

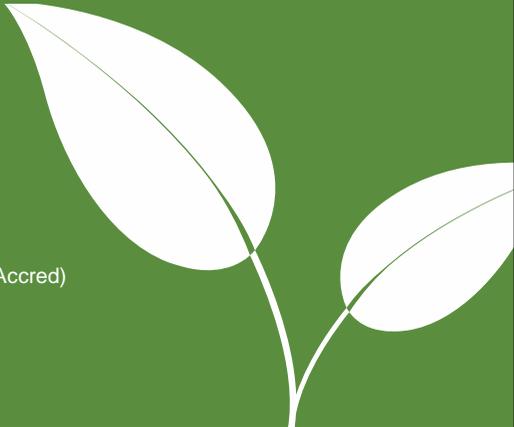
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*From Crisis to Opportunity:
 Responding to the Challenge of a
 Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and
 Ambiguous World.*

DECP Conference 2021

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@AspenPsychology #DECP2021



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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

(Scroll down to 'READY TO DOWNLOAD RESOURCES')

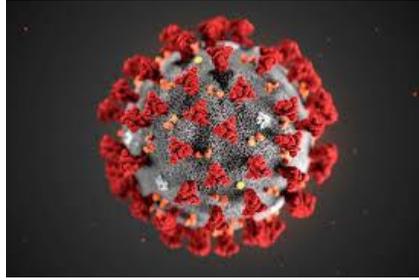
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The Current Context

- 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?



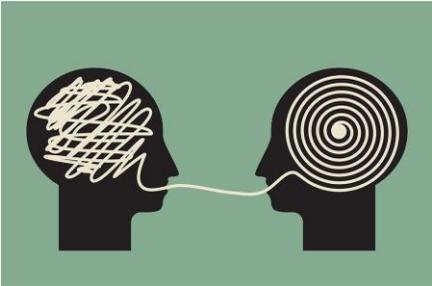
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Complexity ➔ Clarity

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

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