

THE COURAGE TO GO TOGETHER

THE KEYS TO STAYING POSITIVE DURING A CRISIS

2020 ISHC ANNUAL CONFERENCE: TOGETHER IN HOSPITALITY

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This workbook is dedicated to anyone who is struggling to navigate the challenges of this new normal. Together, we will get through this.

-Shola

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....4

Key #1: Focus on What You Can Control.....6

Key #2: Enter the Storm.....15

Key #3: Create Safety.....22

Staying Committed to Resilience26

Additional Resources.....30



INTRODUCTION

We are in the middle of a crisis. A deadly pandemic is barreling through the world, there is deep civil unrest within our country, and both have created several complex challenges that we now have to navigate. Perhaps you can relate to some (if not, all) of the points below:



- ◆ Your stress levels are heightened as you manage the onslaught of incoming news about the COVID-19 virus and the racial divide in the country.
- ◆ You are interested in being an active ally to People of Color (PoC), but you are worried about accidentally saying the wrong thing and unintentionally making a bad situation worse.
- ◆ Your mental and emotional health are suffering due to the isolation and physical distancing that is required to limit the spread of the virus.
- ◆ You are constantly worried about the safety of friends and family who are PoC during these times of civil unrest, and/or you are concerned for loved ones who are elderly, immunocompromised, disabled, or otherwise vulnerable to the virus.
- ◆ You are wondering how you will manage all of the above, while still finding time to exercise, keep the house clean, remain a productive employee, and put together semi-nutritious meals from whatever scraps are left over in your half-empty grocery store.

If you can relate to the above points, thankfully, there is a solution: ***Positivity***.

To be clear, this has nothing to do with smiling your way through this crisis and pretending that your challenges do not exist. Delusion is not positive. True resilience is specifically about the consistent thoughts, beliefs and actions that will bring about a positive outcome for you and for others. ***Yes, even during a life-altering pandemic and deep civil unrest.***

Read on, my friend—the answers that you seek are on the following pages. There is a lot of work to do (as you'll soon see), so let's get to it. See you inside!

Live positively, *Shola*



KEY #1



FOCUS ON WHAT YOU
CAN CONTROL

“Sooner or later, you’re going to realize just as I did, that there’s a difference between knowing the path and walking the path.”

-Morpheus, The Matrix



KEY TERMS

Before we get started, let's ensure that we have clear definitions for the words "resilience" and "burnout." Here they are below:

Resilience

The ability to withstand, or recover quickly from, difficult circumstances.

Burnout

The state of emotional, physical and mental exhaustion caused by excessive and prolonged stress.

WARNING SIGNS OF BURNOUT

Needless to say, burnout can affect our lives in many unpleasant ways. Take an honest look at the list below—are you experiencing any of the warning signs of burnout? Take a moment and circle any of the symptoms listed below that you are feeling right now:

- ◆ Low morale/excessive complaining
- ◆ Decreased connection to your role and/or to the people you serve
- ◆ Moodiness/quickness to anger
- ◆ Cynicism
- ◆ Feelings of helplessness and/or hopelessness
- ◆ Deteriorating relationships at work and home
- ◆ Difficulty concentrating
- ◆ Emotional detachment
- ◆ Loss of interest in caring for yourself

The first step in addressing burnout, building resilience, and of course, *staying positive* is focusing on the things that you have the power to control. Specifically, **your actions, your effort and your attitude.**



1. YOUR ACTIONS

The first of three things that will always be within our control, are our actions (aka, the things that we choose to do). During these uncertain times, being very intentional about your actions can be extremely beneficial when it comes to staying positive. Here are a few examples of the actions you can take, starting today.

A. Fountain vs. Drain

When you think about the activities that you do often, ask yourself this question: “*does this activity fill me up (like a fountain), or does it drain me?*” Now more than ever, it is critical to limit (if not, eliminate) the optional actions that drain us consistently. Excessive news watching is an example of an optional action that can be incredibly draining. Conversely, listening to an inspirational podcast, meditating or reading a good book are examples of optional actions that can “fill you up” and recharge your mental reserves.

What is one action that *drains you* that you are committing to stop?



What is one action that *fills you up* that you are committing to start?



B. Connect Creatively

Due to the physical-distancing guidelines designed to limit the spread of the COVID-19 virus, isolation and loneliness are on the rise. Statistically speaking, loneliness has the same impact on our health *as smoking 15 cigarettes per day*ⁱ. That is why virtually reaching out to friends, family and colleagues (via Teams, Zoom or FaceTime, for instance) during these times is more important than ever. Our resilience and mental health literally depend on it.

Thankfully, there are a lot of ways to creatively connect with others, in the virtual world:

- ✓ Start a Book Club
- ✓ Have Dinner/Happy Hour Together
- ✓ Throw a Dance Party
- ✓ Play Games Together
- ✓ Binge Watch Shows

How will you creatively connect with others, virtually?



C. Go Outside

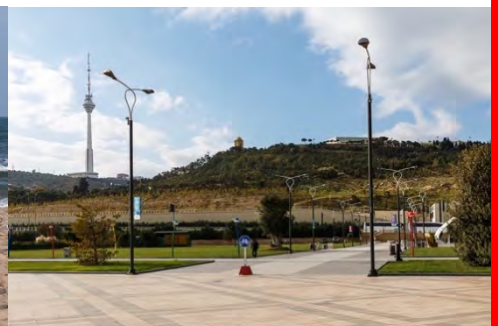
More people than ever are working from home due to the COVID-19 virus, and because of this, it is easy to end up staying inside for longer than necessary. Unfortunately, doing so for extended periods of time can negatively affect our overall mental health. So, what's the solution? *We need to go outside.* Studies have shown that twenty minutes in nature can significantly reduce our stress hormone levels.ⁱⁱ And during these challenging times, reducing stress should be your primary priority.

Going outside should not be left to chance. In order to reduce our overall stress level, we need to create—and commit to—a plan to go outside on a daily basis. Staying inside tethered to your computer all day with artificial lights beating down on you for 8+ hours a day will not keep you feeling positive, I promise.

When will you choose to go outside each day? Where will you go? What will you do as an activity when you're out? Write your answers below.

TIP:

To prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus while you are outside, remember to stay physically-distant (six feet apart), avoid large groups when possible, and wear a mask when appropriate.



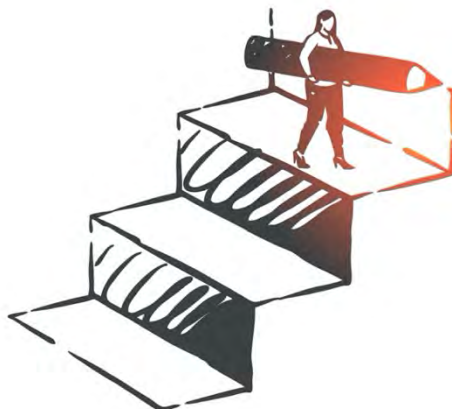
D. Level Up

While the circumstances surrounding the current civil unrest and COVID-19 virus are not ideal, ask yourself if it is possible to turn this difficult situation into something positive. More specifically, what habit, skill or routine can you develop now that will enhance your leadership skills long after the worst of this situation is over?

Do you want to read more books? Start a gratitude practice? Get eight hours of sleep a night consistently? Meditate every morning? Create anti-racist policies for your work area? Drink more water each day? Deepen your knowledge of your sales portfolio? The possibilities for self-improvement are truly endless.

As Winston Churchill once said, *“never waste a good crisis.”*

What action(s) will you take to “level up” (i.e., improve yourself) during these challenging times?



2. YOUR EFFORT

The second thing that is always within our control is our effort. Or in other words, it's how hard we choose to try. To keep the importance of our effort in the front of our minds, here is the simple question that we must continually ask ourselves as leaders: *"did I do my best?"*

Remember though, your best doesn't have to be good! There will be days when you will "hit the wall", you will be unable to muster any additional effort, and the results may be less than optimal. *That is 100% okay.* What is most important is that we can look ourselves in the mirror and know that, no matter the result, we have done our best.



3. YOUR ATTITUDE

The third thing that is always within our control is our habitual way of thinking, otherwise known as our attitude. During these unprecedented and unpredictable times, maintaining a positive attitude can be *really* tough to do. Fortunately, there are some strategies we can employ to ensure a higher likelihood of staying resilient, despite less-than-positive circumstances.

A. Help Others

There are many people (the immunocompromised, the elderly, the disabled, and PoC) who may need your help during these times. It could be to pick up groceries/prescriptions, donating blood, or simply being a reliable ally. Being helpful is not only kind, but doing so can also help to positively boost your mood in the process as well.

B. Express Gratitude

Even though living through this new normal is difficult, are you able to find something to be grateful for? Is it your health? The countless brave people who are showing up to work every day for our benefit (healthcare staff, grocery/pharmacy workers, postal/delivery workers, public transit operators, and janitors to name a few)? Your job? Your home? Your ability to affect meaningful change? Either way, when you are grateful for what is working in your life, as opposed to dwelling on what is not working, it can also have a powerful impact on your attitude.

C. The Six-and-Six Rule

Worrying can have a devastating impact on our overall attitude. That is why we need to spend our energy on the things that truly matter. One strategy is to apply the *Six-and-Six Rule*: if what you're worrying about right now does not have the potential to be a big deal six months from now, then don't spend longer than six minutes worrying about it.



NOTES

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KEY #2



ENTER THE STORM

"And once the storm is over, you won't remember how you made it through or how you managed to survive. You won't even be sure whether the storm is really over. But one thing is certain: when you come out of the storm, you won't be the same person who walked in."

-Haruki Murakami



THE BUFFALO VS. THE COW

My father once shared with me a story about how buffalos and cows behave differently when a storm arrives. The cow, instinctively, tries to run away from the storm—which, ironically, lengthens the time that she’s in the storm. On the other hand, the buffalo chooses to run *into the storm*. By doing so, not only is his time in the storm shortened, but by making the choice to experience something unpleasant (but, necessary), he is strengthened in the process.

So, what does this mean for you, exactly? It means that in times of crisis, we need to “enter the storm” to examine any long-held beliefs that may weaken us for the challenges that lie ahead. Will it be unpleasant? *Possibly*. Will we be more resilient for embarking on this challenging journey? *Absolutely*.



UNHEALTHY BELIEFS

Many people (myself, most definitely included) have long-held beliefs that no longer serve us, or our overall personal development. Worst of all, as we navigate the numerous challenges presented by the current civil unrest and COVID-19, these unhealthy beliefs will only diminish our strength and resolve as we face those challenges. In order to become fully prepared for the uncertainties ahead, we need to boldly enter the storm like the buffalo would, and examine these unhealthy beliefs, head-on. Below are a few common examples of these beliefs:

- ✘ *"I am not good enough."*
- ✘ *"I am incapable."*
- ✘ *"I am unlovable."*
- ✘ *"No one can be trusted."*
- ✘ *"I am invisible and/or I don't matter."*
- ✘ *"There's something wrong with me."*
- ✘ *"I am a loser and/or a failure."*

If you are willing to enter the storm, here is what you must ask yourself: *Which one of the above beliefs do you believe to be true? Where did this belief originate from? How does this belief continue to negatively impact your life? Most importantly, are you willing to re-examine this long-held belief and replace it with a more empowering belief that serves you?* This requires some serious introspection, my friend. If you're up to the challenge, take a moment to write your responses below:



BUILDING STRENGTH FOR THE CHALLENGES AHEAD

In addition to re-examining our unhealthy beliefs, we also need to re-examine our habits as well. Having consistent self-care habits is important when dealing with everyday stressful situations, but in a crisis, we will need to raise our self-care game, significantly. If we are going to voluntarily enter the storm and do what is uncomfortable, we will need to adopt a difficult (but, necessary) self-care routine. A “tough-love” self-care routine is one of the most effective strategies for maintaining our strength, despite the challenges that are thrown at us.

Tough-Love Self-Care Techniques (*circle any of the following that you are committing to add to your routine*):

- ✓ Maintaining healthy boundaries (saying “No”)
- ✓ Removing yourself from toxic relationships
- ✓ Reach out to a therapist (in-person or via telehealth)
- ✓ Reducing, or eliminating, your time spent on social media
- ✓ Making healthy food choices
- ✓ Forgiving others (and yourself, if necessary)
- ✓ Asking for help
- ✓ Refusing to numb yourself and/or justify unhealthy behavior because of all of the good things that you are doing for others



WORKING, PARENTING AND TEACHING...OH MY!

Very few things are testing parents' sanity right now as much as being thrust into the role of homeschool teacher to their kids (which, is in addition to all of their other responsibilities). Now, more than ever, practicing self-compassion is crucial. Thankfully, Dr. Emily King wrote this amazing Public Service Announcement that is a must read for anyone who feels like they are crumbling under the impossibility of parenting their kids, working from home and teaching their kids, simultaneously.

Public Service Announcement

Parents: What we are being asked to do is not humanly possible. There is a reason we are either a working parent, a stay-at-home parent, or a part-time working parent.

Working, parenting, and teaching are three different jobs that cannot be done at the same time.

It's not hard because you are doing it wrong. It's hard because it's too much. Do the best you can.

When you have to pick, because at some point you will, choose connection. Pick playing a game over arguing about an academic assignment. Pick teaching your child to do laundry rather than feeling frustrated that they aren't helping. Pick laughing, and snuggling, and reminding them that they are safe.

If you are stressed, lower your expectations where you can and virtually reach out for social connection. We are in this together to stay well. That means mentally well, too.

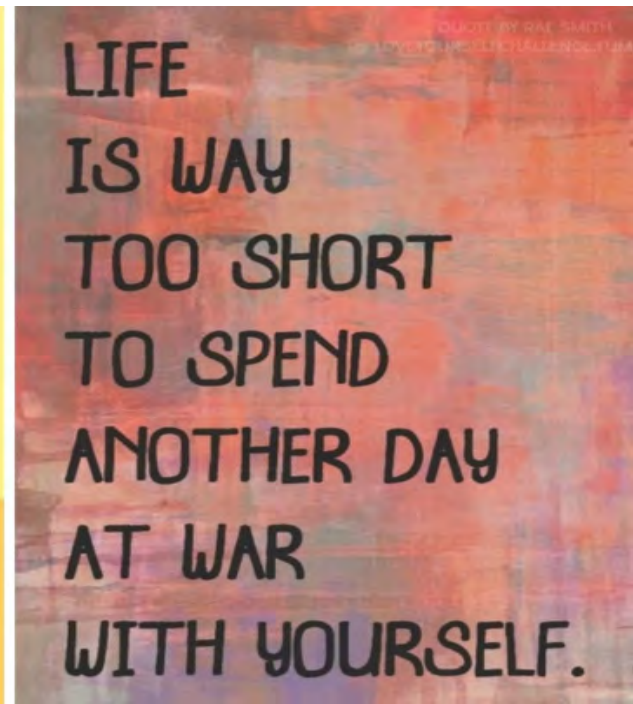
Emily W. King, Ph.D.



FOR ALL OF US

It is worth remembering that we are living through a reality that is unprecedented. It is unrealistic at best, and dangerously delusional at worst, to think that we will glide through these difficult circumstances with consistent grace, poise, and efficiency. We will stumble, we will cry, we may question if we have what it takes to lead...and yes, all of those things are normal.

More than ever, we need to be kind to ourselves by practicing self-compassion as we enter the storm. Knowing this, it's time to dig deep with the following question (and please, keep it real). In what area of your life do you need to be kinder to yourself?



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KEY #3



CREATE
SAFETY

“Leadership is about empathy. It is about having the ability to relate to and connect with people for the purpose of inspiring and empowering their lives.”

-Oprah Winfrey



CREATING SAFETY

Generally speaking, many people do not feel comfortable asking for help. There are numerous reasons why this is the case: pride, embarrassment, and a fear of being perceived as weak are a few of *many* possible explanations. Under normal circumstances, this would be problematic, but under *these circumstances*, the unwillingness to ask for help could be devastating.

This is why it is critical to be a person who creates safety—or more specifically, *psychological safety*—so that others will be willing to reach out to you for assistance. Harvard Business School professor, Amy Edmonson, defines psychological safety as:

“A belief that one will not be punished or humiliated for speaking up with ideas, questions, concerns or mistakes.”

One of the quickest ways to *destroy* psychological safety is to judge others when they share their fears and insecurities with you. Instead, be open-minded, be kind, and most importantly, be helpful. During these challenging times, your willingness to create psychological safety could be the difference between another person’s success or failure, peace or depression, or even life or death.

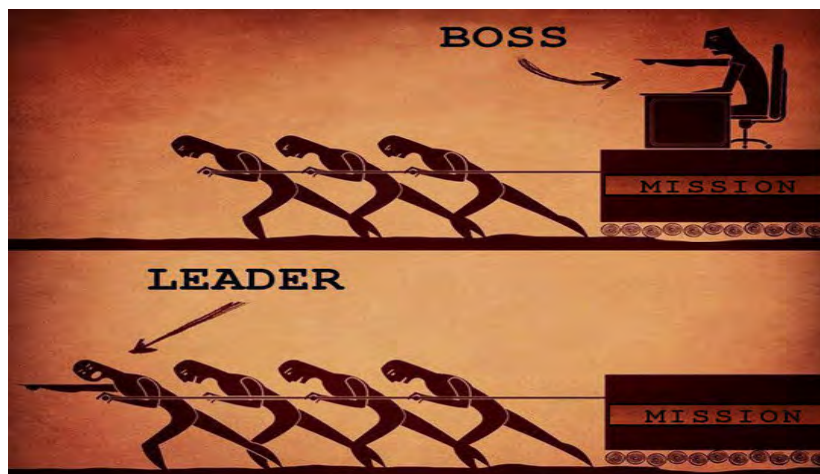


WHAT WILL BE REMEMBERED

During a crisis, one thing that employees will remember *long after* the worst of the COVID-19 virus and the civil unrest has passed, is how they were treated by their organizations and by their leaders. In fact, I will go as far as to say that the circumstances related to this pandemic will clearly separate the ineffective leaders from the transformative ones. The leaders who are able to: **1)** stay calm under pressure, **2)** communicate clearly and with civility, **3)** demonstrate empathy and compassion, and of course, **4)** promote psychological safety will be the ones who succeed in this new reality.

To be clear, true leadership has nothing to do with a formal title. *You are a leader simply if you are able to inspire positive actions in others.* So, here's my question for you: are you willing to lead with compassion, conviction and psychological safety during these challenging times? If so, you will be on the right side of history once this crisis passes. Most importantly, you will be remembered as a leader who inspired others to follow you because they *chose to*, not because they had to. This can (and should) be your legacy.

How will you choose to lead others during this crisis?



NOTES





STAYING COMMITTED TO RESILIENCE

*“Commitment means staying loyal to what you said you were going to do,
long after the mood you said it in has left you.”*

-Unknown



IF YOU WANT TO GO FAR, GO TOGETHER

At the risk of sounding like Captain Obvious right now, allow me to say this: staying positive during a crisis is not easy. If it were, then everyone would be doing it. The three keys on the previous pages are not for the faint of heart, but fortunately, there is a way to significantly increase your likelihood of staying committed to those three keys:

Work with an accountability partner.

Did you know that you have a **65%** chance of meeting your goal if you commit it to someoneⁱⁱⁱ? Even better, did you know that if you have a regular accountability appointment with a person with whom you have committed, you will increase your chance of success to **95%**^{iv}?! Amazing, right?

Is it possible to see meaningful improvement by applying the three keys, on your own? Yes, absolutely. However, to enjoy *meaningful* and *sustained* positive change, it is best to have a trusted companion to join you on this journey. There will be setbacks, dark days, and heartbreaks as we lead during this new normal. Because of this, now more than ever, we need to have someone on our side who will encourage us to stay accountable to these three keys when things get hard.

And believe me, things will get hard.



THE RESILIENCE CHECK-IN PROCESS

There are three points to remember when having a “Resilience Check-in” with your accountability partner:

1. Resilience Check-ins must be a *priority* (not something that you do if/when you have any free time).
2. Check-in regularly (normally, meeting in-person would be ideal, but a quick video call, email or even a text message conversation will suffice—the key is that it is done regularly).
3. During the Resilience Check-in, talk specifically about the progress that you have made applying the four keys since your last check-in, and the challenges that you have faced in keeping your commitment(s).

Your Accountability Partner’s Name: _____

When, and how often, will you meet?: _____

How will you meet (*video chat, phone call, text message, etc.*)? _____

As a result of completing this workbook, what is/are your primary commitment(s) (*i.e., what do you want your Accountability Partner to hold you accountable to*)?



NOTES

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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

"Knowledge has a beginning, but no end."

-Geeta Iyengar



THANK YOU!

Thank you so much for recently attending my webinar *Staying Positive During a Crisis*, and for completing this workbook! I hope that you found both to be useful and informative during these unprecedented times. I know firsthand that staying resilient is a very challenging endeavor right now, but I know that if you put in the work that's detailed in this workbook, you will see meaningful results.

Speaking of which, I'd love to keep in touch and hear about your progress! Below is my contact information and other key links if you are interested in reaching out to me, or learning more about my journey to make the world a kinder place.

Additionally, if you would like to actively keep the positivity going, make sure to join the thousands of fine folks on my Monday Morning email list! Just text the word "positivity" (without the quotations) to **33777**, follow the directions, and you'll get hard-hitting positivity delivered fresh to your inbox every Monday morning.

Until we meet again my friend, stay safe out there and please continue to be part of the positive change that this world needs!

Live positively,

Shola

Website: www.SholaRichards.com

Blog: www.ThePositivitySolution.com

Email: Shola@SholaRichards.com

TEDx talk: <https://youtu.be/BrnhdY0B7Cg>

Speaker Reel: <https://youtu.be/tuc4EBRuuD4>

Facebook: www.facebook.com/SholaRichardsOfficial

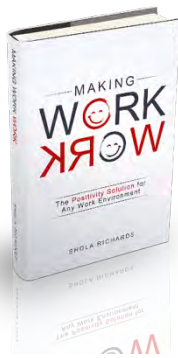
LinkedIn: www.linkedin.com/in/sholarichards

Twitter & Instagram: [@sholarichards](https://twitter.com/sholarichards)



WANT TO KEEP READING?

If you want to take an even deeper dive into these topics, I highly recommend checking out one (or both) of my books. The links to both books are below, and if you want to arrange to have me personally sign your copy/copies after you purchase them, reach out to me at shola@sholarichards.com, and we'll figure out a way to make it happen.



[Making Work Work: The Positivity Solution for Any Work Environment](#)



[Go Together: How the Concept of Ubuntu Will Change How You Live, Work and Lead](#)

WEARABLE POSITIVITY!

Also, if you want to wear some positivity on your sleeve (literally) by rocking one of my popular smiley face tees, feel free to check out the selection at the [Positivity Solution Shop](#).



USEFUL LINKS

Below is a collection of online (and mostly free!) resources that you can use to stay safe, informed and resilient. Please know that these links are just a starting point. If you have any additional links that I should include in this list, please let me know!

- ✓ [7 Cups](#) (the world's largest emotional support system)
- ✓ [Anti-Racism Fight Club](#) (an interactive webinar to help you and your kids to become antiracist in all areas of life. As an added bonus, it's facilitated by my identical twin brother, Doyin Richards!)
- ✓ [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (resource for up-to-date COVID-19 information)
- ✓ [Crisis Text Line](#) (text "HOME" to 741741 to connect with a crisis counselor)
- ✓ [Go Noodle](#) (a great way to keep young kids active while they're inside)
- ✓ [Guide to Allyship](#) (an open source guide to be a more thoughtful and effective ally)
- ✓ [Headspace](#) (an amazing meditation app, that's free to anyone who is unemployed)
- ✓ [Khan Academy](#) (free, world-class education for anyone)
- ✓ [Microsoft Work From Home Guide](#) (a free guide to ensure that you're set up for success while you are working from home)
- ✓ [National Domestic Violence Hotline](#) (or, call 800-799-7233)
- ✓ [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#) (or, call 800-273-8255)

END NOTES

ⁱ Scientific American, *Loneliness is Harmful to Our Nation's Health*

ⁱⁱ Science Daily, *Stressed? Take a 20-Minute Nature Pill*

ⁱⁱⁱ Association for Talent Development

^{iv} Association for Talent Development

