



DISRUPTION, SELF AND ANXIETY –

HOW TO REMAIN EFFECTIVE

On 23rd September 2020, CRF members gathered for an inspiring and challenging Zoom Interactive Event with **Dr. Mee-Yan Cheung Judge**, to explore the topic **Disruption, Self and Anxiety – How to Remain Effective.**

The session considered the role of HR and OD professionals as disruptors of the system in which we work. Using the framework of **Use of Self**, Mee-Yan focused on the intrapersonal work practitioners need to do in order to remain 'grounded' and 'unflappable' in order to maintain impact and effectiveness in our organisations in spite of our and our clients' anxiety.

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DISRUPTION AND ANXIETY

HOW TO REMAIN EFFECTIVE

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KEY TAKEAWAYS

While the outcome of disruption can be positive, the act itself can be violent and often engenders feeling of loss. The pandemic is a system-wide disruptive event, as there is no single aspect of life that isn't affected. Although we may see our role as HR practitioners as having a positive and humanistic influence on the system, in reality the organisation expects us to act as disruptors, whether through shifting behavioural patterns or dealing with dysfunctions in the system. In the pandemic, people are experiencing a double-whammy of disruption, both in terms of their personal experience, and the impact on their job and the organisation.



Emotions are important data you can use when diagnosing the level of anxiety in the system. Tracking your own feelings such as physical and emotional fatigue, ratio of hope vs despair, sleep patterns, appetite and frequency of laughter can help track the levels of anxiety of you or your team.

Mee-Yan's Global Use of Self research highlighted four significant factors that determine optimal use of self in change interventions. These are: being relationship-centric in values and behaviours; focusing on continuous self-development; being expert in your trade as an OD practitioner; and effective self-management in emerging situations. See further reading below for a link to the research.

How can we increase the quality of our relationships with others? There are three things to focus on:

- 1. Really knowing who you are**, which allows you to integrate your self-interest into the organisation agenda.
- 2. Understanding and owning your 'shadow'**, which is not only the aspects of your personality that you might wish to hide, but can also be powerful drives or ambitions that we hold in check because they are not acceptable to the organisation.
- 3. Individuation vs differentiation.** An ability to maintain a strong sense of self while simultaneously having strong affiliation with others, e.g. liking the person while disagreeing with them. We can only do amazing work as change agents if we can transcend our need for the approval of others.



Anxiety provokes powerful emotional, psychological and physical manifestations. It's difficult for people to maintain higher order functioning when anxious, and performance can easily become sub-optimal. Anxiety is also contagious. Signs to look out for that suggest you are working in a highly anxious system include people becoming aggressive, avoidant (e.g. cancelling meetings), inability to make decisions, excessive desire for control, or blame displacement.

Self-knowledge is essential to be effective in influencing the people and the system in which you operate. Effective Use of Self requires having clarity in three key areas:

1. How you show up in terms of presence and behaviour.
2. Understanding your internal landscape – your needs, intentions and strengths and weaknesses.
3. Potential derailers such as biases and blind spots that stop us from being effective.

Being relationship-centric is the most important factor in developing the ability to be effective in disruption. This means being compassionate and empathetic, putting high value in relationships; developing open and trusting relationships and having good emotional connections with others. For change agents, working on the quality of relationships should be your top priority work.



IT'S ESSENTIAL TO TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF DURING THIS TIME OF DISRUPTION. SELF-CARE IS NEVER A SELFISH ACT; RATHER IT ALLOWS YOU TO BE A CALM, SUPPORTIVE, AND HOPEFUL PRESENCE, AND BE YOUR BEST SELF.





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AUDIENCE Q&A

Q What would you advise HR professionals to do as leaders to ensure their teams are helping the business to survive and thrive whilst not being paralysed by the stress involved in this role, which has been exaggerated during the pandemic?

A Simple acts are important – for example, instead of only meeting to discuss tasks, take time to get everyone to share ‘where they are’ from time to time.

Q What about working in a system where disruption has spotlighted the need to end long-standing relationships?

A Sometimes you need to have the courage to end relationships that are no longer working. It’s important to remember that ending can be done with dignity and respect.

Q What does it mean to address the shadow aspects of your internal landscape?

A The shadow is anything that we figure out is not acceptable to the world. It doesn’t need to be ‘bad’. For example, in Chinese culture, women who talk too much are not acceptable, so women who are extrovert learn to become introverted to be accepted as a feminine Asian woman. But, if that shadow aspect is part of the core of who you are, by putting it into exile, you deny an aspect of who you are. When you ‘hit the wall’, whether that is due to a disaster at work, marriage breakdown or some other life event, you will be forced to tackle this aspect of your internal landscape that has been neglected.

SPEAKER



✉ EMAIL

DR. MEE-YAN CHEUNG JUDGE is a Senior Fellow of both Roffey Park Management Institute and Singapore Civil Service College where she contributes to the Gestalt Programme, Duke University Executive Programme and the NTL Institute, where she was Dean. Mee-Yan was a trustee on the Board of the ODN in the U.S. and founded the OD Network in Europe. She is the author of numerous articles, books and reports and has been a member of the editorial board of the Journal of OD Practitioner since 2014.

FURTHER READING

Mee-Yan’s session slides can be found [here](#).

Chaleff, Ira. 2015. **Intelligent Disobedience: Doing Right When What You’re Told to Do Is Wrong**. EDS Publications

Chaleff, Ira. 2009. **The Courageous Follower: Standing Up to and for Our Leaders**. Berrett-Koehler Publishers

Cheung Judge, Mee-Yan and Jamieson, David. 2020. **Global Use of Self (UoS) Research Report**. <https://www.quality-equality.com/uosreport>

Cheung Judge, Mee-Yan and CRF. 2019. **Using the Self. Video Interview**. <https://www.crforum.co.uk/research-and-resources/using-the-self-interview-with-mee-yan-chueng-judge/>

Hagberg, Janet. 2002. **Real Power: Stages of Personal Power in Organizations**. Sheffield Pub. Co.

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DIGITAL CONFERENCE
Re-imagining the New Landscape: Reset, Renew and Thrive
12-13th October 13.15PM BST

📍 **ONLINE:**
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4th November 12.00 GMT

📍 **ONLINE:**
Talent Management: Careers, Development and Succession in a Changing Landscape
18th November 12.00 GMT