

Adaptive Leadership

Let's start with a leadership concept.

What you are being called upon to do, right now, is adaptive leadership. The current crisis is bringing about rapid and multi-level change in our priorities, our home life, and our ways of working.

These are five hallmarks of adaptive leadership challenges that will sound familiar to you:

1. Multiple concurrent changes that affect each other in impossibly complex ways
2. Very different perspectives: the changes look very different depending where you sit
3. Ambiguity: it isn't clear exactly what to do...
4. And it is not exactly clear how to do it
5. Anxiety: pressure to do something

To be clear, the most important challenges in public health are adaptive challenges...the current crisis is just one more instance. Many of you have been working for years on adaptive challenges already

The current large-scale disruption to the way our communities function brings about added layers of stress, fear, and anxiety. The information channels that were already overwhelming to most of us have increased their volume exponentially, with waves of mistakes, misinformation and sensationalism woven in amongst proper guidance and recommendations.

Somehow, we still need to balance this every-day work with the big picture strategic work that guides us to stay relevant and positioned well for new opportunities. This is a dance of sorts, moving from "dance floor" to "balcony" to see both what's happening up close and what needs to happen across the whole system.

I know what you are thinking.... "I can only handle dealing with the current crisis right now." While that is true in the short-term, right now is the time to creatively think about how our work might need to be structured differently in the weeks and months ahead. It is perfectly normal if you are feeling overwhelmed. We all are adapting to change in our personal lives. The uncertainty and the what-ifs are weighty. Be kind and patient with yourself and take one thing at a time. Start with what feels most pressing and go from there. And pat yourself on the back for each little win you figure out along the way.

Take a moment and download the worksheet to reflect on your experiences with adaptive leadership.