

Summary of Webinar Leadership in Time of Crisis: Remote Leaders Must be Brain Aware

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1. What makes COVID-19 any different than other big crisis in our society?

- **The strong survival response:** This involves the primitive flock reaction of let's get toilet paper! From our three brains (reptilian-instincts; limbic – emotions and pre-frontal - rationality) when we are in a crisis the reptilian brain takes the control: survival response: fight – freeze – flight; and the rational brain is deactivated. We cannot think properly. We need to regain control.
- **The level of uncertainty:** The brain is very sensitive regarding lack of information and our current reality is characterized by a high level of uncertainty.
- **Too sudden:** The situation came to fast to be digested.

2. Why is there such a range of different behaviors?

- **Personalities:** The way we react to crises depends on our different personalities.
- **Two levels or two stages:** When the crisis lasts longer than expected, the brain needs to find a new norm. There are two levels or stages: first one the survival response (reptilian brain), the second one the cooperation response (rational and emotional brain) we understand that together is better and faster. This is the reason why we are hearing so many acts of altruism, compassion, and solidarity. A healthy tribal response.
- **Impact on Relatedness:** this is another social domain that we need to keep in balance. The feeling of being protected by the group.

3. **What to do then? Can you define in a few words the objective and actions to take?**

- **The objectives:**

- To create a psychological proximity environment: make people feel connected. We now know, thanks to our experiences with current technology, we can feel closer despite physical distance.
- Be present and be relevant.
- Engage everyone in the process: we are all co-creating this new reality, nobody has a formula. There is no excuse, we are all responsible.

- **The actions to take:**

- Create a new routine for your team ASAP. The brain replaces uncertainty with routines.
- Communicate as often as you can in a systematic and organized way. You as a leader do not need to be in every communication.
- Establish a concrete working and resting time for your team.
- Build an internal network of communication. Who is contacting who if there is an emergency? Everyone should have the contact info of only one person for any emergency. The leader is part of the network not the main "to go" person.
- Don't let anyone spread negativity or play the victim...for too long. Move them to take action, don't play savior. Make them accountable. Check if someone is needing professional help to overcome this situation.
- Keep your team busy. Clear goals are needed!

“When we are no longer able to change the situation, we are challenged to change ourselves” - Viktor Frankl