



## Issue 206 - May 2020



We're in the midst of one of the biggest disruptions of our lives. I've been a lifelong collector of failed (often hilarious) predictions and prophecies showing how uncertain life can be. As the old Yiddish adage reminds us, "Man plans, God laughs."

It's also been said that anyone peering into a crystal ball soon learns to eat ground glass. During my Navigating Change webinar (described in Tips and Techniques section below), I outlined how we seem to be rewiring our world and how these turbulent times could be rebooting and reenergizing our organizations.

At risk of joining the swelled ranks of failed forecasters crunching on glass shards, here are my thoughts/hopes of the good that could emerge:

- **Interconnected and Interdependent** -- it's even clearer how much we need each other and must work together.
- **Teamwork and Collaboration** -- we're seeing that successfully getting through this crisis depends heavily on intertwined support systems.
- **Hiding/Ignoring Bad News Leads to Disaster** -- what we don't know can -- and often does -- hurt us.

### In this Issue:

**Tips and Techniques for Leading in Turbulent Times**

**Bounce Back: 9 Ways to Strengthen Resilience**

**Leading the Way: 13 Approaches to Navigate Through the Storm**

**Trust Matters: It's Critical in These Disruptive Times**

**Read *The Leader Letter* in Weekly Installments**

**Feedback and Follow-Up**

### Past Issues

[Practical Leadership Blog](#)

[Visit Our Site!](#)

**Let's Connect**



**Openness, Transparency, and Trust** – highly effective leaders foster a culture that welcomes and addresses "the brutal facts" -- often touchy and difficult issues.

**"Relationship Capital" Pays Big Dividends** -- the "soft skills" of connecting, caring, and communicating give us healthy relationship accounts we can draw from during tough times.

**Rebalancing Virtual and Face-to-Face Work** -- online meetings and working from home can complement daily commuting and travel for increased effectiveness and better work/life balance.

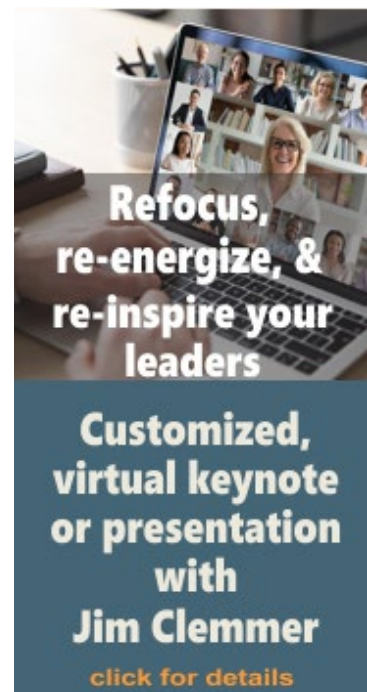
**Separating the Vital Few from Trivial Many Tasks** -- an urgent crisis helps us reassess our overload of meetings, e-mails, projects, and daily tasks to focus on what really matters.

**Agility Determines Change Victims or Victors** -- highly effective leaders will emerge from this crisis, reflecting on lessons learned and how to prepare for the next wave of change they'll inevitably need to deal with.

This issue draws from the research and key points of my [Navigating Change: Leading in Turbulent Times](#) webinar. My goal was to provide practical tips and techniques for leading in turbulent times. The first key section was aimed at self-leadership with 9 ways to strengthen resilience. A second major section looked at leading others with 13 ways to navigate through our stormy seas of disruptive change. We wrapped up with a look at that vital component of dealing with change: trust. It's incredibly difficult to bring teams and organizations together in a crisis without trust.

*A Visitor's Guide to Redwood National and State Parks* explains, "Coast redwood trees can soar to more than 370 feet tall...redwood trees seldom fall over. Their shallow roots form an extensive system of intertwining threads that connect with the roots of neighboring trees, providing reinforcement against the powerful winds of winter storms."

May you find a few tips and techniques to pull yourself and those you lead together to weather this storm.



**Refocus, re-energize, & re-inspire your leaders**

**Customized, virtual keynote or presentation with Jim Clemmer**

[click for details](#)

### Share this!

Please forward this newsletter to colleagues, Clients, or associates you think might be interested -- or on a 'need-to-grow' basis.

Was this forwarded to you? **Subscribe** to receive *The Leader Letter* monthly!

## Tips and Techniques for Leading in Turbulent Times



Shift happens. These days lots of shift is hitting our plans.

We don't choose what changes may hit us, but we choose how to respond. When I catch myself whining or taking a trip to Pity City, I often think of W Mitchell. In his highly inspiring book, *It's Not What Happens to You, It's What You Do About It*, he writes, "Nothing, absolutely nothing is absolute...your life is entirely what you decide it is...The universe starts in your head and spreads out into the world. Change what happens in your head, and the universe changes."

I first met W Mitchell at a professional speakers conference. He doesn't just deliver a powerful message; he is his message. Mitchell is an outstanding example of someone who refuses to be a victim, despite being victimized -- not by just one horrible accident, but two. The first left him burned over 65% of his body, including his face, arms, and hands. A plane crash four years later left him paralyzed from the waist down, putting him permanently in a wheelchair. Thriving despite these setbacks, Mitchell is a very compelling speaker on taking responsibility for our choices in life -- on what it takes to be a leader.

Mitchell's keynote presentation typically begins with an introduction, after which he rolls out on stage in his wheelchair, looks out over the audience, and asks if anyone has ever been in prison. Silence. He then declares that he's been in prison and it was horrible... Mitchell then goes on to talk about self-imposed "mental wheelchairs" that hold so many people back from enjoying life and being highly effective leaders. Today especially, we need to do a prison-check. Are we locking ourselves in a mental prison?

### Permission to Reprint

You may reprint any items from *The Leader Letter* in your own printed publication or e-newsletter as long as you include this paragraph.

"Reprinted with permission from *The Leader Letter*, Jim Clemmer's free e-newsletter. For almost forty years, Jim's 2,000+ practical leadership presentations and workshops/retreats, seven bestselling books, columns, and newsletters have been helping hundreds of thousands of people worldwide. His web site is [www.clemmergroup.com](http://www.clemmergroup.com)."

I recently gave a webinar on [\*\*Navigating Change: Leading in Turbulent Times\*\*](#) to Leadership Waterloo Region, a local organization providing community-focused leadership. It's a mission near to our hearts, especially during this unprecedented crisis.

Here's some of what I covered:

**Lead, Follow, or Wallow: Critical Change Choices When the Shift Hits the Plan:**

- Leadership is an action, not a position - it's our behavior and not our role that determines leadership.
- Don't P Yourself - avoiding the Three Ps that undermine effectiveness
- Uplift: The Resilience Track to Bounce Back from a Set Back
- Choosing Our Framework - applying powerful new research from the rapidly emerging field of Positive Psychology to build resilience and agility
- From Groaning to Growing - recognizing when we're leading, following, or wallowing
- Leader Shift - helping ourselves and our colleagues take the lead and avoid Pity City
- Rewiring Our World - how the coronavirus could reboot and reenergize our organizations

[\*\*Click here\*\*](#) to view the webinar and links to resources to help you steer a successful course through these turbulent times.

Another highly inspiring author was Viktor Frankl who survived the horrors of the holocaust. In his book, *Man's Search for Meaning: Experiences in the Concentration Camp* he writes, "Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms -- to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way. And there were always choices to make. Every day, every hour, offered the opportunity to make a decision, a decision which determined whether you would or would not submit to those powers which threatened to rob you of your very self, your inner freedom; which determined whether or not you would become the plaything of circumstance, renouncing freedom and dignity to become molded into the form of the typical inmate."

# Bounce Back: 9 Ways to Strengthen Resilience



In Japan, the Daruma Doll is a good luck charm with a rounded bottom. When knocked down, it bounces back upright. This ability to bounce back is a symbol of perseverance and good luck.

We're getting knocked down pretty hard. Bouncing back is vital to getting through these tough times. Here are a few ways to strengthen our resilience:

1. **Meditation** -- meditation can be very helpful to calm that "monkey mind" that keeps us up at night and adds stress. Insight Timer is a web site and free app available on Android and Apple. It provides a [free library of 30,000](#) guided meditations, instructions, talks, music, etc. on over 200 topics.
2. **Visualization** -- neuroscience shows we can rewire our brains and shift our mental and physical health by consciously focusing on our desired rather than our feared future.
3. **Get Real** -- we can actively seek [reasons for hope](#) during these dark times to overcome "[headline stress disorder](#)."
4. **Cut off Catastrophizing** -- I've used an elastic band on my wrist to literally snap my attention back from my adverse thoughts. That's step one in the [ABCDE model](#). Next is examining our belief about the event, looking at the consequences of those beliefs, disputing them, and energizing toward our desired future.
5. **Attitude of Gratitude** -- building and regularly reviewing our long list of reasons to be grateful is a powerful way to reframe and rebalance our inclination to focus on what's wrong rather than what's right.
6. **Three Good Things** -- when my head hits the pillow, I review my day for the three best (and more) things. We've practiced this around the dinner

table with our family as well.

7. **Leverage Character Strengths** -- use this scientific, free, positive psychology tool to assess and use your top strengths.
8. **Talk About It** -- loved ones, good friends, or mentors can be enormously useful in talking through our stress and trauma. Counselors trained in **Cognitive Behavioral Therapy** are effective coaches to me and our family.
9. **Positive Psychology** -- using evidence-based approaches, this rapidly growing field is continually providing powerful tools and approaches. The **Positive Psychology Center** at the University of Pennsylvania is a treasure trove of very helpful resources.

In her *Harvard Business Review* article, "How Resilience Works," Diane Coutu writes,

*"Resilient people and companies face reality with staunchness, make meaning of hardship instead of crying out in despair, and improvise solutions from thin air. Others do not...We all know people who, under duress, throw up their hands and cry, 'How can this be happening to me?' Such people see themselves as victims, and living through hardship carries no lessons for them. But resilient people devise constructs about their suffering to create some sort of meaning for themselves and others...an increasing body of empirical evidence shows that resilience -- whether in children, survivors of concentration camps, or businesses back from the brink -- can be learned."*

### Further Reading and Resources

- **Which Framing Level -- Wallowing, Following, Or Leading?**
- **Bouncing Back from Adversity is a Critical Leadership Skill**
- **Possibility Thinking: Spreading Hope and Optimism Leading**
- **Through Adversity: Reframing Tips and Techniques**

# Leading the Way: 13 Approaches to Navigate Through the Storm



Many people can sail the ship when the sea is calm. The real test is during fierce storms. Even mediocre managers can get by during calm times. Today's massive storm calls for strong leadership.

The American Pulitzer Prize winning author, Willa Cather once observed, "There are some things you learn best in calm, and some in storm." Lots of leadership learning opportunities these days!

I recently developed a webinar on [Leading in Turbulent Times](#) for Leadership Waterloo Region, an organization that works to provide leadership development opportunities supporting our community. This is a mission near and dear to our hearts, especially during this unprecedented crisis.

This presentation centered on leading from the inside out: strong leadership of others ripples out from strong self-leadership. My recent blog [Bounce Back: 9 Ways to Strengthen Resilience](#) drew from a key slide on leading ourselves.

I then moved on to a key slide with 13 approaches to lead others:

1. **Boost confidence with strengths and success** -- this is an especially important time to [anchor your culture](#) in a can-do spirit of how you've overcome past difficulties.
2. **Balance strengths and shifts** -- build on your heritage, desirable traditions, and core values as leverage to the outdated thinking, habits, mindsets, and behaviors that need to shift.

3. **Agree on limiting Pity Parties** -- some teams have agreed that short visits to Pity City to vent frustrations can be therapeutic as long as we don't get stuck there.
4. **Start with accomplishments/recognition/celebration** -- begin meetings or conference calls with what's gone right before you jump into what's wrong and needs to be fixed.
5. **Share customer stories on how you're making a difference** -- make emotional connections to the [purpose of your organization](#) with powerful examples of service during these tough times.
6. [Sweet Spot Coaching](#) -- help the people you lead align their strengths and passions to organizational needs. This will boost engagement and effectiveness.
7. **Use 'Keep, Stop, Start' exercise to boost effectiveness** -- this powerful approach can be used for feedback and reflection to increase effectiveness. It's especially useful these days to maximize virtual [meeting effectiveness](#).
8. **Foster [courageous conversations](#) and unfiltered [feedback](#)** -- use anonymous surveys or online tools to facilitate open discussions on key (often touchy) issues to be addressed, and improve your leadership effectiveness.
9. **Take Initiative** -- Don't let a weak boss/senior management drag down your leadership. Practice [upward leadership](#) to lead your leader(s).
10. **Constant weeding, pruning, and prioritizing** – now it's especially vital to [balance reactive and proactive](#) use of our time. Sometimes we need to slow down to speed up.
11. **Check Up from the Neck Up** -- Leading with [Emotional Intelligence](#) is especially vital these days. High EQ leaders recognize and control their own emotions while understanding and positively influencing the emotions of others.
12. [Servant Leadership](#) -- serve your servers and the teams you lead to energize, engage, and enable.
13. **Balance [information and communication](#)** -- don't confuse electronic and verbal communication. Leadership is a two-way, interactive dialogue that engages and energizes.

Navigating stormy seas is a powerful and timeless metaphor to guide us through these ferocious times. As American author and poet, Ella Wheeler Wilcox wrote:

*"One ship drives east and another drives west,  
With the self-same winds that blow,  
'Tis the set of the sails  
And not the gales  
That tell them the way to go.  
Like the winds of the sea are the winds of fate,  
As we voyage along through life,  
'Tis the set of the soul  
That decides its goal  
And not the calm or the strife."*



## Trust Matters: It's Critical in These Disruptive Times



Is your organization suffering from truth decay? Honesty, integrity, and trust are critical in chaotic times. We need everyone actively engaged in looking for innovative new ways to deal with unprecedented disruptions.

In their study, [Innovation by All](#), Great Place to Work concluded organizations with high-trust cultures involve and engage many more employees than most organizations in the innovation process. These companies are much more agile and become masters rather than victims of change.

"Innovation by All (IA) maximizes a company's human potential by tapping into the intelligence, skills, and passion of everyone in the organization." IA cultures, "generate more high-quality ideas, realize greater speed in implementation, and achieve greater agility -- resulting in [5.5 times the revenue growth](#) of peers with a less inclusive approach to innovation."

In their *Harvard Business Review* article, ["Begin with Trust,"](#) Harvard Business School professor, Frances Frei, and The Leadership Consortium founder, Anne Morriss outline The Trust Triangle emerging from their research:

"Trust has three drivers: authenticity, logic, and empathy. When trust is lost, it can almost always be traced back to a breakdown in one of them. To build trust as a leader, you first need to figure out which driver you 'wobble' on:

**Authenticity** -- *I experience the real you*

**Logic** -- *I know you can do it; your reasoning and judgement are sound*

**Empathy** -- *I believe you care about me and my success"*

Many managers have a big credibility gap. Credibility is based on perceptions of trust, reliability, and integrity. The low employee engagement levels found in so many organizations are often because many people just don't believe or trust their leaders.

In one of my *Globe & Mail* columns, [Bridging the Credibility Gap](#), I outlined how managers widen that gap and how to bridge it:

### How Managers Widen the Credibility Gap

- Looking outside instead of within -- for ideas, expertise, and advice
- Not serving the servers
- "Blame storming"
- Confusing information and communication
- Open doors and closed minds
- Avoiding feedback about themselves

### How to Bridge the Credibility Gap

- Listen up
- Reach across the great divide
- Get their input
- Run two-way meetings
- Stop trying to "motivate"
- Be approachable
- Be radical

Are you widening or bridging your credibility gap? How do you **know**? [Click here](#) to read the column and description of each point. Assess yourself -- better yet get unfiltered feedback to see how you're doing. Then take steps to close your gap.

In "Begin with Trust," Frei and Morriss write, "Trust is also one of the most essential forms of capital a leader has.... Your job as a leader is to help your people fully realize their own capacity and power. The more trust you build, the more possible it is to practice this kind of leadership."

## Further Resources

- [Honesty and Integrity Build a Foundation of Trust](#)
- [Five Keys to Reverse Slipping Morale Levels Communications](#)
- [Conundrum: Eight Interconnected Causes of Breakdowns](#)
- [The Six Steps to Trust](#)

## Read *The Leader Letter* in Weekly Installments



The items in each month's issue of *The Leader Letter* are first published in my weekly [blog](#) during the previous month.

If you read each blog post (or issue of *The Leader Letter*) as it's published over twelve months, you'll have read the equivalent of a leadership book. And you'll pick up a few practical leadership tips that help you use time more strategically and tame your E-Beast!

## Feedback and Follow-Up

I am always delighted to hear from readers of *The Leader Letter* with feedback, reflections, suggestions, or differing points of view. Nobody is ever identified in *The Leader Letter* without their permission. I am also happy to explore customized, in-house adaptations of any of my material for your team or organization. Drop me an e-mail at [jim.clemmer@clemmergroup.com](mailto:jim.clemmer@clemmergroup.com) or connect with me on [LinkedIn](#), [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), or my [blog](#)!

Let's leverage our leadership strengths to work together and get through this challenging time.



**Jim Clemmer**

President

Phone: (519) 748-5968

Email: [jim.clemmer@clemmergroup.com](mailto:jim.clemmer@clemmergroup.com)

Website: [www.clemmergroup.com](http://www.clemmergroup.com)



**Please forward this newsletter to colleagues, Clients, or associates you think might be interested -- or on a 'need-to-grow' basis.**

Did you receive this newsletter from someone else? **Subscribe** to ensure you don't miss the next issue!

**The CLEMMER Group**

476 Mill Park Drive, Kitchener ON N2P 1Y9

Phone: (519) 748-1044 ~ Fax: (519) 748-5813

**[service@clemmergroup.com](mailto:service@clemmergroup.com)**

**[www.clemmergroup.com](http://www.clemmergroup.com)**

*©2020 Jim Clemmer and The CLEMMER Group*