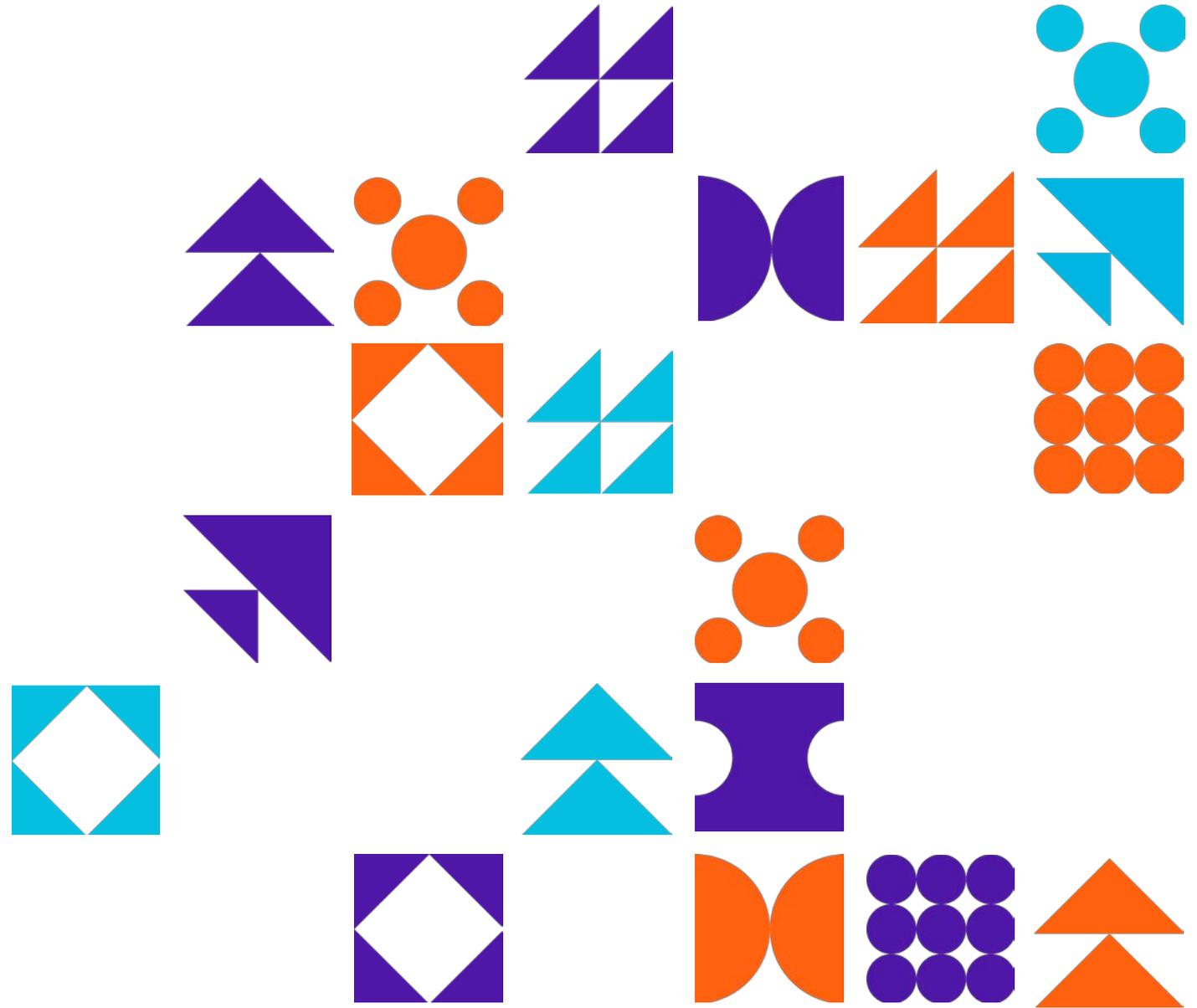


CENTER STAGE PODCAST CLUB

RESILIENCE AND DEEP LEARNING

HIGHLIGHTS AND INSIGHTS

23 March 2021



Our Moderator and Discussion Provocateurs

Tammy Ashraf



Madelyn Blair



Nancy Dixon



Audience – 1,034 participants from 77 countries

Format – Participants answered three survey questions, listened to discussion among the three speakers, and submitted their own questions in real time.



RESILIENT ORGANIZATIONS

Poll Question: What is the most significant barrier to exploring options in response to disruptions?

Audience poll: Responses were fairly evenly split among the following: team members do not have a clear and consistent understanding of their mission (11%); team members are not asked to be involved in the discussion about the best response (10%); team members do not have sufficient resources (budget, time, knowledge) to think and adapt (10%); and team members are overwhelmed and don't know how to prioritize tasks (9%).



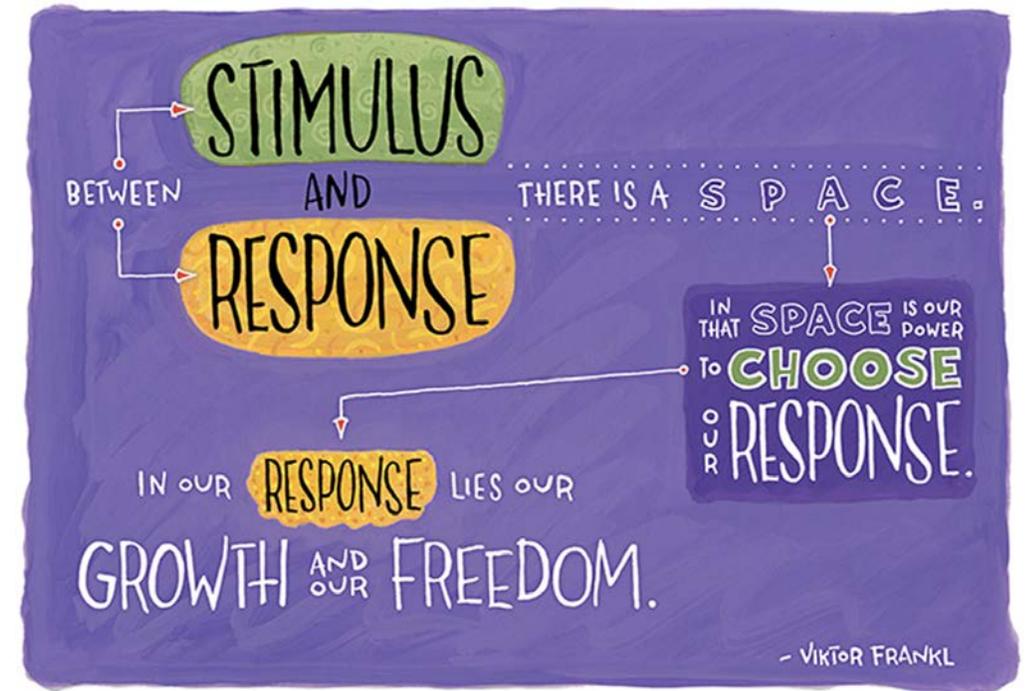
**Madelyn
Blair**

Understanding of the mission needs to be internalized...I like the graphic which shows that even when things appear to be completely out of control, you choose how you feel about a situation.



**Nancy
Dixon**

All of the top poll responses indicate that people are not involved in the mission and that is worrying.



(All remarks attributed to speakers are summaries, not direct quotations.)

Audience Questions

Do we need adversity to effectively lead?



**Madelyn
Blair**

On the farm, when you plant a plant, you press the roots into the soil because roots grow under pressure. So the same relates to people...we need pressure to grow.



**Nancy
Dixon**

We don't learn unless we are faced with a situation we did not expect...Human beings are the only creatures with the mental capacity to make mistakes and learn from them.



Participant
insight

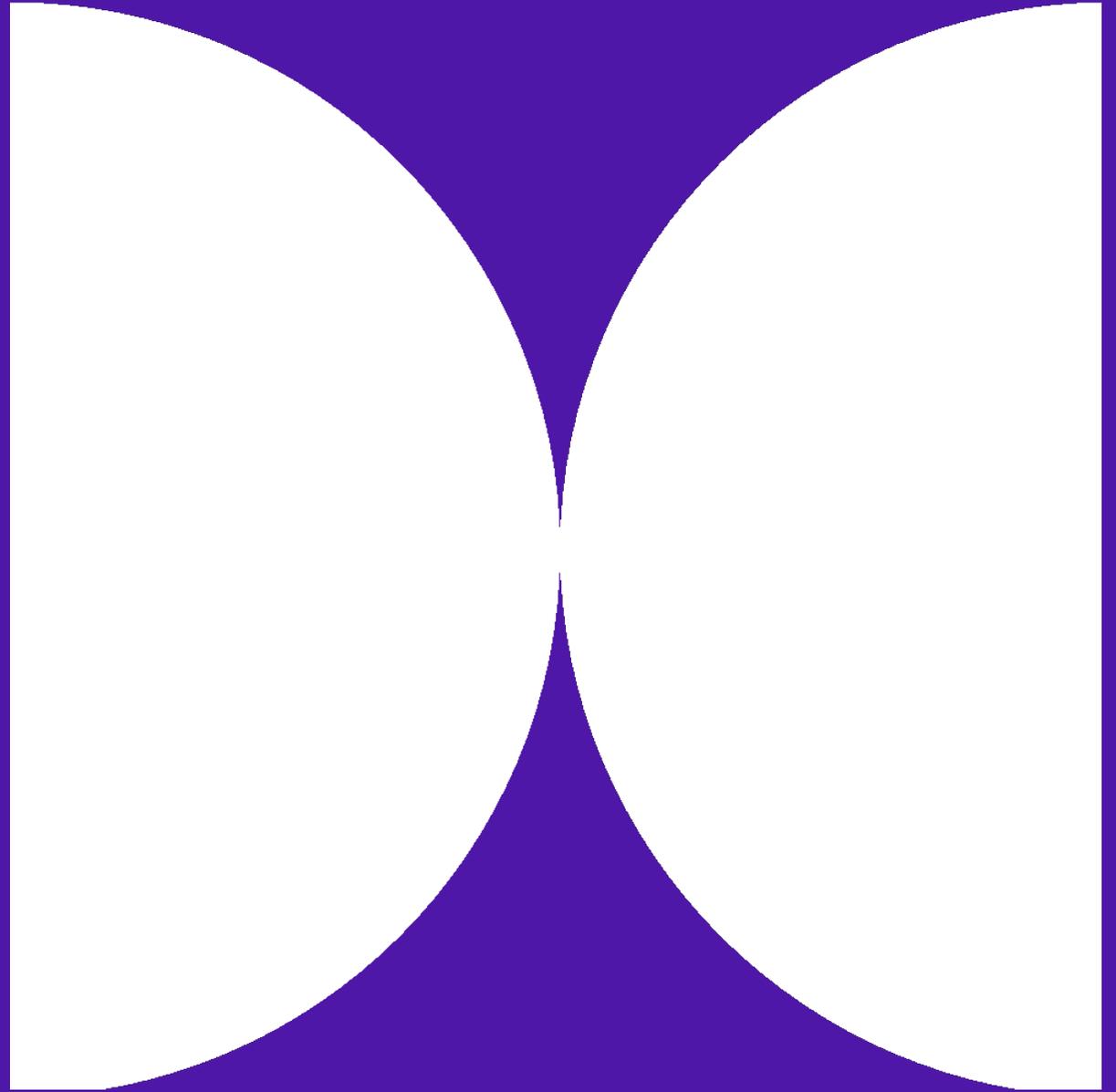
Adversity and “good stress” are important factors for growth, but motivation needs to be at the roots.

Given the plant analogy, what is the equivalent of weeds in an organizational context?

When a project manager or leader push their view rather than giving team members time to explore together. The team needs time to internalize the mission.

Most of the learning within any organization happens in the periphery, not in the center where authority resides. We need to find ways to engage the center and the periphery so we can have shared learning.

DIALOGIC ORGANIZATIONS



Poll Question: How transparent is the exchange of knowledge throughout your organization?

Audience poll: The top responses were: there is a lack of knowledge transparency amongst employees (14%); and there is transparency in knowledge of the organization as a whole and how I contribute to it (12%).



**Nancy
Dixon**

Dialogic organizations enable knowledge exchange and deep learning by encouraging honest and authentic conversations. Think of hallways where people gather, where no one is in charge. You are freer to talk. There is no hierarchy to inhibit or interfere with conversations. More organizational meetings need to be like hallways to encourage richer conversations.

There is equality in the discussions. Opinions are respected, and people can speak their own truth as experience has taught them.



**Madelyn
Blair**

Hallways are also places where you can ask questions and seek out additional information... Instead of judging what others tell us, we can use questions to understand the logic and thinking behind people's views and experiences.



**Nancy
Dixon**

If we look at some of the major scandals that have occurred recently – pharmacies and the opioid crisis, Wells Fargo account fraud and Volkswagen emission scandal – we have to ask whether these would have happened if those actions had been transparent and organizational teams were involved in the decisions. We would have fewer of these types of scandals if employees were influencing what their leaders were doing.



**Madelyn
Blair**

Transparency links with trust and a viewpoint that we are helping each other achieve. Trust builds confidence, motivation and competence, all of which feed into resilience.



Participant
insight

One of the main issues I face is that management keeps excluding technical information that I feel is crucial and instead focuses on things that are superficial to communicate to senior management.

KNOWLEDGE
EXCHANGE
SOLUTIONS



Poll Question: Which situation have you found you often encounter in your organization?

Audience poll: The top responses were: team members tend to “sugar-coat” information that is sent up to management (10%); and team members tend to withhold information about mistakes and errors to avoid getting into trouble (8%).



**Nancy
Dixon**

Virginia Department of Corrections Director Harold Clarke had a strong belief that everyone deserves a second chance and needs to have their viewpoint accepted as valid. He also believed that staff were smart enough to understand and solve problems without managers telling them what to do.

Clarke undertook an effort to have 18,000 staff across the prison system trained in dialogic practices. Each week, staff participate in learning circles to exchange ideas using their dialogic skills.

Staff also participate in working dialogues without managers, so staff have the freedom to speak openly. These working dialogues bring together staff affected by issues or challenges to explore:

- Understanding the problem and ensuring that all relevant stakeholders are engaged.
- What it would look like if the problem were solved; and
- What it would take to implement the solution.

The Virginia Department of Corrections' policy on dialogue can be found at:

<https://vadoc.virginia.gov/files/operating-procedures/000/vadoc-op-010-5.pdf>. Other case studies and resources applied within prison systems can be found at: <http://www.prisondialogue.org/case-studies>.



**Nancy
Dixon**

Using dialogic methods, staff have shifted from a “lock ‘em up and throw away the key” mentality to one that is more empathetic toward prisoners. And recidivism rates which range from 42% to 60% nationwide have dropped to 23.4% in Virginia.

Prisoners are now learning dialogic practices to voice their concerns and to help them find alternative solutions to their problems.



**Madelyn
Blair**

Teams need to build up trust for this type of approach to work. One technique I have seen increase trust is to have team members share their greatest accomplishment with each other. This gives each team member a voice and helps team members learn about each other. I have seen it build up trust and strengthen the team's performance. Back to resilience, it builds confidence to be honest and open and to make the right choice.

Question for the Audience – How do you define resilience?



Participant
insight

Response 1: Prior to today I would have said being able to bounce back. Now I would say the ability in the moment to handle a stressful or adverse interaction/opportunity.

Response 2: Maintaining strength and durability amidst tension or pressure. The ability to bend without breaking.

Response 3: Toughness with grace.

Question for the Audience - Share an example of how your organization supports resilience among employees.

Response 1: We have a core values mantra with #1 being transparency. This has helped our organization be more resilient by providing an understanding of the Why which allows us to participate and be validated.

Response 2: We allow decision making to happen at different levels - specifically allow for quick thinking and flexibility when situations arise.

Response 3: Encourages an entrepreneurial spirit and supports its employees.

Response 4: Resilience leadership coaching.

Response 5: A weekly fully funded lunch meeting and/or learning session for employees to learn, socialize and share ideas.



Participant
insight

Question for the Audience – What are you doing to facilitate communication and knowledge sharing among team members working remotely during the pandemic?

Response 1: More frequent meetings, shorter...More group projects instead of individual work.

Response 2: Nothing at present! I need to change this.

Response 3: Adding team-building activities to weekly meetings.

Response 4: We promote meetings and the exchange of experiences, and we have archives with papers, videos, podcasts and other documents.

Response 5: Motivating them to talk to each other, sharing their work and understanding others' work, documenting the knowledge, using communication channels like Teams...

Response 6: We have monthly all-company meetings. We also have weekly interactions from the CEO. Departments and teams meet weekly. And of course, we are utilizing more technology designed to assist with collaboration.



Participant insight

Question for the Audience - How do you encourage open and honest dialogue among team members? Is this an approach that your organization supports?



Participant insight

Response 1: Yes, great ideas are encouraged if there are no investments. No if ideas go beyond comfort zones of superiors.

Response 2: Generally use the "multi hat" approach. Assigning someone to be Devil's advocate often opens the honest dialogue.

Response 3: Yes, we have a strong culture of being accountable, being open and not expecting perfection.

Question for the Audience – Have you ever faced a situation where a member of a project team withheld information or input that could have improved outcomes or mitigated problems?

Response 1: Yes, sugar-coating by the manager when reporting to upper management.

Response 2: Yes, but it was a case of not knowing what and how to share the information. This was remedied during one of the meetings.

Response 3: Yes. I work in a company where a lot of people feel like they need to protect their knowledge so that they can feel needed and as if they can't be replaced. It is an old culture that still lingers (especially with the older employees).

Response 4: Definitely. It usually involves team members who don't communicate easily and feel afraid to talk about problems because they may feel it can seem like they don't know as much as the profile requires.



Participant
insight

Moderator Insights

Tammy Ashraf



- Resilience is a characteristic that is empowering to individuals in that they have the freedom to choose how they will respond to an external stimulus.
- Challenges can be perceived as opportunities to learn and grow. Making mistakes is often inherent to the process of learning and growth.
- In the Dialogic Organizations poll, there was a near tie between the top two audience responses which were opposite from each other. This is potentially an indicator of the inequality in knowledge exchange throughout an organization.
 - The top two poll answers were:
 - There is a lack of knowledge transparency amongst employees.
 - There is transparency in knowledge of the organization as a whole and how I contribute to it.
 - Some of the most valuable knowledge in an organization is that which is not openly spoken about. It is important to create environments where employees can have free flowing conversations such as "hallway chats".
 - One of the methods to increasing transparency, trust and knowledge exchange is to use the dialogic organization model of communication. Reference case study: <https://www.nancydixonblog.com/2021/01/an-organization-that-changed-its-culture-by-implementing-dialogue-.html>.

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