

Part 2 – Uplifting Leadership Boosts Mental Health & Well-being

In Part One of Uplifting Leadership Boosts Mental Health and Well-being, we discovered we are not that different from astronauts in Space. We too need to adjust to new surroundings and to being away from colleagues, family and friends during COVID-19.

We also discovered employee's priorities and moods are changing. There has been a shift to value hygiene factors ahead of motivational factors (Herzberg Two Factor Theory). They are now more susceptible to low mood and a lack of motivation.



To respond to these changes, we discovered the valuable practice of Uplifting Leadership. How hope inspires people. How Uplift can help sustain business continuity, and the mental health and well-being of a workforce.

In Part Two of Uplifting Leadership Boosts Mental Health and Well-being, we'll review factors that can impede Uplifting Leadership and also provide some practical tips to help leaders generate hope and uplift across the workforce.

How Much Hope Do Your People Have?

In Part One, we revealed how hope is not just a feel-good emotion. It is a dynamic cognitive motivational system involving the will and the ways to achieve goals ([Kaufman, 2014](#)).



If you want to inspire your people, first test their levels of hope. Consider inviting your people to answer this simple question.

When thinking about work, are you more often fearing the worst or wishing for the best?

If the majority answer *wishing for the best*, it is highly likely you have a hopeful workforce. Keep doing what you are doing. You are probably already adopting Uplifting Leadership. You might also find some additional useful tips here.

If the answer is *fearing the worst*, consider adopting Uplifting Leadership. Begin with these starter tips to *Uplift* your people.

Remember, most employees hope you will do the right thing by them. The practical tips in this article are designed to generate *Uplift* throughout a workforce.

Make Performance Targets Realistic

When a business experiences significant, unexpected and detrimental disruption, it stops hitting performance targets. When this happens business leaders can often adopt self-defeating practices. Keeping organisational targets the same as before the disturbance.



Leaders can also reject reasonable requests to revise targets during major disruption. During COVID-19 some employees have also reported expectations to maintain usual outputs despite reduced working hours. This sets people up for failure and employees often feel pushed to their limit. The result is top down pressure and lack of bottom up support. No one wins and it causes a decline in mood, motivation and performance.

Leadership Tips to Cause Uplift

Employers want to be set realistic targets so they can achieve them. Do the right thing and reevaluate your targets across the workforce. Work with your people to readjust the measurement of success to realistic and achievable levels. Then celebrate the wins. It will provide you and your team members with the uplift you all need to keep going during the pandemic.



Having Purpose and Realistic Goals

When major disruption occurs in the workforce, employees can suffer low mood. They can also experience a lack of motivation and direction. Finding a sense of purpose during isolation or separation is likely to be helpful.

When astronaut [Peggy Whitson](#) was asked to provide some tips for staying positive during isolation, she said *"COVID-19 gives us a higher purpose much like being in space does because we are saving lives by quarantining it gives us a rational for continuing to put up with the situation."*

As well as higher purpose, it is also important for employees to understand their work purpose. Understanding the part that they play in the organization, gives them meaning. A sense of belonging and forward projection.

Employees with low mood and a lack of motivation can also feel overwhelmed by long-term goals. They may feel unable to discuss it with their line manager for fear of reprisal. Others may be more expressive and assert their position more forcefully.



Leadership Tips to Cause Uplift

Help employees understand how their role makes a positive contribution to the organisation and wider community. Tell stories of people who have overcome adversity, survived ordeals or sacrificed themselves for the greater good. This can provide a rationale and inspire extraordinary effort to support organisational changes.

Help employees establish small and realistic goals over shorter periods of time, instead of the end goal. It will stimulate motivation and provide a valuable source of focus to raise mood levels. Acknowledge progress and focus on small achievements to help foster a sense of competence ([British Psychological Society](#), 2020). Provide them with regular opportunities to celebrate success to create a sense of togetherness, even if it is via video link.

Establish Priority Routines

When astronaut [Scott Kelly](#) was asked to provide some tips for living in isolation, he said *his strict astronaut schedule helped him keep moving and motivated*. Therapist Clair Jack PH.D describes routine as the cornerstone of good mental health in [How to Keep Up Healthy Routines During Coronavirus](#).

Without routine life becomes unpredictable. This means anxiety and fear can set in. Human brains welcome routine. It creates a stable environment – it makes what's coming next predictable.

In a work environment, this can help employees navigate through uncertainty more easily. Having a routine helps them gain a sense of control throughout the day. It helps them stay in the present, so they are not distracted by other situations out with their control.

Leadership Tips to Cause Uplift



Encourage employees to set some time aside each week to create a weekly plan and establish a consistent structure for daily tasks and routines. Putting those smaller goals into a realistic schedule.

Help them prioritise workloads using the [Eisenhower Matrix](#) and assist them if they get stuck. Employees will experience uplift when they feel able to plan a future with more certainty.

Help Employees Work Through Their Feelings

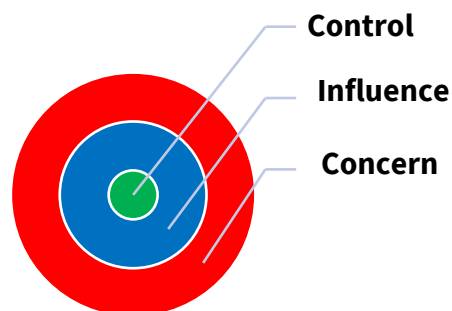
Research by the [British Psychological Society](#) (2020) reported people who have experienced confinement in the extremes, describe ‘detaching’ emotionally from the situation. In a work environment, detachment leads to employee disengagement. This means there is less collaboration and productivity in an organisation.



When employees become emotionally detached it is often realized during the assessment of performance. This is unhelpful for all parties involved because it usually results in a reactive performance management conversation. A proactive conversation that seeks to uplift mood and prevent emotional detachment is of much more value.

Leadership Tips to Cause Uplift

Be proactive in helping employees to reappraise their feelings and search for the positives in the situation. Ask them to share their concerns and explore what can be done to minimise fears, anxiety and stress. Encourage them not to dwell on situations or forecast outcomes out with their control. Consider using the **Circle of Influence and Control** [Stephen Covey] and work through their thinking together.



Then discuss ways they can improve their outlook to feel a sense of personal control. Options like positive self-talk, outcome visualization, gratitude journals and peer support

can help. This approach will provide some rational perspective, restore hope and help reduce negative feelings.

Communication is Key

Isolated living means effective communication is more important than ever during COVID-19. We can learn a lot from astronauts and how they prepare for isolated living.

An astronaut's space station crew become their family when in orbit. They stay with them throughout the day and the night. Isolated from colleagues, friends and family who are back on earth.



Astronauts undertake training to improve communication on board a space station. They prepare well in advance for the pressures on interpersonal relationships. Like astronauts, employees don't get to pick their crew, so have to find ways to communicate well in every situation.

Expedition teams also develop team norms that embrace open and honest conversations. They resolve issues that can potentially lead to conflict ([Smith et al., 2017](#)). To maintain mood and morale, they also manage call content and when they connect with people outside their crew.

In a work environment, the cost of poor communication first appears in working relationships. Misunderstandings whether written or verbal often result in a mixture of negative self-talk, unhelpful two-way communication and an unhappy workforce. Without effective communication, leaders and employees' hopes can dissipate. Stress, anxiety and fears can escalate. Performance, mental health and well-being are jeopardized.

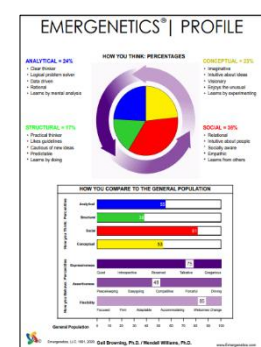
Leadership Tips to Cause Uplift

Prepare for the pressures on interpersonal relationships. Create a culture where your people want to understand and embrace diverse thinking and behavioural preferences, to create a positive and productive working environment.

Give your people the right training and development to embrace cognitive diversity and communicate in a style that improves mood and morale.

Use modern, trusted and accessible psychometric tools, such as [Emergenetics](#), to help you and your team continue to improve skills in communication as you navigate through COVID-19 and beyond.

Utilise supporting smart-phone application technology that provides 'pocket advice' for sustainable reinforcement.



Mind your Tone and Language

Mehrabian's research (Silent Messages, 1971) suggests tone of voice and words account for 45% of how communication is interpreted. Employees separated by social distancing are increasingly using electronic communication. As a result, verbal ahead of non-verbal communication, is becoming even more important in day to day interactions.

WORDS 7%

TONE OF VOICE 38%

BODY LANGUAGE 55%

People also tend to interpret words differently depending on their thinking profile. Reduced opportunity to read non-verbal cues means people in work will rely more on verbal cues to enable effective workplace communication.

Leadership Tips to Cause Uplift

Even though people tend to interpret words differently, there are some universal norms to avoid and adopt. Avoid words and phrases that reduce people's energy levels.

In [Emergenetics](#) we terms this as the *Language of Grace*. A language that emphasizes positivity, caring and connectedness.

Ask your employees what words and phrases sap them of energy.

Run a creative workshop and have some fun discovering the words and phrases that negatively affect energy levels.

Work together on developing positive replacements that increase energy. Then commit to using the new words and phrases during future conversations.

Simple changes in language really can have a positive impact on across an organization.

REDUCES ENERGY	INCREASES ENERGY
Do better	Do your best
You never	Why don't we
I know I messed up	How can I help fix this?
I can't /I'll try	I'll give it my best shot
I can't remember	I'll find out and let you know

Back to Earth



When astronauts return to Earth, they have to readapt to gravity, regain their balance and deal with the mental and physical after-effects of being in space. As one Italian astronaut, Samantha Cristoforetti said on Twitter '[Doing great, but gravity is tough](#)' (2015).

Returning to the norm can prove difficult for some leaders and team members across all

types of organisations.

Creating Uplift gives your people hope and the psychological safety they need to stay motivated and carry on. It reassures team members whatever the outcome, you will be there to do the right thing by them and support them.

Uplifting Leadership is not just a plan to get you and your people through COVID-19. It is a strategy to guide leaders and their people towards ongoing effective performance as well as happiness, health and well-being. It means everyone can exit the COVID experience in good shape and continue to thrive together.

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About the Author

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 Emergenetics® 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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