



Workplace Crisis Management, Conflict Resolution, and Navigating Extreme Change

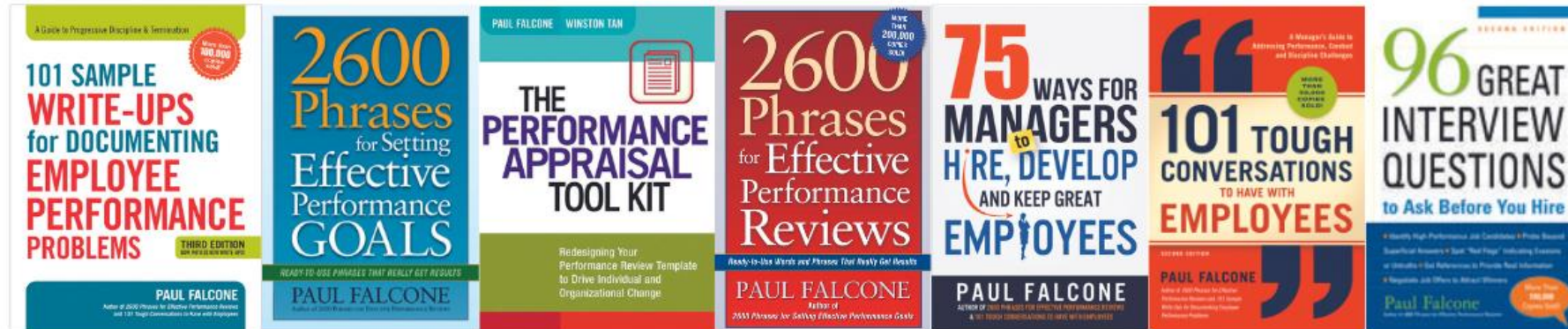
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Paul is the former CHRO of Nickelodeon Animation Studios and head of international human resources for Paramount Pictures. He has also worked in healthcare/biotech and financial services across union, nonprofit, and international environments.

Paul is a columnist for SHRM, a board member of the American Management Association, and a top-rated presenter and webinar facilitator in the areas of talent and performance management, leadership development, and effective leadership communication.



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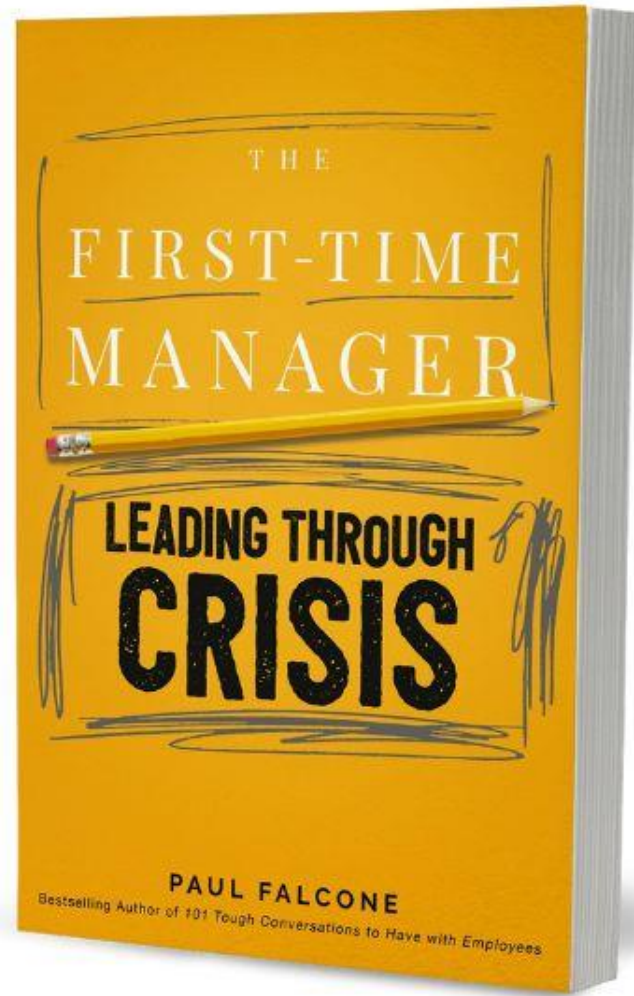
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Today's Agenda

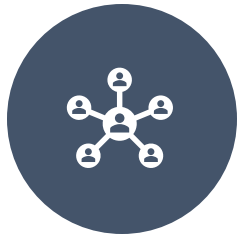
- **PART I**: Living in a VUCA World
- **PART II**: Individual Crises—The Possibility of Losing Your Top Sales Producer
- **PART III**: Departmental Crises—Making It Safe for Employees to Vent
- **PART IV**: Company (Global) Crises—Union Organizing Drives and Natural Disasters

PART I: Living in a VUCA World

- Volatile
- Uncertain
- Complex
- Ambiguous



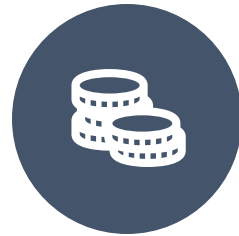
STEEP Framework



SOCIAL



TECHNOLOGICAL



ECONOMIC



ENVIRONMENTAL



POLITICAL

Vicktor Frankl quote. . .



“When we’re no longer able to change a situation, we are challenged to change ourselves.”



A **change in mindset** is required to excel in this new post-COVID 21st century world. . . A solutions-oriented mindset rather than a problem amplification one. . .

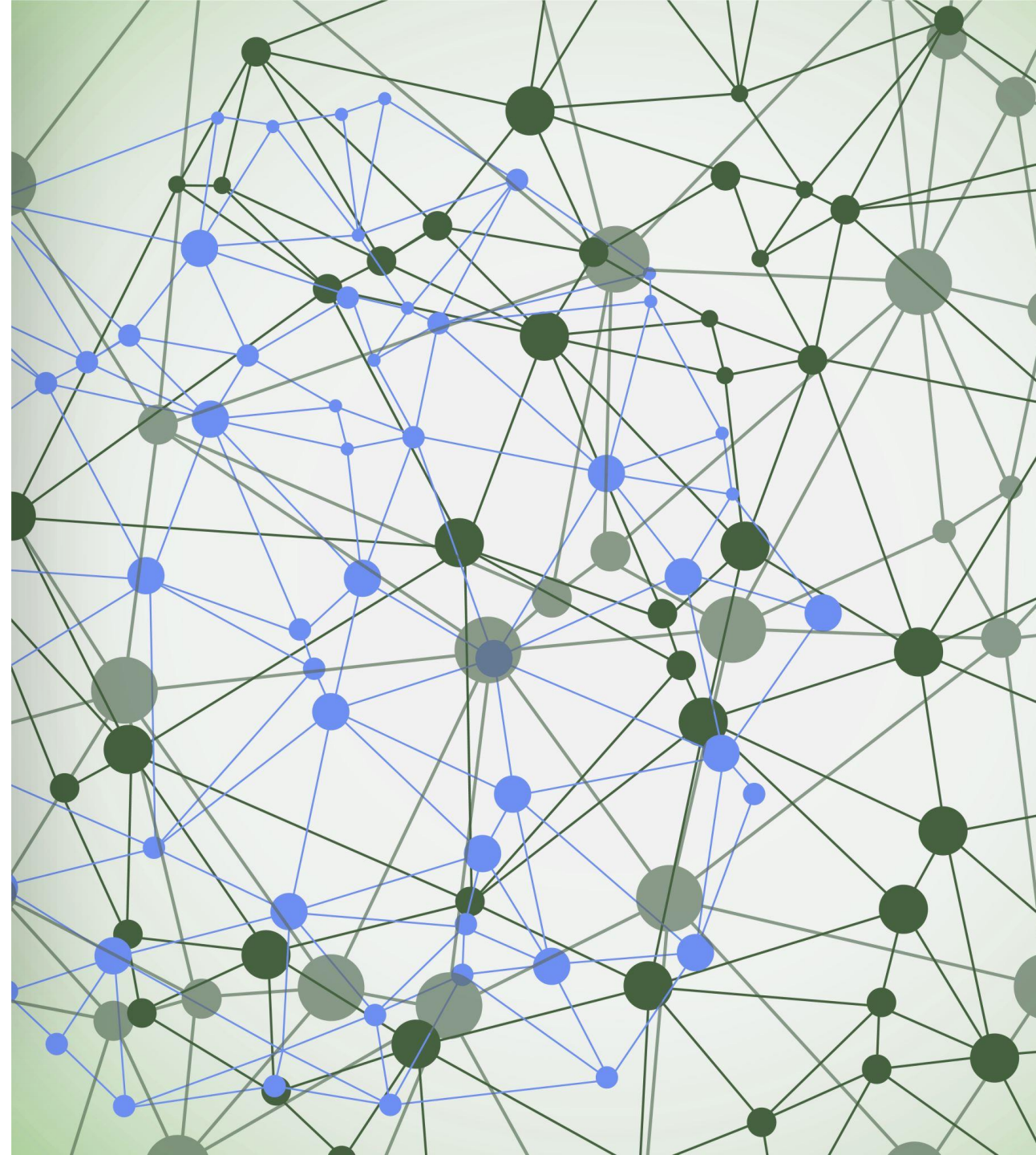
Workplace Application

- Workplace crisis management helps HR & Operational leaders hone their communication and teambuilding skills in today's tumultuous business environment. As Winston Churchill famously said, **“Never let a good crisis go to waste!”**
- 2025 ushers in volumes of sweeping changes, from the presidential election to concerns in the Middle East and Eastern Europe to continuing to manage through post-Covid reintegration, union organizing, returning hybrid-remote employees to the workplace, and more. How HR leads its operational management teams through extended periods of upheaval directly ties to organizational effectiveness, culture change, and the bottom line.
- By no means a "gloom and doom" approach to the many changes before us, this workshop places a healthy and constructive spin on reinventing your role in light of your organization's and team's changing needs and provides timely tools and guidance to help you manage our new “poly crisis” world. **You are both a North Star to and a safe harbor for your organization.**



Crisis and Disruption

- Management and leadership are consumed with unforeseen challenges that seem to come at increasingly alarming speeds with increasingly more dire consequences.
- **Technology** and **globalization** changes are exponential in nature, and today in the new millennium, we face evolutionary change at revolutionary speed.
- Crises seem to abound all around us, and we can potentially over-rely on a “flat world” to our detriment. Make it your goal to prepare for every conceivable threat that can come your way. Discuss how you can prepare to stave off the effects of those changes through proactive planning and on-the-spot execution.



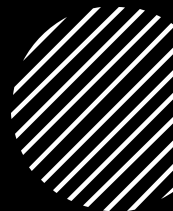


Crisis and Disruption (cont.)

- You'll benefit most from learning how to hire effectively, how to manage and motivate your team, how to act ethically and morally, and how to communicate, lead, and build teams successfully. But as is so often the case, **the rubber meets the road at the point of conflict, confrontation, and crisis.**
- Managers are left to figure this all out on their own, leaving hard-won **experience** to be their greatest teacher. If they're wise, however, they'll look to get ahead of the curve by drawing on the wisdom of those who have gone before them.
- We've lost the ability as a society to sit around the campfire and have elders pass wisdom down to the younger generations. This is our opportunity to do just that. . .



Gen Y and Gen Z Priorities are Clear



Career and Professional Development



Diversity of Thoughts, Ideas, and Voices



Work-Life-Family Balance/Control/Equilibrium



Corporate Social Responsibility, Environmentalism,
and Sustainability



An Ethical Employer, Meaningful Work, and a
Management Team that Cares About Them
Personally

Priorities of CEOs are Clear as Well...

Emotional Intelligence
and Collaboration
(Employee
Burnout/Mental
Health/Remote-Hybrid)

Creativity and
Innovation

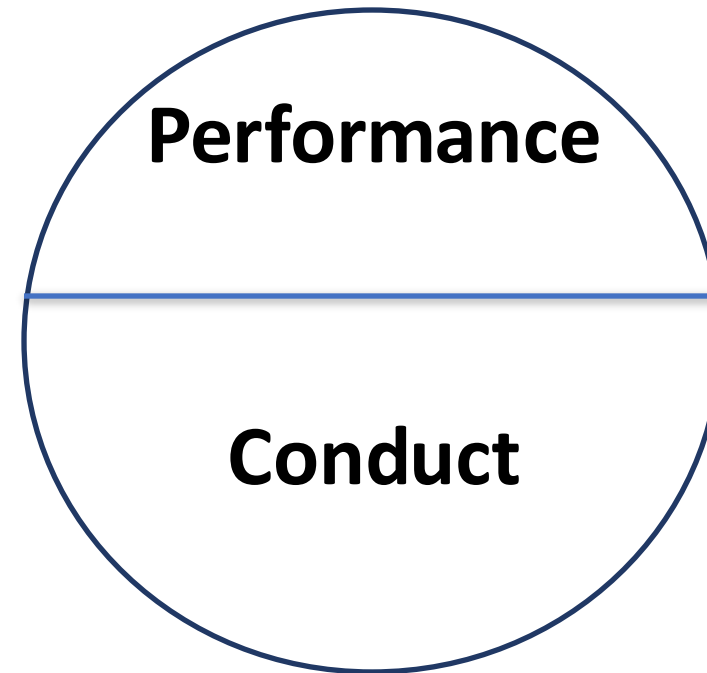
Accountability

Agility and Adaptability

Effective Leadership
through Crisis and
Disruption (i.e.,
Managing “Compound
Volatility”)

-- Source: KPMG 2023
CEO Outlook Survey
(<https://bit.ly/47Lr2B7>)

PART II: Individual
Crises

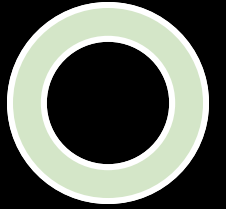




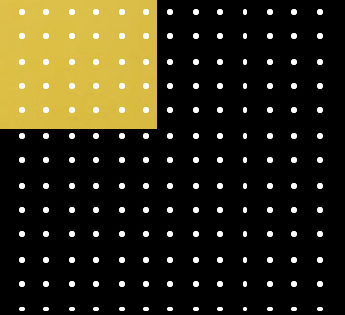
Solution: Performance-Conduct Circle

- *“Tony, I wanted to meet with you privately to discuss something that I think is important to your career. You know they say that the most important decisions about your career will be made when you’re not in the room. That’s the same for you as it is for me and for everyone else.*
- *“There’s something that might be missing awareness that could potentially hold you back over the long term, and I’d like to discuss that with you if you’ll allow me. In other words, I want to help you by having your back as you learn to manage and master this so that you can influence what’s being said about you in that proverbial room at some point in the future when you’re not there to defend yourself. Do I have your permission to continue? [Yes]*

Performance-Conduct Circle (cont.)



- *"Right now, you're knocking it out of the park with your performance, which is great. But that only counts for half of your overall contribution to our company or any other. You're equally responsible for what I'd call your conduct or behavior—in other words, how you're coming across to others, your reputation for building up those around you, and for serving as a role model in the leadership and communication space. That's where you're falling short—and that's what could hold you back over the long term.*
- *"I'm not saying this to offend or judge you or otherwise hurt your feelings, but your peers tend to avoid you, using words like confrontational, aggressive, and condescending to describe you at times. Does it shock you to hear that? [No, but. . .] There's no need to defend yourself right now—we're just talking. There's no judgment here. But it's important that we discuss this together to see what, if anything, you want to do to improve this **perception problem** that exists—and how I can help you get there and what my expectations are."*



Performance-Conduct Circle (cont.)

- “I often ask myself what can I do to help top producers move their careers ahead to even higher levels of achievement. And the answer’s often in the bottom half of that circle. . . Focusing on leadership, communication, and teambuilding are your next step in the professional development space, Tony. I’d like to be the person to help you get there, right here and right now so that this never holds you back in your career.
- “If you can become as strong in the bottom half of the circle as you are in the top half, your career will skyrocket.
- “But regardless of whether you’d like my help as a coach and mentor through this, my expectations will remain the same: I’m holding you fully accountable for becoming a true leader on our team, someone who people seek out for their guidance and support, and someone who could serve as a role model behavior-wise to set the standard for others. What are your thoughts?”






PART III: Departmental Crises

Values-Based Leadership

“Folks, the challenges we’re facing can be difficult at times, and I want you to know that I have your back. My goal is to help you do your very best work every day with peace of mind. But it’s important that I share my professional values with you so that you understand what motivates me and what I believe in. I’m sharing my expectations so you can reset yours. Pretty much any challenge I’ve faced throughout my career can be captured on this one-sheet, even more so than what’s in an employee handbook, policy & procedure manual, or code of business conduct.

“I’m happy to discuss these with you one on one, and I invite you to share with me or others your own core values at some point.



Paul's "Great 8" Rules of the Road

1. Have one another's backs and always bring out the best in others.
2. Practice selfless leadership and role-model leadership.
3. Demonstrate accountability in all you do for both your performance and conduct.
4. Follow the leader-as-coach model: Teach what you choose to learn.
5. Focus on your career and professional development. Building your resume and LinkedIn profile stems from an achievement mindset that focuses on quantifying your accomplishments.
6. Have fun—lighten things up a bit and celebrate successes.
7. Do your very best work every day with peace of mind.
8. No drama! Life's too short, and we spend more time with each other than with our own families. Let's create a work experience that brings out the best in all of us.



Great 8 (cont.)

- “Please keep this one-sheet front and center on your desk going forward. We’ll use it to diagnose any situations gone wrong and to improve ourselves, both individually and as a team.
- “Otherwise, I appreciate having the opportunity to share my career and personal values with you, and I’m happy to discuss your values and priorities in next week’s staff meeting once you have a chance to sleep on this.”

Making It Safe for Employees to Vent About Non-Job-Related Concerns

- “Everyone, I invited you to this meeting on a voluntary basis to discuss—in a very professional and respectful manner—how you’re feeling. So much is changing before our very eyes. . . truths, laws, and rules we’ve held as givens our entire lives.
- “I sense an underlying tone of anger and aggression, not just in our department or company but in society as a whole. I want to make it safe for you to express your concerns, but we have to do so carefully. As such, before we begin talking about how you’re feeling and what you’re experiencing, I’ll ask you to follow some simple rules:



Non-Job-Related Concerns (cont.)

“First, there can be no attacking and there’s no need for defending. We’re here to support one another and make sure we can lower the level of tension that sometimes arises within our team.

“Second, this can’t be about personal opinions: only about how we’re feeling about the pace of change and how it affects us. In other words, if you’re shocked by politics, angry about school shootings, exhausted from pandemics, or simply frustrated about the amount of work or stress you’re experiencing, I’d welcome your sharing it here in a safe setting. But this isn’t a forum for debating your personal opinions. I have to make sure we’re all clear and in agreement on that.

“Third, I get to blow the whistle and act as referee if anything gets too hot or contentious. In such cases, my pressing the relief valve has to be respected by everyone in the room. Is that fair?” [Yes]

The “Mood Elevator”

Top Floors/”Above the Line”

Adaptive

Appreciative

Resourceful

Optimistic

Creative

Supportive

Bottom Floors/”Below the Line”

- Anxious
- Angry
- Self-righteous
- Impatient
- Depressed
- Distant



The Safe-Word Approach

“Permission?”

- Permission to coach. . .
- Permission to share a contrary view. . .
- Permission to call B.S. . .
- Permission to just tell you how I’m feeling, person to person and adult to adult, without reference to rank. . .

Non-Job-Related Concerns (cont.)

“Folks, I hear you. And I think we’ve done a good job hearing one another out just now. I’m sorry for what we’re all going through. And I’m realistic enough to realize that one sit-down meeting as a team isn’t going to resolve these ongoing issues and the frustrations that we’re all experiencing, no matter what side of the divide we fall on.

But it does give us a chance to level set, to reset expectations regarding civil and professional behavior toward one another, and to understand that there’s a lot more that we have in common than sets us apart.

“Let’s all agree to take it down a notch when dealing with one another. As the saying goes, **each to his own without judgment. What you want for yourself give to another. And when in doubt, err on the side of compassion.**

There’s an awful lot of confusion out there, and this is unfortunately something our nation and our world have to endure right now. But we’re in control of minimizing its effects on our coworkers, and a little bit of goodwill can go a long way nowadays. With that, I’ll end the meeting and remind you all that you’re safe and respected here and that you’re equally responsible for making everyone else feel safe and respected as well.”

PART IV: Company Crises, Global Crises, and Natural Disasters

- Pandemics, war declarations, social unrest, economic crashes, or natural disasters can become reality at any time for any of us. What's your role when disruption creates a "new normal" in the workplace? More important, how do you develop a reputation for successful leadership when exceptionally stressful conditions beyond your control leave your employees lacking for information, afraid for their or their families' health and safety, or worried about supply chain issues and other practical outcomes of severe disruption?
- **GOAL:** Build a leadership framework to formulate your response based on human emotional needs.
- This isn't meant to be easy, but facing severe struggle helps you grow and evolve as a leader faster than just about anything else. And in that growth, you hone your character, your leadership mettle, and your definition of self.



Union Organizing Efforts

The Preventive Audit and Vulnerability Analysis

What **terms and conditions of employment** may irritate your employees enough to make them consider hiring and paying for a third party to represent their interests (instead of partnering directly with management)?

Wages

Wage & hour practices
practices/unfairness

Safety

Benefits

Discriminatory

Frontline operational mgmt.



Union Organizing Efforts (cont.)

- **FOE Rights for Managers**

Facts

Opinions

Examples

<https://www.unionfacts.com>

- **TIPS Limits for Managers**

Threaten

Interrogate

Promise

Surveil or Spy

Natural Disasters and Global Crises



“GETTING THROUGH THE STORM TOGETHER” AND “NOT LEAVING ANYONE BEHIND” BECOME CRITICAL MESSAGES AT TIMES OF EXTREME UNREST.



KEEPING THIS BROADER PERSPECTIVE IN MIND, LET’S DEVELOP A TEMPLATE TO PROVIDE OPTIMAL LEADERSHIP SUPPORT THROUGH ANY TYPE OF CRISIS THAT MAY COME OUR WAY.



Natural Disasters (cont.)

- First things first: When catastrophe strikes, tend to the health and safety of your team members immediately, including finding a proper safe zone or shelter to shield yourselves from further harm.
- Second, listen to your senior management team and inform yourself of current priorities and resources, including the key message points that your organization wants all employees to follow and be aware of.
- Third, as the situation begins to normalize, ensure that employees and their families have access to food, water, and medical care, as needed.
- Fourth, as a stabilization phase comes into play, determine where work falls on the spectrum of family-safety-company and ensure that your employees understand that we're all in this together and that in times of crisis, we are all friends and neighbors in addition to coworkers. Put the human element first and keep a healthy perspective of the priorities that your staff members are likely to be concerned about.

Natural Disasters (cont.)

Go

Go into immediate “Crisis Management Mode”

- Inform senior leadership and authorities of injuries and significant property damage
- Tend to the wounded / minimize hazards
- Set up an **Incident Command Center** where centralized decision-making can occur

Communicate

Communicate, Communicate, and Over-Communicate

- Use **email, posters, robocalls, texts**, and any other communications means at your disposal
- Provide updates frequently to all stakeholders
- Create a public question and answer forum
- Remember, it is far better to say, “We don’t know” and “We’ll look into it and get back to you” rather than leave a matter unaddressed

Natural Disasters (cont.)



Step 3: Be Clear about Roles and Next Steps

Assign those willing to **volunteer** to help others in specific areas or with specific tasks.

Disseminate updates regarding onsite work expectations, amended hours of operation, or restricted locations.

Begin discussions about next steps, including cleanup and restoration.



Step 4: Normalcy and Healing Begin as a Marathon, not as a Sprint

Demonstrate empathy, goodwill, and selflessness.

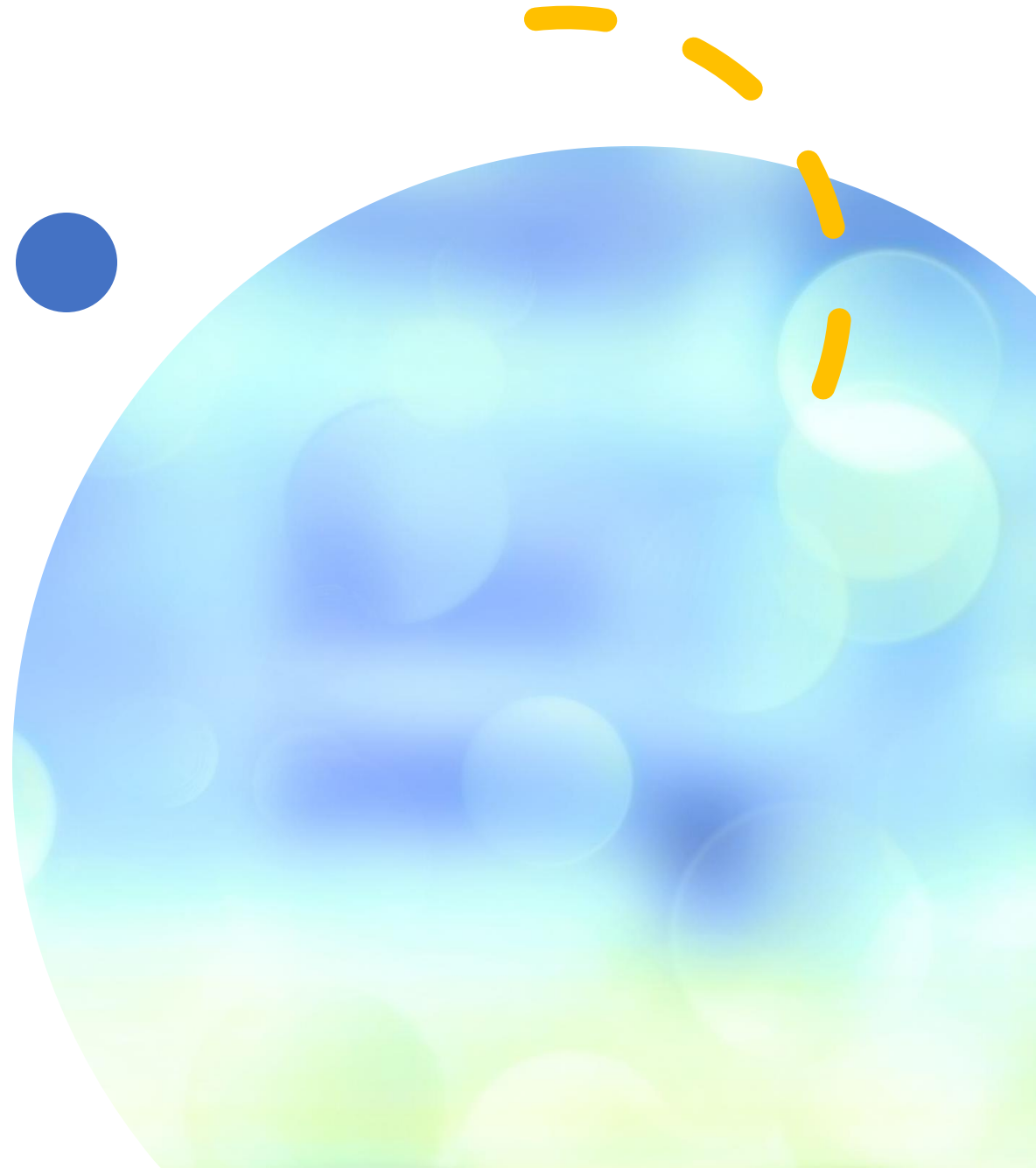
Recognize that humans heal at different speeds and in different ways; patience and flexibility are key.

Check in on your team's wellbeing and provide resources to help them and their families navigate through significant change.

Natural Disasters (cont.)

Your communication, therefore, should spell out everything very clearly and in literal terms, including:

- Office hours for the days/weeks ahead (including modified or regular schedules)
- Flexibility to work remotely or part-time (if that's an option)
- How to log time off work due to a disaster (e.g., "excused time off")
- Whether it's okay to bring children (or pets) into the office if school is out
- How often staff members need to update their supervisor on their availability
- Which parts of the building or complex are unsafe or not functional
- Dress codes, if relaxed from your usual protocol
- Customer and vendor updates, especially if any are temporarily closed
- Road conditions and traffic workarounds
- Ongoing support from the authorities (i.e., fire, police, National Guard)



Natural Disasters (cont.)

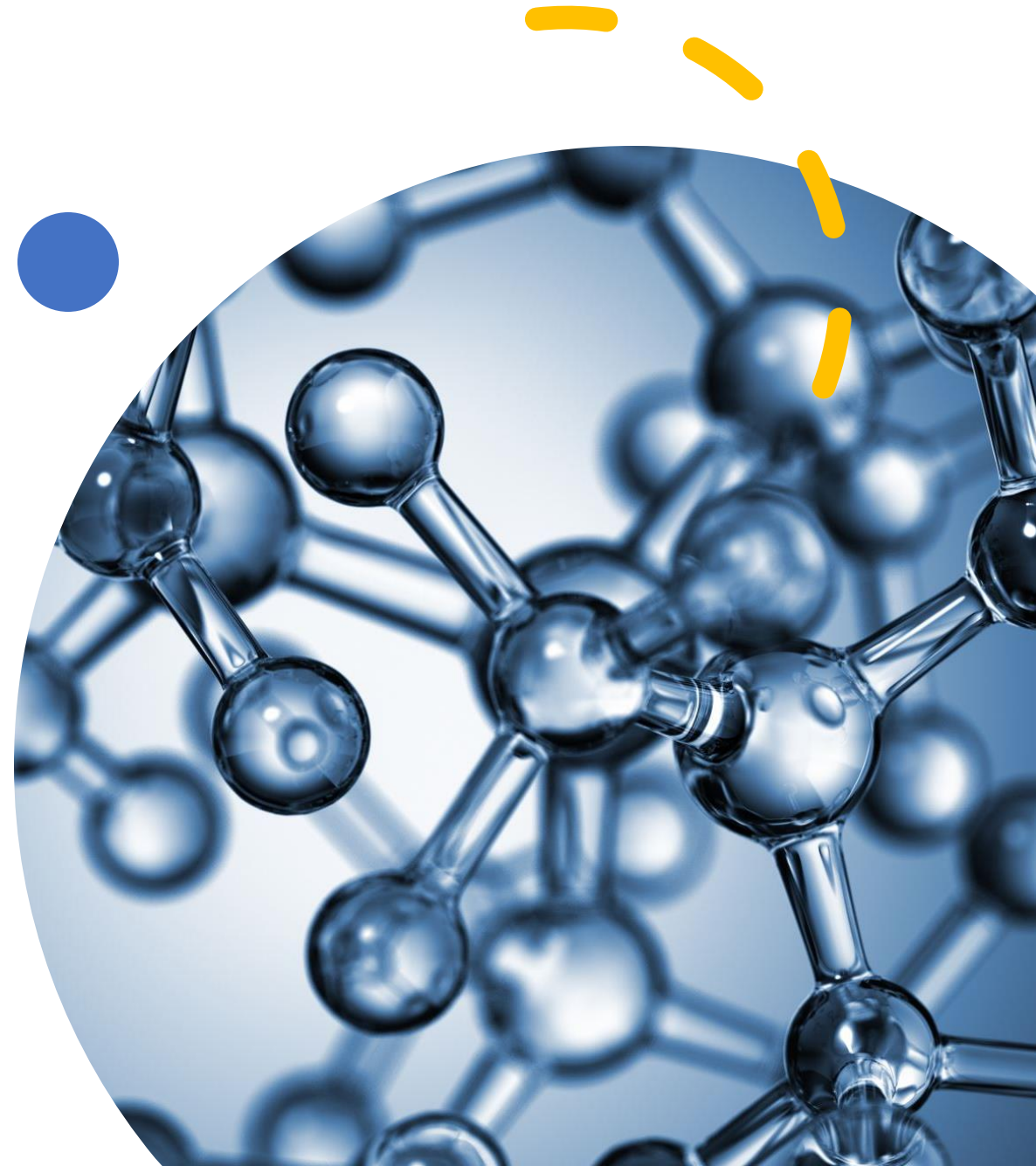
- Disaster resiliency depends on open communication, goodwill, and empathy above all else.
- Crises jolt our physical and emotional systems, requiring on-the-spot solutions that include emergency response plans, incident command centers, communications measures, and so much more.
- And that's the way it will always be. We can't prepare for everything, and certain people may panic and lose their sense of self during an emergency. That's where role model leadership comes in. Holistic disaster management looks not only at economic, operational, and environmental factors but most importantly at the human side of impact.



Natural Disasters (cont.)

There's no rulebook or set timeline for getting back to normal, or even establishing a "new normal." Everyone processes change differently. Check on your team's wellbeing throughout the weeks following a disaster or disruptive event. Recognize that recovery may take weeks or months, and sometimes even years, depending on the level of loss that people may have suffered. That's why it's important that you provide your team members with resources to help themselves and their families navigate through this.

Finally, keep things simple. Make it easy for employees to give back to the community by volunteering and donating goods and services. Allowing employees to help others in need creates a sense of healing and peace of mind better than just about anything else. Never underestimate the power of even the simplest acts of kindness. Lead by example, and practice selfless leadership by putting others' needs before your own. Rarely will selfless leadership be more needed than during the time of disaster or its aftermath. You may just find that compassion, empathy, goodwill, and clear communication will foster long-lasting results, such as increased camaraderie among employees and loyalty that build strong ties that bind.



Your Keys to Self-Care

- Your job: developing greater self-awareness and self-confidence in those you manage and support (client and HR teams).
- High EQ comes from a healthy and strong sense of self-regulation, self-confidence, and self-awareness.
- Navy SEALS 4x4x4 Breathing Technique
- The importance of the 30,000-foot view to add needed perspective and distancing when people feel lost in the weeds / calming influence.
- Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs), mental health providers, and more. . .



Come from Wisdom. . .

- Change your perspective and you'll change your perception.
- What you want for yourself give to another.
- Teach what you choose to learn.
- When in doubt, err on the side of compassion.
- Employ Values-Based Leadership discussions to share expectations and invite others to participate.
- Determine what one element you need in “change in mindset” to take better care of yourself.
- Holistic health = physical, emotional, mental, spiritual.

THANK YOU FOR ATTENDING!

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