

## Uplifting Leadership Boosts Mental Health & Well-Being



During the past few weeks, I've had several conversations with stressed out business leaders. We've covered life, leadership and the impact of the recent pandemic.

Concerns about business continuity, health and financial security are unsurprisingly dominating.

In all my conversations some key words keep popping up to describe their

experiences. Words like **'surreal', 'weird' and 'strange'**. Many have even told me they feel like they are working in an **'alternate universe'**.

It made me wonder how astronauts cope when they first arrive in Space.

### Even Astronauts need to adjust

Despite intensive training, astronauts can feel disorientated and drained when they arrive in Space. They may also suffer a loss of appetite, stomach upsets and lose their sense of time and space. They need to overcome feelings of stress, anxiety and fear. Adjust to their new surroundings and find ways to cope with being away from their loved ones, friends, and family.

**Does this sound familiar, as you and your team test new ways of working during COVID-19?**

When COVID-19 hit, we did not expect or train for it. Nor did we foresee the disruption it would have in our lives.



Somewhat like an astronaut, **it is normal to feel a sense of disorientation, loss and upset, when navigating an 'alternate universe'**.

## Anxiety and fear in an Alternate Universe



**Does it feel like you have been catapulted into outer space without a space suit? Experiencing a disorientating free fall, as you grieve the temporary loss of gravity that once kept you and those around you grounded?**

Whether you are a leader or employee, it is normal to feel stress, anxiety, and fear during COVID-19.

How it affects individuals depends on their domestic and employment circumstances. Though what we all have in common is we want to protect our physical and mental health, and our well-being.

For most of the working population, the focus on achievement, growth, and advancement [motivational factors] are no longer a priority to achieve job satisfaction and well-being.

**Salary protection, job security, work conditions and safe company policies [hygiene factors] are now top of the list.** Domestic conditions like financial hardship and schooling children may also be considerations.

Most leaders now have less resources, reduced budgets, and lower cash reserves. A large proportion are operating in a devastated marketplace. Wondering how to do more with less as well as maintain employee engagement and well-being.

As a result, **emotions and anxiety levels are running high.**



This calls for leaders to evaluate their approach to leadership for two important reasons. To maintain business continuity and protect the mental health and well-being of themselves and their people.

## The shift in mood state



Inspirational leaders encourage and stimulate feeling and action in a workforce. Inspiring others to push themselves, achieve more and reach their potential. However, as the workforce becomes more concerned with hygiene factors, the motivation to act, achieve more and reach potential is waning. Driven by the need for psychological and physical safety, people's priorities and moods are shifting.

The [British Psychological Society](#) (2020) states '*it is almost inevitable that at some point during isolation and quarantine people will experience feelings of low mood and a lack of motivation*'.

**Mood state and feelings are the drivers of behaviour at work. Response to behaviour also affects mood state and feelings in the workforce.**

When an employee has low mood, they are unlikely to feel enthusiastic or excited about their job and they often lack the motivation to improve relationships at work. They also endanger their own and colleagues mental health and well-being (Totterdell and Niven, [workplace moods and emotions](#) research, 2014). This has a negative impact on communication, collaboration and productivity within an organization.



Inspiring a workforce into action can also prove difficult if a large proportion of employees have low mood. By *uplifting* them – creating an environment that encourages them to improve their mood – they are more likely to be receptive to inspiration. **The presence of uplift is essential if you want to inspire people** in your organization. This calls for an additional leadership discipline. One that focuses on mood enhancement. **A practice called Uplifting Leadership.**

## What is Uplifting Leadership

The word Uplifting means **'to morally or spiritually elevate and inspire happiness or hope'**. Many people get confused between the definition of 'inspiring' and 'uplifting' and think they have the same meaning. There is a difference. Inspiring is to encourage and stimulate action or feeling, whilst uplifting is all about improving mood.

The authors of Uplifting Leadership (Hargreaves, Boyle and Harris, 2014), describe Uplifting Leadership as the beating heart of effective leadership. They say;



*'Uplifting Leadership is the creation of 'emotional, spiritual and moral uplift throughout an organization and the wider community it influences and is concerned with emotional and spiritual engagement, social and moral justice and improved performance in work and life.'*

At its core, Uplifting Leadership involves **'the pursuit and attainment of hope and happiness for every employer, leader, and team member'**.

## Why does Uplifting Leadership Matter?

Employees buy into organisations' that stand for and contribute to something they believe in and deem important. They also want to improve their own quality and experience of life.

Hargreaves, Boyle and Harris (2014) say;



*'Uplifting Leadership raises peoples hopes and stirs up their passions. It stimulates their intellect and imagination. Making spirits soar and pulses quicken in a collective quest to achieve a greater good for everyone. It helps people protect against unexpected or opposing forces. Raising the collective performance of a team to reach outstanding levels of achievement.'*

Uplifting Leadership inspires hope in an organisations' people to achieve happiness. This is important because during periods of uncertainty, mood levels can fluctuate. Apathy can set in and employee expectations start to override organisational aspirations.

Uplifting Leadership embraces cognitive diversity in the workforce. Encourages employers and employees to willingly reveal the outcomes they hope to achieve. Motivates them to reframe their fears and share what they want to happen, rather what they don't want to



happen. It steers work-related conversations in a positive direction. Improves communication and fosters a solution-focused environment. A place where employer and employees work together. Where they fulfil mutual hopes for the benefit of each other, as well as the organization. Advance collective responsibility and shared accountability to deliver outstanding outcomes. A culture where mistakes are learning opportunities. Where mental health and well-being are on an equal footing with financial aspirations.

## Hope in Uplifting Leadership

Everyone wants to be happy, right?

When positive outcomes occur for us - things that we hope for - we become happy.

**Happiness evolves from a reference point of hope.**

The definition of hope is wanting something to happen or be the case – a confident expectation.



Hope creates a positive mood about an expectation, a goal, or a future situation. Whilst there are practical and interdependent stages to navigate between hope and happiness, hope is the reference point by which our level of happiness is assessed.



It is well documented in the Science of Hope (Yes, it is a science) that hope fulfilled leads to health and happiness.

Psychologist [Kaufman](#) (2014) says *Hope is not just a feel-good emotion. It is a dynamic cognitive motivational system.* He also says in [Wills and Ways to Hope](#) that hope involves the will to get there, and different ways to get there. It allows people to

approach challenges with a positive mindset. To develop strategies destined for success.

**Hope satisfied, is happiness.** When we are happy, we feel uplifted. We are more likely to adopt positive thoughts, outlooks and behaviours.

**Encouraging a culture of hope in an organization helps employees find optimism, possibility, and self-efficacy.** The more hope and happiness they have, the more receptive they are to inspiration.

Without hope across the workforce, employees will give up. Their stress, fears and anxiety levels will increase. They will become mentally absent. This can lead to physical absence. They will lose their ability to imagine a better world. This impedes positive thinking, proactivity, and performance. It reduces two-way communication, collaboration, and productivity.

## **Develop shared hopes to protect business continuity and collective mental health and well-being.**

It is the first vital step to help recalibrate a workforce following a major disruption. Turn shared hopes into common goals [causing uplift]. This will give your people faith and a sense of belonging in the organization. It will strengthen bonds, breed loyalty and inspire positive action.

People with hope are more likely to do something that causes shared happiness. And when people do something to cause happiness, they usually want to do more of it. No one ever complained about feeling too much happiness or helping someone else find happiness.



## **Hope and difficult decisions**

You can still give your people hope when having to make difficult decisions. If you are facing this possibility provide your people with Uplifting Leadership. Yes, avoid making grand gestures that you are unable to follow through. Your people will not thank you for making promises you cannot keep. Though they will respect your honesty when you admit you don't have all the answers. Keep them up to date as you learn more and help them make hope happen. Consider the advice of Shane Lopez, PH. D, author of Making Hope Happen. *Focus on fueling optimism in their belief that they have the power to make the changes they want in their life. Help them define realistic goals, offer support and be a hopeful person yourself.*

## **Want to Learn more about Uplifting Leadership?**

Part Two of Uplifting Leadership Boosts Mental Health and Well-being will be available later this week. Watch out for it and discover a few key factors affecting Uplifting Leadership, as well as some practical tips to help leaders generate hope and uplift across the workforce.

## **About the Author**

Kate Halewood is a Leadership, Careers and Life Coach specialising in thinking and behavioural leadership development and transformation. She has over two decades of success in strategic and operational leadership, specialising in change management and business development. She started her career in hotel management, working for prestigious global hotel brands like Marriott and Hilton, as well as the renowned Carden Park Hotel, Golf and Spa Resort. Moving into the regional transport sector she also headed up the Commercial Revenue and Marketing Team for Merseyrail Electrics before leading the Customer Development Team for Merseytravel Transport Authority.

Passionate about helping people overcome what's holding them back and to do more of what they do best, Kate has followed her purpose, become a qualified Life and Performance Coach, Certified Emergentics® Associate and now runs her own company, ROOTBALL Coaching & Consultancy, working with private clients, entrepreneurs and corporate leadership teams to help them, their people and their business thrive.

She is also an active mentor and volunteer for the Princes Trust and board member for the Liverpool Everyman and Playhouse Theatres Trading Board.

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**References:**

[Coping with life in isolation and confinement during the Covid-19 pandemic](#), British Psychological Society, 2020

[Workplace moods and emotions](#) research, Totterdell and Niven, , 2014.

[Will and Way to Hope](#), Kaufman, 2014.