

# Grab a Shovel (and 3 other things you can do) to Conquer Worry and Drive Success in Tough Times

A management psychologist says the keys to overcoming the current financial crisis may be in the last place you'd think to look.

By DR. DAVID A. WEIMAN

The COVID-19 pandemic has the world in a tailspin.

And this has likely impacted your life professionally and personally.

Most business leaders are looking for ways to protect and strengthen their organizations right now. This article offers some insights on how to do that.

Events in the world – both good and bad – are constantly swirling around us.

They always have. And they always will.

For some people, their sense of stability depends on what's happening in that swirl. Like Dorothy's house in *The Wizard of Oz*, they feel tossed around right now. But the source of the stability and strength isn't around you in the swirl of events.

## It's inside of you.

In *Man's Search for Meaning*, psychiatrist Viktor Frankl's hallmark conclusion was that the freedom to choose how to think is the ultimate response to any situation:

*Between stimulus and response, there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom.*

You have many resources at your disposal -- your core values, your work ethic, your decision-making skills, and your ability to take action. You already possess all you need.

And when you truly focus on your resources and block out distractions, you have more going for you than you may realize: your energy, your attention, your ability to solve problems, and many other resources you can tap to promote your own well-being and success.



In fact, studies show that your mind continues to try to solve problems even when you're not consciously thinking about them. It taps into all that your life experience has taught you to help find solutions.

If you are ready, here are three ideas for mastering the current challenges:

### **1. Reduce your daily news intake.**

There's an old joke about a man who goes to his doctor. He bends his elbow and says, "Doc, it hurts when I do this." The doctor replies, "Stop doing that."

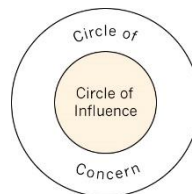
If the headlines make you anxious or depressed, spend less time reading or watching the news.

Dr. Andrew Weil suggests a "news fast" – a day or more when you skip your newspaper, TV, and any other sources of news.

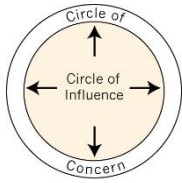
You will feel more in control. And you'll have more time to focus on what you *can* do. Get the minimum amount of news you feel you need to be informed. And don't be surprised if it's not much.

**2. Focus on what you can control.** Success expert Stephen Covey says that all the things you're concerned with – health, finances, problems at work, etc. – form your "Circle of Concern."

Within that circle, your "Circle of Influence" contains those things you can actually do something about. When you focus on your Circle of Influence, you're more productive and successful because you spend your time doing things that make a positive impact instead of reacting to and worrying about things you can't control.



You can expand your Circle of Influence by identifying and focusing on solutions. Creating a plan around those solutions structures your thinking and effectively blocks the worry that results when you are anxiously apprehensive about the future.



Here is a suggestion: Take out a sheet of paper and make a list of all the things you're concerned about.

Circle the things you can do something about and prioritize them, starting with concerns that, if you were to resolve them, would have the most significant positive impact on you or your business.

Then transfer each priority to a new sheet of paper and list up to three action steps you can take to address each priority.

Next: Put one of those action steps on today's calendar and commit to starting it today. Before you go to bed.

The next suggestion explains why this is so important.

**3. Take action.** Action is the antidote for anxiety. It channels your concerns into proactive steps that manifest your great ideas. The importance of *doing something* is captured in this story from James Kirkwood's novel *There Must be a Pony!*

A psychiatrist had twin sons age eight. One was an incurable pessimist – the other an incurable optimist. Their father became alarmed and decided to try an experiment. Christmas Eve he filled the pessimist's room with everything a boy could wish for; and he filled the optimist's room with horse manure.

Early the next morning he went to observe their reactions. The pessimist sat among the toys, books, clothes, sporting goods – just sat there – eyeing the presents suspiciously, trying to figure out what the catch was.

His father sighed and walked toward the other boy's room. When he peeked in the door he saw him standing waist high in the middle of all the manure, shoveling it up in the air over his shoulder and laughing like a fiend! "Son," the father said, "what's the matter with you? What are you so happy about?"

The boy turned, still laughing, and replied, "Gee, Dad, I figure with all this manure, there must be a pony!"

If the current crisis doesn't leave you feeling optimistic right now, that's understandable. But consider, for a moment, that optimists succeed where others fail because they believe their own efforts, correctly focused, can lead to success even in the worst circumstances.

To paraphrase Colin Powell, optimistic action is a force multiplier.

Commit to taking an effective action today; perhaps something you know you should do but have been putting off. It will increase your sense of control and lead to more action. Wayne Gretzky said: "You miss 100 percent of the shots you don't take." Always keep moving.

The suggestions above are for strengthening yourself from the inside out. You can strengthen the inside of your team or organization, as well.

A corporation may exist as a legal entity on paper, but if no one shows up for work on Friday, the company doesn't exist. *People* are the company.

Increase the strength of your team members right now by focusing them away from news and toward the personal resources they possess that will keep the company moving forward.

Plan a review meeting or series of meetings to reinforce company, team and individual values, purpose, and mission. Review and clarify roles and responsibilities. Review processes for attracting prospects, converting sales, and serving clients. Recommit to goals. These are all within the company's Circle of Influence.

And that's where the action is. ☒



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