



**UNIVERSITY OF  
CALGARY**

# **Energize Your Workplace**

Tips and Worksheet

**CONTINUING EDUCATION**




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# Introduction




Is your leadership resilient enough to get your team through this crisis?

To lead through a crisis is not for the faint of heart. This pandemic is the greatest challenge of our lifetime and we are figuring it out as we go. It's hard work. Restore your confidence and renew your optimism with three simple ideas that matter.




## Three Challenges Leaders Face Now:

-  Emotional Chaos
-  Uncertainty
-  Disconnect

## Three Important Ideas:

-  Managing Emotions
-  Cultural Optimism
-  Meaningful Connection

## Three Tools:

-  Have More Conversations
-  Ask More Questions
-  Listen Differently

“In my experience people everywhere are longing for new ways of working together, and for more harmonious relationships. We know we need to work together, because daily we are overwhelmed by problems that we can't solve alone. People want to help. We want to contribute. We want to feel hopeful.”

Margaret Wheatley,  
Finding Our Way



# Three Challenges Leaders Face Now

“Never waste a good crisis”



A crisis forces us to **pay attention, to notice, listen deeply and learn.** What we need to do now to be a great leader is no different than it was a year ago. It's just more important and the stakes are higher.



## Emotional Chaos

You probably don't need me to paint this picture for you. We can see it in our families in teams as we struggle with our own emotions and managing and supporting our teams. We can go from being flooded with emotion to feeling nothing.

Emotional chaos means there is an avalanche of emotions and they could be different from moment to moment and everyone is impacted. As a leader how do you manage all that?



## Uncertainty

Uncertainty is the opposite of control. Control is what humans thrive on. As a leader how do you bring some calm and focus and meaningful action to your teams?



## Disconnect

We have felt disconnected way before now. Loneliness has been on the rise and is the biggest global health issue. As a leader how do you build connection, support and community with your remote teams or if some of you are back in the workplace and a much altered workspace?

# Three Important Ideas



## Managing Emotions

What matters now is getting more comfortable and easy with emotions. We need to get better at managing emotions and get past this idea that we “should just leave emotion out of it.” We can pretend to not feel, but everybody does. Managing emotions is a new frontier that will make us more powerful, more compelling and trustworthy, and way more effective.



## Cultural Optimism

Our focus needs to be on building Cultural optimism. We as leaders can choose how we respond to challenges, we can help our team get behind a new vision of change and transformation. Now is the time to have the courage to be enthusiastic. Express appreciation. Give compliments. Call out triumphs. If you see something good speak up.



## Meaningful Connection

We can make connection a priority. We can listen better. We can have more curious conversations, ask more questions and show genuine interest in knowing people on a deeper level. We can build resilience and engagement through conversations.

# Three Tools



## Have More Conversations

**Every conversation matters.**

How many real conversations are you having right now? How many times have you thought to yourself, “I’m too busy to have this conversation?”

How many meetings have you planned today? Too many defeats the purpose because you cannot have the kind of conversations we need if you are stacking them.

Everything a leader does that has value happens inside of a conversation. Let that sink in. Leadership is about people. If you are not having conversations you are not leading.

Think about the last time you felt inspired, acknowledged, appreciated or significant. Or felt that you learned something, were challenged or supported and guided? These things happen in conversations. It’s where trust is built. It’s where meaning and purpose live. It’s where vision is shared and we develop common ground and high standards.

### **Try This:**

Every conversation leaves people feeling better or worse as a result of the interaction. **What if you ran an experiment and kept a running log of your conversations in a day?** How many would have a positive impact on the person you were talking to? How many would have a negative impact on the person you were talking to? Just paying attention in this way changes how often you could leave people feeling inspired, supported, encouraged, valued, appreciated and significant.





## Ask More Questions

Conversations that are transformational begin with curiosity.

We can ask questions that help us understand where people are at and how they are feeling. We can ask questions that help teams develop a shared vision, a common purpose and a game plan for moving forward as things change. And we can have conversations that build trust, respect and a feeling that “we’re in this together.”

### Try these to:

#### Show care and compassion and support people emotionally

*How are you feeling right now?  
On a scale of 1-10, where are you at?*

*What is the hardest thing you are dealing with right now?*

*What do you need from me?*

#### Build cultural optimism and transformation

*What challenges are we facing now?  
What’s harder?*

*What opportunities are ahead?  
What doors are opening?*

*When we look back at this time,  
what do we want to remember?*

#### Build Connection

*What matters most to our team right now?*

*How can we best support one another?*

*How can we balance appreciation and accountability?*



## Listen Differently

Listen to each others stories.

It has never been more important to tell our heart stories. Listening heals us. When you tell a difficult or painful experience over time when you are listened to you eventually recast the story to reveal more about what you learned, how you changed, and what you came to understand. We can even find meaning and inspiration in our stories. We can do this as a team and build deep connection trust and engagement.

### Do you know how you listen?

Let me give you an example: I am talking with a VP of a company I work with. I ask him how he is feeling now? He says, *“I’m feeling really unsettled.”*

### How would you respond?

I could say, *“Of course. We’re in unsettling times, your organization has been disrupted, you are having to make tough decisions. You are worried about your operation and your people. How could you not be unsettled in the face of all of this? I totally get it.”*

How’s that? It would be the most obvious thing for me to say. It reflects empathy, understanding and awareness of what’s happening.

It’s way better than saying, *“OMG, me too. I just had the worst day. My budget got cut and several of our projects cancelled.”*

**Both of these responses would be a mistake.**

It’s a mistake because in this very new world there’s a response that’s important and necessary before empathy. **And that is curiosity.**

Ask questions and be **OPEN**, and **LISTEN** and **LEARN**. This kind of listening takes humility and not knowing.

## Try This:

So a much better response is to say ... *tell me about that. What's making you feel like that?*

We can learn to listen differently. And it feels so much better. And it to end the gaping disconnect in our world, the polarization of one group against another, the division that weakens us we need to listen with curiosity.

One of the most powerful questions I think leaders can ask a lot:

*What do you mean when you say that? Or, When you say you are unsettled, what does that mean for you?*

Use the **EAR Acronym** coined by Ken Blanchard, author of The 1 Minute Manager.

- E** xplore
- A** cknowledge
- R** Hold Back Response

**Our biggest challenges are not new. Just bigger. Harder than ever.**

- How do you use emotions to bolster engagement?
- How do you help people feel calm grounded and focussed in the midst of uncertainty?
- How do you actually help people feel connected, like the slogan, *"We're all in this together?"*

The best tools we have are not new. Just more important than ever.

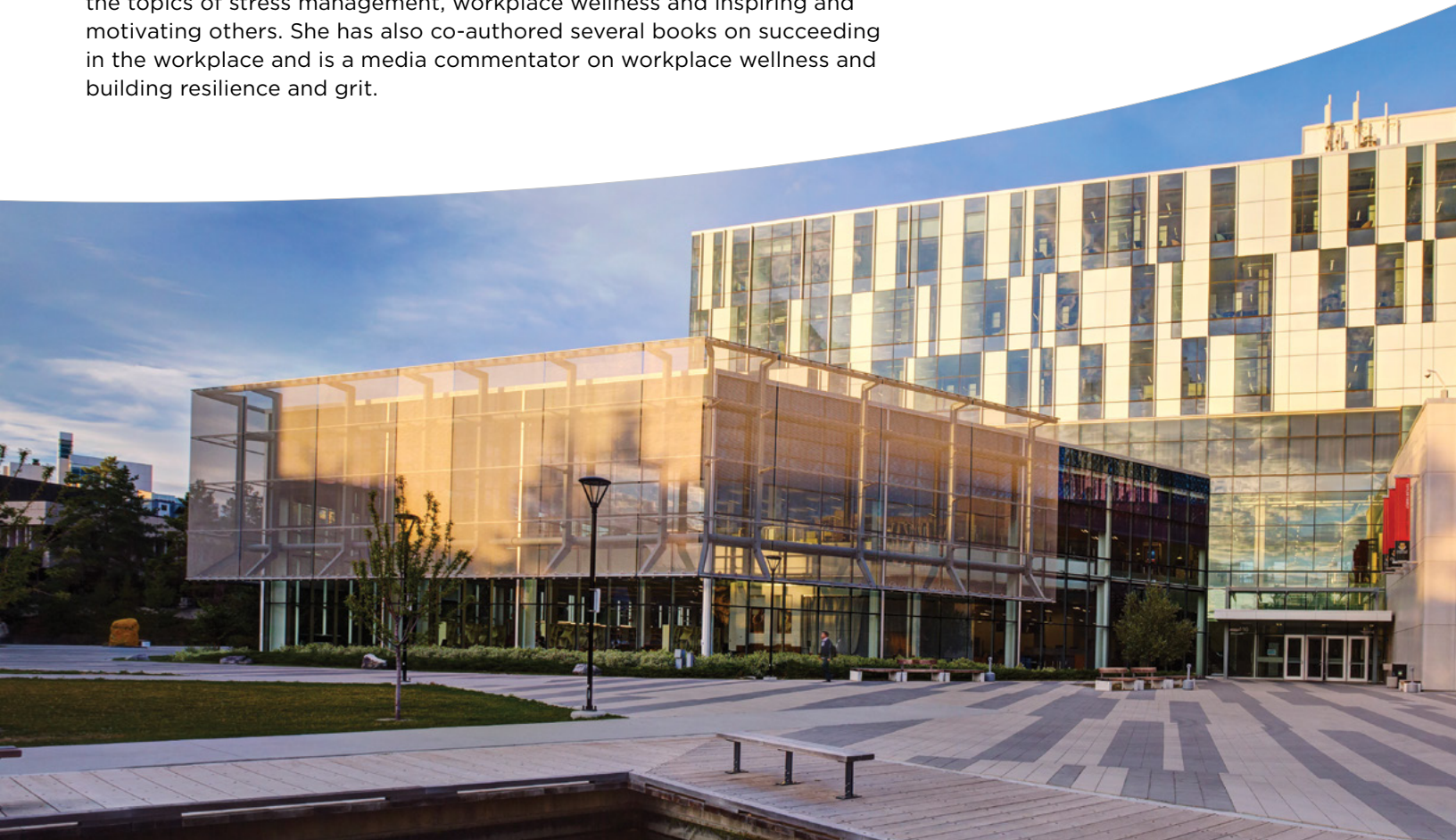
**Pay Attention. Listen Deeply. Learn and Adjust.**

**What would change if you had more conversations, asked more questions and listened differently?**



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Tammy Robertson, MA, is an instructor with University of Calgary Continuing Education in the Emerging Leaders Certificate program. She teaches on the topics of stress management, workplace wellness and inspiring and motivating others. She has also co-authored several books on succeeding in the workplace and is a media commentator on workplace wellness and building resilience and grit.



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