THE CLEARING®

A Leader's Guide to Resilience

A practical guide for leaders who want to build and foster resilient workplace cultures.

CULTURE

THE CLEARING®
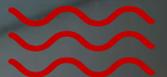
Are you a leader trying to figure out what is happening and what to do next?

It can be lonely as a leader, especially right now, during times of disruption. As leaders, how do we move forward while continuing to show compassion and illustrate unshakable strength and conviction across our organizations and teams? How is that possible with so much uncertainty? **Resilience.**

"Resilience is the capacity of a system, enterprise, or person to maintain its core purpose and integrity in the face of dramatically changed circumstances."

– Andrew Zolli

Improving your resilience allows you to respond quickly and creatively rather than reactively and enhance your ability to resist being pushed from your preferred state. This opens the door to new possibilities for you and your organization. When you as a leader can remain intentional and deliberate, there is a tremendous opportunity to define and build the "next normal" in which your teams and organizations can truly flourish.

Resilience grows beneath the surface just like the roots of a tree.

Six Principles of Resilience

1	2	3	4	5	6
Choose Your Attitude	Balance + Distribute	Tighten + Reorganize	Connect with People	Listen to the Shadow System	Simplify at the Core
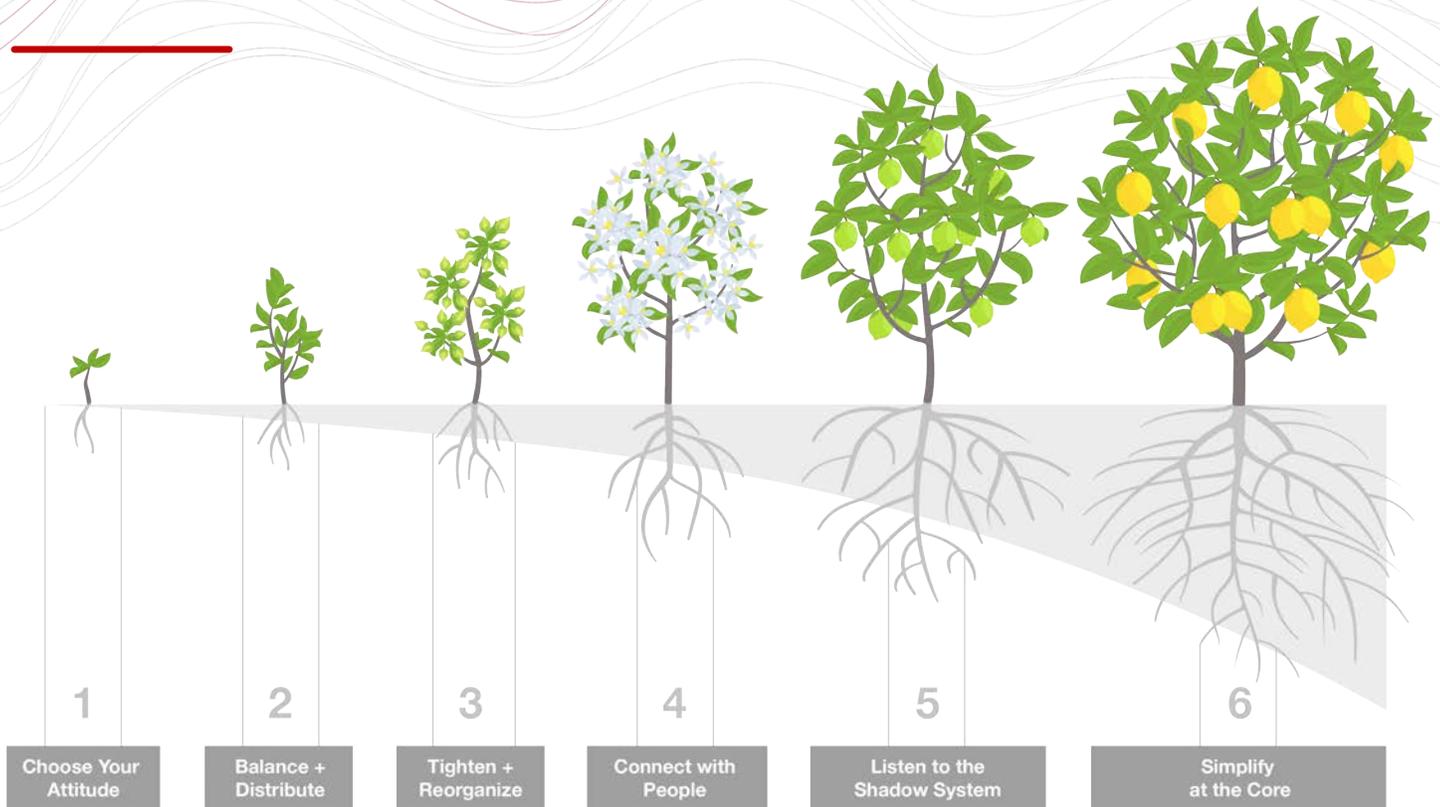
1. Choose Your Attitude

Viktor Frankl, an Austrian neurologist, psychiatrist, and Holocaust survivor, said that choosing your attitude, even in the most abysmal circumstances, leads us to freedom and an opportunity to create our own meaning.[1] As a leader, you have an opportunity to set the tone for how others respond to disruptions.

1. Choose Your Attitude (Continued)

Resilient leaders cultivate their attitude and state of mind and choose their way of being regardless of what is happening around them. In fact, research shows that an individual's happiness is 40% determined by your thoughts and actions vs. your genetics or when life just happens.[2] Your ability to choose your state of mind can be strengthened through various small and intentional moves. **Try these small shifts and notice how they affect your attitude throughout the day:**

- Identify the tone and mood you want to set one minute before each meeting.

- Set aside 3-5 minutes each day to meditate on your breath, an inspirational message, or have kind thoughts about others.

- Notice, track, and communicate what you appreciate about your team members.

2. Balance Taking Charge and Distributing Decision-Making

Leaders must often run to resolve immediate and pressing problems, which can make the disruption more intense. Decision-making becomes overly centralized and the core group forgets to check the edges of the system for input. To become a more resilient organization, consider balancing centralization and distributing decision-making to optimize outcomes. This provides an opportunity to build the resilience of individuals and teams that will ultimately allow for continuity and recovery from the disruption.[3] **Try out these actions to distribute decision-making across your organization:**

- Set up a task force made up of formal and informal leaders (including those on the frontlines) from across the organization to contribute to decision-making.

- Identify decisions and authorities you can delegate to teams (for example: working hours, client/customer management, etc.).

3. Tighten Feedback Mechanisms and Dynamically Reorganize as Needed

Tight feedback mechanisms allow leaders to collect better real-time information about your team and organization's data and performance. The tight feedback mechanisms are especially important when your situation is changing on a weekly or even daily basis. You might learn about an employee's needs for a flexible work schedule, equipment or technology, or varied management practices for tracking performance. This information will allow you to shift your decision-making, approach, and operations.[3] **Try the following exercises to increase your ability to listen for and receive feedback:**

- Increase the number of check-ins you have with your team and organization (for example, if you were meeting monthly previously, consider moving to weekly or even daily).

- Create an anonymous survey that allows employees to submit questions or concerns.

- Track progress on organizational goals more closely through measures such as monthly revenue or customer satisfaction.

4. Connect with People

Resilient leaders take time to connect with people and facilitate connections between groups. Small moments of connection between individuals can have large impact on building the "connective tissue" of your organization. This "connective tissue" supports your organization's ability to withstand disruption. Researcher, writer, and storyteller, Brené Brown, puts it elegantly, speaking in terms of trust, *"it turns out that trust is in fact earned in the smallest of moments. It is earned not through heroic deeds, or even highly visible actions, but through paying attention, listening, and gestures of genuine care and connection."* [4] You have an opportunity to create an environment that reflects the reality and feeling that "we're in this together". **Build trust and connect with others by trying these ideas:**

- Set up weekly or bi-weekly conversations with your team members to connect on non work-related topics. Be open and flexible to what an individual or group needs. Sometimes this means throwing away the agenda and just allowing yourself to connect.
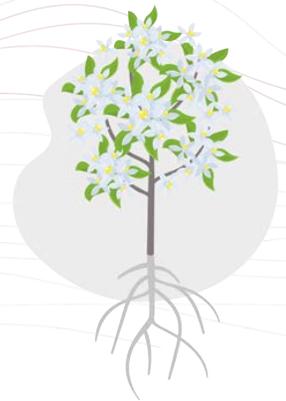
4. Connect with People (Continued)

- Take a few extra minutes at the beginning of a meeting to check-in on how individuals are doing. Check-in questions can vary from serious to more fun and humorous. Humor can serve as a powerful tool for resilience in the face of the existing stress and anxiety individuals may be experiencing.[1]

- Connect individuals who can benefit from working together either because of their similarities or differences and remove yourself from acting as the go-between. This strengthens the network within your organization that is not solely reliant on you as the leader.

5. Listen to the Shadow System

Every organization consists of two organizations. We are all a part of both. First, it consists of the formal hierarchy, procedures, and communications in the organization. Second, the "shadow system" lies behind the scenes. The shadow systems consist of water cooler conversations, the rumor mill and the informal procedures for getting things done. The "shadow system" is where creativity lives and offers data on the reality of how individuals are feeling and behaving. Leaders have an opportunity to tune into the "shadow system" to inform their choices and actions.[5] **Tap into your organization's shadow system by:**

- Consider connecting with 1-2 individuals to whom others go to for advice in your organization. Connect with those people to better understand what's going on in the organization.

- Take opportunities to attend informal events such as virtual community service events and other social gatherings to understand how the organization is doing.
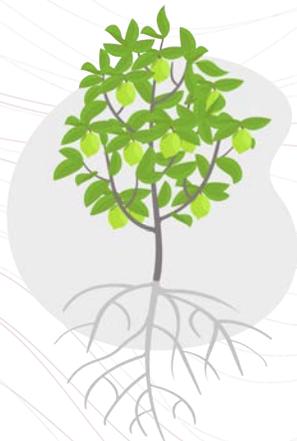
6.   Simplify at the Core; Diverse at the Edges
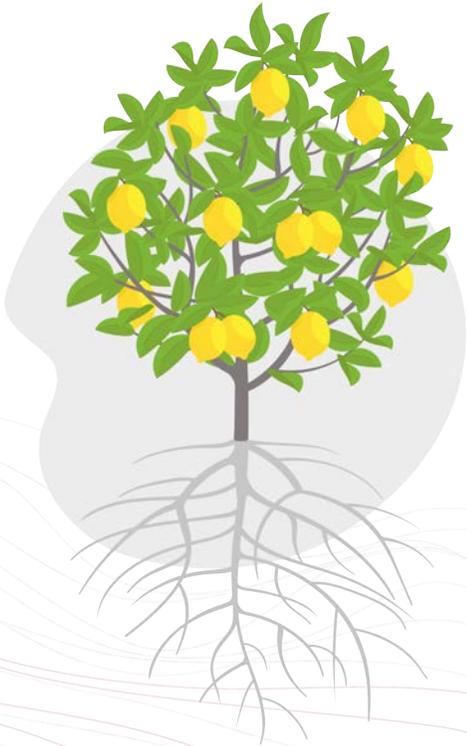
During a crisis, the complexity and scope can be overwhelming and make decision-making difficult. Resilient leaders find opportunities to simplify at the core while maintaining diversity at the edges. For example, a power grid translates power generated from diverse sources to many useful forms of work.[3] **You can begin to simplify by:**

- Identify your fewest, most important priorities and revisit as a leadership team on an ongoing basis.

- Keeping your leadership team to the fewest, most important people to simplify the complexity of decision making.

While there is no "perfect" approach to developing resilience in any given organization, keeping these principles in mind will help enable intentionally navigating through this period of change.

References
-
1 Man's Search for Meaning by Viktor Frankl
2 The How of Happiness by Sonja Lyubomirsky
3 Resilience: Why Things Bounce Back by Andrew Zolli
4 Dare to Lead by Brené Brown

For more information about resilience or to connect with The Clearing, please reach out via the channels below.

linkedin.com/company/theclearing

info@theclearing.com

202.558.6499

THE CLEARING®