

## **Every Crisis Conceals Opportunity**

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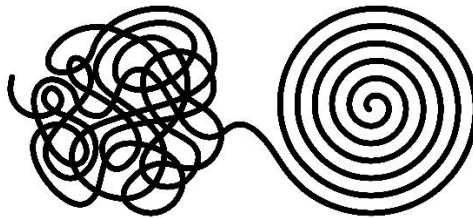
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*As the Covid-19 challenge unfolds – it is important to remember the 1918 influenza pandemic infected a third of the world population and killed 50 million people. The stakes now are even higher. As viruses continue to evolve – and as urban civilization continues to barrel forth - Estimated death toll from a pandemic could be as high as 21-147 million. “Understanding the complex interplay of factors is vital - an important lesson from the 1918 influenza pandemic is that a **well-prepared public response** can save many lives.” <sup>1,2</sup>*

Against the background of this sobering thought – the question worth considering: “Can this global crisis be used as a transformational opportunity?”

This article outlines the **7R** choices we can make as individuals and as leaders:

**Recognize, Reframe, Respond, Reconcile, Regroup, Resilience, Respect**



**Choices which could **help us transform** our journey toward a more equitable and sustainable world.**

### **1. Recognize:**

We can **choose** to ...

- a. Not under-estimate the power of an exponential growth curve – especially when it comes to loss of lives.
- b. Choose not to permit insidious memes to infiltrate the mind (a meme is a negative thought which grows like a virus, once it gains entry)
- c. Build the Capacity to Ask the right questions – to get to the ‘Root-Cause’. Not be a rabbit paralyzed by the headlights.

- d. Seek & share facts based on empirical evidence. Refuse to get overwhelmed by a deluge of ill-informed opinions which can lead to mass-hysteria and panic.  
A case in point is the positive forecast made by Michael Levitt - a Nobel laureate - on the number of days it takes to cross the peak of the Covid19 infection-rate. [3](#)

## 2. **Reframe**: Every single moment, the lens we choose is creating the world we live in.

We can **choose** to ...

- a. Adopt a new Perspective. See the Opportunity-in-Crisis. The Chinese word for 'Crisis' (*wēijī*) consists of two characters – i.e. 'Danger' AND 'Opportunity'.
- b. Have Faith. And choose to spread Positivity & Hope. Give a wide berth to conspiracy theories, doomsday scenarios or indulging in blame-games.
- c. Re-imagine a 'New Normal'. Recognize Nature's ancient message that everything is 'Inter-Connected AND Inter-Dependent'. This is validated by Quantum Science as well.
- d. Hence, solutions to burning complex issues (not just Covid-19) are possible only if we adopt a wholistic and systemic view.

## 3. **Respond**:

We can **choose** to ...

- a. **Rapid-Response** to stem the gash and achieve containment before the exponential curve overwhelms the healthcare infrastructure (as Covid 19 can spread exponentially). Each hour's delay can cause multifold increase in human tragedy. [4](#)
- b. Not to **React**. Pro-actively **Respond**. Choose not to overly-rely on the 'Fight or Flight' survival response.

Instead, choose to fluidly toggle between the adrenaline rush of the 'Primal-brain' AND the Neocortex - the higher-order brain which governs conscious thought, reasoning and social interactions. For senior leaders, Emotional Intelligence (EQ) is considered at least twice as important as IQ. [5](#) The good news is that EQ can be developed at any age.

High EQ leaders can choose to build social capital thru 'Team EI' – the single most important variable to achieve High-Performance status.

At the next level, it is possible to develop high Cultural Intelligence (CQ) which can help with a vital skill for this century – i.e. nurturing Alliances & Partnerships across cultures & Eco-systems.

- c. Never under-estimate, how important 'Back-to-Basics' is. Whether it is age-old advice to be familiar with the 'nuts & bolts' of the business. Or in the case of Covid-19 to maintain basic personal & social hygiene and regular exposure to exercise, fresh air & sunlight. 6

Effective leaders choose to **Communicate 3X** with clarity. They are consistent and use all available media / platforms for **Real-time** engagement. Evolve the narrative as new facts emerge. Neither embellish nor mince words. Choose to firmly anchor the narrative on the shared vision, purpose & values. Invite looking ahead - to **Co-create the Future**.

- 4. **Reconcile** – in a volatile, uncertain, complex, ambiguous (VUCA) world – where disruption and quantum change is the norm.

We can **choose** to ...

- a. Unleash the potential for significant and sustainable Value-creation by aspiring to **Transformational leadership**
- b. Become Ambidextrous leaders who choose to unleash the immense power residing in what appear to be polar opposites.

e.g.

- Chaos AND Order
- Maintain the Core AND Disruptive Innovation
- Discipline of Execution Excellence AND Empathy a.k.a. 'Tough-Love'.
- Several other paradoxes across the spectrum of:
  - Results Leadership
  - Thought Leadership
  - People Leadership and
  - Self-Directed Leadership

Ref: Sunya Circle blog – 'The Play of Paradox' - <http://blog.sunyacircle.com/wp-admin/post.php?post=121&action=edit>

- c. Learn the art of **Recognizing, Respecting and Reconciling** apparent polarity to **Realize** the full value. "To innovate is to combine values that are not easily joined- therefore scarce – therefore profitable" says Dr Fons Trompenaars 7

## 5. **Regroup with Resolve** :

We can **choose** to ...

- a. Rely more on 'Pull' (vs. 'Push'). Design the gradient for organization Energy to flow – leveraging Influence, not Control

- b. Getting grass-roots allegiance, not mere alignment, is how inspirational leaders produce extra-ordinary results with ordinary resources. During my corporate career over 3 decades, several of my teams lived the credo - '*Impossible is Possible*' and '*Either We Find a Way or We Make One*'.
- c. Redirect & **Transform** energy – from a negative swoosh into a positive upward spiral of 'Flow'. Choosing to continually raise the bar- matching 'Stretch' with enhanced leadership competencies. Importantly, together with a deep conviction in a shared **Sense-of-Destiny**. [8](#)
- d. Build an accelerated bench-strength of future-ready **inspirational leaders**. Encourage them to consider higher-order Trust based **Inclusive Leadership**. Reaching deep down to the grassroots and reach-out across-the-aisle, across eco-systems. Instilling **Co-ownership** for a compelling narrative. As Future-ready Leaders, we can choose to develop:
  - Enhanced 'Soft-Skills' AND 'Digital-Literacy' [9](#)
  - Partner across Eco-systems – e.g. Public-Private Partnerships
  - Choose to be stewards for long term sustainable wealth across diverse constituencies by practicing '**Service-First Leadership**' or Servant-Leadership

## 6. Resilience :

We can **choose** to ...

- a. Have Faith AND deep **Respect** for ground reality (not just sugar-coated optimism). Jim Collins refers to this as the Stockdale Paradox - a quality which helped inspirational figures like Vice Admiral James Stockdale and Nelson Mandela to survive many years of harsh solitary confinement and torture. [10](#)
- b. Not to wait for a 'silver-bullet' as a cure-all fix. Covid-19 and perhaps even bigger challenges will come again. Bumps on the road are a reality. We can choose to learn to enjoy the ride – both, the ups and downs. Getting up each time, we fall.
- c. Actively collaborate across Eco-systems to build a globally coordinated response to global challenges – e.g. a 'Pandemic Preparedness Program' – which works the levers both, through Centralization AND Decentralization. [1](#)
- d. Similarly, organizations can choose to be pro-active about Risk-mitigation and 'Disruptive Innovation' by having multi-disciplinary teams with regular battle-readiness drills.

## 7. Respect & Reflect:

We can **choose** to ...

- a. Salute and convey our deep respect for all first-responders, health-care workers and others engaged in manning essential services during a crisis ... and after. Step up and offer solace and support to families who have lost loved ones.
- b. Feel deep gratitude for the abundance we have been blessed with. Importantly the ability to **Discern & Choose** - To choose to be stewards of a sustainable civilization which values the well-being of all & cares for our home planet.
- c. Yuval Noel Harari (author of 'Sapiens') commenting on the world after Covid19 - underlines the need to engender **Trust** ... "to achieve such a level of **compliance and co-operation**, you need trust. People need to trust science, to trust public authorities, and to trust the media" [11](#)
- d. Reframe the 'lock-down' as an opportunity to step away from the frenzied pace we had gotten accustomed to. Choose to spend more time with family, in Nature or with our own Self. **Reflect** on & perhaps choose not to procrastinate the '**Journey Inward**' - to Rediscover our True Self.

### Summary:

As *Homo Sapiens* (translated 'wise ones') we can exercise the gift of **Choice**:

- We can choose to **Transform** any crisis into an opportunity to emerge stronger and wiser. Create a future which is more equitable and sustainable.
- Alternately - if we make a fear-induced choice – there is the danger to lurch deeper into authoritarian leadership which has little respect for individual rights and a sustainable world.

Thanks to the crisis, a break-through in the **Consciousness Level** for the individual as well as for Humankind may prove to be the tipping point for something that is waiting to emerge.

Leaders must choose to **raise their game** to meet the expectations of Millennials - who will form most of the workforce in the Knowledge Age. It is entirely possible, we are at the cusp – and the portal may swing wide open for large numbers to choose Trust-based, Inclusive, 'Service-First' **stewardship**.

The key is to remain calm and considerate. And together to **Co-script & Co-own** a new reality across the **7 R's** with **Creativity, Courage and Compassion**.

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- Dr. Carolien van de Sandt - Doherty Institute, Australia  
  
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