

Living and Leading with Resilience In Unprecedented Times



We are living and leading through unprecedented times. As we navigate the uncertainty and unknowns ahead, our resilience as leaders has never been more important. Brene Brown has called this a time of 'collective vulnerability'. Having interacted with over a hundred leaders in virtual coaching sessions in the last ten days, it is clear that our leadership is not in lockdown and being **ACTIVE** as leaders is key.

A Being **AWARE** of our own emotions is an important starting point. The uncertainty and sense of being under threat makes this a time of heightened feelings. We're probably having ups and downs; good and bad days. Identifying and naming our feelings; and seeing them as 'data' - giving us key information on our situation and our response to it - enables us to pause, choose our next action and react more consciously and intentionally. Fear might be showing how to keep ourselves safe; sadness might be highlighting a sense of loss; excitement might be highlighting the possibilities ahead; boredom might be showing us this is a marathon not a sprint. Denying our feelings or pushing them away makes them more likely to resurface unconsciously and trigger less emotionally intelligent actions. Using our breathing - slow, deep breaths in for 4 seconds; holding for 4 and then breathing out through our mouth for 6 - is a way of bringing us into the present and calming any racing emotions.

C Focusing on what we can **CONTROL** helps us feel more grounded and more goal-focused. Making a list of everything that is worrying or concerning us, then identifying what is in our control and what is not, is a useful exercise for leaders and our teams. Giving ourselves and our teams a time-based 'worry window' (say twenty minutes a day) to explore the things out of our control is another useful tip. Picking one key action for everything in our control helps us to regain a sense of our own autonomy.

CONNECTING with others is essential in these uncertain times. Humans are a social species and we need interpersonal connection for our psychological and physical health. Our relationships with others is the most important predictor of resilience. Keeping connected with our loved ones and teams is critical in these times. Making time to check-in with our teams every day; and building time with our friends and families will add to our sense of well-being. We all need to feel a deepened sense of care in a crisis. Aside from all our virtual meetings, teams are getting together for virtual coffees and having casual meals together (the equivalent of just sitting next to someone at a lunch table and having a chat). Leaders are finding this both fun and useful. Feeling we're not alone in this has been one of the most important practices highlighted in our sessions with leaders.

T Using **TECHNOLOGY** mindfully is important. While our virtual worlds are essential to keep our teams communicating, work moving forward and loved ones being connected; it can also feel overwhelming. Our Whatsapps are constantly pinging, our days are filled with back-to-back virtual meetings and many leaders are working longer hours than usual and feeling that they're always online. Building space into our days for breaks is useful. Stepping away from our laptops, tablets and phones is necessary. Carefully choosing the social media and news channels we are tuning into and scheduling screen free time every day is important. Unplugging is key to preventing a sense of overwhelm, fatigue and anxiety.

I **IDENTIFY** key practises that are helpful to you, your loved ones and teams. Sleep, nutrition, hydration and exercise are an essential foundation for everything else. Building a sense of structure and routine into our days helps keep a sense of normality and predictability in unpredictable times. Getting up at our usual time, getting dressed for work, ending work and then having down time each day helps. Daily team huddles at a set time provide a structured way of connecting and aligning. Prioritising and keeping focused on the most important tasks are useful anchors and promote clarity in a confusing time. Making week days different to weekends is important to feel that the time is less of a 'blur'. Some leaders have spoken to us about keeping a Friday night braai ritual, of scheduling 'silly time' with their children every day at 5pm, and all doing a family exercise session first thing on a Saturday. Many leaders are building mindfulness, meditation, prayer, journalling, gratitude and reflection into their days.

V Our **VISION** and our **VALUES** are key guides for us amidst all the unknowns right now. The lockdown and COVID-19 crisis will end at some point. This is the time to ensure that we're clear on what we want for ourselves, our teams and our loved ones at the end of this. Linking that to our vision and our values - both as individuals and as your organisation - will help us to feel anchored in the bigger picture and give this time a greater sense of meaning. It will help us to elevate our perspective and allow us to focus on the possibilities and opportunities around us - to reframe the situation - rather than being stuck in a survivalist headspace. We have seen leaders tapping into a deep sense of purpose, bringing all their strengths and resourcefulness to the current uncertainty, unlocking creativity and innovation in the darkest of situations.

E **EXPERIMENT!** This is a time to try out new things and build new habits. Give it a go! Have fun! Use the time to do things you have been meaning to get around to. Try things out, if they don't work, try something new. We're inspired by teams collaborating across silos, partnering with competitors and breaking boundaries in their innovations. We're energised by how people are doing yoga using apps; having family meals across the country using Facetime; doing exercise challenges; taking part in live, virtual dance competitions or worshipping in streamed services. We also know that resting, recovering, reflecting and taking it slow are important. Be kind to yourselves and give yourselves permission to be human in all of this.

The things that seem clear for everyone is that we're all learning as fast as we can, and building the path ahead as we walk it.

And that we're all in this together. You're not alone.



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