

The Change Mindset Toolkit

How to Improve Decision-making in Uncertainty

"Life can only be understood backwards; but it must be lived forwards"
- Soren Kierkegaard

Faced with disruptive change – personally, organisationally, at industry level or across society, cognitive and emotional paralysis often hijacks our potential actions and solutions. The psychological response called *"threat rigidity"* is common to anyone facing uncertainty, yet there are some people who manage to navigate change more effectively than others. These are the leaders who have built what we call a *Change Mindset*.

Research into how such people succeed uncovered the two fundamental attributes of a building successful Change Mindset: *Courage & Empathy*.

Courage gives us the internal power to move forward in uncertainty, while Empathy provides the insight to do this in ways that integrate our external context and the needs of others. Layering these attributes into our decision-making during transitions increases our likelihood of success.

What follows is a selection of tools from the *Change Mindset* that are developed to help individuals, teams and organisations build their power to navigate change and enhance their Change Mindset.

Tool 1: The Courage & Empathy Pyramid

What this is:

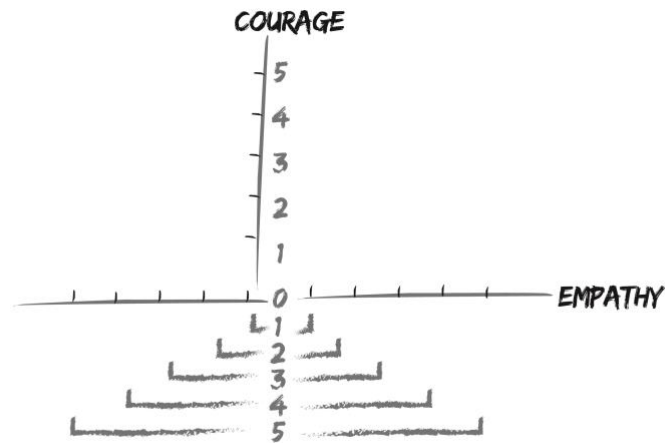
A tool to measure your ability to display courage and empathy during uncertainty.

How to use it:

Step 1: Rate your current ability to deploy *Courage* and *Empathy* in situations of change using the following scale:

- 0: Low skill level or not used at all
- 1: Rarely used and only when pushed by others or by circumstances
- 2: Used occasionally during change but not consistently and not always with a strong impact
- 3: Used regularly and with skill to improve outcomes, bring others with you and obtain results
- 4: Always applied with deliberate focus, clearly communicated, and with proven impact
- 5: This attribute is part of your DNA which you apply consistently to powerfully drive change

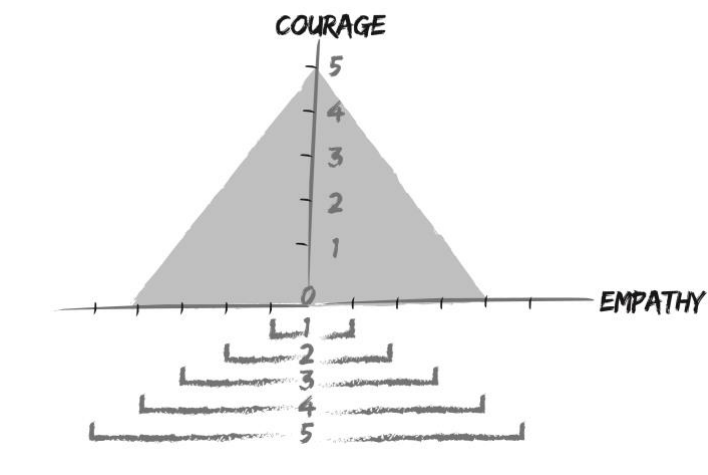
Step 2: Use the following chart to plot your results and connect the dots to form a pyramid. Notice the overall size, width and height of the pyramid within the chart area.



Interpretation:

Courage and Empathy develop naturally over time for most leaders - with courage steadily increasing with experience, and empathy often starting high in our early years, taking a dip in mid-career and then building up again later in life. This pattern is not universal and I have coached many young leaders who display exceptional courage alongside natural empathy early in their careers. Equally, I have worked with late career leaders who have yet to find the courage in themselves to take on real change despite years of accumulated experience.

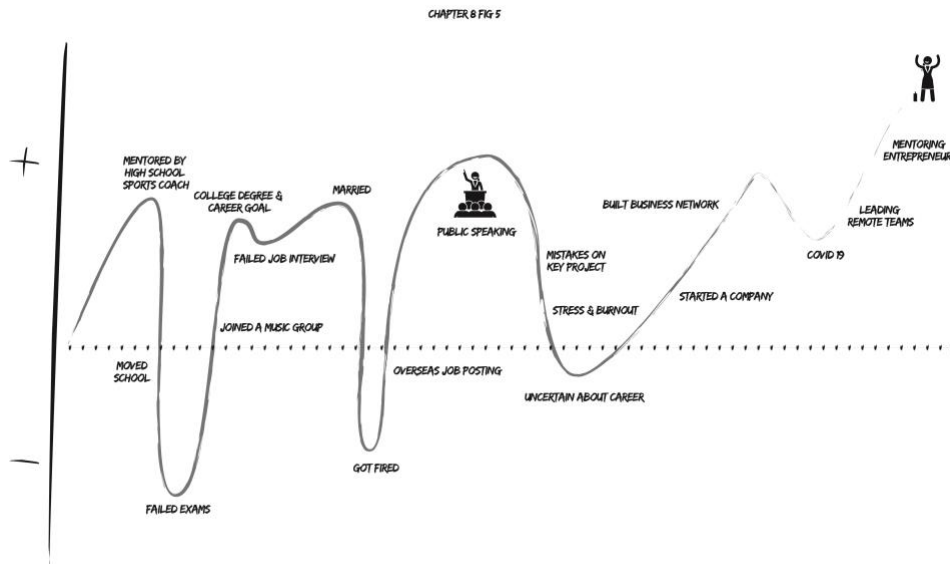
The larger our pyramid, the stronger our attributes are. The more symmetrical the pyramid, the more balanced our use of Courage and Empathy is. The key as change leaders is to develop our skills so that we "own" a large, even pyramid of skills.



Tool 2: The Change Lifeline

What this is:

A tool to reflect on our life experience and identify moments of natural resilience, and what lessons these moments can teach us.



How to use it:

Step 1: Draw a horizontal line in the middle of a page representing your life (personal, as a team, or for the organisation) from your earliest memories to today.

Step 2: Think about specific situations when you were confronted with transitional change, i.e.: a significant new context or challenge that was outside your control but that required an active response from you.

Step 3: Plot these moments on the Lifeline as either *Positive* (above the line situations where you succeeded with the change, creating new ideas and more effective actions), or *Negative* (below the line situations where you failed to make the change happen, the results led to further problems, or your efforts were simply inconclusive). The height and depth of your peaks and valleys should represent the relative magnitude of each significant success or failure. Add a word or symbol next to each peak or trough to remind you of the situation and bring them to life in your memory.

Interpretation:

Proceed in two stages, one for moments above the line and one for moments below. In each case ask yourself these questions.

1. What was happening at this particular moment?
2. What do you believe caused the good or bad outcome - was it your mindset, attitude, relationships, resources, judgment, or some external factor?
3. Ask yourself looking back now what lessons you could learn from this experience – personally if you are working alone or collectively if you are working in a team
4. Now describe how might apply these lessons to greater effect in the future?

- From moments above the line, how can you replicate those conditions more often?
- For moments below the line, how can you avoid or mitigate those conditions?

Tool 3: The Change Readiness Index

What this is:

A tool to measure your change readiness by understanding key behaviors that can boost or block our actions.

How to use it:

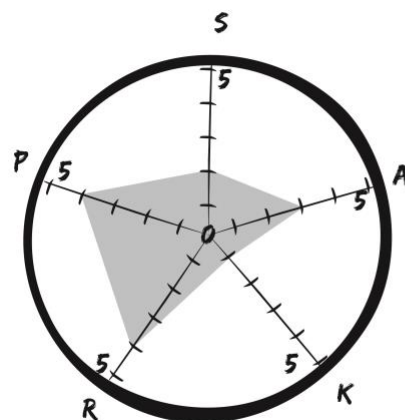
Step 1: Review the definitions of the SPARK and FAIL practices in the table below and rate your current level of skill under each attribute, using the following scale:

- 0: Low skill level or not used at all
- 1: Rarely used and only when pushed by others or by circumstances
- 2: Used occasionally during change but not consistently and not always with strong impact
- 3: Used often and skillfully to improve outcomes, bring others with you and achieve results
- 4: Always applied with deliberate focus, clearly communicated, and with proven impact
- 5: This attribute is part of your DNA which you apply consistently to powerfully drive change

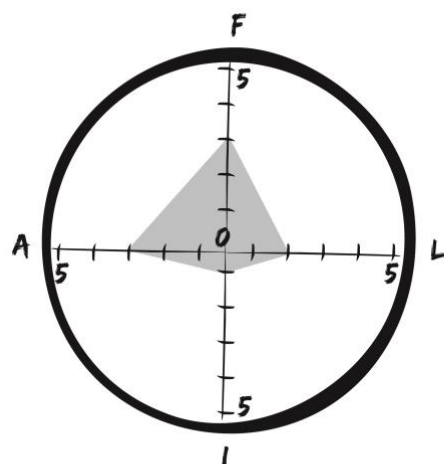
SPARK BOOSTERS	DEFINITION	SKILL 0-5
Spirit	Finding our essential self	
Partnership	Using the power of other people	
Alternatives	The pursuit of possibilities	
Reason	Evaluating & making sense of our choices	
Knowledge	Using purpose to guide change	
TOTAL SCORE		0-25

FAIL BLOCKERS	DEFINITION	SKILL 0-5
Framing	Failure to dream big enough	
Asking	Failure to explore options	
Imitation	The danger of mimicry and pleasing others	
Limitation	Imposter syndrome and the inner critic	
TOTAL SCORE		0-20

Step 2: Next, add up your values for each line and use the following two charts to plot your results. Connect the dots to form a star. Now add up your total score for "S" and divide by 5. Similarly, add up your total score for "F" and divide by 4. This weighted result will yield either "S>F" or "S<F".



	SKILL
S	2
P	4
A	3
R	4
K	1
14	



	SKILL
F	3
A	3
I	1
L	2
9	

Interpretation:

Once complete, notice the overall size and shape of your results. The larger your shape, the stronger your attributes are. The goal is to build our change skills to achieve "S>F", maximising the "S" value and minimising the "F" value. In this case the overall weighted result is positive (S>F), though of course any individual factor score below 5 means there is room for improvement:

$$F / 4 = 2.25$$

$$S/5 = 2.80$$

$$S > F$$

The key is to become more consistent in your use of SPARK and FAIL behavioral practices, which will help close the gap between intention and outcomes as you navigate change, in turn increasing your individual factor scores and your overall S:F score. This tool can be used to create a snapshot in time about your current mindset and attitude towards change, or as a way to measure and track progress as you undertake specific actions in any change situation – individually or collectively.

Conclusion

Mastering change and dealing with uncertainty is not an easy task, especially for leaders who must bring teams with them through organizational transformations.

But as human beings, we all have the power to be Change Masters if we choose to remain open, curious, courageous and empathetic.

And in our VUCA and AI dominated world, building a Change Mindset to navigate disruption is no longer a choice but has become a key leadership skill.

Frameworks and tools such as these and others in the book can equip you and those around you to build a stronger Change Mindset and succeed where others fail.