

# AN INSIDE JOB:

## Practising Resilience in the Midst of Change



This workshop was developed to support you as you manage in times of change and profound uncertainty. We sincerely hope that the workshop content, tools and resources will be of practical and ongoing use.

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## An Inside Job: Practising Resilience in the Midst of Change

The 8 workshop modules you have completed focussed on

- How our brains and bodies naturally respond to the strain of rapid, intense, unpredictable events.
- How our automatic response can negatively amplify that stress.
- Strategies that can be used at work and home to reduce and, in part, neutralize the impact of stress.

This consolidation of the workshop module handouts is a resource you can draw on, to continue to build your own resilience through reflection and practice.

***Remember: Applying what we learn builds our practice!***

Much like building muscular strength, increasing our person resilience takes time and intentionality. We know that as we do or think repeatedly, our brain adapts by creating denser and more efficient neuropathways in our brains.



**Neuro-Geek Info:** When two neurons frequently interact, they form a bond that allows them to transmit more easily and accurately.

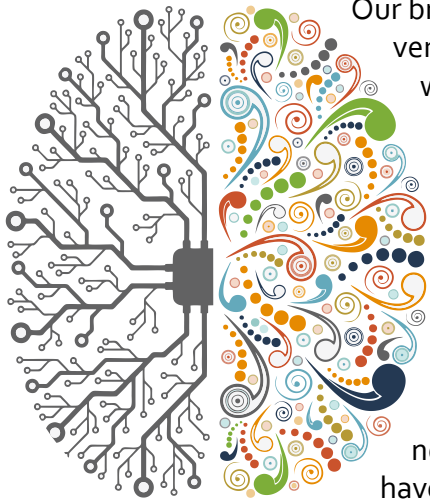
So, review the information and employ the practices associated with each section!

We wish you the best as you practice and build your personal resilience.



# The Brain

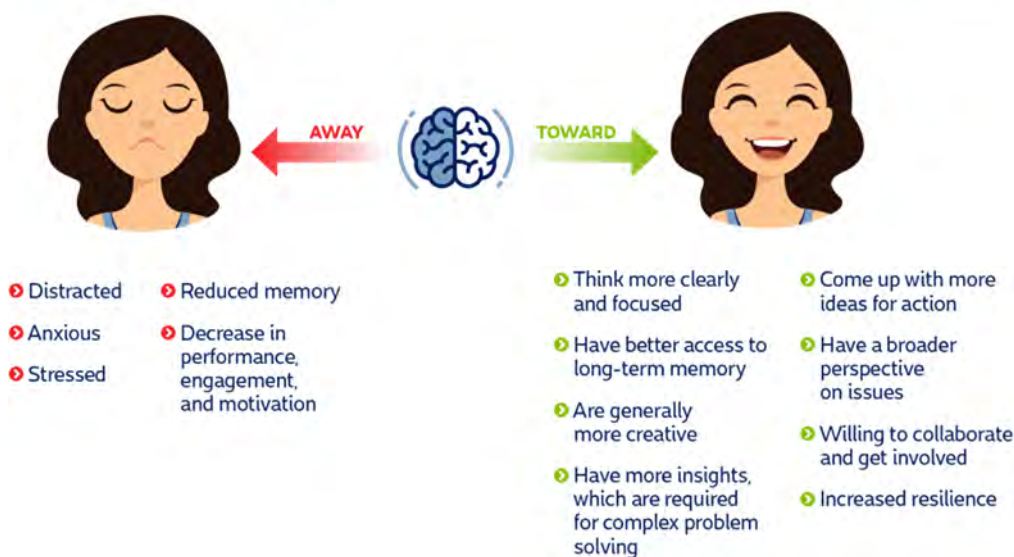
## Threats & Rewards



Our brains react differently to perceived Threats and Rewards. Threats are very subjective, but they can include ongoing stress due to pressures at work or home, an environment of rapid change, a situation where the outcomes are unknown or unclear, or even an upcoming critical meeting or performance review.

During times like COVID-19 Pandemic, we are all experiencing many of the situations described above and often, two of more of them simultaneously. Our brains are constantly scanning for threats or rewards (five times per second). If our brains are unable to categorize a situation, it immediately deems it to be a potentially serious threat (unknowns are categorized as very threatening, not as neutral). Because we have an inbuilt instinct for survival, our brains have 5 times more real estate dedicated to search out threats than to identifying rewards. When our brains detect a threat, they release chemicals (including cortisol and adrenaline) which initiates the release of glucose into our body. We experience what is often referred to as “flight or fight”: rapid heart beats, dry mouth and we begin to interpret more things as threats. The results of our reactions to threats and rewards are described below:

### Threat vs. Reward



Since many of us at work are experiencing these reactions right now, how can we begin to understand and recognize our reactions and manage ourselves and others to reduce the strain and stress of our automatic responses? One of the things we can do is understand what people might be interpreting as threatening.

# Our Reaction to Stress

## How it happens: Step by Step

- Step 1:** When you see, hear, touch or taste something, that sensory information first heads to the thalamus, which acts as your brain's relay station.
- Step 2:** The thalamus then relays that information to the neocortex (the thinking brain).
- Step 3:** Then the information is sent to the amygdala (the emotional brain), which produces the appropriate response.



**However** ..... when faced with a stressful or threatening situation, this order changes:

- Step 1:** When you see, hear, touch or taste something, that sensory information first heads to the thalamus, which acts as your brain's relay station.
- Step 2:** The Thalamus sends the information directly to both the neocortex and the amygdala.
- Step 3:** If the amygdala senses danger, it makes a split-second decision to initiate the flight or fight response before the neocortex has time to overrule it.



- Step 4:** This cascade of events triggers the release of the stress hormones which increase our heart rate, elevate our blood pressure and boost our energy levels so that we can fight or flee.



With apologies to Daniel Goleman, (1995) *Emotional Intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ*. New York: Bantam Books

## Different Parts of the Brain are Inextricably Linked

It's important to remember that even though (for simplicity's sake) we are describing what each part of the brain might do, the different parts of the brain are inextricably linked. Check out this article by Ann Betz:

<https://www.beabovaleadership.com/2019/07/12/the-orchestra-of-your-brain/>

Note that your body also influences your brain, and the brain is just one part of your "mind". In her 2018 book, *Your Body is Your Brain*, Amanda Blake points out that:

- Our brains exist out to our fingers & toes.
- The heart, gut, lungs, skin, and connective tissue (fascia) all provide unique signals to the brain.
- The GI system heavily influences our brain.
  - 10% of our neurons (or 100 million neurons) are in our enteric nervous system (gut).
  - 95% of the serotonin in our bodies is produced in our gut.
  - 80-90% of vagal nerve fibres are afferent – they send signals to the brain rather than receiving signals from the brain.

- There are 8-9 messages sent to the brain from the gut for every message from the brain to the gut.
- Information from gut to brain travels faster than information moving in the opposite direction.
- It's the only part of the nervous system that can ignore instruction from the brain.
- There is a strong relationship between our minds and our body.
- The body acts as an "early warning system" prior to conscious awareness of our state.

### Some additional resources on this topic:

Your Body Is Your Brain with Amanda Blake | Heal The Divide Podinar:

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W1dqOXUMoD4>
- <https://www.health.harvard.edu/diseases-and-conditions/the-gut-brain-connection>

**Blake, Amanda,** (2018). *Your Body is Your Brain: leveraging your somatic intelligence to find purpose, build resilience, deepen relationships and lead more powerfully.* Truckee, CA: Trokay Press

**Fogel, Alan,** (2009). *Body Sense: The science and practice of embodied self-awareness.* New York: W. W. Norton

**Zull, James E.** (2002). *The Art of Changing the Brain: enriching teaching by exploring the biology of learning.* Sterling, VA: Stylus Pub.

### Module Practice

- Set an alarm for a couple of times a day.
- At those times, notice the state that your body is in, in that moment.
  - How does your body feel when it is in a "relaxed" state vs when it is in a "stressed" or "threat" state?
  - Where are the strongest signals in your body?
- Use this practice to gain a greater awareness of signals from your body.





# The SCARF Model



## The SCARF Model Explained

### The Social Brain

As humans, our brains are deeply social. We are wired for social connection and we experience social pain in much the same way that we experience physical pain. This is useful – it ensures that parents pay attention when their children cry. It's what makes us connect and care for one another.

- The “resting” position of the brain is to scan for what is going on socially (not task focused). This is called the “default mode network”. We are constantly trying to make sense of other people and ourselves.
- Our sensitivity to social rejection is so central to our well-being that our brains treat it like a painful event and our brains process social pain in the same region that physical pain is processed. Research shows that taking Tylenol will relieve socially felt pain (in the same way that it relieves a headache).
- Memories of social pain are much more intense than memories of physical pain.

Check out this TED Talk by Matthew Lieberman “*The social brain and its superpowers*”:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NNhk3owF7RQ>

We are incredibly motivated and influenced by social cues.

David Rock’s SCARF Model identifies five key social needs that can either incite a threat or reward response.

Social Need	What It Is	What We Want
<b>Status:</b>	Perception of where we are compared to others (Will this social encounter increase or decrease my status?)	We want to be secure and feel respected in our social position. <i>"I am valuable!"</i>
<b>Certainty:</b>	The degree to which we believe we can predict an outcome	We want to know what will happen/be informed. <i>"I know what will happen!"</i>
<b>Autonomy:</b>	A sense of control over one's environment or circumstances	We want to feel like we have control over our environment. <i>"I have a choice!"</i>
<b>Relatedness:</b>	The degree to which we perceive others as similar to ourselves	We want to feel safe with other people and connected to them (to be like others). <i>"I belong!"</i>
<b>Fairness:</b>	The degree to which we perceive things are equitable	We want to be treated fairly and equitably. <i>"I am treated fairly!"</i>

This short (4 minute) YouTube video describes the SCARF Model

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qMejNfodL2g>

## Tips for Addressing SCARF Needs

Develop an awareness of your unique SCARF needs and attend to them (check out this free SCARF Assessment <https://neuroleadership.com/research/tools/nli-scarf-assessment/>).

### Status

1. Ask for feedback
2. Identify opportunities to contribute
3. Create a personal development plan
4. Seek out new learning/growth

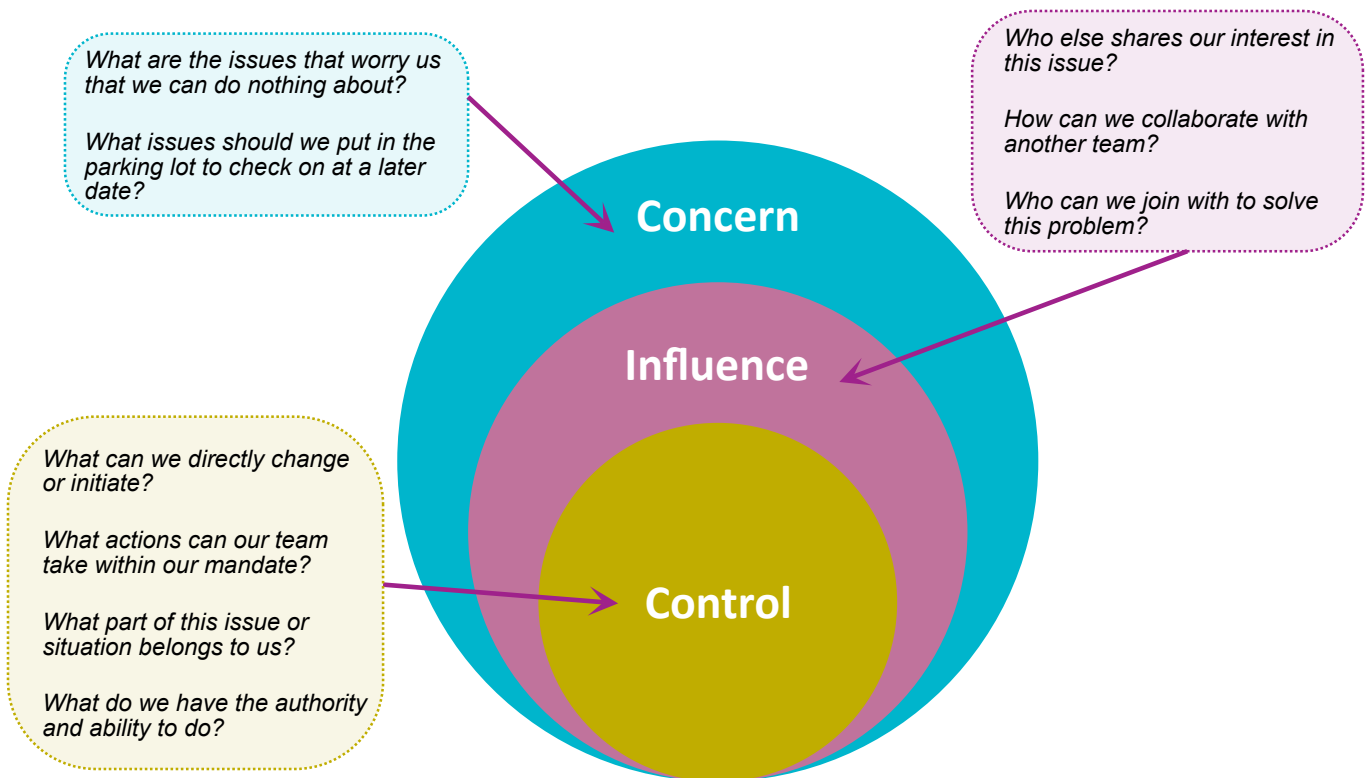
### Certainty

1. Seek out as much information as possible during the course of change (foster certainty)
  - Ask when information may be available
2. Identify what is known/unknown
  - Make two lists: what you know/what you don't know
  - Share this information with your team/direct reports
  - Decide and let them know how often you will update them/each other
3. Define what has changed and what remains the same/Remind yourself about what will stay the same
  - Make two lists: What has changed and what has not changed
  - Discuss with peers or direct reports

4. Set out objectives at the beginning of every meeting
  - Reduce complexity by identifying what is most essential to focus on/accomplish
  - Identify what you are doing (making a decision, sharing information, getting feedback, etc.)

## Autonomy

1. Articulate spheres of influence
  - Identify the aspects of your work (or environment) that you personally control
  - Discuss with your team or direct reports what you can control, what you can influence, and areas of concern (things that you can't control or influence)
2. Make lists for each and develop appropriate strategies for each (suggestions are included in the graphic below)
  - Take control of what you can and let go of the things you don't control
3. Be conscious of the day-to-day simple choices that you are able to make autonomously
4. Identify what you do not have control over and decide to "let it go"



## Relatedness

1. Intentionally build and take time to build relationships with others at work
2. Identify similarities with others
3. Work with others on a common challenge (this makes someone part of the "in" group)

4. Recognize/thank each other (immediate, unexpected, tangible, personal, public recognition is most impactful)
5. Show vulnerability – ask for help

Check out this HBR article on ideas for how to create social connections in the virtual world.

<https://hbr.org/2021/02/make-time-for-small-talk-in-your-virtual-meetings>

### Fairness

1. Clarify goals, roles, processes/rules
2. Catch your emotional response before you get into obsessive thinking
3. Determine if it is something important to address or not
4. Check your assumptions about people's intentions
5. Work to address inequities

Remember that addressing SCARF needs (yours and others) will help you (and others around you) see change as less threatening and make it easier to manage.

### Module Practice

- In your interactions with your team this week, note which SCARF needs come up most frequently.
- Try out some of the discussed techniques.
- Which techniques are you most comfortable using to address them?
- Which techniques are uncomfortable? Why?





## Autonomy and Control

Our reactions to stressful situations depend on the degree of control or autonomy we believe we can exercise.

To be effective leaders we need to shift from the sympathetic nervous system response, which generally focuses on what caused this situation or decision to a focus on what aspects of this situation can I improve. This change of focus supports and reinforces shifting to the parasympathetic nervous system, which is where we are able to think more clearly, spot options, be creative and collaborate with others. To 'bounce back' from adverse circumstances managers need to adopt active, response-oriented thinking as opposed to cause-oriented thinking.



**Specifying**



**Visualizing**



**Collaborating**

A simple analytical framework of three questions can help us identify factors that will move us forward:

**Specifying:** to help us identify specific actions we can take.

**Visualizing:** to shift our attention away from the cause of the adverse event and towards a more positive outcome

**Collaborating:** to identify team members, colleagues or other resources who can help move forward.

*\*Paul Stoltz and Joshua Margolis*

Applying this thinking framework to the issue of control or autonomy:

**Specifying:** What can I do right now to change the course of this adverse event or situation. What aspects can I directly influence?

**Visualizing:** What would other leaders I respect, do in this situation?

**Collaborating:** Who can help me and what is the best way to engage them?

Using these deceptively simple questions when faced with autonomy or control issues works for a wide variety of reasons including the ones below:

- They cause us to re-frame our thinking from how bad the situation is to what is possible.
- They emphasize that there are aspects of the situation we can influence or change.
- They reinforce our locus of control; which is tied to perceiving less stress and performing better.

Martin Seligman. <https://ppc.sas.upenn.edu/people/martin-ep-seligman>

C.R. Anderson, *Locus of control, coping behaviours, and performance in a stress setting: A longitudinal study*. <https://psycnet.apa.org/record/1978-09912-001>

## Module Practice

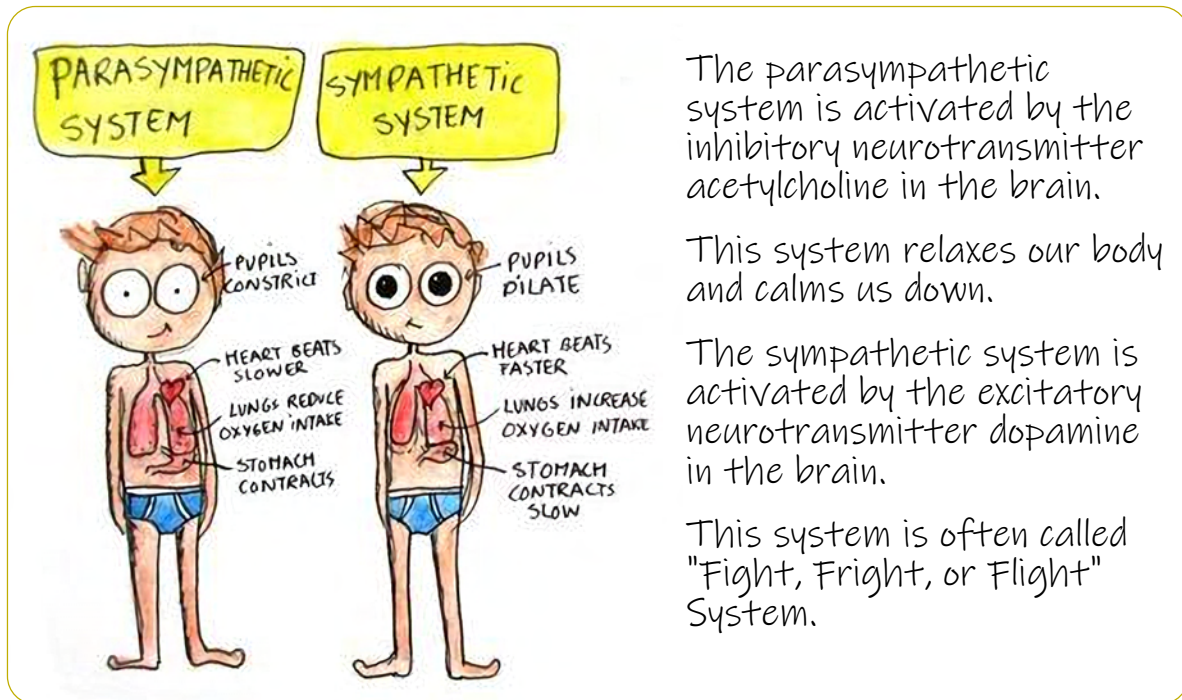
In your interactions this week, look for situations where issues of control and autonomy trigger reactions in yourself and others.

- What happens when you apply the key questions?
- What happens when you help others explore where they do and do not have control?



# Mindfulness

## Moving from the Sympathetic Nervous System to the Parasympathetic Nervous System



One powerful practice we can use to shift to a less stressed, more productive state is mindfulness. There are many definitions of mindfulness but there is a common theme: being aware of self and what is around us, in the moment.

Mindfulness practices help us slow down, focus and increase our perception – all very beneficial aspects of activating the parasympathetic nervous system (PNS). When we activate the parasympathetic nervous system, we are able to think better, we are more creative, and more able to collaborate with others. In this state it is easier for us to lead and work with others. For further reading on mindfulness and how it applies to leadership, look up the following experts:

- Richard Boyatzis (Case Western Reserve University)
- Annie McKee (University of Pennsylvania)
- Ellen Langer (Harvard)
- Jon Kabat-Zinn (University of Mass)

There are many mindfulness practices that have been shown to help activate the PNS. The following are simple mindfulness practices that you can incorporate into your regular workday.

## Controlled Breathing

Focused breathing directly affects the levels of a natural chemical messenger in the brain called noradrenaline. It works like a brain fertilizer! By focusing on a regulating your breathing, you can optimize your attention level and your mind becomes sharper.

One example of focused breathing, “4-7-8 Breathing” is as follows:

- Exhale
- Inhale through the nose for 4 seconds
- Hold for 7 seconds
- Forcefully exhale through the mouth for 8 seconds
- Repeat 4 times

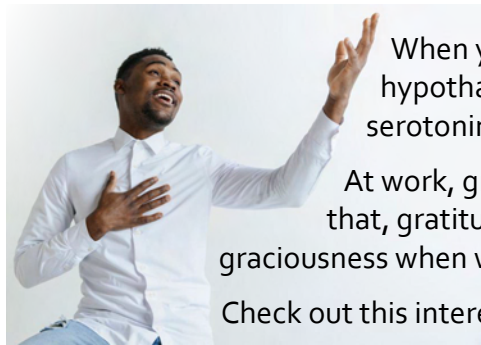
Practice twice a day for maximum benefit.

This practice is easy to use “in-the-moment” when faced with a stressful situation. Truly taking a pause and breathing more deeply and more deliberately can help you think better.

A link to Dr. Andrew Weil’s demonstration of this technique:

<https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/324417#how-to-do-it>

## Gratitude



When you practice gratitude, there is an increase in activity in the hypothalamus which decreases your stress level. Gratitude releases serotonin, a neurotransmitter that aids with thinking and concentration.

At work, gratitude increases our productivity and job satisfaction. Not only that, gratitude is contagious – we tend to mirror cooperation and graciousness when we see others practising it.

Check out this interesting research on gratitude practices at work:

<https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2010-09990-007>

<https://www.scirp.org/journal/PaperInformation.aspx?paperID=26232#.U8lrHvldWZk>

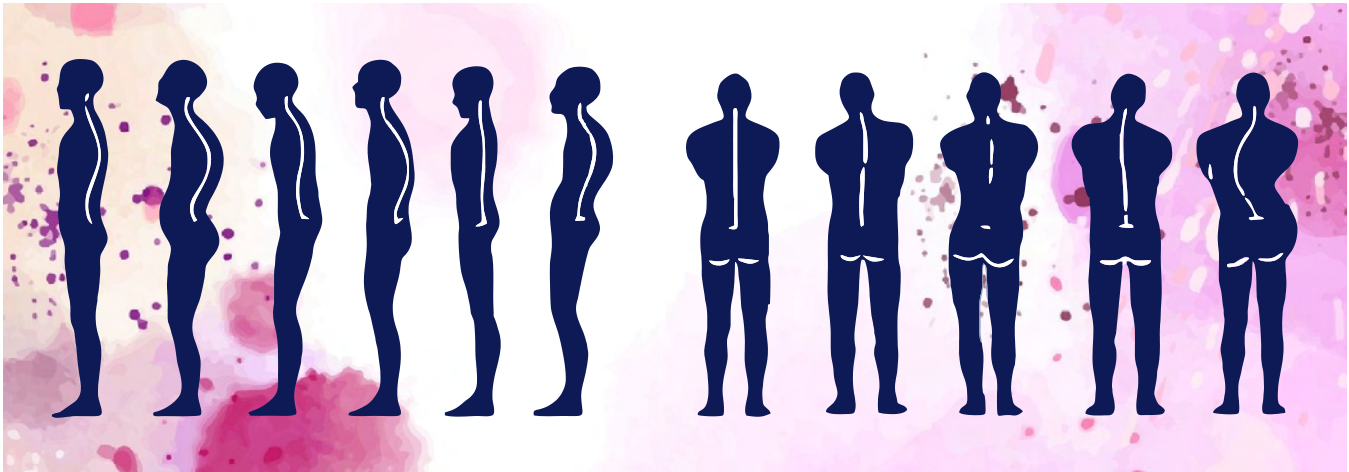
<https://www.health.harvard.edu/healthbeat/giving-thanks-can-make-you-happier>

We have to be purposeful about practising gratitude. For a variety of reasons, we are hesitant to show gratitude in our professional lives. A study conducted by the John Templeton Foundation (The Expanding Gratitude Project) shows that people are least likely to express gratitude in the workplace – despite feeling a desire to be thanked more often at work themselves. Here are some simple ways you can incorporate the discipline of gratitude into your work day:

- Recall experiences you feel grateful for having experienced (for maximum benefit, really sink into feeling how you felt in that moment and let your brain marinate in that memory).



- Include a gratitude “roll call” in your regular team meetings.
- Keep a gratitude journal. Start or end your workday by writing down 3 things that you are grateful for from that day or the previous day. Make them as specific as possible.



## Body Posture

Embodied cognition is the idea that the relationship between our mind and body runs both ways – meaning our mind influences how our body reacts but the form of our body also triggers our mind. Emotions and thoughts affect our posture and energy levels; conversely, posture and energy affect our emotions and thoughts.

How we hold our bodies can impact us positively or negatively. The next time you are feeling less than stellar – check your body position. Are you hunched down? Are your shoulders rolled forward? This posture is generally used to protect ourselves - so you may be communicating stress from your body to your brain (embodied cognition). Becoming aware of how we sit and stand can be a key to how we feel.

Amy Cuddy, a professor from Harvard University, has studied the effect of this. Her research has revealed that two minutes of “power posing” a day can change how we feel about ourselves. This is because this practice increases testosterone and decreases cortisol (the stress hormone). And by the way, her research has shown that powerful, effective leaders have higher testosterone (dominance hormone) and lower cortisol (stress hormone). Just two minutes of standing in a “power pose” will literally change these hormone levels – and increase your ability to be assertive, confident and comfortable. Check out her interesting TED talk on this topic:

[https://www.ted.com/talks/amy\\_cuddy\\_your\\_body\\_language\\_may\\_shape\\_who\\_you\\_are](https://www.ted.com/talks/amy_cuddy_your_body_language_may_shape_who_you_are)

## Additional Body Posture Practices:

Try adjusting how you hold your body in daily life and pay attention to how it affects your mood. You might find that certain positions make you feel that little bit calmer!

- When you find yourself slumped over your phone or computer keyboard, take the time to sit up straight and become taller by lifting your chest and rolling your shoulders back. Set reminders in your calendar so that you do this throughout the day.

- Get up and go for a brisk walk every hour – even for a very short time in a hallway.
- If you find your energy lagging or your mood dropping, just smile – go ahead and form a smile with your mouth. This will literally change the neurochemical cocktail in your bloodstream. Smiling releases dopamine, endorphins, and serotonin and this relaxes your body and lowers your heart rate and blood pressure. Do it a few times!
- Quickly pop into to another room or stand at an outside door to refresh your energy.

There are many other mindfulness practices, such as meditation, journaling, spending time in nature, and yoga that you can incorporate into your life. The practices listed here are ones you can easily incorporate into your work life to deliberately activate the parasympathetic nervous system. Remember that activating the PNS will help you think more clearly, be more creative, and collaborate more easily with others.

## Module Practice

Try incorporating one or more of these mindful practices this week:

- What happened when you used one of the mindfulness tools?
- Which practice were you most comfortable using?
- Which practice made you uncomfortable?



# Compassion



## What is it?

Compassion is a practice that kicks in the parasympathetic nervous system, activating all those brain and body systems that enable us to think more clearly and creatively, experience less stress and increase our ability to collaborate with each other.

Compassion can be defined as an internal process involving the noticing, feeling, sensemaking, and acting that alleviates the suffering of another person.

## Are the benefits real?

The benefits of practising compassion are both personal and organizational. On a personal level, we just feel happier! On an organizational level where leaders practice compassion, there is a greater overall commitment, more responsiveness to clients and a sense of shared community and responsibility. Leaders and teams who practice compassion perform better and produce better results.

## Compassion creates positivity

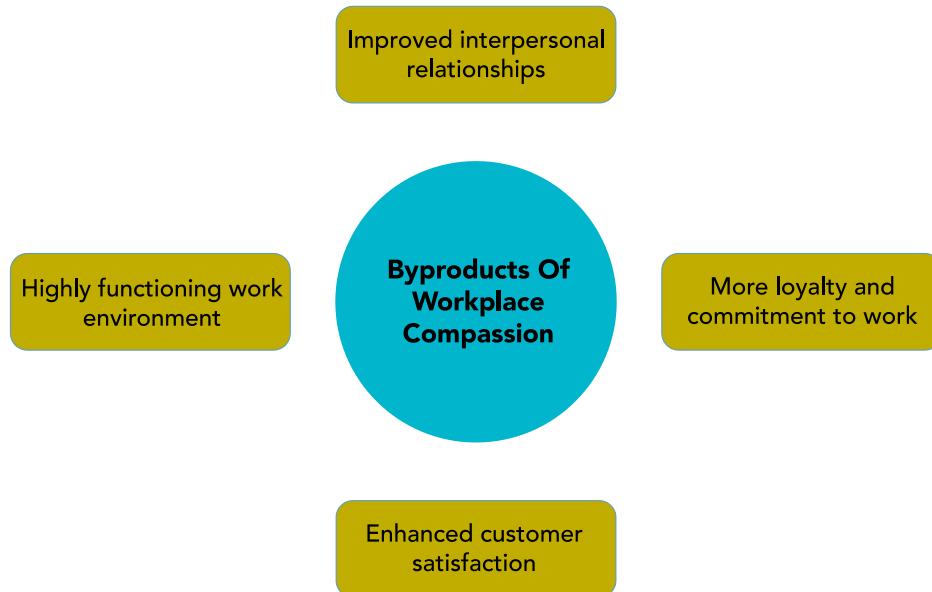
Being compassionate releases dopamine in the brain which makes us feel happier and more positive. Research shows that when we feel more positive, we are more likely to be creative, intelligent and productive. At work, positive employees build teams and places where people actually want to work.

## Compassion is contagious

A single act of compassion can start a ripple effect, as others (both recipients and observers) experience the positivity produced and share compassion themselves. In the workplace this type of contagion accelerates when leaders or supervisors are actively involved. This compassionate contagion becomes a building block for a caring environment where people feel valued. P.S. does this sound like engagement?

## Compassion boosts productivity

Before you roll your eyes and dismiss all of this as “fluffy”, there is solid body of academic research that links compassionate workplaces with a higher level of energy, enthusiasm about work and increased commitment to their organizations. *Association of Professional Executives of the Public Service of Canada (APEX)*



## How can we practice compassion at work?

- Be curious about others – find out a bit about their lives, ask them questions about their out of work experiences.
- Watch for opportunities to help peers – put out a notice on your chat group if you happen to have time to assist someone with work.
- Take the time to give positive feedback when you notice someone doing something well – or something you admire.
- Pick a charity or cause to support as a team.

## Self Compassion

People often find it easy to be compassionate towards others but have to work at self-compassion. Self-compassion means treating yourself with the same understanding and courtesy that you afford others. It is not self-indulgent or weak – and being self-compassionate won't make us narcissistic or complacent. In fact, the opposite is true. If we take good care of ourselves, we gain exactly the same benefits as when we are compassionate with others. We are actually able to contribute more by practising self-compassion, as it gives us the internal resources we need to continue to be of service to others.

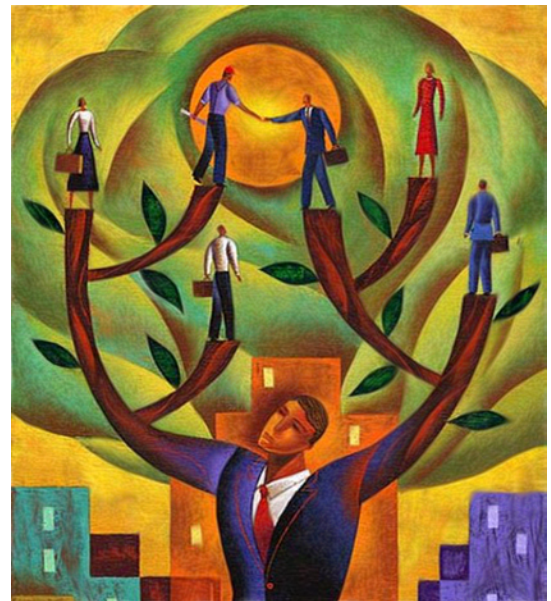


## How can we practice self-compassion?

- Give yourself a break – it is okay not to be perfect. Acknowledge yourself for your efforts and intentions.
- Manage that inner dialogue – talk to yourself as courteously and kindly as you would a friend.
- Give yourself a hug – it feels great – and it actually releases endorphins which will enable you to be more clear-headed!
- Notice your emotions and label them, not yourself.
- Practice a loving-kindness meditation (may I be safe, may I be well, may I be happy).
- And yes... go ahead and pat your dog or cat! That works as well.

## Leading with Compassion

Resilient leaders build a relational capacity for sharing knowledge and ideas by attending to emotions. In the face of major change, it is easy to believe that the only way to avoid becoming overwhelmed by emotions (of ourselves and others) is to ignore them. However, we know what happens if we ignore or do not attend to our reactions to change: we will stay in the spin cycle of the sympathetic nervous system. When we are in that state, we do not think clearly or creatively, our ability to problem solve lessens and collaborative efforts drop. Ironically these are the very behaviours we need to get through change effectively. A resilient leader brings people along by addressing the emotional implications of transition by caring about how people feel.



## Compassion Response

As leaders, we need to hold ourselves personally responsible for improving a given situation, regardless of its cause. Our job is to find ways to make “things” better. During a transition through change, instead of waiting for staff to “come to their senses” or “get with the program,” we will actively look for ways to make a positive difference.

We are more than our job titles. Each individual brings their past experiences, the complexities of their lives to work every day. Staff’s reaction to change may have very little to do with the actual substance of the change or with us for leading the change. Each person is simply coping with their internal sympathetic nervous system’s response to that change.

When we lead change, we need to create an emotional component to our change strategy so that team members can grapple with and accept change in their own way.

## Compassion in Action

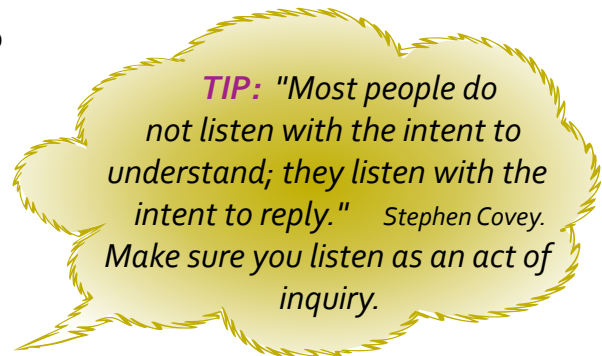


- **Specifying:** How can I step up to make the most immediate, positive impact on this situation
- **Visualizing:** What positive effect might my efforts have on those around me?
- **Collaborating:** How can I mobilize the efforts of those who are hanging back?

Within my sphere of authority, what can I do right here, right now to make a positive difference?

### Questions:

- What was difficult about today? What would help to resolve these issues? What can I do? How can we as a team solve these problems?
- What do you think were the best aspects of our old system? What were the factors that made those aspects work so well? How can we incorporate those factors into the new system?
- What are your biggest worries going forward? (remember the SCARF needs)



For further information on compassion in the workplace, check out these resources:

- Compassion at Work by Jane Dutton, Kristina Workman, & Ashley Hardin:  
<http://webuser.bus.umich.edu/janedut/Additional%20PDFs/Compassion%20at%20Work.pdf>
- Why Practice Compassion? Greater Good Science Centre:  
<https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/topic/compassion/definition#why-practice-compassion>
- Kristen Neff's Self-compassion website:  
<https://self-compassion.org/>
- Brené Brown's podcast on comparative suffering:  
<https://brenebrown.com/podcast/brene-on-comparative-suffering-the-50-50-myth-and-settling-the-ball/>

## Module Practice

In your interactions this week, look for situations where a compassionate response is most appropriate.

- What happens when you apply the key questions?
- How do others react when you respond with compassion?
- How did self-compassion make a difference?



# Hope



## What is “hope” and why is it important at work?

Hope is another practice that kicks in the parasympathetic nervous system, activating all those brain and body systems that enable us to think more clearly and creatively, experience less stress, and increase our ability to collaborate with others.

Dr. Charles Snyder (University of Kansas) defines hope as a positive, motivational emotional state accompanied by clear thoughts about what the future can be and how to get there. It is comprised of three critical elements:

- 1. Goals** a picture or vision of what the future might look like
- 2. Agency** the feeling or belief that we can do things that will produce results that lead to us achieving those goals
- 3. Pathways** a plan or way of getting from the here and now to that future goal

Hope creates physiological and emotional resiliency. When we actively feel hopeful (i.e. envision a positive future state), endorphins and enkephalins are released in our brains. Why is this important? When we “bathe” our brains in those neurochemicals, we are more likely to see possibilities, to look for opportunities, to reach out to others, to find more resources, to get support. In other words, we start to see the potential in our situations and are motivated and willing to take actions that help us move towards our goals and ultimately thrive.



## What are the organizational benefits of hope?

Dr. Shane Lopez is a Senior Gallup Scientist and a business professor at the University of Kansas. His research indicates that hopeful workers:

- Show up for work
- Are more engaged
- Are more productive
- Are more creative
- Are better during times of adversity and change
- Are happy

He reports that hope accounts for 14% of workplace productivity. Put another way, a hopeful employee will have almost one more day of productivity per week than a non-hopeful employee.

## How can we practice hope for ourselves?

- Be clear on your own passions, purpose, and values – when you can link what you are doing back to a bigger “why” you are more likely to be engaged and invested in the outcomes you are trying to achieve.
- Surround yourself with hopeful people – hope is contagious and learned.
- Talk about your own positive goals and dreams – this does not have to be purely work-related or typical organizational objective setting.
- Practice “futurecasting”. Make your goals come alive in your mind. Imagine what it would feel like to achieve your goals/visualize your dreams being a reality now.
- Identify various pathways, plan for obstacles and be ready to address them.

## How can we encourage our teams to practice hope?

- It starts with you – make sure that you are showing up as a hopeful leader!
- Get your team talking with other about their hopes and dreams (e.g. What makes you excited about the future? What are you looking forward to?). The conversations you have with your team about their hopes and dreams don’t necessarily all have to be work-related (e.g. Where do you want to travel to in the future? What are your fitness goals? What are your hopes for your children?).
- Enlist people in coming together to pursue something together that they may not do on their own (what do we want to accomplish as a team?). Engage people in setting goals and help people identify why the goal is valuable to them (doing so will make it more likely for them to take responsibility for finding solutions to problems as they arise).
- Encourage people to identify pathways as well as potential obstacles to achieving these goals

- Use storytelling as a mechanism to engage people in envisioning a future that you are trying to create. Paint a picture of a future state where others can see themselves in the story and see it as meaningful to them personally.

Remember that exercising hope through goal setting isn't just for large things or big, transformational change projects – you can practice hope in small ways and continue to build your own “hope” muscle and encourage others to do the same thing.

## Leading with Hope

Leading with hope is not about passively or naively hoping that things will change. It involves bringing some rigour to the concept of hope.

*“Critical thinking without hope is cynicism, but hope without critical thinking is naivety”*

Maria Popova



Hopeful leaders will help to paint a picture of life after the change. They will see where they can be a catalyst to help others move forward, and they will engage others in plotting a way forward. We can use visualizing, specifying, and collaborating questions to help bring rigour to the concept of hope.

### Visualizing:

As leaders, we first have to discover for ourselves what excites or engages us about the possibilities that may arise from the project or change initiative. Only then can we work with our team in exploring what is important or meaningful to each of them in the potential outcomes.

- What do I/you want life to look like on the other side of this adversity?
- What do I/you hope the project will achieve?
- What do we as a team hope will be the result of this change?

### Specifying:

- What can I/you do in the next few minutes or hours to move in that direction?
- What can I/you do tomorrow to move this forward?
- Where are things hanging up?
- What is in our way?
- What keeps happening that slows us down?
- What looks right or wrong about where we want to be by (the end of the week, the month, phase 2)?

### Collaborating:

- What sequence of steps can we put together as a team, and what processes can we develop and adopt to see us through to the other side of this hardship or change?
- If we imagine ourselves in the future – what would we wish we had done now, that we can't do as well or as easily later, to move us closer?

### For further information on hope, check out these resources:

- Dr. Shane Lopez – Hope is a Strategy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AXBEoTepQHQ>
- The Business Case For Hope: Creating The Future You Want: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/pauladavislaack/2019/02/05/the-business-case-for-hope-creating-the-future-you-want/>
- The Business Case for Instilling Hope: <https://news.gallup.com/businessjournal/26380/business-case-instilling-hope.aspx>
- The Healing Power of Hope: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/ca/blog/the-healing-factor/201211/the-healing-power-hope>
- Mission impossible: being hopeful is good for you – and psychologists' research is pinpointing ways to foster the feeling: <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2013/10/mission-impossible>
- Want More Productive Workers – Give Them Hope: <https://www.cnn.com/id/100537689>
- The Anatomy of Hope: How People Prevail in the Face of Illness by Jerome Groopman (New York: Random House, 2004) (1st chapter is available online at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2004/02/22/books/chapters/the-anatomy-of-hope.html> )

### Module Practice

In your projects this week, look for how addressing aspects of hope could make a difference.

- What happens when you engage people in a discussion about their hoped-for results?
- Were you able to find a role for yourself in getting to those results?
- How difficult or easy was it to engage staff in mapping a way forward?

# Playfulness

## What is playfulness and why is it important at work?

Playfulness is not something that people often think of as contributing to their ability to be productive at work. But playfulness is another practice that activates the parasympathetic nervous system and therefore helps you think more clearly, be more creative, and collaborate with others more effectively.

When you are playful, the brain changes. “Feel good” neurotransmitters such as dopamine, serotonin, and an array of endorphins are released. Organizations are starting to recognize the benefits of playfulness at work.

Laughter (one form of playfulness) is linked to higher motivation and productivity at work. Some organizations are even using structured “play” to solve complex organizational problems, enhance innovation, and improve business performance.



## How can we practice playfulness at work?

People often think that playfulness equals being a great joke-teller. Telling humorous stories is one way to invoke playfulness, but there are many other ways.

When you are thinking about how to encourage playfulness at work, pay attention to these caveats and tips:

- Playful and fun activities work best when employees are involved in designing them.
- Leaders can encourage playfulness by showing their own sense of fun.
- Fun means different things to different people. Vary your activities to make it easier for employees to join in their own way.
- Watch for SCARF needs.

### ***Some ideas...***

- Create a fun competition or game
  - Best “work from home” outfit or worst hairdo or silliest hat
  - Most embarrassing moment in the midst of a video conference
  - Best pet/child photo
- Listen to music and dance along
- Share cartoons or memes that are funny

- Get people to move during your video meetings (do “the wave” or the “7<sup>th</sup> inning stretch”)
- At the beginning of a meeting, play your favourite song from high school and invite others to bring theirs to future meetings.
- Start wearing hats to your Friday wrap up meeting.

Remember, as a leader you can set the conditions for lightheartedness in your workplace by being open and flexible to input and make it easy for staff to bring forward their own ideas.

## Time In Nature



Spending time in nature has a measurable positive impact on our brains: there is a decrease in cortisol and an increase in the areas of the brain associated with empathy and altruism. Our heart rates lower and we experience more relaxation and improved attention and memory. Research out of the UK found that those who spent 2 hours a week in nature demonstrated the strongest health and well being results. These benefits can be gained even the two hours comprise small increments of time. So head out for a 15 minute stroll - it counts!

The majority of research to date has focused on the health and personal benefits to spending time in nature, however there is an emerging body of literature on the organizational benefits. Companies such as Apple, Amazon, L.L.Bean and Google are including ways to include outdoor elements into their workspaces.

Employees who spend time in green and natural spaces exhibit:

### Improvements and increases in:

productivity  
creativity  
memory  
energy

### Decreases in:

stress  
stress related health complaints



How can we include time in nature in our personal and work lives?

- Take meetings to outside spaces
- Walk in a park during breaks
- Introduce plants and natural light into your workspace
- View images of nature (artwork, posters, screen savers, on-line photos etc.)
- Listen to sounds of nature
- Garden – even if it is just a small plant box!

**For further information on playfulness and time in nature, check out these resources:**

- Laughter Will Keep Your Team Connected – Even While You’re Apart: <https://hbr.org/2020/05/laughter-will-keep-your-team-connected-even-while-youre-apart>
- Humour, laughter & those ah ha moments: [https://hms.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/HMS\\_OTB\\_Spring10\\_Vol16\\_No2.pdf](https://hms.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/HMS_OTB_Spring10_Vol16_No2.pdf)
- 5 Ways to Have More Fun at Work: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/christinecomaford/2018/04/07/5-ways-to-have-more-fun-at-work/#29ec801d248f>
- Managing Conflict with Humour: <https://www.helpguide.org/>
- Time In Nature Is Good For You: <https://www.the-scientist.com/notebook/time-in-nature-is-good-for-you-66484>
- How Nature Can Make You Kinder, Happier, and More Creative: [https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/how\\_nature\\_makes\\_you\\_kinder\\_happier\\_more\\_creative#:~:text=Scientists%20are%20beginning%20to%20find,to%20connect%20with%20other%20people](https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/how_nature_makes_you_kinder_happier_more_creative#:~:text=Scientists%20are%20beginning%20to%20find,to%20connect%20with%20other%20people)
- Five Data Backed Ways Working Outdoors Can Improve Employee Well Being: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/alankohl/2018/06/25/5-data-backed-ways-working-outdoors-can-improve-employee-well-being/?sh=64a3c6ce4eb8>
- National Geographic Live – This is Your Brain on Nature: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BiXrRK-yrfA>

## Module Practice

Look for opportunities to be playful and encourage playfulness amongst your team.

- What happens when you introduce or foster levity into the work day?

Identify ways of bringing time in nature into your work day.

- What happens when you incorporate time in nature into your work day?



# Mood Contagion



Our moods are physiologically contagious. Research demonstrates that we have a natural tendency to mimic or mirror the facial expressions, postures and other behaviours of others during interactions. We even pick up on and mirror very subtle physical cues called micro-expressions which are fleeting, involuntary expressions of feelings that last a fraction of a second. This physical mirroring triggers our brains, and we sync up emotionally with others in a matter of seconds.

This means that we literally rely on connections with other people to help determine our moods. This is helpful – because of this, a parent has the ability to soothe their child.

What is the physiological reason for mood contagion?

- Our limbic system has an open-loop design (external sources help to manage it).
- One person transmits signals (via mirror neurons) that alter hormone levels (e.g. oxytocin), cardiovascular functions, sleep rhythms and even immune functions inside the body of another.
- If you tell a gripping story, my brain patterns will match up to yours.

Both positive and negative moods are literally contagious; however, a good mood spreads more quickly than irritability or depression. Moods that start at the top of the organization tend to move the fastest – but leaders at all levels (people with influence) will impact the moods of their peers and others.

**And this translates into mood-impacting organizational performance!**

Why does this happen? Daniel Goleman, Richard Boyatzis, and Annie McKee talk about this in their book, *Primal Leadership*:



When influential people are in a positive mood, others view everything in a more positive light – they become more:

- Optimistic about achieving their goals.
- Creative.
- Mentally efficient.
  - Better able to take in complex information.
  - Better at making decisions.
  - More flexible in their thinking.
- Helpful to others.

Why is this important? A leader's mood impacts organizational results!

*"Of all the elements affecting organizational performance, the importance of people's moods and accompanying behaviours are the most surprising."*

They describe the implications of their research in this way:

*If a leader's mood and accompanying behaviours are indeed such potent drivers of business success, then a leader's premier task—we would even say his primal task—is emotional leadership. A leader needs to make sure that not only is he regularly in an optimistic, authentic, high-energy mood, but also that, through his chosen actions, his followers feel and act that way, too. Managing for financial results, then, begins with the leader managing his inner life so that the right emotional and behavioural chain reaction occurs.*

### Some steps you can take to strengthen your emotional leadership:

1. Be purposeful about the impact you want to have (identify the kind of a leader you want to be)
  - Envision yourself as a higher effective leader (regardless of what level in the organization you are at today)
  - How do you want to show up at work?
  - What is the impact that you want to have?
2. Understand your impact on others today (Where are you now?)
  - In what circumstances has your emotional leadership been helpful for others?
  - Where has it been a hindrance?
3. Develop a plan for closing the gaps (How do you get from here to there?)
4. Rehearse new behaviours (Physically and mentally)
5. Identify others who can support you in this journey (e.g. Coach, mentor, colleague, manager)

What are some things that you can do to put yourself in the best possible frame of mind to show positive emotional leadership?

All of the things that we've talked about that activate the Parasympathetic Nervous System (PNS) (Mindfulness, Compassion, Hope, Playfulness, and Time in Nature) will help you achieve a positive mindset. Some things that you can do include:

- Practising gratitude (boosts dopamine)
- Practising hope (talking about positive goals and dreams – it activates brain centres that open you up to new possibilities)
- Using humour
- Spending time with people who positively impact your mood (you can benefit from other's emotional leadership too)

But you can't fake it... your mood must resonate with reality and has to be in tune with people around you and the realities of your culture and your organizational state. If you try to "fake it", people will likely be able to read the real inner sentiment underneath the outward façade (remember how mirror neurons work). So, the work isn't just putting on a face, but actually working to shift your inner state.

**For further information on emotional contagion, check out these resources:**

- Faster Than a Speeding Text: "Emotional Contagion" at Work: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-science-work/201410/faster-speeding-text-emotional-contagion-work>
- Primal Leadership: The Hidden Driver of Great Performance: <https://hbr.org/2001/12/primal-leadership-the-hidden-driver-of-great-performance>
- The Contagion We Can Control: <https://hbr.org/2020/03/the-contagion-we-can-control>
- The Ripple Effect: Emotional Contagion and Its Influence on Group Behavior: <https://web.media.mit.edu/~tod/media/pdfs/EmotionalContagion.pdf>
- Is a Bad Mood Contagious?: <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/is-a-bad-mood-contagious>





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## For Further Study – References & Referrals

The following list of books, websites, videos, etc. includes material referenced throughout the program as well as materials suggested by previous program participants.

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Rubin, G. (2009). *The Happiness Project*. New York, NY: Harper Collins.

Seligman, M. E. P. (2006). *Learned Optimism: How to Change Your Mind and Your Life*. New York, NY: Vintage Books.

Vaill, Peter, B (1996). *Learning As A Way of Being: Strategies for Survival in a World of Permanent White Water*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

## Article Links

- Article re: vulnerability and leadership  
<https://www.cheknews.ca/commentary-b-c-s-love-affair-with-dr-bonnie-henry-668376/>
- Article that synthesizes The Resilience Factor (includes a self-assessment tool). Article by Frumi Rachel Barr, MBA, PhD  
<https://www.yumpu.com/en/document/read/20991752/the-resilience-factor-frumi-group>
- Article that reviews Peter Vail's Book "Learning As A Way of Being" (see book list)  
[https://www.hepg.org/her-home/issues/harvard-educational-review-volume-67-issue-1/herbooknote/learning-as-a-way-of-being\\_214](https://www.hepg.org/her-home/issues/harvard-educational-review-volume-67-issue-1/herbooknote/learning-as-a-way-of-being_214)



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## Authors and Facilitators



[Heather Lehmann](#) is a respected executive coach and organization development consultant with over twenty-five years of leadership and consulting experience. She helps executives:

- Develop their leadership capabilities.
- Initiate, implement and sustain strategic change.
- Engage in critical conversations with their boards, leadership teams, employees, and other stakeholders.

Heather has supported executives at some of the largest private and public sector organizations in BC through complex and disruptive change. Heather's [qualifications](#) include an MBA from UBC, a degree in Psychology, and a Certified Professional Coach designation. She has a passion for helping leaders make changes that matter in their leadership and in their organizations.



[Liz Gilliland](#) Executive Director of the [BC Excluded Employees' Association](#) is a retired BC Government Assistant Deputy Minister. She has over 20 years of progressively senior level provincial government experience in leading organizational and cultural change management initiatives, integrated service delivery projects, and a variety of key operations, programs and policies. She has held positions in regional BC, ministry headquarters and spent two years working for the Deputy Minister to the Premier.

Liz has a passion for people development and facilitates learning and professional development including as a sessional at UVIC's School of School of Public Administration, an instructor at Royal Roads University's Centre for Applied Leadership and Management and for the BC Excluded Employees' Association.

Liz brings a sense of humour and practicality to all her workshops.

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