

FOUR VALUABLE TIPS FOR EXECUTIVES LEADING THROUGH DISRUPTION

1. Focus on What is Not Changing

Many specific circumstances we are facing are unprecedented, but the dynamic of rapid, disorienting change is not. Many aspects of John Kotter's guidance on managing change are applicable here. Specifically, spend some time focusing on what is **not** changing. Principles which have guided you through difficult times before remain as applicable as ever: focus, prioritization, perseverance, resilience. In a leadership role, continue to **communicate** frequently in order to promote alignment and engagement through rapidly changing conditions. Keep in mind: It is seldom possible to overcommunicate an important message.

2. Establish and Maintain Routines and Structure

If you are moving more rapidly during this period, keep routines and structures in place that allow you to keep perspective and maintain your health and energy. Velocity is not always the answer to complexity. Keep regular breaks, meals, activity/exercise and sleep on your schedule. Maintain your routines. They provide the framework and foundation from which to manage smaller tasks so your energy and focus can be directed to the larger challenges. Give yourself a break if you find you are operating at less than full efficiency until you can restore some of the structure on which that efficiency was based. William Bridges' work in *"Transitions"* confirms that sudden and significant changes are often accompanied by a temporary decline in efficiency.

3. Separate Fact From Noise

Take care of yourself, continue to monitor and moderate emotional responses. Avoid those voices escalating emotion into panic. Charles Mackay in his work *"Extraordinary Popular Delusions and the Madness of Crowds"* said that people go mad in "herds" and return to sanity one by one. Stay away from the noise that foments overreaction, discouragement or panic. Search for facts and data on which to base strategic decision-making. Separate yourself from the herd and be guided by your own critical thinking and strategic vision. Leaders demonstrate that for others. Use facts and data as steppingstones to the other side of a significant, but temporary, challenge.

4. Take Care of Yourself

No matter how busy, stressful, intense or consuming your current environment seems, there is always time to take care of yourself. This is the foundation on which your effectiveness depends. If you don't believe it, take 60 seconds now to relax and breathe deeply. Notice how long that feels but how much of a shift can occur in even that brief period. As Stephen Covey pointed out in *"Seven Habits,"* taking time to maintain and strengthen your physical, spiritual, mental and social/emotional well-being is at the core of your effectiveness. Keep it as your priority. Sleep, eat and exercise to boost your energy, strengthen your immunity and maintain the perspective you need, especially under highly challenging conditions.