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



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

# About This Book

June 2020

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



**Cathy Johnson**  
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Asia  
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# Convert Our Vulnerabilities Into Defences

by Mark Lim

## Desperate Times Call for Desperate Measures

We are often urged to think positive. In this unprecedented crisis, sorry to play devil's advocate, but I believe it is not enough to just look on the bright side.

During this Covid-19 pandemic, many of us have been affected financially and emotionally, in varying degrees of magnitude. Some may be experiencing the darkest period of their lives. It is understandable for one to feel stress, fear and worry.

While it is toxic to ruminate in negative emotions, suppressing our insecurities with positive thinking is comparable to taking a painkiller. Our mind will drift back to negative thoughts once the effects of the painkiller wears off.

So, what's my suggestion?

*Embrace the positives of the negatives.*

Research has shown that as humans, we tend to pay more attention to negative events than positive ones. We also learn more from negative experiences.

Let's use death as an example. While death is perceived by many as a negative event, it also taught us life's mortality, and motivated us to live our lives to the fullest. Negative emotions like fear and anxiety are also part of human's natural defence mechanism for survival.

My suggestion is not to fight the negatives with positive thoughts. In fact, fighting it with positive thoughts may actually be counter-productive. Thinking positive alone will not make your debts go away, you've got to take action to address them.

Let's use a mathematical equation to demonstrate this.

$$(-A) \times (+B) = -AB$$

*Where -A is the negative event and  
+B represents positive thoughts.*

*The result is negative.*

As illustrated above, positive thoughts alone may not be enough to deliver a positive outcome.

As a contrarian, I personally see the value of thinking negatively, especially in unprecedented times like these. When people think negatively, they will likely convert their fear and anxiety into action.

I believe that once you start to take action, the *what* and *how* will come naturally. Your action may initiate the birth of new ideas, new connections, new processes, and more. What is important is the urgency to act, which may well be triggered by your fear and anxiety.

In fact, from my own experience, I actually *add* to the negativity by visualising all the possible worst-case scenarios or rather, *worst-worst-case* scenarios. While I may sound like a sadist, this contrarian approach has helped me tremendously in my business.

Let's return to our mathematical illustration to see how this now plays out.

$$(-A) \times (-B) = +AB$$

*Where -A is the negative event and  
-B represents negative thoughts.*

*The result is positive.*

In the above equation, applying negative thoughts has set the stage for a positive outcome.

Although the above method has worked for me, I do understand that everyone has their unique set of challenges and circumstances, the suitability for application depends largely on your frame of reference.

The point I am driving is, if we are overly optimistic, we may not experience stress or anxiety. Conversely, if we are too pessimistic, our stress may lead us to inaction. The idea is to strike a balance between positive and negative thinking.

To produce positive outcome in your life requires a progressive series of actions. The key is to induce motivation to act so that we can have a better chance of success. If we change nothing, nothing will change. Convert your vulnerabilities into defences and you will be in a better position to confront the new world.

*"When everything seems to be going against you, remember that the airplane takes off against the wind, not with it."  
- Henry Ford*



**Mark Lim**

Mark is the design director with MDS interiors. Following an amazing recovery from a horrific vehicular accident in Dec 2015, Mark established the WHYME brand and began his speaking journey. He shares the power of contrarian thinking, which he applies in his life and business and even to his accident recovery.

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# Two Words That Almost Bankrupted Me

by Brenda Tan

Everything we do, say or see during our lives can influence our thinking pattern, from the most seemingly insignificant moments to major occasions like a pandemic.

When negative thoughts enter our mind, we produce unproductive ideas surrounding ourselves, loved ones and our life choices. On the other hand, with positive mindset, we communicate within ourselves great optimism to shatter all kinds of barriers.

## **Predictability**

This first word is responsible for almost every inaction and stopping people from thriving in uncertainties.

In the course of our lives, we often ponder the future, worry about the present and dwell on the past. We crave predictability and to have control of everything around us.

I used to spend a lot of time thinking up new ideas that I would like to introduce into my business, but rarely executed them. Deep down, I had a lot of fears from *what if*, to *will it work?* I needed so much assurance to feel safe and that it will succeed.

As a result, my inaction led to little sales, not enough customers, and almost being bankrupt!

Our wonderful world is not built for predictability. Instead, it unveils life's mysteries to us one step at a time. So since we cannot change what we do not know, how about embracing uncertainties?

To have success in our lives we need not only the motivating desire for wealth and happiness. We must also become aware of changing our negative mental habits that prevent us from taking positive actions. This is done through embracing uncertainty.

## **Complexity**

This second word is another roadblock when you have your beliefs and thoughts misaligned. I defined here as: high levels of conflict, emotional pain, suspense, betrayal and uncertainty.

Our mind is riddled and plagued with "I'm not". *"I'm not rich enough, not smart enough, and not good enough."* These hurdles can be overcome by changing "I'm not" to "I have", and, "I need to" to "I get to". This roadblock occurs when complexity of a situation takes over from our desire to reach a desired goal or step out to try something different.

*"I have to do that, but first I have to make sure that other thing is sorted...  
but that means that other thing I have to do has to be right...  
and that means fixing that... and if that happens...  
then I'll need to do these other things...  
I don't think I'm capable enough!"*

*"I need to stop being this unhealthy or else I will end up overweight...  
and my partner will no longer find me attractive...  
and he'll leave me... and I'll be alone forever."*

An extreme example but with more truth in it than most will care to admit!

Often, when faced with taking action in our lives, we mentally play out a melodramatic drama. This goes on to the point that the different variables overawe us and destroy our original plan of action. We must remember that even the longest journey starts with the first step.

In my early days of starting a business, I worried that I would never had enough clients. By simply changing this around to 'I have the expertise that many people want', I was able to have the confidence to change my mindset and my productivity. But when I let that complexity of thoughts slip in again, I see my own self sabotage, and as a result, pathetic results followed!

All it takes is one simple action. The one step that will forward the play without any emotion attached.

*"The quality of your life is in direct proportion to  
the amount of uncertainty you can comfortably live with."  
- Anthony Robbins*

In all situations of uncertainty, does your life come to a halt, in the darkness and unknown, or do you initiate calm and empower yourself amongst the panic until the light at the end of the gloom can be seen again?

Two words can make a whole lot of difference to the quality of life we can choose to live today. Simply by becoming aware, observing our actions, the kind of stories we tell ourselves and simply taking many first steps, you will begin to see the new shift in your life.

May you make the wiser and empowered choice today that will bring you renewed clarity and excitement into the new future!



**Brenda Tan**

Cited by Singapore's Prime Minister Lee during the National Day rally as "a life that exemplifies our Singapore story" in 2008. Brenda has helped many people like you through life and career transitions, bringing them clarity and excitement again! In her book *Regain Your Power*, she shares many important life-changing lessons on self-empowerment.

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# What's Your Plan B?

by Dhruvi Shah

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

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

But, hold on! Let's pause here.

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

## Why Create A Plan B?

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

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

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

## How Can You Create Your Plan B?

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

Ask yourself the following questions to create your Plan B:

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



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

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

### **Onward And Upward**

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



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



#### **Dhruiti Shah**

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

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# The Power Of Constraints

by Gunnar Jaschik

One of the best things about being stuck at home during a lockdown, not having a regular office job and no small kids, is the amount of time one gains to do things which otherwise often fall through the cracks.

On the other hand, some of the worst things are the constraints and limits that come as a side effect... or are they?

## My Lockdown Mission And Challenge

I started into the lockdown (circuit breaker) determined to finally spend some time to sharpen my profile on social media by developing and publishing valuable content. I dove into research and quickly compiled a lot of great material ready to be transformed into articles and short videos for my audience.

But whenever I got anywhere close to publishing, I couldn't get myself to take the final step. Either I worried that I had not covered all relevant aspects, and thus needed more research, or I got hung up on small technical nuances which kept me from pressing that publish button.

When I finally finished preparations for a short video, my professional microphone simply decided to stop working! What a bummer! I got so close, and now here I was in the middle of this lockdown with my only piece of professional equipment broken. The world wasn't fair!

## The Turning Point

I felt stuck! But during my morning cycle, I suddenly had this thought: What if my microphone wanted to tell me something? What if this unusual lockdown situation required an unusual and different approach?

I reflected on how my wife and I had adapted to the lack of supplies in supermarkets over the past couple of weeks. It had helped us discover new and delicious meals by forcing us to be flexible and experiment with new recipes and ingredients.

I also remembered how I had just installed unused IT equipment from our storage, a monitor and keyboard, to improve our home office experience. And I thought about how our daughter had re-decorated her room multiple times, only using what was already available.

The outcomes weren't always perfect, but they were good enough for the moment and a step forward.

*If constraints and limits managed to spark creativity, action and discoveries at home, might a similar approach help me in my professional life, too?*

I felt I was on to something! After all, my main struggle was to manage my ego and cut through the noise to start finishing and publishing valuable content.

So I decided to *introduce* some constraints to help me overcome this problem.

## What Was Holding Me Back?

- **Information Overkill**

The never-ending flow of new ideas and material available through books, articles, social media kept me from seeing clearly and making a final decision on what I wanted to share.

- **Fear Of Failure And Too Many Technical Options**

The quality of content delivery and video production on the internet made me feel like I needed to compete on that level, too.

## My Self-Imposed Constraints

### 1. Limited Sources

I stopped buying new books and radically limited my consumption of articles and social media.

I also decided to be okay with what I could produce with the hardware and software I already owned. I could upgrade at a later stage.

### 2. Limited Scope

I chose to start by focussing on one idea and topic per video or article only.

### 3. Limited Size

My videos would be two-and-a-half minutes or less, and my written articles no more than 1300 characters so that they could fit into a standard LinkedIn post.

These changes allowed me to finally cut through the clutter and move from research-mode into publish-mode.

I encourage you to look at your current situation at work or in life. If you feel stuck or frustrated by what's going on, consider the unique and positive aspects of the situation and try to reframe. Maybe some self-imposed constraints could help you see clearer and get you started or even finished with what you intend to achieve.



### **Gunnar Jaschik**

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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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# 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.

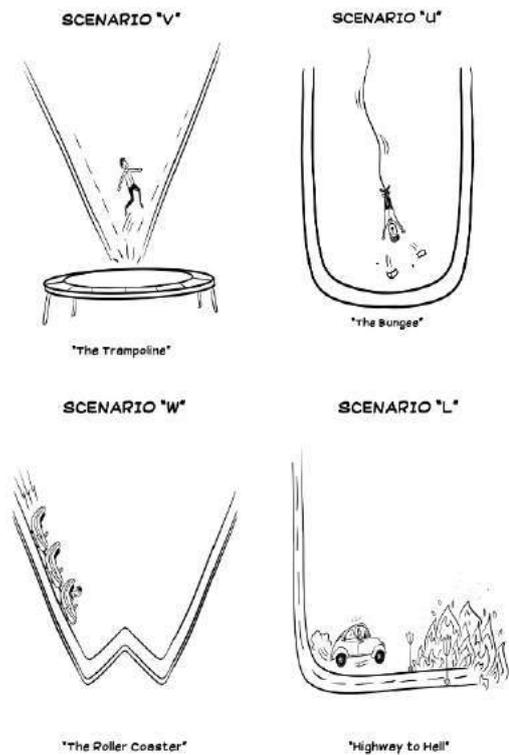
The fresh start that we always wanted, here it is.  
To do things any which way we can.

*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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# 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.



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One person, one organisation, one community at a time

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# Spring Will Come Again

by Benjamin Cheng

In a recent APSS Careology call hosted by Ron Kaufman, we were asked about our mood during this period of the Covid-19 pandemic. My three answers were Worried, Glad and Excited.

## 1. Worried

I am worried for the medical workers who are in the frontline of this battle. Three of my family members are in the field of medical services, and I have not seen them for many weeks. I am concerned about the economy and how many of my friends will survive. Many businesses will be affected, and owners will be worried about their company's cash flow. Many freelancers and self-employed will have their livelihoods in jeopardy.

## 2. Glad

I am not glad about what happened, but I am glad it did, because Singapore is going to experience a change in leadership within the next few years. The 4G leaders are being put through one of the toughest tests since our independence in 1965. The true leaders will rise up and shine, while some will fade away. I am also glad both my teenage children are experiencing this pandemic, because it will help to strengthen them mentally and emotionally.

## 3. Excited

I am excited about what will happen after this pandemic. During a leadership coaching session with a client recently, she asked me, "Will this virus go away like SARS, or will it be here to stay?" My response was, "What will happen if it's here to stay? What are you going to do about it? What happens when it goes away? What are you doing now to get yourself ready for both scenarios?"

## Global Economic Recovery

I believe that the speed of global economic recovery will be the fastest we have ever seen in history. Why is that so?

Imagine compressing a metal spring. The harder you compress, the stronger it will bounce back. During this pandemic, many countries are in lockdown. With people all over the world having to stay home, they cannot carry on with their usual activities, so many have a lot of pent up energy.



As I connect with friends around the world, I hear that many of them are very restless. They are like the compressed metal spring, ready to burst out. But at the same time, others are getting very creative coming up with new ideas and creating new business propositions.

When this pandemic is over, I feel sure we will see a scurry of activities and new businesses surfacing. So are you preparing yourselves and your team members for the future? Now is the time to equip, to train, to retool, and get ready.

*When circumstances compress the spring in your life, as long as you do not lose the life in your spring, you will spring back much stronger.*

### **Prepare Like An Athlete**

Those who have good time management will find that there is ample time in hand to do many things. Clear out your old garage, read books you bought years ago, connect with old friends you have not seen for years. You will find there are a lot things you can work on. More importantly, prepare for the future with the discipline of a professional athlete. Invest time to work on your physical health and fitness, strengthen your mental resilience, and improve your emotional stability. Most importantly, understand your sense of purpose for what you are doing and what you are going to do in the future.

### **Be Inspired To Inspire**

One of my mentors used to say, “Do not walk away from negative people. *Run* away from them.” During this period, think about the people you are communicating with. Are they negative naysayers who believe that this will be the end of mankind? Or are they positive, constructive and helpful?

*“Do not walk away from negative people. Run away from them.”*

Speak to different people, and ask them what they think of the future. Ask them why they think the way they do. All it takes is one positive sentence, one constructive idea, or one helpful thought. It could inspire hope for everyone around them about the great future of mankind. As we are being inspired, go forth and spread the fire of hope to inspire others.

### **Spring Will Come Again**

Never lose the life in your spring, once the winter of this pandemic is over, another season of spring will arrive. Get ready now to make the most of the opportunity. It will be time to bounce back, burst out, live your life to the fullest, and spring forth into what could be one of your greatest successes and one of the best times of your life.



#### **Benjamin Cheng**

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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

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# How I Uncovered My Gift In Crisis

by Coen Tan

Covid-19 is a pandemic that has killed hundreds of thousands and has infected millions, disrupted lives, and upended economies and businesses around the world. As a speaker and trainer, I've had income loss, cancellations and deferment of speeches and training workshops. However, for me, it brought about another enormous challenge.

## My Unique Challenge Posed By Covid-19

Since I was a small child, I have been aware that I was highly sensitive to the emotions of people around me, and I would often internalise the emotions. Not only would I cry when watching sad movies, I would often feel prolonged feelings of sadness, fear and anger after interacting with other people, and not even know where those feelings came from. When I was younger, I would struggle to deal with all the *emotional information* that I had unwittingly collected. Whenever I expressed my feelings and observations, I would often be dismissed as being “overly sensitive” and “thinking too much.”

It was not until I had grown up and became more aware and exposed, that I've understood that I am an empath. According to Dr. Judith Orloff, author of *The Empath's Survival Guide*, empaths are highly aware of the emotions of those around them, to the point of feeling those emotions themselves. They often lack the filters most people use to protect themselves from excessive stimulation.

As an empath, I really struggled with the pervading negativity that the Covid-19 pandemic brought about. Every day, the news and social media are full of updates about the Covid-19 situation. I see people going into a frenzy of panic buying, fear of losing their jobs, their income and business, grief and sadness from losing loved ones. I've even read articles of the rising incidences of domestic violence brought about by victims being locked down at home with their abusers. I realized that to protect my *emotional garden*, I've had to give myself a break from the news, and from scrolling through social media feeds.

During that much needed break, I asked myself the question, “what is the opportunity here to offer my unique gifts?”

## Uncovering The Gifts Within

I realized that as an empath I could use the one gift that I possess in abundance: empathy.

In the tremendously insightful book *The Power of Moments*, authors Dan and Chip Heath share that we do not remember every single moment of our lives. We recall moments that are both memorable and meaningful, moments when we experienced intense emotions. They further broke down these moments into three types: Peaks, Pits and Transitions.

- Peaks: moments of elevated joy, pride, connections and insights (e.g. wedding, receiving a prize, a promotion)
- Pits: moments of hardship, pain or anxiety (e.g. family bereavement, divorce, retrenchment)
- Transitions: moments where people make intellectual (e.g. new work), social (e.g. new community), and environment (e.g. new home) changes

The ways we can deepen our relationships and strengthen our *heart-share* and *mind-share* in the minds of our clients, suppliers, colleagues and loved ones, are to:

- Commemorate and celebrate the Peaks
- Fill the Pits
- Smoothen the Transitions

*“We can deepen our relationships and strengthen our heart-share and mind-share in the minds of our clients, suppliers, colleagues and loved ones.”*

### **Offering My Gift**

That was what I did. I realized that many people are panicking from how their lives will be affected by Covid-19, and many others are making the transitions to working from home, especially those who have to care for their children who are learning from home too. It was the perfect opportunity for me to reach out to them.

I was glad I did just that. I’ve found that people, while still staying busy, are more open to just catching up. It’s become easier because instead of having to sync up time to catch up over coffee, people are happy to just take pockets of thirty minutes to an hour here and there to simply catch up over Zoom calls. What’s even more surprising for me was also how these short catch-up calls turn into deeper connections. While I used to feel in the past that people were more focused on talking about goals and successes, I’ve found that people are now more open to sharing their struggles and challenges. All I’ve needed to do was ask simple questions like, “How have you been coping? What is challenging in your life? How may I help?”

### **A Surprising Outcome**

As a result of simply reaching out to catch up, and offering a listening ear and companionship, I’ve strengthened my relationships with my existing clients, forged connections with new business collaborators. Through these conversations, I was also able to uncover problem areas and needs of clients that my clients and I previously never knew existed. That has also led to me clinching new consulting and coaching projects. In fact, some of these projects are more aligned to my areas of expertise, and have resulted in me having the best first five months of a calendar year in terms of business revenue.

*If we can connect to our gifts of deeper humanity, we will be relevant to the new normal.*

The post-Covid-19 environment may be drastically different from what we’ve been used to in the past. If we can connect to our gifts of deeper humanity, we will be relevant to the new normal.

It is time to “human up!”



#### **Coen Tan**

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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 find new ideas 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**

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# Stop Lying To Yourself!

by David Goldwich

These are strange times. Most of us are staying close to home. I see people using this time to rethink their priorities, appreciate the simple things in life, and take stock of themselves. Whether learning yoga or listening to webinars to learn new skills online, there's an itch for self-care and self-improvement going around.

Personal change is never easy. Perhaps the most difficult thing to change is the voice in your head repeating negative messages. *I'm not good enough. What if I fail? What if people form a negative perception of me?* This voice was shaped by your inner story—the set of fundamental beliefs about who you are and how you relate to others, your place in the world, and how life treats you.

You have been living by this inner story for so long you may not even recognize it as a story; you think it is simply who you are. But you have been living a lie!

*It doesn't matter what other people tell you; the only thing that matters is what you tell yourself.*

## How Did This Happen?

Imagine you're five years old. It's the holiday season, and you have been visiting friends and relatives with your family. Your mother asks you to greet someone you don't know, but you're reluctant. Maybe you're hungry, or tired, or overwhelmed by the parade of strange faces, or just uncomfortable in an unfamiliar place. You take evasive action and hide behind your mother's dress. After some unsuccessful coaxing your mother gives up and says, "Don't mind her, she's just shy."

*Shy, you think to yourself. Mother says I'm shy. Mother is so smart, she knows everything, and she would never lie to me. I must be shy. I wonder what shy means? I think it means I don't like to meet people, or I'm afraid they won't like me, or I don't feel important or worthy or interesting. I'm shy.*

This incident may seem insignificant, but to your five-year-old self it takes on a very real meaning. The fact that you may have misunderstood what happened, didn't place it in an appropriate context, or made an incorrect inference is irrelevant. Five-year-olds aren't very good with nuance. They don't understand words, people, relationships, or the ways of the world. Your child self does what it can to make sense of it and records it as a rule for living, along with other reinforcing beliefs. They become part of your inner story. *I'm afraid people won't like me. I don't feel important or worthy or interesting. I'm shy.*

As you got older, this false story tightened its grip on you and became a script for your life. When things don't go well for you, you use your inner story to explain why. *I knew they would ignore me—I'm not important. Another job application rejected—I'm not worthy. Of course she broke up with me—I'm not good enough, interesting enough, rich enough, etc.*

*Your inner story was written by your child self, and it can be rewritten by your more experienced and enlightened present self.*

How can you rewrite your inner story? The process looks like this:

### 1. **Uncover Your Inner Story**

Think back to some of your earliest memories. What assumptions, expectations, and rules did you develop as a result of these incidents? In the above example, being called shy may have created expectations that you don't deserve to succeed or to get what you want.

### 2. **What's Wrong With It?**

Try to understand how and why the false narrative came into being, the purpose it has served, and that you can change it. What does it mean? How did you misinterpret it? How has it affected you? In our example, you might conclude that when you were small you felt intimidated by older or more powerful individuals, but you have matured, you are often able to influence and positively impact others, and being labeled shy as a child does not define you.

### 3. **Rewrite Your Inner Story**

Can you reinterpret the situation, relationship, or another person's intentions in a positive way? Draw on your strengths, talents, and positive qualities. Referring to our example, you might change your story to reflect that give and take is part of life, and as an intelligent, empathetic, accomplished professional you are able to achieve excellent results.

### 4. **Internalize Your New Narrative**

This is the most challenging part. Your old story was lying to you for so long it will be difficult to replace. You will have to test your new story until it drowns out the old voice and becomes real to you. Using our example, you might set up simple encounters designed to be easy wins, progress to more challenging situations, devise an affirmation, adjust your expectations of others, etc. Focus on your development until it becomes natural.

Repeating affirmations, practicing new behaviors, and other self-help techniques will not work if they only scratch the surface. To truly develop you must get to the root of the problem and rebuild on a solid foundation — your inner story.



#### **David Goldwich**

David uses humor and stories gathered from his own experience as a lawyer, businessman, and father to help people reach breakthrough changes in their personal and professional lives. He coaches and conducts workshops on confidence, assertiveness, influence and persuasion, and storytelling.

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# Building Your Karmic Capital Now

by Joanne Flinn

Karmic capital is a modern take on business wisdom. It's based on the principle that doing good is both good for you and good business. With everything that is going on right now, in the demands of life, business and leadership, it's easy to get overwhelmed and feel that niggling of doubt and fear that all this will never end. I'd like to share with you a key powerful secret that will successfully get you through to the other side. The secret is to build your karmic capital.

Have you heard of the golden rule? Most probably! Karmic capital is the golden rule in action for business folk. It's been used to get businesses through financial crisis, it's been used to deliver successful digital transformation programs, it's even been used to connect and inspire people through Covid-19.

I'm going to focus on karmic capital in business to help you and your people get through the current stress and demands successfully, calmly and productively.

Now, for those of you who are data-minded, karmic capital has hard core value in market capitalization. In fact, it is behind 87% of the stock market value. Yes, 87%. Just 13% of business value is cash, contracts and traditional depreciating assets. (Source: Standard & Poors, additional analytics).

You might ask me whether I have ever deliberately built karmic capital and whether it helped. I have. Karmic capital first came into my life while leading a business for a blue chip multinational during the Asian Financial Crisis in 1997. We lost 90% of our cashflow in weeks. We had to do things differently. We used the nine principles of karmic capital to get through it successfully. A few years later, when it felt the world was collapsing around us during SARS and 9/11, I applied these for a bank as part of their digital transformation executive team. Again we got both the transformation and the business through to the other side.

A senior executive from IBM said they'd "never seen results like this." I have. It's the basis of the business coaching I do, and it's the secret behind some of the fabulous, unicorn-like things that have happened in my life: like TEDx talks, and even achieving dreams I'd been scared to do, things others had told me were impossible.

## Everything Was Once Impossible

Flying was once impossible for humans, so was running a four-minute mile. Eighty-storey buildings were once impossible to build, so was talking to 50 people via video across 50 countries. And yet all these all are totally normal now. It's only impossible until you do it.

So ask yourself: *what could be some really amazing outcomes of this period if I drop the limitations of thinking something is impossible?*

*"It's only  
impossible until  
you do it!"  
- Joanne Flinn*

## See Time As Your Dearest Asset

You've been gifted with today. You may have heard of living each day as your last, but let's look at it differently. You are reading this... you have today! In what will you *invest* these 24 hours? And now that you've dropped the word impossible, what *assets* do you wish to build today?

## Give First, Trust

This may feel a touch challenging in business with cashflow in a crunch. I get it. But this is the *Stargate* to the other side. Find organizations, business partners, and clients who need your help, and *give* help to them. Invest in getting *them* through. Give value. Trust you'll be appreciated. You will be.

## Build Real Relationships

If you've ever felt tired of transactional relationships, I hear you. This is about building relationships by helping out. When you help them, they can help others. Things move because of you. And realise that in some weird way, things come back to you even better than you imagined. The secret is to do this without expectations.

## Use A Structured Mindset Methodology

You know your mindset is a key part of your success. In business, we have structured methods and processes to reliably deliver change: for technology we have ITIL and DevOps, for business processes there is Agile and Lean. These work. Building karmic capital is a mindset-based methodology built on Oxford-based research verified in real life, in real businesses dealing with real uncertainty and disruption while delivering really big transformations.

## Respect Expectations With Transparency

These days intellectual property, customer relationships and the implicit expectations we have of others in the business ecosystem are areas of core business value. The fastest way to destroy your business in these times is to violate expectations and watch social media make it louder, bigger and more difficult to recover. That's rough.

As things are changing fast, transparency on what's happening to you and what you are doing to respond makes all the difference. Everyone is dealing with uncertainty, working from home, home schooling, using new technologies, developing different expectations, and much more. When stuff happens, it's okay, say so. Be transparent. Share what you are doing and what's happening next.

*When you focus on these six karmic assets, you'll find that your business will be building these three as well: your commercial contracts, your cash flow and your physical assets.*

Build your karmic capital with generosity, kindness and giving. It will bring you the assets you need!



### Joanne Flinn, The Business Growth Lady

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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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# 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:

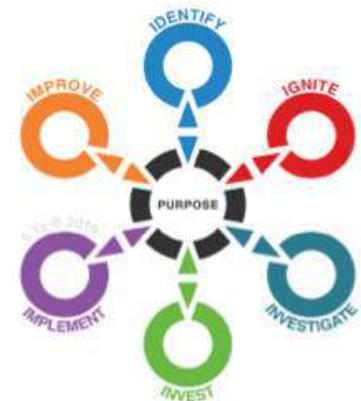
1. Encourage a daily individual and/or team mindfulness practice. This will help to clear stress and tension and move your mind into the sketchpad of the brain, the pre-frontal cortex from where you can strategise, imagine and create.
2. Spend time thinking about you and your team's PURPOSE. Why are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

by Rohit Bassi

Our smile, silence and gratitude are the fuels of compassion, all which is hidden within us. I have a request that you please do these three short easy powerful exercises. My doctor teacher whom I call Doc Uncle (Dr. Segu Ramesh) refers to compassion as entering the unknown anatomy of the heart. The three exercises are:

1. **Chant Your Name.** Take your hand and place it upon your heart and simply chant your name slowly three, six or nine times.
2. **Your Ho'oponopono.** Take your hand and place it upon your heart and at a steady, calm pace simply say "I love you" three, six or nine times.
3. **Gratitude From You.** Take your hand and place it upon your heart and simply say thank you for three, six or nine things that you can give gratitude for today.

While doing these exercises, smile and do your best to be in a place of silence. If you are unable to find a place of silence, then remember that by touching your heart, you are simply entering the temple of silence.

*"If you knew the magnificence of the three, six and nine, you would have a key to the universe."  
- Nikola Tesla*

## Why Chant Your Name?

The simple reason being it is the sweetest name that you resonate to. By doing this you are conducting self-sound therapy.

We hear other people call our name, but we never call ourselves by our own name. Dale Carnegie once said, "A person's name is to that person, the sweetest, most important sound in any language."

Please note, this is not necessarily the name given to you at birth; it is the name that resonates the most with you.

## Why Your Ho'oponopono?

Ho'oponopono is an ancient Hawaiian art which means "set things right" or "to make right." It is about letting go, erasing, deleting and cleaning the data (the trash, the bullshit) within us to get into a state of inspiration, love and excitement.

Many have confused it with being a prayer for forgiveness. Ho'oponopono is way beyond that. By saying, "I love you," you are saying "Thank you for bringing this up" (especially when it comes to those feelings, thoughts and actions we define as negative).

I am thankful for the opportunity to free all of you and me. I am thankful for divine intelligence and wisdom for removing the obstacles that hold me back. I am thankful for my true self for giving me another opportunity to be who I am.

## Why Gratitude From You?

Saying thank you to all that has happened to you, all that is happening to you and all that will happen to you allows you to be a more humble person.

Saying thank you to all that you have received, all that you are receiving and all that you will receive allows you to become more abundant in life.

Saying thank you to all the events that have happened to you, all the events that are happening to you and all the events that will happen to you allow you to amplify your awareness of compassion.

*"Any who is (so) grateful does so to the profit of his own soul."  
- Holy Quran, Surah Al-Luqman*

An article from Forbes.com stated, "A 2006 study published in Behavior Research and Therapy found that Vietnam War Veterans with higher levels of gratitude experienced lower rates of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder."

My loved ones continue to remind me of the power of gratitude. These people have been empowering people at all levels for many years. No matter what adversity they go through their attitude of gratitude is heartfelt, which is evident by their smile. Their actions of compassion are immeasurable.

Remember that you, all human beings and I have weaknesses and faults. Gratitude allows us to see beyond such labels of inadequacies and flaws.

The truth is that genuine gratitude is often ignored by most of us on a moment-to-moment and day-to-day basis. Most see it as an act of fashion and fad, an accessory to please one's ego. Ancient cultures, spirituality and modern science promote the cultivation of gratitude. Its beauty is such that it does not cost anything in terms of time, money and resources. Research from across the globe reveals gratitude has several benefits for you and the people around you.

*"The creatures that inhabit this earth be they human beings or animals are here to contribute to the beauty and prosperity of the world. The food we eat, the clothes we wear have not just dropped from the sky. This is why we should be grateful to all our fellow creatures."  
- Dalai Lama*



### **Rohit Bassi**

He is known as the compassionate communication wizard with experience of 25+ years, is a bestselling author and spoken in 21+ countries. He works with organisations who want their people to speak with clarity, conviction and compassion resulting in outstanding leadership.

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# Why Let A Good Pandemic Go To Waste?

by Scott Friedman

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

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

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

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

## The Silver Lining

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

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

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

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

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

## Turn On Your GPS

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

## Gratitude

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

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

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

## **Play**

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

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

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

## **Surprise**

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

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



### **Scott Friedman, CSP, Global Speaking Fellow**

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

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# UltraCreativity

by Sonja Piontek

UltraCreativity is an extremely powerful concept to unlock the mind's full potential. It is based on the belief that with the right mindset and the right tools, the impossible is possible even during difficult times. UltraCreativity has helped and inspired people from all over the world and given them the well needed positive outlook they required, particularly during the Covid-19 crisis. Let this article give you an insight into the potential of UltraCreativity, and see how it can transform your life and help you soar. Here are some of these powerful tools.

## **Ban “Cannot” From Your Vocabulary**

A long time ago, I decided that the word “cannot” does not exist in my vocabulary. For one simple reason: “cannot” limits your mind. It deprives you of the most amazing opportunities and kills any creative energy you might have. So, whenever I develop a great new idea and feel hesitation creep up in my mind or whenever, I share an idea with someone else and hear them judge it with “cannot”, I put an immediate stop to that negativity and instantly transform the crippling “cannot” into the enabling “how”. I simply do not allow any negative energy to suffocate my creativity and limit my potential!

1. To achieve anything in life, immediately ban “cannot” from your vocabulary.
2. Never be afraid to try something new, even if it is deemed impossible.
3. Dare to challenge the status quo and question the way things “have always been done”.

## **Focus On Your Strengths**

I am a vivid advocate of strength-based leadership – in fact, I lead my entire life based on the principle of focusing fully on my strengths. Admittedly, we all have weaknesses, and clearly so do I. We can spend a lifetime trying to overcome every single weakness. What I have decided instead is a different and much more successful strategy: to simply put full focus on my personal strengths and the things I am most passionate about. This strategy is not only incredibly powerful, it has worked wonders for me, as I am sure it will for you!

1. Find out what you are really good at and what you are truly passionate about.
2. If you want to succeed, fully focus on your strengths.
3. Stop worrying about your weaknesses, they are irrelevant.

## **Use Your Resources Intelligently**

Another valuable key is to always use the resources at hand and be smart about how you approach any task in life. There is no need to constantly reinvent the wheel or be shy about asking for support. It is totally fine to ask for help, suggestions, feedback or even just an ear as you lay out your idea and thus get greater clarity. When you start a new project, especially a daring one, take a moment and consider the resources you have access to.

1. For any new project or quest, tap into the resources you have at hand, including people.
2. Stop trying to reinvent the wheel.
3. Dare to ask for help.

## Step Outside The Comfort Zone

Behind the comfort zone lies a universe of opportunities – it is yours to conquer and yours to explore! Great things are waiting for you out there: amazing opportunities, amazing rewards, amazing experiences, amazing victories... an amazing life overall. But in order to get there, you have to take that all-important first step and leave your comfort zone. The choice is yours, just give it a go! Throughout my life, I have personally taken the decision to leave my comfort zone several times – whilst every single time was challenging and tough, the results were incredible beyond what I expected.

*“Behind the comfort zone lies a universe of opportunities!”  
- Sonja Piontek*

1. Behind the comfort zone lies a universe of opportunities.
2. To step outside the comfort zone can be scary and takes some guts, but it is worth it, so just give it a go.

## Have Full Determination

Whenever I need to gather all my strength and come up with full determination to master a challenging task, I think of Lewis Pugh. Lewis is not only a good friend, he is the UN Patron of the Oceans and an incredibly determined man. His mission in life is to protect the world's oceans. In order to raise awareness, he undertakes the most extreme swims: 1km over 20 minutes with no protection in sub-zero temperatures in the Polar Sea! When I asked Lewis how on earth he manages to endure such unbelievable pain and pull through, he shared one simple strategy that gives him all his strength: there is nothing more powerful than a made-up mind.

*“There is nothing more powerful than a made-up mind.”  
- Lewis Pugh*

1. Never forget: there is nothing more powerful than a made-up mind!
2. Determination will help you do the unthinkable.

Whatever the circumstances, your happiness and your success are entirely in your hands. Decide to be positive. Decide to take charge. Let the concept of UltraCreativity guide your way and soar - because you can!



### **Sonja Piontek**

Sonja is an acclaimed global keynote speaker and bestselling author on UltraCreativity that has spoken in 23 countries and inspired thousands from stage. The former Director of Marketing for BMW Asia left the corporate world late 2017 to focus on her speaking career and set up her award-winning agency Sonnenkind. Sonja and her impressive work are regularly featured in international publications.

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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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