



## Leading Through Uncertainty

-Mark Haeussler, CEO

People crave certainty. Certainty creates confidence and reduces stress. We model the future, project it based on past experiences, and make educated predictions. As for seeing the future, such ability to anticipate with certainty is the thing of science fiction movies. Like it or not, some level of uncertainty is a passenger on any voyage.

Instead of hoping for certainty, frame the future as a range, from predictable to chaotic. It does seem that, at present, our long friend of predictability has left us, and that merely thinking our way through the uncertainty has its limits.



Below are practices to be in to support yourself and those you lead:

1. **Centering.** Being "centered" is the leader's most valuable skill from which we can lead ourselves and others. As you read this, you can find try on these four starting points to center, and select one as a regular practice to access centering: (1) Place your feet flat on the floor, and feel the earth beneath you. (2) Feel the seat of the chair beneath you, holding you up through the chaos. (3) Feel the back of the seat supporting you against all of the challenges ahead that want to push you back. (4) Breathe, letting the exhale relax your shoulders. Centering includes more than what is here, yet one of these four tactics will help you, and when done many times a day, will support a more grounded practice in leading uncertainty.
2. **Listen.** And listen more. Even as people want reassurance and direction, the first thing they want is someone in which to confide and someone who will hear their concerns. People find reassurance in being heard and in expressing their challenge in not knowing the way.
3. **One Thing.** What is the one thing that you can do right now to take action or create reassurance? Then do that, and do it well. Create a focus in some direction, and if it turns out to not be exactly the right thing, then make a shift and keep going. I recall the television show *The West Wing*, starring Martin Sheen as the president. He often would say, "What's next?" as his transition from one conversation to the next with his team. The character was closing the last conversation and opening the next one. Asking, "What's next?" can bring people back from the long-range uncertainty to the next place of focus. Ask yourself, *what is the very next thing that we can do?* Then, do it.
4. **Be Kind.** That includes being kind to yourself. Anxiety is part of the human condition, and some manage it better than others. You cannot fill in all the gaps of uncertainty and doubt that lay ahead, but you can express kindness and empathy as you and your team navigate into the mist.

Einstein reminds us that, "Adversity introduces a man to himself." As you support others through the uncertainty, a new you awaits at the other side as you build upon yourself to more effectively lead others.

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