

A crystal ball sits on a dark, textured rock. The crystal ball reflects a sunset scene with a bright orange sun low on the horizon, casting a glow over a dark, silhouetted landscape. The background of the entire image is a blurred sunset sky with warm orange and yellow tones.

Reimagine

Life, work and teams

How to build the mental muscle to redesign your life, work and teams in the post-COVID19 world

Experts in self-leadership and developing high functioning, deeply connected teams



Programs and coaching | Workshops and keynotes | Diagnostics and strategies | Industry coalitions

Appreciation and gratitude

The ideas in this paper have been inspired by many incredible thinkers, some of whom I've worked closely with and others who I observe and admire from afar. Rather than diligently cite every sentence, I profile my inspiration sources on my website.

I'd like to make a special mention to Charlotte Thaarup from The Mindfulness Clinic and Dr Matt Kalitowski whose ideas and insights through hours of conversations altered my worldview for good. A shout out also goes to Sam Harris (samharris.org), Shane Parish (The Knowledge Project), Jim Dethmer and Diana Chapman (Conscious Leadership Group), Robert Kegan and Lisa Lahey whose books, blogs and podcasts have been an invaluable source of life-changing ideas.

I hope I do their ideas justice and they deliver as much value to you as they have to me.

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We're at a pivotal moment in time

The global pandemic has redefined how we think about work and life

New priorities and perspectives

Two months of self-isolation has created an extraordinary opportunity for deep reflection on what matters to people. Many of us are searching for ways to retain what we enjoyed about this time - the less harried pace, less traffic, more time with family, walks in the park. Returning to the old routines of ironing shirts, putting on makeup, schlepping into the office and being back in the corporate grind fills many of us with dread.

The shared experience of a pandemic and the economic havoc it has unleashed has also created new levels of personal connection and understanding. This is a once in a generation moment for organisations to work with their people to capture what has been great and address what hasn't.

A fully or partially distributed workforce is here to stay

The great COVID-19 working from home experiment has largely been a roaring success. A recent US survey found only 2% of respondents wanted to return to full time in the office. Our clients are all expecting a partially distributed workforce when offices open to all employees.

Organisations that withdraw these newfound freedoms do so at their peril.

That said, working from home was far from a bed of roses for many. The organisations that didn't support their people by adjusting expectations for home-schoolers, or help manage the costs of isolation for others, face flight risks over the next year as talent re-evaluates their loyalty. Don't be surprised if engagement collapses as burnout sets in.

The challenges of distributed teams need to be surfaced and addressed

Even when the best support was put in place, uncertainty and remoteness has a cost. If not intentionally managed, it can undermine cohesion at a time when the problems just got a whole lot bigger. Here are some of the challenges we're seeing:

- It's harder to engage people on **virtual team meetings**. Great meetings depend on all participants injecting energy and curiosity but managers struggle to coach better behaviour. As teams become partially distributed and there are some in and some out of the office, this becomes harder to manage
- If conflict or **poor collaboration** was a problem before lockdown, isolation means unconstructive tension, defensiveness and passive avoidance has become more pronounced.
- Your team's **priorities and expectations for work and life have shifted** but managers struggle to effectively have those conversations.

- Remote working has become an excuse to not **have difficult conversations**, leaving issues to fester and brew.
- The **fear of isolation** has become real for some, particularly for employees who crave social connections and depend on internal networks to do their job. Stress and anxiety levels have increased as a result.
- Some employees struggle to stay **productive and motivated**, and are more easily distracted at home. They miss the energy of the office and value it as fuel to get the job done.
- There is anxiety about **returning to the office**. Fear of exposure to the virus is very real for some, regardless of how low the risks now are.
- It's harder to keep an eye on **engagement**; a homogenous approach to motivating people just won't work.
- **Many are just over it!** Home-schooling, endless all-day and late-night Zoom calls, and constant thinking and rethinking how to respond to the uncertainty have taken their toll. Now the adrenaline has subsided, the threat of burnout is real.

The problems and opportunities just got bigger

Mass-disruption always creates new challenges and opportunities. What we know for sure is what got us here, isn't going to get us there. **That means we must change. Having effective conversations with ourselves and others is at the heart of that journey.**

The impact on teams and the business

In our work with clients, we're seeing several team characteristics become more pronounced, highlighting the need to intentionally work towards a new aspiration. The characteristics below the line aren't mutually exclusive and so you might relate to a combination of these traits.

Team dynamics	Delivery	Business impact	Key challenges
High functioning, deeply connected	Excellence	Progress, value and results	Organisational-wide commitment
Collegiate, traditional and conformist	Status quo	Marginal impact	Fixed mindset
Stressed and over it	Concerns	Attrition and mental health risks	Resilience and mental health
Defensive, dysfunctional and distracted	Excuses	Culture destroying toxicity	Blame games and power struggles

What got us here, won't get us there

We need to reimagine how we live our lives, structure our work and develop our teams

We believe there are four burning platforms that organisations should focus on to surface and address the new challenges we face and capture the incredible opportunities ahead.

Radical responsibility is a gamechanger

Taking radical responsibility is a gamechanger for our wellbeing, personal effectiveness and team dynamics. It means we're the writer, producer and director of everything in our lives, including our thoughts and feelings, and actions and consequences. A life 'by me' is full of appreciation, accountability and creativity. Blame games, power plays and defensive postures dissolve when this mindset is modelled, trained and nurtured.

The starting point is understanding how our brain and mind works – its unavoidable limitations and incredible powers. From there we can develop a practice of personal discovery to fully lean into how we show up, how we get in our own way and what we need to do to shift.

Fortify, strengthen and repair mental wellness

Isolation, disconnection, uncertainty, and work/life integration and intensification have a cost and the currency in mental wellness. The cost is not only measured by anxiety and depression rates. Our personal effectiveness dramatically declines when our threat systems are running the show.

New rituals supported across the team that help them invest in their own wellness can have a profound effect.

“Loneliness isn't the physical absence of other people, it's the sense you're not sharing anything that matters with anyone else.”

Johann Hari, author

We need to go beyond the boundaries of typical wellness and mental health first aid programs to help our people uncover ways to forge more meaningful connections with themselves and others. Creating an environment that encourages feelings to be felt and their wisdom to be learned is one way we can achieve this endgame.

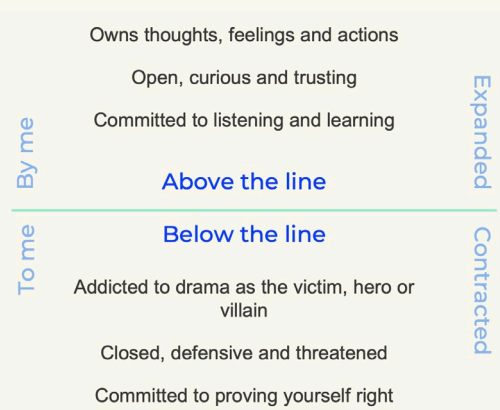
Transform how we communicate and influence

Effective conversations are the most important tool we have to solve the challenges we face. Being human makes this hard. We all get triggered and when we do we get defensive and abrasive, and play blame and power games. In other words, we go below the line.

Surfacing and addressing these unconstructive behaviours was hard when most of us were in the office most of the time. A partially distributed workforce makes it that much more challenging.

New skills for seeing how we show up and shifting are required.

These can be trained in a way that's equal parts challenging and confronting, fun and playful, and inspiring and motivating. Tools that help your people deeply self-reflect, internalise the learning, practice new habits and support each other are key.

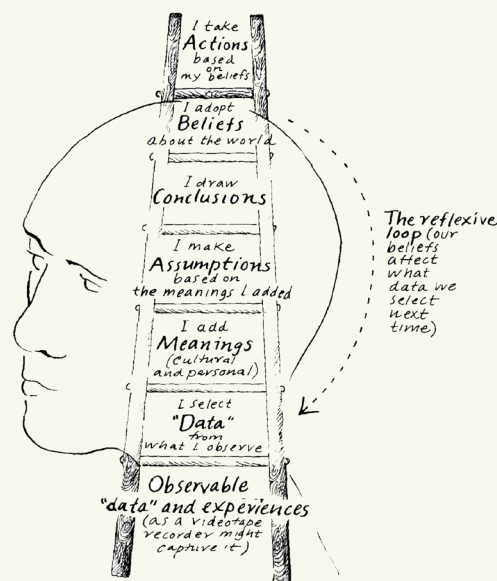


Source: The Conscious Leadership Group

Team cohesion needs a new rule book

Team cohesion needs to be about more than getting along. We need to strengthen our capacity for openness, insight and co-creating if we are to make the sum of the whole greater than its parts. Much easier said than done yet still able to be trained by zeroing in on how and why we close our mind off to alternative possibilities.

When we can own our own closed-mindedness and its cost, we can use simple techniques to break it wide open. Separating fact from stories, and re-writing alternative stories is one powerful process. Developing a co-creation culture of share and discover using priming, timing and 'yes and', 'yes but' and 'no because' habits is another.



Source: Chris Argyris and Donald Schon

A reimagination roadmap

A proven methodology that supports your people and teams to reinvent how they work together and live their lives

Input

General check-ins and standard team conversations might mean your people feel heard but they won't radically shift limiting beliefs and engrained behaviours.

It takes a deeper conversation with your people, supported by proven frameworks and tools that ensure the conversation stays constructive, even when it becomes confronting.

Output

- Profound insights into you and your colleagues
- Observable behavioural changes to work on individually and team-wide, including progress mapped over time
- Team commitments to support awareness, wellbeing, cohesion, effectiveness and co-creation

Outcomes

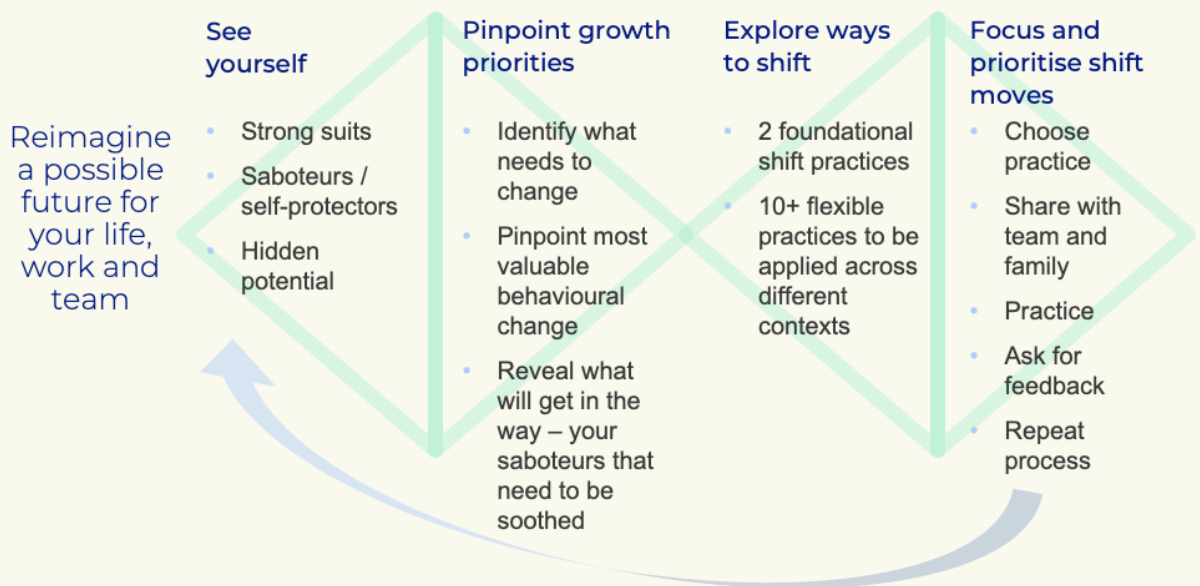
We've boiled it down to five key areas that can be developed with easy to integrate practices and habits.

	Awareness	Wellbeing	Cohesion and connection	Effectiveness	Co-creation
	Open, adaptable and growing	Resilient and energised	The whole is greater than the sum of its parts	Have more fun and get more done	New perspectives, great ideas, executed well
Above the line	Able to see unhelpful thought patterns and behaviours, able to shift	Established habits of nurturing self and others	High levels of trust A practice of seeing and being positive intent Professional intimacy	Focused and present Flexible and adaptable Focus on progress and goals	Open and curious Share and discover Yes and, yes but, no because
Below the line	Easily triggered, limited awareness of unhelpful thought patterns and behaviours	Unchecked, unconstructive habits	Surface and transactional Gossip and drama Withhold and withdraw	Distracted Closed and defensive Entitled	Positional Transactional Combative

The learning experience

We believe learning experiences need to impact participants in the moment so they fundamentally shift how they see themselves and others. An appetite and ability to keep changing and growing after the program is another essential outcome.

Here's an overview of our learning experience aimed at reimagining how we live and work in the post-COVID19 world.



All of us have superpowers we can tap into to navigate the transition to work and life after COVID-19. When overplayed and combined with human self-protection mechanisms, these superpowers can become our kryptonite.

Understanding how these undermine our potential is where to start. We recommend being playful with this personal discovery. Personas are a great way to bring this to life.

Here are some of the ones we script to help clients narrow down on which one is most getting in their way:

The dramatist	Good parent	Opposite of my story	Feeling all feelings
Captain serious	Peacemaker	What is, what if, if only	Candour and clearing
Perfectionist	Protector	Appreciation and gratitude	Integrity
Highway patrol	Cynic	Play and rest	Zone of genius
Woe is me	Control freak	Share and discover	Sourcing approval, security and control
Avoider	Worry wart		
The critic	Martyr		

Change is hard and most of us fail despite best efforts to shift behaviours, even when the stakes are high.

The good news is the human brain is plastic and can change based on what it pays attention to. It also has its own 'muscle memory' and so the efforts we put in have a cumulative effect. That means it gets easier to stay above the line over time.

We use shift practices that train our brain to be more accountable, open, curious, connected and adaptable.

About Yo&Co

Experts in self-leadership and high functioning, deeply connected teams

Yo&Co brings these ideas to life for clients via programs, coaching, workshops and keynotes.

Yolanda Beattie founded Yo&Co in 2019 after spending three years leading Mercer's diversity and inclusion consulting practice and before that three years leading the Workplace Gender Equality Agency's public affairs team.

Her 20-year career has focused on influencing change by expertly facilitating conversations that capture hearts and minds – at a national, industry, organisational and individual level. She brings to clients an infectious energy, passion for breaking the mould and insatiable desire to get to the heart of issues in pursuit of solutions that work.

Yolanda holds a Bachelors degree in Commerce, a Masters degree (with merit) in public policy and is a certified executive coach (IECL).



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What others say

“Yolanda has a way of asking the questions that need to be asked and taking us that bit deeper to get to the crux of our issues”

“I was able to see how the stories I was telling myself were negatively impacting my working relationships. It was incredibly powerful”

“Yolanda is incredibly intelligent, insightful (self-aware) and passionate. She has a heart for people.”

“Yolanda has a way of making people feel comfortable. She gains trust by sharing her own experiences (good & bad), which draws people out and helps to develop the environment required to support personal change.”



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