



Where are you on the Corona change curve?

We have been hearing much about epidemiology, medical science and the economics of the pandemic. We are only starting to hear about the psychological impacts of the current situation – yet this drives how people make decisions and plans in organisations, how they interact with others and how they approach their lives.

As a leadership coach with an interest in personal development, I have been curious about the mental journey that people have gone through over recent weeks.

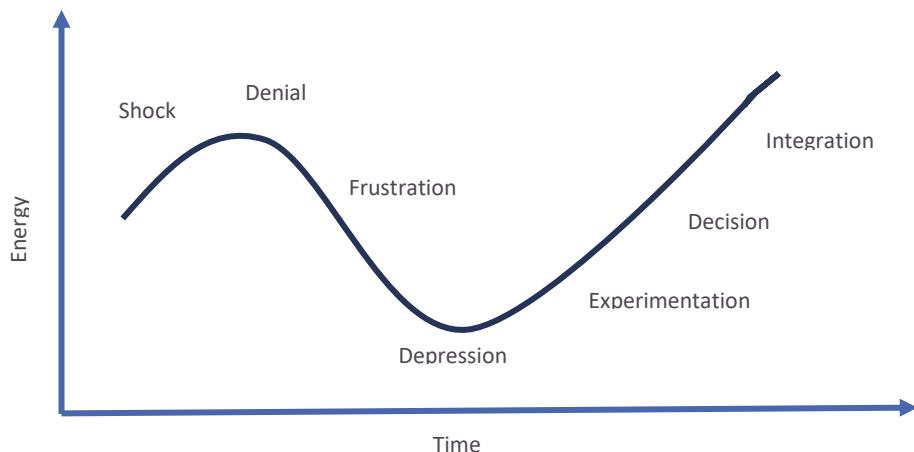
- How are we coping with the disruption of our professional and personal lives?
- How are we dealing with the emotional ups and downs over a prolonged period of lockdown?
- Are we slowly moving towards a “new normal”? What are we learning in the process?

To understand this better, I asked some clients and others in my network for their thoughts and have added their reflections to my own:

- Those in work tend to be overworked having operated in crisis mode for many weeks now – long days full of video meetings, constantly changing priorities (sometimes daily), little time to think, exhausted from juggling childcare and work, the list goes on. Boundaries between work and home life are blurred more than normal, with people feeling an obligation to always be available. Short term thinking wins most days. After many weeks of experiencing a stress response, people are **feeling tired and “battle weary”**.
- Those not in work (because they are furloughed, self-employed or unemployed) are often concerned about the future. Whilst family commitments are more manageable, there can be **feelings of loss, guilt, anger or anxiety**. Some have moved through this and are enjoying a period of rest and quality time with the family. Others have started to think about their **personal and career development**, following the motto **“never let a crisis go to waste”**.

- At the beginning of the lockdown, people stopped responding to messages – a kind of “**psychological lockdown**”. The reasons would have been very individual – needing to deal with practicalities, too busy, feeling overwhelmed, confused, scared. As a coping mechanism, some people retreat when they are under pressure. Since the lock-down has started to be eased, I have noticed a shift with more people looking forward again and re-engaging. I heard the words “I stopped waiting for things and decided to carry on with my life” being said.
- Leaders have been feeling a loss of control which makes them feel more vulnerable than usual, in the face of unprecedented disruption to their businesses. Some try to **regain control by micromanaging** and getting closely involved in the detail of jobs they probably shouldn’t be doing. This is contributing to overwork which can derail leaders and their teams.
- **Extroverts**, who get their energy from the outside world and from the interaction with other people, have had a tough time with social distancing and home working, feeling “**like a tiger in a cage**” at times. **Introverts**, who get their energy from time alone and their inner world of thoughts, have been enjoying this recent period of time more. Fellow introverts have told me that they are finding it easier to contribute during video meetings compared to face to face meetings and they are rather enjoying the solitude of their home office!
- Some people have started to see **the positives of new ways of working** – the opportunity to learn new skills, more efficient meetings, more contact with more diverse range of people, less time wasted on commuting and business travel, improved staff engagement in some organisations, more regular communication. Yet not everyone is ready to spot these benefits and embrace them.

Coaching my clients via Zoom or Skype, I have certainly been noticing strong emotions in the system. In thinking about this, I have found the Kübler-Ross Change Curve helpful:



Faced with significant change, people move along this curve. The process is not necessarily linear, and individuals may go back and forth experiencing ups and downs, or they may get stuck. One of my big learnings during the lockdown period has been the importance of acknowledging and

allowing emotions, in order to enable clear thinking to follow. And we need clear thinking and creativity more than ever right now!

Each person is different, so there is no single recipe for how to get through this. Different people will also be at different points on the curve. Here are some options for personal coping strategies, which people have shared as useful:

- Rest and sleep – we are processing lots of change. This is tiring.
- Give structure to your day / week – routines introduce a sense of normality which can help us to function more effectively again.
- Things like yoga, mindfulness, walks in nature - to calm down and focus.
- Connect with people who give you energy and a different perspective. Talking through your experiences helps to process them.
- Focussing attention on things that you can influence.
- Doing something you really enjoy.
- And very important - have a laugh!



My encouragement to leaders is to look after themselves in these times – only then can you look after your team and the business. How you are will impact others in the organisation, so self-care, as well as care for others, becomes a strategic necessity:

“The Covid-19 Global Pandemic is challenging Leaders on an unprecedented scale, with most organisations fighting to survive while keeping their staff and stakeholders safe, both physically and mentally. More than ever, Leaders need to reach out to Coaches to support themselves, to remain effective and enable others to navigate successfully through this.” Finance Director, Edinburgh

I can be your thinking partner to help you accelerate along the change curve. You might be in a good place already but needing to work differently with your remote team. Or you may need to think through some difficult decisions, dilemmas and new strategies for your business. Or you may be thinking “you know what? I want to do something different” and want to plan your career direction.

I work with organisations and directly with individuals. I am able to be flexible on rates at the moment.

For a complimentary trial session, contact me at sabinestanley@outlook.com, mobile: 07480 517493.