Leading Through Change: Supporting Yourself and Others

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This document brings together the models from the session and introduces three further frameworks. Each includes guidance on applying it in practice, particularly in challenging situations.

Supporting Yourself First

Understanding your own relationship with change matters before you can support others through it.

Susan David's research on emotional agility shows that leaders who acknowledge their own difficult emotions, rather than suppressing them, make better decisions and are more effective in their relationships. Her TED talk is a good starting point and is listed in the further reading.

Ask: *How do I respond when things feel uncertain?*

Ask: *Am I carrying anything into this conversation that belongs to me rather than to the person I am supporting?*

Ask: *What do I need to stay effective in this role right now?*

Where Is Your Energy Going?

Covey's Circle of Control divides what we think about into three areas.

- Circle of concern: what you worry about but cannot change. Funding decisions, government policy and institutional restructuring.
- Circle of control: what is within your own power. How you respond, what you say and how you look after yourself.
- Circle of influence: what you can affect through your relationships and actions. How you communicate with your group, the conversations you have and the culture you create around you.

Most people under pressure spend the majority of their energy in the circle of concern. That leaves very little for what can actually be done.

Ask: *What is one thing in my circle of control that I could act on today?*

Reference: *Covey, S. (1989). The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People. Simon and Schuster.*

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Supporting Others Through Change

1. Encourage agency

Help the people you support identify what they can do. That might be building on existing strengths, exploring industry partnerships or considering alternative funding routes. There are more options than people realise.

Ask: *What options have you not yet considered?*

2. Share information honestly

Share what you know. Be clear about what you do not know yet.

Ask: *What do I know that would help this person right now?*

3. Signpost to spaces for listening

Know what exists across your institution and beyond. Wellbeing services, peer networks and other support structures can all provide a space outside your immediate role.

Ask: *Where can I direct this person so they feel heard?*

A Short Guide to Having a Conversation About Change

Use this when preparing to have a conversation with a member of your research group, a mentee or a colleague who is navigating change.

Prepare

- Get clear on why you are having the conversation
- Know what you can share and what you cannot
- Reflect on your own relationship with this change first

During

- Acknowledge what is happening before offering solutions
- Share what you know and be clear about what you do not know yet
- Ask one question at a time and wait for the response
- Help the person identify what is within their control
- Listen more than you speak

After

- If you said you would follow up, follow up
- Know where to direct someone if the conversation goes beyond your role
- Be clear about what is yours to carry and what is not

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Team Frameworks

Lencioni's Five Dysfunctions of a Team

Patrick Lencioni's research on team performance identifies five behaviours that determine whether a group stays cohesive during difficult periods. Each builds on the one before it.

1. Trust
2. Healthy conflict
3. Commitment
4. Accountability
5. Results

Use this model to identify where your team is struggling. Where is accountability missing? Where is commitment low? Where has trust broken down? Start there and address it directly.

- Hold regular meetings that include how you are working together, not just what you are working on
- Be honest about what you know and what you do not know yet
- Involve your team in identifying what they can do something about
- Acknowledge what has been difficult before asking people to move forward
- Recognise small wins. Outputs, submissions and completions all count.

Reference: *Lencioni, P. (2002). The Five Dysfunctions of a Team. Jossey-Bass.*

Kotter on Resistance to Change

Kotter's research identifies four conditions that cause people to resist or disengage during change.

1. The person does not understand what is changing and why.
2. They do not trust that the change will deliver what has been promised.
3. They feel they have no control or input.
4. Previous change has affected them in ways that have never been acknowledged.

Resistance is rarely about the change itself. It is usually one of the four conditions above. Identify which one before you respond.

- Identify which of the four conditions is most likely before you respond
- If clarity is low, share what you know, even if the full picture is not yet available
- If trust is low, follow through on small commitments
- If someone feels unheard, create a genuine opportunity for input
- If previous change has left frustration, acknowledge it before moving forward
- Address difficult behaviour privately and be clear about its impact on the team
- If the behaviour continues despite these steps, seek guidance from your HR function

Reference: *Kotter, J. (1996). Leading Change. Harvard Business Review Press.*

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Motivating Research Groups During Uncertainty

People maintain motivation during uncertainty when they feel heard, have clarity about what is expected and have some control over how they work.

Use this activity in a group meeting when motivation is dropping or when people are having difficulty staying focused on current work.

Before the meeting

- Send one question to your group in advance: what do you need from this team to do your best work right now?
- Ask everyone to come prepared with one or two thoughts

In the meeting

- Acknowledge the current situation honestly
- Share your own answer to the question first
- Invite others to share theirs
- Agree on two or three behaviours as a team and write them down

After the meeting

- Revisit the agreed behaviours at your next meeting
- Update them as things change

Reference: *Deci, E. and Ryan, R. (2000). Self-Determination Theory. Psychological Inquiry, 11(4).*

Further Reading

Covey, S. (1989). *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People.* Simon and Schuster.

David, S. (2016). *Emotional Agility: Get Unstuck, Embrace Change, and Thrive in Work and Life.* Avery Publishing.

Deci, E. and Ryan, R. (2000). *Self-Determination Theory.* Psychological Inquiry, 11(4).

Kotter, J. (1996). *Leading Change.* Harvard Business Review Press.

Lencioni, P. (2002). *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team.* Jossey-Bass.

Susan David TED talk: The Gift and Power of Emotional Courage

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