

**PANDEMIC EMPLOYEE  
PROGRAM COMPLEMENTARY  
TIPSHEETS**

**LEADERS AND TEAMS**

- **Leadership Self Care During a Crisis**
- **Stay Healthy While Social Distancing**
- **How leaders can maximise trust and minimise stress during the pandemic**
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## Leadership Self Care During a Crisis

Even in ordinary times people can make their leader a hero – and sometimes a scapegoat. Leaders become public property onto whom others project things and, whether they like it or not, leaders can be burdened with unrealistic expectations. We are all dealing with circumstances that none of us could have imagined a few months ago, so it is no wonder we want someone to show us the way and take care of us. Yet how can leaders possibly have all the answers in these unprecedented times? The heroic label can feel like just another miserable weight on your shoulders.

As a leader it will be hard for you to avoid these dynamics, but you can work with them (Binney et al 2005). For many years now evidence has suggested that heroic leadership – a model in which a single individual is perceived as driving an organisation to success – does not create better outcomes for leaders or teams.

### Focus on Self Care

Don Berwick, President Emeritus at the Institute for Healthcare Improvement, offers how leaders can take care of themselves, and their teams during this crisis.

#### ■ Consider yourself a priority

- It's a very demanding time for leaders, that's for sure, part of my message to leaders is really the same as to the workforce as a whole which is first take care of yourself. This is going to be a long haul and leaders are human beings and they need to attend to their own health and well-being and sense of energy. Those who treat leadership as totally sacrifice of themselves won't get through this as effectively as they could be so nurture yourself.

#### ■ Bring people together and share

- Do it together although work many of us are trapped in a virtual world now it doesn't mean we can't reach out to each other exchange ideas exchange support and be willing to talk about the emotional side of it because all of us need to understand the psychological stresses upon us in terms of leading the organisation.

#### ■ Provide stability as best you can

- The leader is the source of a sense of stability and moderation even in a crisis. The staff are looking to the leaders to advance a sense of planning and in the long run, confidence, as well as an invitation that everyone should be involved in the solving of the problems.

## Leadership Self Care During a Crisis

### Be authentic

- Leaders need to convey a sense of direction and confidence and honesty because the other thing I think is essential in a crisis is trustworthiness. The believability of leaders matters and so telling the truth is a mainstay both about what you know and about what you don't know.

### Share your stories

- It's not every man for himself or every-one woman for herself, it's all of us together, so I think that means that we need platforms for exchange for storytelling.

### Think about what matters to you

- Under the pressure of this crisis it may feel inefficient, but we have to reserve time to inquire about how we're doing. In the in quieter times at the Institute for Healthcare Improvement where I work, it has pushed long and hard for the idea of asking 'what matters to you' not just 'what's the matter with you'- this is a time to ask that question.

## Share the leadership load

Leadership is about relationships, not being a superhero. Keeping the five points below in mind can help you to let go of this and support your teams to keep hold of their collective strength.

### Harness the team's collective strength

- Remember we are all just human and you are doing your best.
- Your imperfections make you valuable as a leader – people can relate to you and trust you with their own uncertainties if they know you have some too.
- In moments of stress, draw a breath, keep in touch with your humanity, emotions and intuition.
- Ask others for their views – they will have ideas you haven't thought of.
- There is no need to constantly be the superhero. Keep hold of your courage for those moments when you do need to speak up or out.

## Stay Healthy While Social Distancing

We offer some ways you can stay connected, stay healthy, and stay safe. Follow along for tips and tricks for making the best of uncertain times and staying in touch with loved ones. Doing your part by staying home and self-isolating is so important right now, but staying in can make it a lot more difficult to take care of yourself. Self-care is so much more than just worrying about your physical state.

Here are some amazing free resources that you can use to complete your self-care routine:

### Smiling Mind — Available for Android, iOS and on web.

- This completely free meditation app and web service is perfect for people of all ages and meditation experience levels. Smiling Mind recognises the importance of being mindful throughout our daily lives, but with the explosion of the Coronavirus they're providing even more insight into why managing your emotions is more crucial than ever.

### Stop, Breathe, Think — Available on Android and iOS.

- This is another meditation app that can be downloaded for free, but also has a paid premium option. A great feature of this app is that once installed you can indicate how you're feeling at any given time and based on that the app will recommend a meditation option for you. If you're new to meditating you might not know what practice is best for you, so this feature is great!

### BBC Good Food — Available for Android.

- Wellness encompasses mind, body and soul... or something like that! With over 10,000 recipes available for free, you're bound to find something you like. The food you put into your body can affect both your body and your mind so let's try to avoid binge eating junk and opt instead for some good quality food while stuck at home.

## Stay Healthy While Social Distancing

### ■ Big Oven — Available for Android and iOS.

- Did you think 10,000 free recipes was a lot? We did too until we learned that Big Oven has over 350,000 recipes available within their free app! They also have a feature that will help you build your grocery list based on what recipes you want to make. Perfect if you're ordering your groceries online — just copy and paste!

### ■ Dots — Available for Android and iOS.

- Alright, this app suggestion is one hundred percent for brain stimulation. It's super simple, and super fun. Dots is essentially a puzzle game that will help keep your brain engaged and active. If a couple rounds of Dots each day will help stop the process of your brain turning to mush, we'd say it's worth a try.

If we can take some time out of our day to focus on our health and wellbeing we'll all be better off once we're able to get back to our normal lives!

## How leaders can maximise trust and minimise stress during the pandemic

Evidence based advice on how to boost your leadership communication in times of crisis.

People look to leaders for guidance on what to do, what to expect and how to act. During uncertain and fluid times, the need for strong, calm, trustworthy leadership is more important than ever.

Recent research points to several ways that leaders — whether they are government officials, business managers, educators or parents — can improve their communication skills to maximise trust and minimise stress and anxiety:

### Manage stress

- People look to leaders to be calm and deliberate in their decisions and actions. Leaders who react to stressful events in highly emotional ways can add to people's stress and anxiety. Leaders can start by slowing down, taking stock of their stress and understanding what is causing an emotional reaction. Even when facing the demands of a high-profile crisis, leaders must take breaks to reset and refocus.

### Share information with empathy and optimism

- In their communications, leaders should recognise the uncertainty and anxiety people are experiencing. This is especially important when leaders are communicating decisions that might add to people's stress, such as a business closure or a reduction of work hours. Recognise that people who are anxious need their leaders to give them hope and a sense of control. A loss of control can contribute to a sense of helplessness. Leaders should make it clear that there is a path to a better future and let people know how they can contribute. Providing specific steps people can take will help them manage stress and worry and build hopefulness.

### Use credibility to build trust

- Credibility is a combination of expertise and dependability. Leaders gain credibility when they demonstrate that they understand the risks and ramifications of a situation. At the same time, leaders should not expect that they know all the answers. Good leaders admit when they don't know the answer to a question and defer to other experts — such as scientists or policymakers.

## How leaders can maximise trust and minimise stress during the pandemic

### ■ Be honest and transparent

- To increase trust and connection, leaders should deliver disappointing news in a clear, straightforward way and avoid giving a false perception that everything is OK. Effective leaders don't hide bad news, which rarely stays hidden. Leaders who don't share all the facts quickly become less credible, and that type of leadership can lead to more panic and overreaction.

### ■ Provide regular communications

- Good leaders establish a communication routine that people can look to with reliability. When communication stops, people are prone to imagine the worst.

### ■ Provide a forum for feedback

- People will have questions and will want to offer suggestions. Leaders gain trust when those they support feel involved and heard. While leaders can't collect and respond to everyone's feedback, they can provide reasonable, appropriate channels for questions and suggestions, such as how to support local businesses.

### ■ Be a role model

- When people aren't sure how they should behave, they look to leaders as role models. Leaders must behave consistently with what they are asking others to do. Leaders need to be the first to embrace new policies such as cutting back on travel and practicing social distancing. People will follow the example of leaders they respect.

## Coping with pandemic related stress

With our workplaces disrupted like never before, we are facing unprecedented change.

Your meetings may now be virtual. Perhaps you're juggling your children's educational needs as well as your own. Whether you're a leader or team member, you're probably feeling anxious, sad and uncertain. These feelings are normal. And there are ways to lessen your stress.

### Practice self-care

- Basic self-care will keep your immune system strong and your emotional reserves full. Get enough sleep. Exercise regularly. Eat well. Try mindfulness apps.
- Find activities that engage different parts of yourself. Do something physical like dancing. Occupy your mind with puzzles. Engage your senses with hot baths or fragrant candles.
- Look for tasks you can postpone or simply eliminate from your to-do list.

### Find ways to focus

- You might feel unmotivated now. Recognise that the current circumstances are hard for everyone. Don't judge yourself; just do the best you can.
- Establish a routine. Get up, go to bed and do your work at the same time every day. Frequent breaks can help you re-engage in your work.
- Try to create a separate work space, although you should reserve your sleeping area for sleeping. If family members are distracting you, use "I statements" to explain the problem--"I'm can't focus on this report"—and work together to develop solutions.

### Seek out social support

- Your teammates have probably scattered. And having to stay home can be lonely. To combat isolation, come together with your team mates for fun activities such as Friday afternoon 'quarantines' via technology.
- Even something as simple as turning on your webcam during virtual sessions can help you and others feel more connected.

## Coping with pandemic related stress

### Help others cope

- Your teammates and family members are anxious, too. You don't have to fix their problems. It's enough to let them know they're not alone. Be sure to address your own concerns so you can focus on your work. Ask your manager for help.

### Find ways to manage disappointment

- Whether it's a project you started earlier in the year and were excited to deliver, or a training course you were looking forward to attending, important events may not happen this year.
- Grieve those losses, then reframe how you think about these life events. Think about how you can honour what you've achieved. Find new ways to celebrate. Consider recreating important events once it's safe.

### Focus on things you can control

- Your teammates, friends or family members may be disobeying the rules about physical distancing or doing other things that add to your stress.
- While modelling good behaviour and staying safe yourself, recognise that you can't control what other people do. You can only control your own thoughts, feelings and behaviours. Another thing you can't control? The uncertainty about what comes next. Instead of worrying about our ambiguous future, focus on solving immediate problems.

### Find a role model

- In these challenging times, some people are better positioned than others – financially, socially, emotionally and psychologically – to ride out the ups and downs of the coming weeks. Here are five questions to ground yourself:
  1. Who is your role model?
  2. What is your #1 priority?
  3. Who is someone that can help you even in a small way?
  4. Who can you help?
  5. What character strengths does your role model display?

Recognise that the current circumstances are hard for everyone.  
Don't judge yourself; just do the best you can.

## Building an environment for self compassion

Just like the rest of the world, leaders navigated the new reality brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic: transitioned to work from home, managed childcare while schools were closed, worried about older family members and are still wondering what comes next. We have all of these concerns ourselves, and then we have to also provide support as our staff struggle with them, too. Whether you're a leader or a team member, how can you take care of yourself and build an environment of self-compassion during stressful times?

### ■ Prioritise

- Make a plan of action by listing your work and personal priorities and deciding what can be delegated or postponed. Be sure to add self-care to your schedule. "In stressful times, self-care can seem frivolous or selfish...but committing to self-care will preserve your ability to rise to the challenge."

### ■ Stick to a routine

- If you continue to work from home, build a routine to give you a sense of normalcy and stability.

### ■ Create a separate workspace

Working from home can blur the boundaries between work and your personal life so that you feel you're working all the time," says Nathaly Shoua-Desmarais, PsyD, of Florida International University. "I could be on the computer 24/7 now." Create a separate workspace if possible, even if that means setting up a desk in a corner of your living room with your back to the larger space, she suggests. Keep your sleeping area as personal space, she adds.

### ■ Exercise

If you can get outside, take a walk or run. But there's plenty you can do inside. "People are posting workouts on social media and hosting exercise classes on Zoom. Ask your gym or yoga studio if they're offering virtual sessions or look for workouts on YouTube. Even dancing to your favourite music in your living room can help.

## Building an environment for self compassion

### ■ Stay connected

- While psychologists often worry about excessive screen time, technology like Zoom, Skype and Google Hangouts has helped people stay connected despite physical isolation. If you started some virtual social gatherings while in isolation, try to continue these, if possible - in person, if not continue with your virtual get togethers. That social interaction is really important for all of us during these times.

### ■ Limit news consumption

- Checking the news or social media constantly or having the news on in the background only causes unnecessary distress. Decide how much time you're going to devote to checking reliable sources and stick to that limit. That could mean spending 5 minutes scanning the news in the morning and another 5 minutes before doing pre-bedtime relaxation exercises.

### ■ Practice mindfulness and relaxation techniques

- "Mindfulness activities can be helpful for dealing with anxiety," says Richelle Concepcion, PsyD, MPH, of Tripler Medical Center in Hawaii. "Meditation, yoga, even mindful breathing are ways to slow things down." And there are plenty of free resources, including autogenic training on YouTube, the apps Breathe2Relax and Tactical Breather, or the Mindfulness Coach.

### ■ Cut yourself some slack

- "It's important to be kind to others — and to ourselves," says Teachman. Keep in mind that in times of stress, you're not going to be as productive and that's OK, she says.

### ■ Check in with colleagues

- Keep an eye on colleagues who may be struggling, and let them know you're struggling, too, as a way of normalising their reactions. And find meaning in helping others. "There's not enough yoga in the world to deal with the magnitude of what we're coping with right now," says Boxley. "We have to think flexibly about self-care: It's not just about taking care of ourselves but about taking care of others."

## Managing your energy

2020 has presented us all with huge challenges, it's completely understandable and normal that the current situation can feel unsettling and overwhelming. But whatever your role, fear, anxiety, panic and fatigue will disrupt your ability to focus on the right priorities, manage your relationships effectively, and make informed choices. The practice of restorative self-care is hugely important for sustaining energy and building resilience in the weeks and months ahead. When we make time for self-care, we also model it as a legitimate and important priority for others around us. There is a framework that can be useful here. Put simply it offers a way to think about how you manage your physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual energies. We often assume effective time management is what underpins high performance, leading to a preoccupation with tasks and 'doing' that can and often does lead to burnout. But it is the effective management and intentional use of your energy that really matters because – unlike time – energy is renewable if you invest in it (Loehr and Schwartz 2003)<sup>1</sup>. Using the simple framework below, try to reflect honestly on what you do, don't do, and could do to routinely renew and manage your energy.

### Physical Energy

- Good nutrition, exercise, sleep, and rest are the foundation of physical energy, but they are also vital for managing emotions and focusing attention. Is your body getting what it needs to properly restore itself each day?

### Intellectual Energy

- This is about the mental ability for sustained concentration and attention; for data, for memory, and for speed, flexibility and creativity of thought. What do you do to relax that gives your mind the time and opportunity to recover throughout the day?

### Emotional Energy

- Emotional energy is central to how effectively you understand and regulate your emotions, as well as how you connect with others. What coping mechanisms do you use to process your emotions and develop your self-awareness? Who or what in your life helps you experience positive emotions?

### Spiritual Energy

- We all have and feel a connection to something bigger than ourselves. What that is will be deeply personal but could include things like values, connection to culture and community, the natural world, and/or to faith and our beliefs. Spiritual energy is ultimately about motivation; it ensures congruence between who we are and what we do (authenticity). What really matters to you?

## Are you burned out? Here are signs and what to do about them

COVID19. Natural disasters. Escalating political tensions. Economic headwinds. All this is taking a toll. Many are viewing the future as a significant source of stress and could do to routinely renew and manage their energy. Burnout is more than just feeling worn out. According to psychologist Christina Maslach, PhD—a pioneering burnout researcher who developed what has become the gold standard for measuring burnout—the condition has three components: overwhelming exhaustion, cynicism and detachment, and a sense of ineffectiveness and lack of accomplishment (Maslach Burnout Inventory Manual, fourth edition, 2016). "People kind of switch to doing the bare minimum instead of doing their very best," says Maslach, a professor emeritus of psychology at the University of California, Berkeley, and co-editor-in-chief of the journal *Burnout Research*. Signs to look for in yourself or others include heightened negative feelings, reduced quality of work, a tired appearance, reduced eye contact, irritability or agitation and poor communication.

### ■ Assess your self-care.

- That might mean sharing work-related stressors with colleagues, being aware of stress-inducing triggers or simply staying up to date on the self-care available in your area.

### ■ Try mindfulness.

- You don't have to have a full-scale meditation practice, instead, try "micro" breaks. Take five or 10 minutes between meetings to hit the pause button, think about something enjoyable and breathe in and out, this helps to build reserve energy so we aren't feeling so drained at the end of the day.

### ■ Change the way you think about your work.

- Much of the burnout research focuses on job demands, such as long hours. Some useful cognitive strategies as reflecting on satisfying work experiences, keeping your job in perspective, being aware of your strengths and weaknesses and monitoring your own reactions on an ongoing basis are helpful.

### ■ Get moving.

- Research shows that cardiovascular exercise and resistance training seem to be effective burnout interventions. "Usually the first thing to go out the window when stress gets higher is going to the gym...instead of saying, 'I'll go to the gym next week,' we should be saying, 'Oh, my stress load is really high; I need to go to the gym right now.'"

## Are you burned out?

### ■ Seek social support.

- Find a mentor and check in monthly. "They might say, 'The last four times I've seen you, you've reported being really tired. Have you noticed that pattern?'". Rally with your peers and look out for each other. Support from friends helps, too.

### ■ Get political.

- At the end of a day it helps to switch gears and advocate for change, the best fix for burnout in this political climate is to transform anger into action. "Sitting in inaction is a very quick way to get burned out as a social justice advocate". Join a social action group that you're passionate about and get active.

### ■ Unplug, both technologically and mentally.

- Being unable to switch off work after hours is associated with burnout. Refraining from work-related thoughts and activities during non-work hours can be restorative (*Journal of Organizational Behavior*, Vol. 36, No. S1, 2015). Take leisure time seriously!

## Mourning our pre COVID lives

The COVID-19 pandemic is an epidemiological crisis, but also a psychological one. While the situation provokes anxiety, stress and sadness, it is also a time of collective sorrow - we've lost something. There is a communal grief as we watch our work, health-care, education and economic systems — all of these systems we depend on — destabilise. The losses include our sense of predictability, control, justice, and the belief that we can protect our children or elderly loved ones

### Grief is natural, and most people are resilient.

- Grief is really about turning inward and recalibrating, and thinking: 'This is not the way the world is anymore, and I need to adapt, it's okay to feel grief over what we're losing. When we do that, it allows us to let grief do its job, so that we can move on.
- Grief is transient, even when we're in the midst of its clutches. We should expect to fluctuate between moments of sadness and mourning, and moments of acceptance or even happiness,
- Allow yourself to be distracted and entertained, and make sure you laugh and play.

### Shaking our sense of self.

- We have had to confront a series of losses: The loss of a sense of safety, of social connections and personal freedoms, of jobs and financial security. Going forward, we may experience new losses we can't yet predict.
- These losses affect our senses of self, can feel like a loss of identity. Redefining our attachment to places, projects, possessions, professions and protections, is important.

### It helps to "name and claim" the process.

- You may experience a vague sense of anxiety or wordless suffering, and an organised way of taking action to help cope with their loss can help.
- Keeping a journal to put words to losses, write about your personal strengths and coping skills to help identify ways to move forward can be valuable.

## In search of meaning

In a culture that values speed, technology and consumer cravings, you might think meaning would fade into the background. But our desire for meaning remains strong. Meaning in life appears to nurture us, meaning-related work helps us identify, prioritise and act on what matters most to us. Things are meaningful when three aspects are in place: Our work makes sense and has continuity, we are directed and motivated by meaningful goals and we believe our contribution matters to others.

### ■ Have a plan.

Structure us key.

1. Explore your meaning-related issues
2. Gain insight into them
3. Take action.

### ■ Foster a big-picture view.

- See the potential in difficult circumstances, develop resilient attitudes toward challenges, and contribute to others or to a larger cause -aim high toward future ideals.
- Keep a daily journal to express gratitude for life's gifts, including challenges, and to track the sometimes bumpy journey toward making positive changes

### ■ Keep it off a pedestal.

- Meaning is everywhere—in actions as simple as hanging out with one's family or walking the dog. Simply being in a good mood can inspire a greater sense of meaning and that intuition—not analysis—is linked to our ability to perceive a meaningful world. Everyday activities—tasks as simple as helping a person get dressed or taking a stroll together—can be as valuable as loftier or more ambitious goals. "We tend to think of meaning as this most profound of human experiences...yet all of these more ordinary things also foster our sense of meaning."

## Nurtured by nature

### Time in nature can improve our mental health and sharpen our cognition

Spending time in nature is linked to both cognitive benefits and improvements in mood, mental health and emotional well-being. Feeling connected to nature can produce similar benefits to well-being, regardless of how much time one spends outdoors. Both green spaces and blue spaces (aquatic environments) produce well-being benefits. More remote and biodiverse spaces may be particularly helpful, though even urban parks and trees can lead to positive outcomes.

Be honest: How much time do you spend staring at a screen each day? For most of us, that number clocks in at more than 10 hours, according to a 2016 Nielsen Total Audience Report. Our increasing reliance on technology, combined with a global trend toward urban living, means many of us are spending less time outdoors—even as scientists compile evidence of the value of getting out into the natural world.

#### Interacting with nature has cognitive benefits

- Being exposed to natural environments improves working memory, cognitive flexibility and attentional control, while exposure to urban environments is linked to attention deficits. We know that just a few moments of green can perk up a tired brain, and even the sounds of nature may be recuperative.

#### Nature and happiness

- Spending time in nature also has emotional and existential benefits. It is associated with increases in happiness, subjective well-being, positive affect, positive social interactions and a sense of meaning and purpose in life, as well as decreases in mental distress.
- For those of us who can not get outside due to mobility reasons, even virtual reality nature experiences are beneficial.

## Nurtured by nature

### ■ Experience vs. connection

- We get the benefits of nature when we've spent at least two recreational hours in nature a week, that's when we experience significantly greater health and well-being.
- The effects are the same whether you get your dose of nature in a single 120-minute session or spread out over the course of the week.
- It's also beneficial to feel connected to the natural world even when you're stuck at a desk and socially isolated. This connectedness to nature benefits mood and mental health, so find some indoor plants, and visit your local park, it will make a world of difference to your wellbeing.

### ■ Green and blue spaces

- Recent research suggests that along with green spaces, blue spaces such as marine and freshwater environments are also good for well-being.
- Areas deemed to be "high environmental quality"—such as nature reserves and protected habitats—were also more beneficial than areas with low biodiversity.

### ■ Key take aways

- Spending time in nature is linked to both cognitive benefits and improvements in mood, mental health and emotional well-being.
- Feeling connected to nature can produce similar benefits to well-being, regardless of how much time one spends outdoors.
- Both green spaces and blue spaces (aquatic environments) produce well-being benefits. More remote and biodiverse spaces may be particularly helpful, though even urban parks and trees can lead to positive outcomes.

## How our character strengths help us through trying times

When we experience turbulent times, as we are now, we can feel overwhelmed and discouraged, stretched to our limits, and lose sight of our strengths. Often, the loud inner critic joins in the game by suppressing one's confidence—amplifying fear instead. What if we could positively impact resilience, well-being, achievement, and life satisfaction? How might that help us rise to the challenges we face? Developing an awareness of our strengths helps us to focus on “what's strong” instead of on “what's wrong.”

### Understanding character strengths

- Character strengths are those aspects of our personality that define what is best in us. Collectively, they are responsible for our greatest achievements and fulfilment. We each possess all 24 of these strengths in different degrees and combinations. We flourish when we identify and flex our strengths.
- If we want to build up any of these strengths, we can learn to do so. We aren't born missing key character strengths – we just may not have focused on exercising a particular strength, perhaps causing it to atrophy.
- The key is developing an awareness of our strengths and working out how to optimally use them, in order to boost our resilience and well-being
- You can discover your own unique strengths profile and download it for free at <https://www.viacharacter.org/>.

### Your top strengths

- Some strengths are more strongly represented in us, are core to our identity, and to what we value. These are called our “signature strengths” or “top strengths.” They come naturally, and we feel energised and satisfied when we are expressing them. And when others see them in us, we feel understood in a significant way. If we are unable to express these parts of ourselves for some reason, we might feel like we are suffocating or dying inside. That's why focusing on our top strengths and how to put them into play—especially during difficult times like those we face now—is so important. Our top strengths bring meaning into our lives, which is a powerful coping tool in the midst of this pandemic.
- As you look at your strengths ask yourself these questions: Is it authentic? Does it show up often? Do others notice it? Does using it energise me? If unable to express it, would I feel empty?
- We can learn to collaborate with other through developing an appreciation and respect for their strengths. This has never been more needed.

## How our character strengths help us through trying times

### ■ Your situational strengths

- Another category of strengths is called “situational strengths.” These are strengths we call forth when we need to. Often they are lesser strengths for us and can be draining to do activate. We can “step up” and invoke any strength when needed.
- Situational strengths, unlike top strengths, are not as crucial in defining who we are. The difference between situational strengths and top strengths is that people need to express top strengths to feel whole and energised, but they are comfortable expressing situational strengths only when they are needed.
- During this pandemic, most of us are having to call forth strengths we haven’t used much in the past. Learning to combine our less-used strengths with our top strengths to infuse more energy into our actions, is one of the most powerful tools we have at our disposal to get us through hardships. For example, while quarantined, many of us called forth strengths of hope, social intelligence, perseverance, kindness, creativity, bravery, humour, etc.
- The more we use any character strength, our comfort level with that strength will increase—genuinely building that strength.

### ■ Bringing your strengths to life during adversity.

You can open up a new, and empowering trajectory during these trying times by exploring:

- ways you can consistently bring your top strengths forward for greater energy
- strengths you have used optimally in past successes that would be beneficial now
- lesser strengths that could help you achieve a positive outcome to current challenges.

Our strengths bring out the best in us and in those we seek to positively influence, and help us navigate and manage the struggles.