this wave?**

Leveraging our new brain when we experience an intense emotion is important. The stress response to Covid-19 is 100% understandable; we're wired this way but how do we **not become hijacked by emotion?** If we can get our two brains collaborating, then we're building agile thinking. We don't need to tell you the importance of agility in leadership excellence.

LEADERSHIP RESOURCES
(clickable)

[Podcast episode, "Unlocking Us" with Dr. Marc Brackett](#), author of *Permission to Feel*

Listen



[The Happy Secret to Better Work](#)
TEDtalk from Shawn Achor, author of *The Happiness Advantage*



Leadership Tip!

Open your team meetings by having your members do a mental check-in. Brené Brown mentioned in her new podcast ("Unlocking Us") that she begins every team meeting (with 30 people) with asking her team to select two words to describe how they feel.

"We are not thinking machines that feel; rather, we are feeling machines that think."

Dr. Antonio Damasio, neuroscientist and TEDtalk speaker



Leadership Tip!

Before starting a meeting or reviewing someone's work, do a check-in with yourself. *Are you frustrated, tired, angry, anxious confused or overwhelmed?*

Strong emotions can affect our tone, openness to ideas, capacity for problem-solving and harshness of our feedback. **Take three 4-7-8 breaths**, where you breathe in for 4 seconds, hold for 7 seconds and breathe out for 8 seconds. Repeat **"I AM"** on the inhale, and **"HERE NOW"** on the exhale.

Step 3

Name it, put a word to your experience

Now that you have recognized and understood that something powerful is going on, it's time to label your emotion. When we label what we're experiencing, our new brain starts gaining control over the old brain.

COMMON STRESS EMOTIONS

► **Fear (anxiety)** in response to uncertainty – Fear is a defensive emotion that is focused on threat, urgency, and action. You may feel blood flowing into your legs (*should I run?*), freezing in parts of your body (*should I hide?*), rapid heart rate (*should I fight?*).

► **Shame** in response to not having the answers as a leader. Shame usually blends several emotions like anger and anxiety. It's linked to your leadership identity and how you think of yourself as a person. If you have a strong fear of failure or criticism, you may experience shame if you don't feel competent.

► **Anger** in response to feeling helpless, thwarted or blocked. Anger is a powerful defensive emotion. When mastered, it mobilizes our resources for powerful action. However, when left unhinged, it can trigger rumination ("How dare they do that?") and harmful aggression.

LEADERSHIP RESOURCES

- **Podcast:** "Choosing better words for better leadership" with David Marquet on *How to be Awesome at your Job* podcast
- **Book:** "Worry Trick: How your Brain Tricks You into Expecting the Worst and What You Can Do About It" by David Carbonell, Ph.D
- **Article:** "Leading through Anxiety", published by Harvard Business Review focuses on COVID stress

Step 4

Express what you're feeling

After you've recognized, understood and named your experience, it's time to express it and give the emotion what it needs.

Dr. Paul Gilbert, Ph.D., identified three main emotion regulation systems:

1. *Threat and self-protection* (anger, anxiety disgust).
2. *Incentive and resource seeking* (drive, excitement, vitality).
3. *Soothing and contentment* (content, safe, connected).

Ask yourself, what emotion am I experiencing? And what do I need? Say it to yourself. Say it to someone else? Just say it!

What stories are you telling yourself?

Pesky thoughts: *How do you talk to yourself?* Bring your awareness to the stories you tell yourself because we often internalize negative thoughts and beliefs, which impacts our emotions.

Human memory is in continual change. The way we recall events depends on the stories we tell ourselves about what happened. Human beings are equipped with a psychobiological process called reframing.

Reframing is a powerful tool for identifying beliefs, which often feed troubling thoughts and emotions. *Albert Ellis* a psychologist put forth the *A-B-C model* for unpacking negative thinking (see other side). This model helps us unpack the triggers and consequences of our thoughts and more importantly, assign new *positive* meaning to those thoughts. **The result? We will have a more positive and less emotionally-charged perspective.**

Your take away here is this

The past is a story you're telling yourself, **if you change the story, you change the emotional impact.** When you edit the meaning of fear, you can start to master your inner experience rather than being highjacked.

- A Activating agent.** What is the actual event? Try to describe as objectively and as factually as possible.
Ex. "My co-worker is not meeting deadlines and it's causing me to fall behind on mine"
- B Beliefs.** What are your thoughts and beliefs about what happened? What is your interpretation of the event?
Ex. "The other person is not dependable and doesn't care about the stress this is causing me"
- C Consequences.** What were the negative consequences of the beliefs and thoughts you had? How did you feel/ behave?
Ex. "I didn't think about stressors the other person is having that may be affecting them" OR "I didn't ask if they're waiting on someone else"



"Emotion, which is suffering, ceases to be suffering as soon as we form a clear and precise picture of it."

Viktor Frankl, psychiatrist and neurologist

Leadership Tip!

Four questions to ask yourself everyday:

- 1) How did I feel overall today on a scale of 1-10?
- 2) What emotions did I experience?
- 3) How have my emotions influenced my communication, decisions, and behaviours today?
- 4) What's one action I can take tomorrow to support my team?

LEADERSHIP RESOURCES

- **Podcast:** "Exhausting Every Moment" featuring NFL coach Hall-of-Famer Ronnie Lott on *Finding Mastery Podcast*
- **Book:** "Primal Leadership: Unleashing the Power of Emotional Intelligence" by Daniel Goleman
- **VBlog:** "What crisis leaders do well" by John Maxwell

Optimize your energy

It's about energy management, not time management. Most of us are not skilled at managing our energy. When we attune to our needs, we optimize our creativity, productivity and our well-being.

Energy Management

When we understand our body's rhythms we can leverage energy levels. We have two main rhythms.

The first is called the **circadian rhythm**, some have peak energy in the morning and others in the afternoon.

The second is called the **ultradian rhythm**, aka. the **90/20 cycle**. After 90 to 120 minutes of focused attention, the brain will disconnect for 15-20 minutes. Why? The brain needs a break, which is equivalent to clicking "SAVE" on your computer. **After every 100 minutes, our brain needs to organize information.**

Following these two physiological rhythms will lead to more efficiency, creativity and fewer mistakes. Your productivity will soar - and so will your energy.

Tips for Managing your Energy

- **Meditation:** meditation or closing your eyes for 10-15 minutes can have the effect of a "power nap"
- **Grounding:** a proactive tool to help your brain recharge and calm anxiety (see other side for how)
- **Monk Morning Mode:** reduce the amount of information you consume in the mornings to get organized for your day
- **Routine, routine:** COVID-19 has upset everyone's routine, but our bodies and minds need predictability (this creates less stress on the body)
- **Get out of Doing Mode:** multi-tasking and "going from one thing to the next" quickly feeds burnout and fatigue; we all need time to unplug and just 'be'

Grounding: A mindfulness technique

"**The Rule of 5**" or "**Grounding**" relates to our 5 senses. It's simple, effective and can be practiced at anytime, anywhere.

How it works?

When we feel anxious, we need to stop and anchor our attention to the present using our 5 senses.

How do we do this?

Sight: name 5 things you see (e.g., clock on the wall)

Touch: name 5 things your body is touching (e.g., feet on floor)

Hear: name 5 things you hear (e.g., kids playing)

Taste: name 5 things you taste (e.g., coffee)

Smell: name 5 things you smell (e.g., diffuser running)

Repeat until you notice your attention shift. Grounding helps us to be mindful by focusing our attention on the present moment.



Anxiety is about the future or the past. When you ground your attention to the present, anxiety can't exist, unless you're in actual danger.

Leadership Tip!

Introduce your team to the grounding exercise above at your next team meeting. You may even choose to kick-off your team meeting with this simple exercise. After completed, ask your team members whether they noticed a shift in their energy and focus.

LEADERSHIP RESOURCES

- [TEDtalk:](#) "All it takes is 10 mindful minutes" by Andy Puddicombe
- [Article:](#) "Manage your energy, not your time" published by Harvard Business Review



Exercise + Sleep

COVID-19 has disrupted our daily routines. Sleep and exercise have suffered. We talk about the importance of each below and share tips.

EXERCISE

[A recent poll of 1,000 Ontario residents](#) found that **36 per cent say their diet has suffered and 48 per cent say exercise habits have worsened since COVID-19.**

Exercise stimulates feel good endorphins and a powerful nerve in your body, the vagal nerve. This nerve mediates your nervous systems and helps you calm down. Try this. The next time you feel tension in your body, practice 10 jumping jacks, rest, 10 jumping jacks, rest....

Exercise Tips

- **15 minutes is all you need:** workouts do not have to be long to be effective; try a short 15 minute cardio interval or for something more gentle, yoga/pilates there are thousands of free videos on YouTube
- **Walking meeting:** try a walking meeting when permitted. Leaders such as Bill Gates have talked about how walking or pacing helps to think clearly (there's a good scientific reason for this so try it!)
- **Schedule in your workout at the start of the day:** add I will [BEHAVIOUR] at [TIME] in [LOCATION] on your calendar will increase your likelihood of getting it done
- **Set goals:** set the bar gradually higher and higher, whether it's doing one extra push-up a day or taking 300 extra steps

Sleep Hygiene Tips

- **Reduce blue light exposure:** electronic light disrupts sleep; purchase a pair of blue light glasses or power down at least 1 hour before bedtime
- **Routine wins again:** our circadian rhythms love routine, go to sleep & wake up at the same time everyday
- **Thankful 3's:** record 3 *specific* things at night that you are grateful for or trade off saying them with your partner, this builds positive mood before bed
- **Use your bed for sleeping only:** this means no working in bed, checking emails or reading. This helps us form an association with our bed, it's time to sleep
- **Eat your lunch outside:** it is 100x brighter outside than it is inside and our bodies crave natural light, this helps reset your circadian rhythm and you'll sleep better

SLEEP

The average adult, 21-64, needs 7-9 hours of sleep and few people achieve that. Inadequate rest increases irritability and compromises clear thinking, judgment and decision-making. Sleep is critical for cognitive functioning: quality sleep maximizes memory efficiency and energy. It gives our brain the rest it needs to regenerate and revive. **Sleep is like "housekeeping" for the brain.** It cleans leftover toxins from the day and weakens connections (i.e., synapses) throughout the brain. This allows the brain to prune away unnecessary connections, and effectively "clean the slate" so that we can learn again the next day.



LEADING THROUGH TRANSITION

WHERE DO WE BEGIN?

This section outlines key tenets of transitioning your team to a new normal. Start the **psychological change management process early** and keep it steady - the human brain needs time to digest and adapt.

The brain loves equilibrium – balancing familiarity/novelty or certainty/uncertainty. Honing the emotional competence in others, as they transition, is a process. **If rushed or mismanaged, it risks the survival and well-being of your organization.**

Where to begin

We believe that the best place to begin is with **organizational purpose**. We need the why, what, and how of the organization but we also need to get a pulse on how people are coping with this disruption.

The great transition

We need to build **psychological safety** from the inside-out if we want to build and develop great teams (and great places to work).

Purpose

The why goes a long way.

Key people goals

What people need now.

The secret ingredient

Earning trust.

Leading with grace

Your determination.

Re-evaluating your 'why'

ORGANIZATIONAL PURPOSE

As you manage the impact of Covid-19, prioritizing profit over purpose, opens your organization to several mid-long-term risks (sub-optimal performance, employee mental health etc.). Start with these questions:

- ▶ Name three adjectives that define current strengths of your organization's culture.
- ▶ Name three aspects that can be improved in your organization's culture.
- ▶ Where do you stand on profit and purpose?



"Profit for a company is like oxygen for a person. If you don't have enough of it, you're out of the game. But if you think your life is about breathing, you're really missing something."

Peter Drucker, founder of modern management

DEFINE THE WHY

Organizational guru, [Simon Sinek](#) defines the golden circle as the *why*, *how*, and *what* of an organization. The **why** and **how** represent the **inner centre** of the circle (purpose/process). The **what** represents the outer layer of the circle (the results). Leaders are under the gun to drive profit and many have begun with the what instead of why. **To inspire optimal change, start with the why. Begin with re-visioning and re-defining purpose after Covid-19.**

Leaders, it's time to bring your full human self to work

What does authentic leadership look like?

- Honesty without self-righteousness
- Confident strength with confident vulnerability
- The courage to be respectfully honest
- Grounded self-awareness (others feel it in your presence)

LEADERSHIP TIP

Pulse-check on how your people are doing?

Many leaders are checking-in on how their teams are doing. Do a **"pulse check"** with your immediate team, division or entire organization. These questions can help guide policy and transition support programs. Keep it brief and **limit it to 3 questions**. Here are **three questions to ask**:

- "What are your concerns right now - at home and at work?"
- "What communication and updates would be helpful to you at this time?"
- "What suggestions do you have that the organization should consider to restart our business when the timing allows?"

The great transition

YOUR KEY PEOPLE OBJECTIVES

We want you to focus on two core objectives:

1. Building 'psychologically safe' environments.
2. **Leading with determination:** Define the framework, set and communicate clear goals, and quiet your fear of making a mistake.

Point 1 involves empathy. Point 2 involves the rational brain. One network is concerned with social, emotional and moral engagement. The other with scientific, mathematical and logical reasoning. The paradox - Our brain has a built-in neural constraint that limits the ability to be empathic and analytic at the same time. But we need both! **Covid-19 is your golden leadership development opportunity.** You can learn to determine when empathy needs to join the conversation and influence decision-making or when it's time to quiet empathy and invite your rational analyst to guide you.



What is Psychological Safety?

Defined as "**being able to show and employ one's self without fear of negative consequences of self-image, status or career**" (Kahn, 1990). It's about communicating respectfully and welcoming others to authentically engage.

LOW LEVELS OF SAFETY

- People afraid of admitting mistakes
- Blaming others is the rule
- Intolerance for diversity in perspectives
- Fitting in is prioritized over contribution

HIGH LEVELS OF SAFETY

- People aren't afraid to admit mistakes
- Others share innovative ideas
- Decision-making confidence
- Sharing ideas is the rule
- Failures are seen as a source of development

Your people are maxed and to manage the why, how and what of transition, they need to bring their full selves to work. They need to feel safe to do so.

LEADERSHIP RESOURCES

- **Book:** ["The Fearless Organization"](#) by Amy Edmondson
- **Podcast:** ["Creating Psychological Safety in the Workplace"](#) podcast by *Harvard Business Review* featuring Amy Edmondson
- **Article:** ["What Google learn from its quest to build the perfect team"](#) published by the *NY Times*
- **Article:** ["Why emotional trust is harder to gain \(and more important\) than physical trust"](#) published by *Medium*

Four Quadrants

Psychological Safety

Learner Safety

Fosters a growth mindset (innovation, question asking, experimentation, learning from mistakes).

Challenger Safety

Challenging the status quo, speaking up, expressing ideas, identifying changes, and exposing problems.

All four quadrants need to be in balance in order for a team to be effective

Collaborator Safety

Engaging in an unconstrained way in interactions, open dialogue, transparency, and healthy debate.

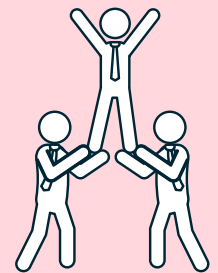
Inclusion Safety

Feeling valued, fair treatment, individual experience and ideas matter regardless of rank.



Google's ground-breaking research

The Aristotle Project



Google sought to discover the secret ingredients of top teams. They studied 180 teams and discovered that group intelligence correlated with “conversational turn-taking”, social sensitivity, well defined goals and a culture of dependability. Guess what else?

Psychological safety was key and yielded the most success, across the board, and **trust was the secret sauce**.



Group Trust Needs

Psychological Safety

There are two basic types of trust. **Technical trust** refers to someone's ability and dependency ("I trust you to get the job done"). **Emotional trust** refers to security ("I trust that you got my back"). The latter is more difficult to gain and is also the one that takes longer to repair when broken. Emotional trust is critical in times of crisis.

The Emotional Trust Equation

	WHAT IS IT	IN ACTION
Credibility	People need to trust what you say	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell the truth • Admit when you don't know something • Admit when you're wrong
Reliability	People need to trust what you do	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you say you will do it, do it • If you are meant to do it, do it • Share your thought process
Intimacy	People need to trust you with what matters to them	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extend trust to others, share first • Include others & invite others to share • Keep confidential information to yourself
Self-orientation	People need to know that you don't just focus on yourself	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give others the chance to talk • Listen with intent (empathetic listening) • Make decisions that don't benefit you

Source: [Blue EQ](#)

Tips on building intrinsic motivation for emotional trust

- + **Belong & Connect:** Keep your team close, especially in the beginning of the return.
- + **Significance & Position:** Send a clear message indicating the importance of their role in re-building the new normal.
- + **Learn & Challenge:** Push growth and learning. Growth feels good! But remember that challenge should be just above skill level.
- + **Security & Certainty:** Be honest about hard staffing decisions. Don't avoid the topic and don't BS. If their roles are secure, tell them that!
- + **Voice & Recognition:** Solicit suggestions and opinions. Communicate that their voices are important. Check-in with people. How do they feel?
- + **Fairness:** Fairness is a subjective experience. Check-in with people about what they think.
- + **Choice & Autonomy:** Do your people have the power to make decisions? Take calculated risks? Autonomy is key to motivation.
- + **Purpose:** Crisis tests our perspective on life. Explore and help them define their new emerging purpose at work.

Leading with Determination

WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO LEAD DURING AND AFTER A STORM?

Showing confidence, determination, providing clear structure and direction, and decision-making are key tenets of leading through and after a storm. This can be hard. You're not immune to the psychological impact of Covid-19 but there are ways to manage the impact on you.

Slow down your action response time.

When you think, "I can't do anything to fix this" you may be creating additional anxiety for yourself. **When anxiety kicks in (fear response), your brain will tempt you to reassert control, fast.** Panic can push you to act too quickly. Remember section II, keeping rational control over your old brain is key. As the weeks and months unfold, you'll be tasked with complex decisions. **Try to pay less attention to headlines and more on factual data, both quantitative (number) and qualitative (what you're learning about others' experience).**

Calm and deliberate thinking is hard because of information overload. We need to manage the information we attend to, regulate the emotion we experience and slow down the impulse to act. When emotions are strong, that's your cue to slow down, delay your decision and calm your system. Remember as humans, we can all get hijacked by the power of our survival brain.

Watch out for your own biases.

The volatility of Covid-19 has influenced our decision-making. **Information overload can trigger biases, little traps that the brain uses to reach conclusions as quickly as possible.** For example, the **availability bias**, prompts us to attend to information (*seeing all the layoffs in the news*) that align with what we believe is likely to happen to us (*I'm going to get fired*). The availability bias may lead to fear-based decisions and action.

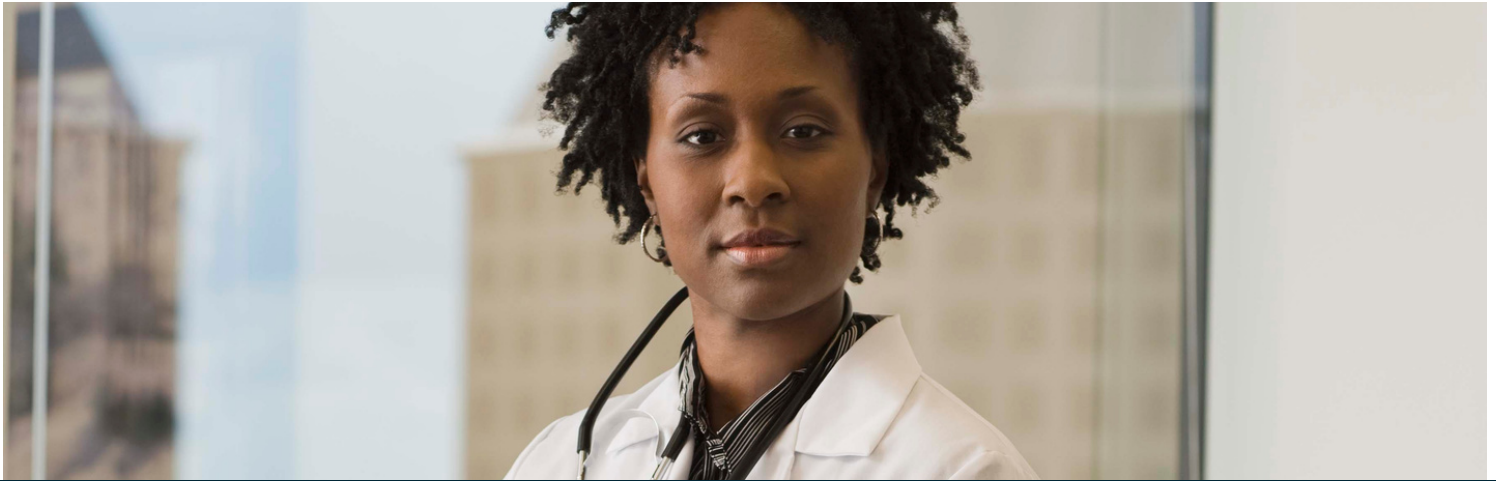
**Define the framework.
Communicate clear goals.
Quiet your fear of failure.**

LEADERSHIP TIP

Pause before pressing "SEND"

Wait 15 minutes to hit the "send" button on an email if your anxiety is high. If you come back 15 minutes later and it's still high, wait until you feel calm and level-headed. Ask yourself: am I acting from my rational brain and my calm place?





CLOSING THOUGHTS

LEAD IN A WAY THAT YOU'LL BE PROUD OF

The world is in a state of anticipation. We know that a global economic crisis is brewing but no one knows when. It's hard to think about the future when your hands are tied at present. ***We need to weather the current storm while maintaining a broad, long-term outlook, which, is especially hard under stress.*** In closing, we'd like to leave you with a final reflection question that we highly recommend putting in your line of sight as a gentle reminder: "***Am I leading through this time in a way that I'll be proud of some day?***" Put the question on your monitor. Make it your desktop picture. You need to see these words daily so you lead with intention and grace.

We would like to end with a **famous parable that captures the essence of 2020.**

One day the apprentice asks the master:

What is hell like?

The Master says to him:

"It is a great mountain of steaming and aromatic rice. We are sitting around, but we cannot eat it because we have too long chopsticks and too short arms"

Then the student asks what heaven is like.

And the Master explains: "It is a great mountain of steaming and aromatic rice. We are sitting around we have too long chopsticks and too short arms...but we have learned to feed each other"

We are living through a tremendous global crisis and human collaboration is being called to action. As we navigate present challenges, let wisdom and heart be our guide. Let's co-create a brighter, stronger and more connected future, together.

With gratitude,

Tatijana, Carlos, Amanda, and Alex

Get to know the contributors



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Tatijana holds a Ph.D. From the University of Toronto, Applied Science and Human Behaviour. As a clinical and organizational psychologist, she marries the art and science of human emotion and behaviour to how individuals, dyads, and teams think, feel, relate, and behave, at home and at work. She's a trauma expert and has guest lectured in organizations, universities, and hospitals on the psychology of stress and change processes. She's a published author in career psychology and has been featured in media outlets such as HBR.

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Amanda works with clients to build their confidence, manage stress, communicate effectively and overcome performance anxiety in the workplace. She has developed several workbooks that she uses with her clients to empower them on their development journeys. Amanda has written several publications on interview anxiety and public-speaking anxiety, and has been featured in media outlets such as Harvard Business Review, Globe and Mail, Forbes Magazine, and Men's Health Magazine. Amanda enjoys serving as a guest on podcasts and maintains a blog where she aims to make research accessible.

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Carlos has over 20 years of experience supporting the development of leaders and teams internationally. Carlos lived and worked in Europe for twelve years and now lives in Canada where he works as an Executive Coach and business consultant. As an MD, he's held business executive roles for multinational pharmaceutical companies in Biotechnology. He is a professor of Neuromanagement in the MBA program at the University of New York in Prague, and a thought leader with the Institute of Coaching at McLean Hospital, affiliate of Harvard Medical School.

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Alex works with businesses, not for profits and governmental organizations both locally and internationally to create solutions and to foster and facilitate collaboration. Alex has built and sold businesses in both the technology and healthcare sectors. Through his extensive Government Relations, Management Consulting and Private Equity work, Alex has been able to utilize his strong political relationships to achieve his client's goals. Alex uses his passion for politics to help support mental health, addiction and poverty related charities. He has both Canadian and UK citizenship and is the proud father to two wonderful children.

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