



*"smaller agencies doing big  
things.....together"*

# ACT Small Agencies HR Forum

## Monday 7 November 2022

***1 Day Leadership Program***



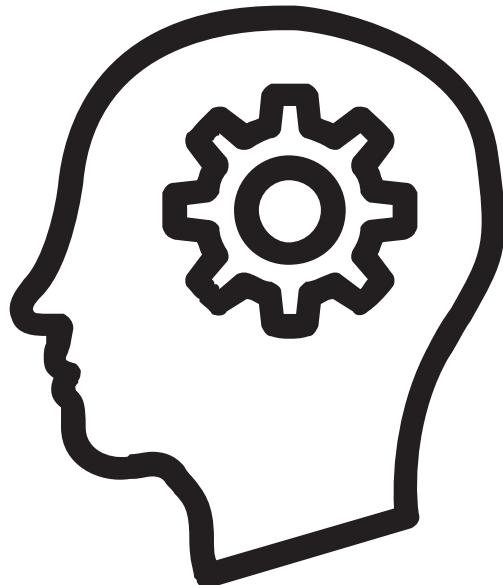
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# CONSTRUCTIVE LANGUAGE AND CONVERSATIONS

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Leadership Workshop





## COMMUNICATION – SYNONYMS

- connection
- contact
- conversation
- delivery
- intelligence
- link
- transmission
- elucidation

## THE THREE MOST COMMON COMMUNICATION STYLES

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### EXERCISE

(5 minutes)

**How do each of  
these styles  
look? How  
recently have  
you experienced  
each style?**



**PASSIVE ?  
AGGRESSIVE ?  
CONSTRUCTIVE?**

## THE THREE MOST COMMON COMMUNICATION STYLES

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- **PASSIVE** characteristics of this style include talking in a tone of voice that is hesitant and unsure, saying “yes” when you really want to say “no”, covering up what you really think and feel, going along, apologising – This style leads to others walking over you and to sudden outbursts, demotivation
- **AGGRESSIVE** characteristics of this style include yelling, screaming, using intimidating gestures, negative body language e.g. glaring, sarcasm, using loaded words, interrupting and talking over people, blaming others, fear, communication stops – this style leads to long term damage and ignores the rights and feelings of others
- **CONSTRUCTIVE** characteristics of this style include active listening, validation, not interrupting, communicating what you want in a clear, level tone of voice, maintaining appropriate body language and eye contact while you talk.



# CONSTRUCTIVE ENGAGEMENT – WHAT'S THE PLAN?

*How are you intending to engage?*

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YOUR PLAN...

What is your objective?

- Performance management?
- Project assignment?
- Issue management?
- Staff restructure, update?



**VALIDATE:**

How many conversations start with a validation: Positivity, recognition, removes judgement...gives value

# CONSTRUCTIVE ENGAGEMENT – WHAT'S THE PLAN?

## Transformational Language

*What is transformational language?*

- **I** – the individual, ME:
- **You** – the individual, YOU:
- **We** – the organisation; the SES, BAND ?, TEAM, BRANCH, DIVISION, DEPARTMENT, EXECUTIVE

This is about who owns what – assigns but more importantly clarifies ownership. Evens the platform.

### USE TERMS OF REFERENCE....

- Who is the audience?
- What is their understanding, knowledge?
- What reference can you provide to give context and relevant content?



### USE THE PAUSE

- Ensures focus
- Question, clarification
- Minimise emotional response
- Time to gather thoughts
- Ensures you actively listen

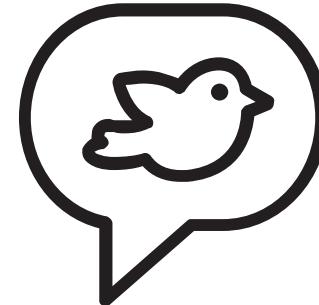
ALL FACILITATES CONSTRUCTIVE DISCUSSION

# LANGUAGE – Clarifying Questions

## ➤ Pause... Listen...

Pausing and Listening facilitates questioning, clarification:

- “I want to understand what you perceive to be the issue?”
- “Can you explain why you have reacted to .....?”
- “Can you share what has prevented you achieving the objectives, requirements, report, results ...?”



- “Can you please clarify what you heard me say?”
- “The deadline has been missed for the team to deliver this to the Division, can you explain what has happened...?”

# LANGUAGE – Influencing Change

If this situation were to go unresolved, what do you think the possible outcome might be?

- What impact might this have on our Business? People? Reputation? Relationships? Clients? Financial Rewards?
- How do you think this might affect the Division's perception of us?
- Who would be forced to make a decision to rectify the situation? What might they do?
- Can you allow this to happen?
- Can you recover from such a setback?

Consequences/  
Implications...  
Change...

So...

“What specifically do we need to **change** to avoid these consequences occurring?”

# LANGUAGE – Influencing Change

If we were able to resolve this situation, what do you think the possible outcome might be?

- What impact might this have on our Business? People? Reputation? Relationships? Clients? Financial Rewards?
- How do you think this might affect the Division's perception of us?
- Who would be supportive of the situation?
- What might they do?
- Can you Influence this?
- What could you gain from such a positive outcome?



# LANGUAGE – “The words we use”

**What opportunities might present themselves in our Business? Career? People? Reputation? Relationships? Clients?**

**How might this affect people's perception of us?**

**Who would see our ability more clearly?  
What might they do/ say?**

**What financial rewards might result?**

**What other opportunities might there be?**



**Upsides and opportunities...  
What to aim for.....**

So....

What specifically do we need to **change** to realise/meet these outcomes/upsides?

Validate... pause...

- ✓ “I propose...”
- ✓ “I suggest...”
- ✓ “What could you do differently...?”
- ✓ “What would you do differently...?”
- ✓ “If you could what would you do differently...”

# CASE STUDY 1

## 10 minutes...

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- You consider yourself to be a technical specialist with excellent skills in your area of expertise. Your manager has recently provided feedback that your manner and behaviour is such that no one wants to approach you for advice and that you are unwilling to share knowledge and tend to work in isolation in delivering projects.
- You don't believe that this is true.
- Practice a second constructive conversation with your manager, seeking to refute this feedback because you think it unfair and unwarranted.
- How are you going to approach this?

## CASE STUDY 2

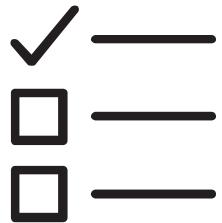
### 10 minutes...

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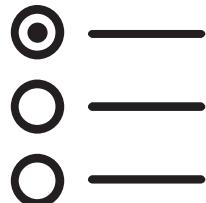


- Carl is your supervisor. He's a helpful and outgoing person and supports you in any way he can. Carl's attention to detail however means that any request he puts through to you (ie allocating work) doesn't provide you with enough relevant detail in order for you to deliver.
- When you are unable to deliver due to lack of information, you approach him for more guidance and he responds by shouting and dismissing your request. He doesn't appear to think this is a problem.
- Practice having a constructive conversation when Carl is dismissive and overreacting.
- How do you approach this?

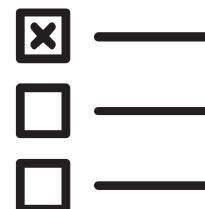
# PLANNING A CONSTRUCTIVE DISCUSSION



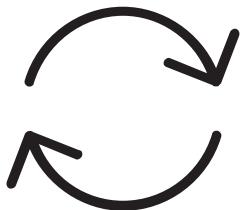
What are they  
doing well – list  
the positive  
FIRST



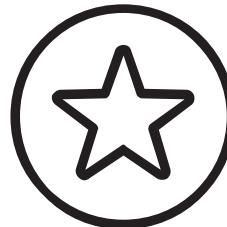
What are the  
terms of reference  
for them – what  
could be impacting  
them?



What are the issues –  
list the performance  
issue - behaviour,  
skills, attitude,  
motivation,  
personality clash:



What is the impact  
for them, the  
team, the results,  
their development,  
their career if they  
continue to work  
this way?



What is the best  
outcome to aim  
for?

This  
provides  
the  
framework  
for the  
discussion...

# PLANNING A CONSTRUCTIVE DISCUSSION

PLAN

CONSTRUCT

DISCUSS

?

# THE Most Forgotten Step

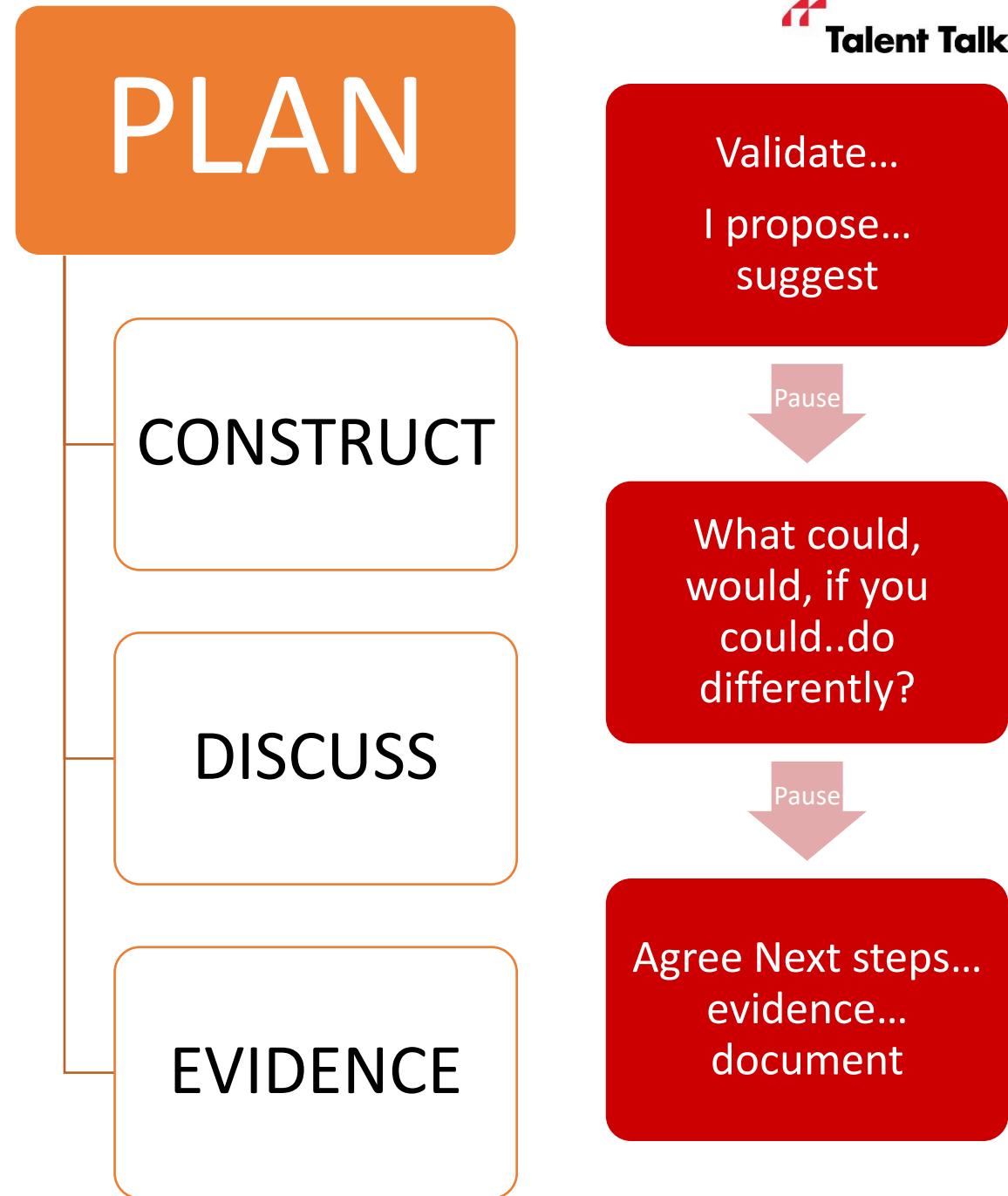
## EVIDENCE

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- Do you record the discussion?
- How do you record your discussions?
- Do you send follow up emails on your discussions?
- Do you refer back to them?
- The most critical step in performance management.
- Most valuable managing your and their work flow



# PLANNING A CONSTRUCTIVE DISCUSSION



## WHAT IS FEEDBACK?

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### FEEDBACK CAN OFTEN BE INTERPRETED AS BULLYING

Workplace bullying is defined as:

*Repeated* and *Unreasonable Behaviour* directed towards a worker or group of workers that creates a risk to health and safety. It can be intentional or unintentional. (APSC Prevention of Bullying and Harassment in the Workplace, 2014)



## WHAT IS BULLYING?

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**Bullying happens at work when:**

- **a person or group of people repeatedly behave unreasonably towards another worker or group of workers the behaviour creates a risk to health and safety.**

Examples of bullying include:

- behaving aggressively towards others
- teasing or playing practical jokes
- pressuring someone to behave inappropriately
- excluding someone from work-related events
- unreasonable work demands

## Reasonable management action:

**Reasonable management action that's carried out in a reasonable way is not bullying.**



### An employer or manager can:

- make decisions about poor performance
- take disciplinary action
- direct and control the way work is carried out
- Management action that isn't carried out in a reasonable way may be considered bullying.

## ➤ Case Studies

## THE THREE MOST COMMON COMMUNICATION STYLES

**PASSIVE** -- characteristics of this style include talking in a tone of voice that is hesitant and unsure, saying “yes” when you really want to say “no”, covering up what you really think and feel, going along, apologising – This style leads to others walking over you and to sudden outbursts, demotivation

**AGGRESSIVE** – characteristics of this style include yelling, screaming, using intimidating gestures, negative body language e.g. glaring, sarcasm, using loaded words, interrupting and talking over people, blaming others, fear, communication stops – this style leads to long term damage and ignores the rights and feelings of others

**CONSTRUCTIVE** – characteristics of this style include active listening, validation, not interrupting, communicating what you want in a clear, level tone of voice, maintaining appropriate body language and eye contact while you talk - PLANNING

## PLANNING A CONSTRUCTIVE DISCUSSION...

1. What are they **doing well** – list the positive FIRST
2. What are the **terms of reference** for them – what could be impacting them?
3. What are **the issues** – list the performance issue – behaviour, skills, attitude, motivation, personality clash
4. What is the **impact** for them, the team, the results, their development, their career if they continue to work this way?
5. What is the **best outcome** to aim for?  
  
➤ **This provides the framework for the discussion...**

# THE ENGAGEMENT PLAN

How are you intending to engage?

- **TRANSFORMATIONAL LANGUAGE**

- What is the objective?

- I – the individual, certainty, ownership
    - You – the individual, participants, ownership
    - We – the organisation... third party....who owns this?

- **VALIDATE**

- Positivity, recognition, removes judgement... gives them value

- **USE TERMS OF REFERENCE**

- Who is the audience, what is their understanding
    - What knowledge do they have, what reference can you
      - provide to give context and relevant content....

- **USE THE PAUSE**

- Ensures focus, question, clarification
    - Minimise emotional response, time to gather thoughts
    - Ensures you actively listen



FACILITATES  
CONSTRUCTIVE  
DISCUSSION

# A COVERSATION BASED ON THE USE OF I, WE, YOU

## This will:

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- Facilitate constructive discussion
- Performance Management – manages ambiguity, decision making, delegation
- Role Clarity – sets parameters
- Clarifies Responsibility
- Establishes Mutually Agreed Timelines
- Values your work/others' work
- Establishes ownership of the role
- Identifies priorities
- Strategic
- Facilitates self reliance problem solving

# Performance management

## CONSTRUCTIVE DISCUSSIONS

### BODY LANGUAGE and PRESENTATION

- People “read” people – 15 seconds is all it takes
- One to one discussions...
- In meetings - group discussions & presentations...
- They are noting, judging, reading....
- Your expression....are you engaged?
- Happy or sad, cranky or bored?
- Your eyes....what are you looking at?
- Your attention....focused?
- Your hands/arms....where are they?
- Your body....still, sitting position?

Stay attentive, be present.... participate, control your signals, engage

- Be mindful – Conscious of WHO you are presenting



A  
CHALLENGE  
– Video  
yourself...

# Performance management

## LANGUAGE – the words!

- The most critical element of a performance management discussion is the language...
- Opening the discussion.....use I-WE-YOU....validate



John, you have clearly worked and focused on this project for some time, how do you think its going?

John, I observe you get on well with the team, so I want to understand what led to the issue with you and Rob?

John, I have always enjoyed our interaction, and I have always welcomed your honesty and commitment, but I sense (but I have observed) (but I was surprised at your reaction)

John you are a valued team member, and have always made positive contributions

John you have usually demonstrated a good understanding of the required outcomes of our team from the Department



# Performance management

## LANGUAGE – the words!

- **Pause....Listen...**
- Pausing and Listening facilitates questioning, clarification

CONSTRUCTIVE  
DISCUSSIONS



*I want to understand what you perceive to be the issue?*

*Can you explain why you have reacted to ?*

*Can you share what has prevented you achieving the objectives, requirements, report, results?*

*The deadline has been missed for the team to deliver this to the Division, can you explain what has happened?*



# CONSTRUCTIVE DISCUSSIONS

## Performance management

### LANGUAGE – the words!

#### Consequences/Implications... change

If this situation were to go unresolved, what do you think the possible outcome might be?

- What impact might this have on our Business? People? Reputation? Relationships? Clients? Financial Rewards?
- How do you think this might affect the Division's perception of us?
- Who would be forced to make a decision to rectify the situation? What might they do?
- Can you allow this to happen?
- Can you recover from such a setback?



So, what specifically do we need to **change** to avoid these consequences occurring?

# Performance management

## LANGUAGE – the words!

- **Upsides and Opportunities...what to aim for....**
- If we could successfully change to address these issues, what might this mean for us?
  - What opportunities might present themselves in our Business? Career? People? Reputation? Relationships? Clients?
  - How might this affect people's perception of us?
  - Who would see our ability more clearly? What might they do?
  - What financial rewards might result?
  - What other opportunities might there be?
- So, what specifically do we need to **change** to realise/meet these outcomes/upsides?

CONSTRUCTIVE  
DISCUSSIONS

“I propose...”

“I suggest...”

“What could you do differently...?”

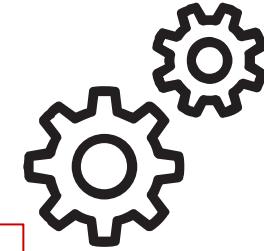
“What would you do differently...?”

“If you could what would you do differently...?”



# EXERCISE

## Case Study 1 (Collaboration)



- Freda is a technical specialist with excellent skills in her area of expertise. You have a team of relatively inexperienced/junior staff who could benefit greatly from Freda's extensive knowledge and experience. Upskilling your team is becoming a pressing priority as there's going to be a significant increase in work in 10 months' time.
- Freda's manner and behaviour is such that no one wants to approach her for advice. She is not willing to share knowledge and tends to work in isolation in delivering projects. You as the manager know that this lack of team working does not lead to productive outcomes nor good relationships in the team. How are you going to manage this?
- (Complicating factor – you don't know this but Freda's partner is dying.)
  - reasonable way may be considered bullying.

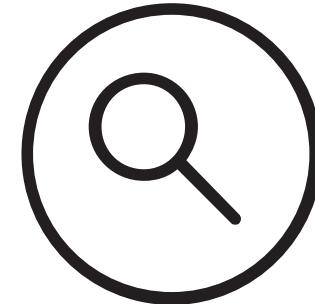
# EXERCISE

## Case Study 2 (Transparency)

Carl is your assistant director. He's a helpful and outgoing person and supports you in any way he can. Carl's attention to detail however means that any request he puts through to you (eg for resources) doesn't provide you with the evidence you require to enable approval; does not provide all the details to allow you to evaluate his requests. This is in spite of the fact that he is provided with templates to do so. Carl also hides information about what his people are doing.

The amount of rework and the consequent delays that it creates is starting to cause issues with your branch head. What are you going to do?

(Complicating factor – you socialise with him outside work.)

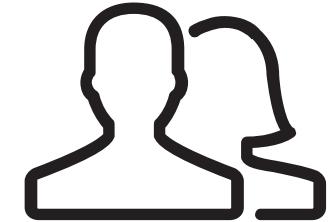


# EXERCISE

## Case Study 3 (Client Focus)

Your team is constantly complaining about one of your clients. No matter what is requested (eg documentation, sign offs) it is always late. This impacts delivery schedules which means the team is constantly having to do overtime. Compounding this, the client always requests changes late in the delivery cycle; this impacts other teams as well as your own. Your team lead Michael, is at the end of his tether. How are you going to assist him?

(Complicating factor – your branch head has just called you in to advise that he's had a call from your client's branch head. Apparently Michael was extremely unprofessional in a stakeholder meeting – things deteriorated to a point where things got extremely personal and there was a liberal use of expletives.)



# LANGUAGE – the words!

## Turning the discussion into ACTION....

- Based on the explicit needs we've agreed exist in order to avoid (consequences) and realise (benefits)
- What can you do differently this week to begin addressing these needs? How can I support that?



I propose (xxx) are you comfortable and clear on this suggestion?

I'd like you to spend some more time planning the specific details of your action plan and then summarise this in writing so that we can review it

I propose you and I revisit this to review progress and plan the next steps on (date), or every weeks (days, months).

You have worked well on this. The objectives haven't quite been achieved so I propose you review how you might achieve them over the next 48 hours, and we can meet at 2pm on Thursday to consider your approach. In the meantime, let me know if you need my support.

Follow  
through with a  
documented  
action plan by  
email and  
keep the trail  
going!  
**EVIDENCE**



# RESILIENCE

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## From “I” to “WE” to “YOU”

- “Our greatest glory is not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall.” *Confucius*
- “Man never made any material as resilient as the human spirit” *Bernard Williams*
- “Fall seven times, stand up eight” *Japanese Proverb*
- “When one door of happiness closes, another opens; but often we look so long at the closed door that we do not see the one which has opened”  
*Helen Keller*



# RESILIENCE

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Why is resilience important from a leadership perspective?

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Who would you describe as “resilient”

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What characteristics do they display?

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# RESILIENCE TEST

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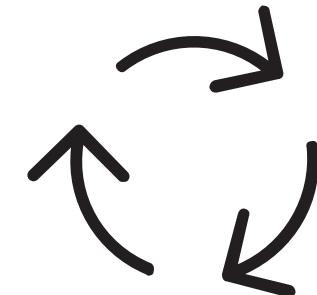
<b>Statement</b>	<b>Always</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Never</b>	<b>Describe what causes this to occur</b>
I'm able to adapt to change easily				
I feel in control of my life				
I tend to bounce back after a hardship or illness				
I have close, dependable relationships				
I remain optimistic and don't give up, even if things seem hopeless				
I can think clearly and logically under pressure				
I see the humour in situations, even under stress				
I am self confident and strong as a person				
I believe things happen for a reason				
I can handle uncertainty or unpleasant feelings				
I know where to turn to for help				
I like challenges and feel comfortable taking the lead				

# RESILIENCE

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## The three C's

- **Commitment:** viewing your work as important and worthwhile enough to warrant your full attention, imagination and effort
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- 
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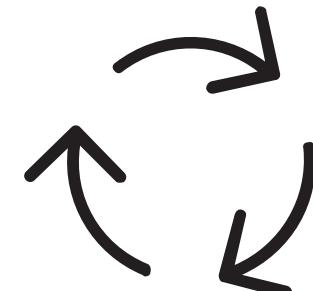


- **Control:** actively trying to keep positively influencing the outcomes of the changes going on around you
- 
- 
- 

- **Challenge:** seeing change as instrumental in opening up new fulfilling pathways for living/working
- 
- 
-

# TAKING ACTION

- 1. Transformational Coping** – thought process that places changes into a broader perspective
- 2. Social support** – engaging others rather than alienating and strengthening relationships – especially those important to one's growth or dealing with a situation
- 3. Understand what motivates you**
  - The drive to acquire?
  - The drive to bond?
  - The drive to understand?
  - The drive to defend?
  - What is your operating style and how does this impact?
- 4. Study people you know who are high in resilience**
  - What was the stressful situation/strengths overplayed?
  - How did they flex their style to reduce the situation's stress?
  - How did the person seek out others?
  - Who did the person talk about the situation?
  - How did their coping efforts express hardy attitudes?
- 5. Take Action**



## ACTION PLANNING

### ASK YOURSELF

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What are my key strengths are in relation to resilience?

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Refer to the Resilience Test and think about what your area(s) you ticked sometimes and/or never.

What Resilient Actions might you take to strengthen in these areas?

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