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 SERVICES

*From Crisis to Opportunity:  
 Responding to the Challenge of a  
 Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and  
 Ambiguous World.*

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Director: Mark Adams CPsychol MISC P (Accred)  
 Educational & Coaching Psychologist


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## Overall aim

- To leave you with a practical tool that can be applied to support others (and ourselves) in navigating our way through **volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous (VUCA)** times.



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## The Big Picture

- The current context.
- What do we mean by VUCA, and how do such circumstances impact on us?
- How can we ground ourselves and find opportunities in VUCA times?
- Practical reflective tool and application.



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## Ready-to-download handout and additional resource

[www.aspenpsychologyservices.co.uk/resources.html](http://www.aspenpsychologyservices.co.uk/resources.html)

(Scroll down to 'READY TO DOWNLOAD RESOURCES')

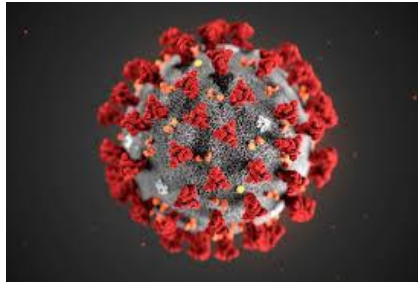
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## The Current Context

- Experience of, and impact of, the Covid-19 pandemic from February 2020 to now.



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**Living  
through  
VUCA  
times**



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# VUCA

- An acronym used in the late 80s at the US Army War College to describe the changing nature of the world after the Cold War.
- Based on/informed by the writing and leadership theories of Bennis & Nanus (1985).



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# VOLATILITY

- Rapid pace of change.
- New information or developments frequently emerge which change the fundamental situation or environment.



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## UNCERTAINTY

- Not having clear information about what is going to happen.
- Questionable validity of some information?



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## COMPLEXITY

- A large number of factors and relationships/inter-relationships between them.



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## AMBIGUITY

- Lack of clear meaning.
- Not clear what action should be taken.
- Information is incomplete or contradictory.



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## Activity

- What is it like to live through VUCA circumstances?
- What impact does it have on you?



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## Living through VUCA circumstances

- Feeling unsettled?
- Increased stress levels?
- Emotional sensitivity or volatility?
- Relationships / communication can become more fractious?



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Ever felt like you're being pulled out to sea...?



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## So....

- How can we **ground** ourselves, rather than feeling swept away?
- We need to draw upon internal and external **resources** as we adapt and respond.
- Resilience can develop in response to change, challenge or adversity.



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## ‘V.U.C.A PRIME’

(adapted from work by Bob  
Johansen, 2007)

Each of the VUCA challenges can be reframed as an **opportunity** to develop...

*Challenges*      *Opportunities*



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## Volatility → Vision & Values

- What is the **future** I/we want to move towards?
- What **values** will inform my/our actions?
- How do I want to show up?
- How can my values guide my behaviour in the coming days and weeks?



(See e.g. Harris, 2009).

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## Uncertainty → Understanding

- What do I/we know?
- What don't I/we know?
- Who do I need to listen to or connect with?
- What questions do I/we need to ask? Of whom?
- Where can I find out more?
- What do I need to accept as unknown for now?



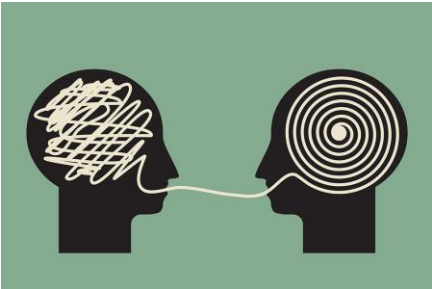
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## Complexity ➔ Clarity

- What factors might be present, or might we need to have regard to?
- How can I/we try to simplify or summarise the picture/challenge?
- What key things can we focus on?
- What rules can I/we develop to inform my/our actions?







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## Ambiguity ➔ Agility

- How can I/we adapt to this situation?
- What options do we have?
- What will be our Plan A? Plan B? Plan C?
- What can we learn from what's happened so far?
- How can we adapt based on our experience?





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## Activity

- To what extent are those questions/reframes helpful?
- In what circumstances might you use them?



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## Summary

- The Covid-19 pandemic has presented the most significant practical and psychological challenge our society has faced for generations.
- We are buffeted by events that are VUCA in nature (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, & Ambiguous).
- However, each VUCA component can be reframed as an opportunity to develop:
  - V = Vision & Values
  - U = Understanding
  - C = Clarity
  - A = Agility

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Thanks very much!

*If you wish, you can sign up to the **APS Mailing List** (via the home page of the Aspen Psychology Services website) for updates about blog posts, resources, services etc.*

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Bennis, W. & Nanus, B. (1985). *Leaders: The Strategies for Taking Charge*. New York: Harper & Row.

Harris, R. (2009). *ACT Made Simple: A Quick-Start Guide to Basics and Beyond*. Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications, Inc.

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