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Cover photo and all Las Vegas Mainstreet Mosaic wall pictures taken by Adolf Castillo,

While it may seem that as a nation we may be more divided than ever, my perception is different. In New Mexico, random acts of kindness and love abound in the time of Covid-19!

In my neck of the woods, #StayStrongSilver resonates in town and across our county. Silver City residents have formed groups of mask-makers, created pay-it-forward exchange networks for essential goods, and announced food distributions via social media and the local newspaper. Local civic groups and individuals have increased their donations to food pantries and the recent Give Grandly! Virtual event garnered over $216,000—the largest amount in its history. Social media is being used to coordinate surprise birthday, graduation, birth, and appreciation parades for healthcare workers, first-responders, and people of all ages. Parade participation by the Silver City Fire and Police Departments, the Grant County Sheriff’s Office, and volunteer fire departments along with large numbers of local residents has lifted the spirits of so many people that have and continue to felt isolated and lonely. And, unsurprisingly, random acts of kindness have increased throughout our small town, nearby municipalities, and in the county with folks leaving wrapped gifts of food, toilet paper, and other necessities on the doorsteps of friends, neighbors, and strangers.

Many individuals, businesses, and civic groups have ensured folks have masks to wear and have supported local businesses. One Silver City Rotarian, Kathy Eaton, has single-handedly made over 600 masks in the past month. Kathy provided the initial 200 masks to local healthcare offices and workers. The remaining 400 masks have been gifted by Silver City Rotarians to shoppers and staff at local grocery stores, the Silver City Food Co-op, and Silver City Farmer’s Market. More often than not, people gladly accept the gift with a big thank you! The local newspaper, the Silver City Daily Press and Independent, created a no-contact restaurant delivery service in a week where none existed before! And, the same newspaper developed and held a virtual county-wide Support Silver Small Business Auction to benefit local businesses that participated.

I know that many of our municipalities have similar stories, and I would appreciate it if you would share them with Tasha Martinez at the League.

New Mexicans have a sense of community that extends beyond our individual municipalities and counties to the entire state, which is one of the many reasons why I chose Silver City, New Mexico to be my home almost 40 years ago. Our municipalities are resilient and so is the New Mexico Municipal League. We have tough times ahead, but together we will persevere. #StayStrongNewMexico!

As always, thank you for your service to your municipality.

And, take it from me, love abounds in the time of Covid-19!
The past few weeks has been challenging for our nation and law enforcement in particular. In the wake of the death of George Floyd, this was a statement I released. I felt it was worth sharing with the Municipal league.

Greetings,

I want to take a moment to discuss the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis. We have many things going on in our area and important events can pass by without us taking notice. This shouldn’t be one of those.

The death of Mr. Floyd, after being handcuffed and taken into police custody, should NEVER have happened. While I know few of the facts and will have to wait to see them all, there is nothing in the video that called for a handcuffed prisoner to have an officer kneeling on his neck until his death. Mr. Floyd and witnesses called on the officer to stop but neither the officer nor any other officer responded to these calls. To be clear, this tactic is neither taught nor approved by the FPD.

I debated doing this post, since this did not happen here and I don’t know all the facts. However, after nearly 30 years in law enforcement, I know this to be absolutely true. George Floyd should not have died that day. If we as law enforcement leaders cannot plainly condemn this kind of event, we are failing our profession, our officers and our communities. This event was a tragedy for the Floyd family and for any American who expects better from the police. That expectation must come from police chiefs and sheriffs across the country. It starts by sending a clear message to everyone…George Floyd should not have died this way. In order to ensure this kind of thing doesn’t continue to happen, we all need to acknowledge this one simple truth.

What citizens should expect of FPD is that we will have modern and clear policies, they will have effective and relevant training, there will be an intense review of force incidents and, in those rare cases when the force is outside of policy, officers should be held accountable.

Here in Farmington and San Juan County, law enforcement enjoys very strong support from our community. Although we work hard to earn and keep that support, FPD has had our failures. When these have occurred, we have done our best to own what happened, be as transparent as possible and hold employees accountable. When police use force on citizens, it is an extremely important and rare event that FPD does not minimize or take lightly.

Chief Hebbe, Police Chief
City of Farmington
WORKING REMOTELY: HOW TO CREATE AND MAINTAIN PRODUCTIVITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

By Randy Van Vleck, League General Counsel

The COVID-19 pandemic has given both business and government a unique opportunity to test the waters. In many business and government settings, there has been a move towards providing for remote workplaces over the years. In recent years many major U.S. corporations have moved to a more remote-based workforce for some of their operations. All of the following companies have transitioned thousands of jobs from the traditional office setting to remote duty stations: Dell, Aetna, American Express, Xerox, Apple, IBM, Microsoft, Google, Jet Blue Airlines and United Airlines. In the government arena, the federal government has lead the way in adopting work at home rules for federal employees. NASA, DOT, DOJ, Social Security Administration, Department of State and the Department of Veteran’s Affairs are just a few federal agencies that permit and promote working remotely. For organizations large and small, the question of who, or even more fundamentally whether employees should be permitted to work remotely has been a vexing one. Employees see working from home as a benefit: they can sleep in because they save time no longer having to get dressed for the office and because they do not have to face the daily commute. Working from home is convenient and the surroundings are more familiar and many times more comfortable. Work at home scenarios provide flexibility on how and when the job gets done and provides a much needed relief from the structured office existence. Employers however, may see it in a much different way. From the employer’s perspective, the work at home employee may be easily distracted or tempted to conduct personal business when they are supposed to be working. Employees may have a hard time being motivated in an at-home work setting and it is much more difficult to hold employees accountable if they work off premises.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the accompanying “stay-at-home” orders have given both business and government an opportunity to implement and evaluate the benefit of remote workplaces. Some entities have been forced to close their doors altogether while others have tried innovative ways to keep employees busy. Many business and government entities have as an unstated policy that employees conduct their work activities through the office unless the employee is on sanctioned travel or other business. In other words, working remotely or from home was not sanctioned. Working from home would be generally approved on a case-by-case basis and then only for short and sporadic periods of time. With the pandemic, those entities were

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LEGAL LESSONS

Working Remotely
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put in a position of suspending business (not a very good option), furloughing employees whose job duties could not reasonably be conducted off-site (a tough option) or trying to assimilate each employee’s duties into a form that could be performed remotely.

The League was faced with this same dilemma when the governor issued the first stay-at-home order back in March. The League, to its credit chose to try to keep all employees employed and busy by permitting all employees to work from home unless the employee’s physical presence at the League office was required or unavoidable. Although the League has a protocol for working remotely, it is rigid, overly complicated and in fact has never been implemented. Instead, the League has had to develop its own work from home culture. It is a work in progress and represents what many will say is the new norm. As the League has implemented a work from home protocol, I have been thinking of ways to ensure that the experience is positive for both the employee and for management. Although I am far from an expert in this arena, I offer the following suggestions and observations concerning the work from home experience.

Work from Home Challenges

Some jobs are more suitable to working from home than others. For example, for many years Jet Blue Airlines reservation and customer services representatives have worked from home. If you have ever called Jet Blue to make a reservation or to resolve a customer service issue you would never had known that the person on the other end of the phone was working remotely. Other types of business and government activities might be less suited to off-site work arrangements.

Face time

One of the most obvious challenges to a remote working environment involves “face time.” I don’t mean the iPhone® function called Facetime®, I mean the time we actually spend in face-to-face encounters with our customers and co-workers. According to a study done by Gettysburg College, one third of your life is spent at work. The average person will spend 90,000 hours at work over a lifetime; that is a lot of time spent with co-workers. For many, co-workers are like family and we become accustomed to spending time with them. The inability to have this meaningful facetime can lead to loneliness, depression, and increased use of alcohol. Employees who do not “work” at the workplace do not have the benefit of these valuable face-to-face encounters with people with whom we share a third of our life. Human beings are social animals and a certain amount of face-to-face exposure is necessary for a health existence. The challenge is to balance the need for this social interaction with the benefits derived from a remote workplace.

Communication Breakdowns

One of the paramount considerations in establishing and maintaining a remote workplace is communication. One of the challenges here is purely technological. Remote workers must have the ability to communicate with the workplace and customers and clients as if they were working from the office site itself. Seamless communication is essential to a successful remote work environment. Robust telecommunications systems including voice and data must be established for the remote work experience to be successful. Employees must be able to retrieve voice mail, to make phone calls and to read and respond to electronic communication in order to be productive and successful. Technological breakdowns can be frustrating and inconvenient and any employer considering a remote working arrangement must have a trusted IT professional on hand to troubleshoot the inevitable technological setbacks that may occur. This is not to mention the communication breakdowns that occur naturally. Think of all the times that someone has been misunderstood, where the message was not heard or was interpreted incorrectly. These communication breakdowns happen under the best of circumstances. Add to this the challenge we just spoke of, and you have a recipe for non-communication. It brings to mind the words of the overseer in Cool Hand Luke: “What we have here is a failure to communicate.”

Distractions

Distractions happen. Distractions happen at the office and distractions occur for those employees working remotely. How we adjust to distractions and interruptions can make all the difference in the world. I remember reading a study somewhere that it takes about 7.5 minutes to fully recover and get focused after an interruption. Whether we are working in the office or from the dining room table, it is important to try to minimize distractions and interruptions. One method is to schedule face-time and other meetings in advance. Having a pre-set time set aside during the day for such
meetings and interactions can minimize distractions and interruptions. Co-workers will know exactly when you are available to discuss whatever is on their mind, and you will be able to full focus on that matter rather than trying to re-focus our attention to the project you were working on prior to the interruption. The same goes for phone. Put all telecommunication devices on silent mode and only answer or respond to calls during your “telephone catch-up” time. Don’t forget the computer. Disable pop-up and audible notifications when new e-mails are received, and only look at your e-mails during your assigned time for doing so.

Communicate

It is essential that the lines of communication between employees and the management team be open, accessible, two-way, and frequent. Frankly, this type of communication is important in office-only settings as well, but its importance is magnified when the employer has numerous employees across several departments, trying to accomplish different goals. Clear, precise and understandable communication is essential. There is no such thing as too much communication. Trust is developed through close communication, and trust is an essential component in the remote workplace. Here are some areas that demand clear communication between management and its team.

Schedules

Has it been established that employees will keep standard business hours, and that the only change is the location where the work will be performed? Or is it understood that the employee’s schedule is theirs to set as long as the work gets done and the employees are available for any weekly meetings that are scheduled ahead of time? Outlining these priorities is critical to creating and (more importantly) maintaining realistic workflows for the employee and the remote manager alike. What about urgent matters? How will they be handled? Are employees expected to be in constant communication with management through whatever means are available? What is the expected response time? Should the response time be different if the urgent matter arises during the workday as opposed to after hours? These are important questions that should be resolved.

Matters needing attention

Remote workers, just like in-office workers have the responsibility of prioritizing their workload. The employee should have a clear understanding of management’s expectations. Clearly communicating specific project or goal expectations with reasonable deadlines or timelines is important in any setting, but for remote workers it becomes even more important. When setting expectations, a clear explanation of what is requested is essential. The communication should set forth nature of the project and if helpful some background information on the project. Specific expectations and deliverables should be established and clearly communicated. Set reasonable deadlines and timelines.

Ongoing Communication

Regular, ongoing communication and updates between management and the team will ensure that the remote work experience is beneficial and productive. Regular check-ins keep management apprised of what the team is doing and provides the team with much needed access to and feedback from the management team.

Holding Yourself Accountable

Goals

Start by setting goals. Set both short-term goals (what am I going to accomplish today), middle-range goals (what am I going to accomplish this week), and long-term goals (on a monthly or longer basis). By setting goals for yourself, you are not only holding yourself more accountable for your work, but also prompting yourself to produce better work.

Prioritized Daily Task List

Years ago I was introduced to the Franklin Covey theory of time management. One of the important features of this program is daily task prioritization. I start off each day with a few moments of planning and solitude. I spend those few moments focused on the day and what I need to accomplish. Listing all of the activities that need to be addressed and each task separately gives me an opportunity to see just how filled my day might be. That list may contain new items that have come up, recurring items that need attention and even items that have been carried over from previous days. This exercise provides me with a clear understanding of what needs to get done and more importantly, what has not been done. It is a fantastic tool to fight procrastination. There is no better feeling than to be able to place a check mark next to a task to signify its completion.

Be Mindful of Time

Have you ever sat down to check your email and

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MainStreet de Las Vegas (MSLV) is excited to announce that the Las Vegas Memory Wall has been installed in a temporary pocket park at Grand Avenue and Lincoln Street in Las Vegas’ Historic Railroad District. The Las Vegas Memory Wall is a 60 ft. mosaic wall that serves as a testimony to the vitality and creativity of the city of Las Vegas. Funded by New Mexico Gas Company through the Place Making/Design Initiative at New Mexico Main Street, partners for this project include New Mexico Highlands University, the City of Las Vegas, New Mexico Main Street, United World College’s Global Leadership Forum, West Las Vegas High School and Robertson High School.

New Mexico Main Street’s Place Making Initiative was established in 2011 and transforms underutilized or vacant public areas, such as streets, sidewalks, parks, plazas, parking areas, or vacant lots, into vibrant and functional spaces where people want to gather, celebrate and increase the economic vitality of their districts.

The Memory Wall is on a vacant lot at the corner of Lincoln Avenue and Grand Street in the Railroad District of Las Vegas. This project connects to MSLV’s Great Blocks Project and is at the entry way to the soon to be transformed Historic Railroad District.

The Las Vegas Memory Wall was designed by artists David Lobdell, Frank Beurskens and Highlands University artist Adolfo Castillo. It contains twenty separate 3’x5’ panels created by community artists and organizations over the past year. During the summer some panels were created as part of a mosaic class that was taught at Highlands University by artist and Sculpture Department Chair David Lobdell.

Participating artists include Jane Lumsden, Mary Miller, Taylor Kuiper, Adolfo Castillo Rodrigues, Anonymous, David Lobdell, Veronica Black, and Elizabeth Martinez. Schools that made panels include Highlands University, United World College, West Las Vegas High School, and Robertson High School.
Special thanks to Jackelope and Arte-sano’s Tiles in Santa Fe, Barela’s Lumber and BTU in Las Vegas, Dr. Sam Minner & Highlands University, Amor de las Tierra Garden Club, New Mexico Main Street, New Mexico Gas Company, Andres Aragon, Frank Beurskens, Adolfo Castillo.

The mission of MainStreet de Las Vegas is to unify the historic commercial corridor and engender pride in the community while promoting economic development and preserving historical, cultural, architectural and natural resources through partnerships and community collaboration.

Since 1984, New Mexico MainStreet has played a significant role in creating a positive commercial district environment, helping to ensure the vitality of local small businesses and sustaining and expanding the job base in our downtowns. New Mexico MainStreet uses a community asset-based approach to economic development in partnership with local revitalization organizations to rebuild the local downtown economy.
The men behind Tucumcari Bio-Energy Company are retooling an abandoned ethanol plant in this rural New Mexico town to turn manure from nearby dairies into methane for compressed natural gas vehicle fuel, food-grade carbon dioxide, and sterilized solid and liquid fertilizer.

After several years of foundational work, the startup owns the plant property. It has a business plan, engineering design, and environmental impact statement. It also qualified for $1.8 million in federal funds through the New Markets Tax Credit Program, but company vice president Steve Morgan and president Robert Hockaday haven’t heard when they will receive that money.

“We've waited so long,” Hockaday said. “We're ready to go.”

When it arrives, the company can order equipment, modify the plant’s existing infrastructure and attract more private investors to get the multitiered project operational within a year.

Synergistic solutions

New Markets Tax Credit Program helps businesses that need significant capital to purchase expensive commercial equipment or to develop property in ways that benefit economically depressed New Mexico communities like Tucumcari.

Hockaday, a former engineer at Los Alamos National Laboratory, started Tucumcari Bio-Energy Company as a spinoff of Energy Related Devices, a research and development company he started in 1987 to invent energy-generating technologies.

A resident of Tucumcari, Hockaday saw potential in the abandoned ethanol plant to help area farms and dairies by providing a place where farmers can turn waste into pipeline-quality methane and other marketable products. Besides methane, carbon dioxide and fertilizer, the process to be used by Tucumcari Bio-Energy also captures hydrogen, which can be sold as fuel. And other areas of the property will be available for grain storage and greenhouse operations.

The overarching goal, according to the vision statement on the company’s website, is to “[e]nable agricultural communities to thrive and be sustainable by creating and operating new systems in agriculture to solve problems of energy, food quality, diversity, waste, pollution, and water scarcity.”

In the long term, Morgan and Hockaday hope their plant will be a template for other entrepreneurs who
want to turn shuttered ethanol plants in the Southwest and Midwest into facilities that can turn biological waste into valuable, renewable products.

Matching investors, projects

Funds provided through the New Markets program are allocated in the form of tax credits to community development entities (CDEs)—in this case Finance New Mexico LLC, an entity formed by the New Mexico Finance Authority (NMFA; no relation to the Finance New Mexico project). The CDE matches funding with projects and “sells” the tax credits to private investors, who provide 25 percent of the needed capital.

The cash comes with low interest rates for borrowers and interest-only payments for seven years. It offers investors a way to reduce federal tax liabilities over seven years, and the credits can be resold to other companies. The New Mexico Finance Authority manages the program, maintains relationships with investors and reports to the Treasury Department on how credits have been distributed.

Since New Mexico began participating in this public-private partnership 13 years ago, the program has enabled numerous economically beneficial projects in New Mexico’s economically challenged communities.

Business owners who have secured 75 percent of project funding and qualify for the New Markets credits are encouraged to contact the NMFA, which can verify the project’s eligibility, match it with investors, allocate the credits and structure the loan. Most projects are in the $5 million to $10 million range.

NMFA allocates tax credits each quarter and solicits projects for rural New Mexico until credits are exhausted. Contact the application manager at NMTC@NMFA.net for detailed information. For more information about Tucumcari Bio-Energy, visit http://tucumcaribioenergy.com/

Grow It! is an economic development initiative of the New Mexico Municipal League. This article was written by the team at the Finance New Mexico project, which partners with the League. To learn more, go to www.GrowItNM.org.
As organizations continue to implement work-from-home strategies in response to the global pandemic, many employees are discovering that this option isn’t all they had expected.

The fantasy of an “easy” life -- exercising midday, getting some laundry done during that conference call and even juggling child care responsibilities -- has met with the reality of fractured attention, lack of onsite support resources and longer hours. The result is that, after two months, burnout is on the rise.

Internet jokes about forgetting what day it is abound. But what’s no laughing matter is that too many employees forget even what time it is as they unexpectedly find themselves lulled into working morning, noon and night when home becomes the office. As someone who’s officed out of my home for nearly 30 years (long before it was in vogue), I know how simultaneously seductive and depleting it can be.

For many, burnout is a result of losing the temporal barrier that had previously separated work from home life. When WFW (working from work), there are multiple actions that signal the brain to know that it’s time to transition. Shutting down the computer. Checking out with co-workers. Listening to the news while sitting in traffic during the commute home. In the absence of those signals and that transition, the workday simple continues.

Shutdown rituals can reduce burnout, enhance productivity and make working from home work.

**Shutdown rituals**

People who can successfully and sustainably work from home understand the necessity of balancing all of the other things they do from home with the work. For many, the key is to develop and religiously observe shutdown rituals that trigger the brain and body to shift gears. Consider these incredibly simple strategies as you craft rituals that work for you.
1. Close the door. Many who are working from home are doing so from dens and dining-room tables. But, if you’re fortunate enough to have a separate space, when day is done, simply closing the door can be a powerful message that it’s time to move on. Not only that, the closed door is a literal barrier and a reminder of your intention when you’re tempted to dip back into work.

2. Say "goodnight." Trade bidding co-workers adieu on your way to the parking lot for a quick text, IM or email. Share a short message of appreciation for their contributions to your day or reference something you know about how they’ll be spending their evening.

3. Capture insights. Reflection has long been acknowledged as an excellent way to bring closure to one’s day; but it also serves as a transitional signal for those working at home. Ask yourself: What did you learn? How did you feel? What will you do differently? What are you grateful for? Journaling your thoughts can be a powerful and satisfying way to wrap up one’s day on a high note and ready yourself to move on.

4. Make a plan. Another way to wrap up one day is to begin planning the next. Take a few minutes to review your schedule. Pull together necessary resources. Anticipate challenges and issues. List your to-dos. This clears the conscious mind, freeing up more energy for evening activities while allowing the subconscious to begin working on issues as necessary overnight.

5. Phone a friend. Remember those calls you used to make on your commute home, checking in with friends or family members? You don’t need to be on the road to reach out. Not only can it act as a transition; it can also satisfy today’s heightened need for human connection.

Follow the leader
Everyone who’s working from home can benefit from establishing shutdown rituals that trigger the brain and transition the body into a different mode. But this may be even more important for leaders and executives within the organization. Leadership behaviors set the tone and establish expectations for everyone else.

An employee in a technology firm recently shared: “Given all that’s going on in the world -- and in my home -- I’m already hyper-vigilant and on edge. Now my boss is sending emails at all hours of the night and I’ve lost the excuse of not being in the office.”

Leaders are in a powerful position to model the behaviors that can make working from home work. When they make a point to shut their days down, they give permission to employees to do the same, enabling the balance and rejuvenation required to get up and do it all over tomorrow.

Despite increasing pressure over the past decade to offer greater flexibility regarding when and where work gets done, the reality of working from home is beginning to sink in, along with the burnout. Shutdown rituals -- practiced by leaders and employees like -- are one way to ensure that we realize the promise rather than the problems of the WFH lifestyle.
How the mighty have fallen. Where once our lofty thoughts turned to ways we could save the world, now we're in a scramble to save ourselves from a deadly virus. We used to live at the top of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, where we could sit and contemplate the meaning of life; now we're on the streets with a roll of toilet paper in one hand and a face mask in another to protect us from the great unclean.

Gone are the days when mental toughness was something only athletes needed to earn millions of dollars a year. Now we all find ourselves in need of ways to become mentally tough in a crisis that affects each one of us.

2020 is a year that has shaken most of us to our core. It’s also a time when most of us have realized we need to develop the skills to cope with the challenges -- and opportunities -- that have become part of our new normal.

Mental toughness is believing that you will prevail in your circumstances rather than believing that your circumstances will change. You must manage your thoughts, emotions, and behavior in ways that will set you up for success.

Let's look at ways we can become mentally tough in a crisis:

1. **Shift your thinking**

   In the past, psychologists believed that it was the amount of stress that was bad for a person's health. Recent studies show that the amount of stress is a poor predictor of whether it will leave you better, or worse, off.

   Shawn Achor, author of "The Happiness Advantage," reveals that people can be divided into two groups:
   1. Those who believe that stress is debilitating
   2. Those who believe that stress is enhancing.

   Achor’s findings suggest that we need to shift our thinking about stress. Stress is killing us if we believe it is. Studies confirm that many people who die from stress do not die from the stress itself. They die from the belief that stress was bad for them. Those who do not believe it is harmful, experience no negative side effects on their health.

   A study cited in a Harvard Business Review article also found that people who had stress-is-enhancing mindsets reported having better health. They also experience greater life satisfaction and superior work performance. Stress produces a hormone called cortisol -- too much or too little cortisol released in response to a stressor can have negative physiological consequences.

   **How to make it work for you:** This is a time of uncertainty for everyone and it’s tempting to give in to a pity party. Instead, try this:
   - Ask yourself how realistic are your worries?

   Are they a result of the panic and fear you see and hear in the news cycle? If so, this might be the time to forget about partisan politics and focus on how the situation specifically applies...
to you. Also, limit the time you spend on social media.

- Set aside “worry time” every day. Jot down specific bad news or worries that pop up during the day and wait until that specific time to wallow in your misery.
- Focus on what is going right in your life.

2. Push through limits

World-class experts fail a lot. They like to play at things that are too hard for them and accept challenges that are too big. But this is key: In the process, they’re always getting valuable feedback.

Mentally tough people know that to reach their potential, they need to get comfortable being uncomfortable. You cannot be mentally tough if you cry like a baby because it’s scary when left in the dark. Guess what? Life frequently throws a wad of darkness into our midst, even when we aren’t expecting it or don’t want it.

Mental toughness requires us to push through the limits we’ve imposed on ourselves or have been imposed upon us by family, teachers or society. We need to practice moving into our discomfort zone -- frequently. Each time we fail, we need to stop and analyze what we learned from the experience. With these experiences comes the confidence that we won’t break like a china doll.

We cannot grow if we don’t move out of the center where it is safe and well-lit.

How to make it work for you: To find your center, you must move to the edge. When you break new frontiers, become comfortable with new challenges and embrace the hard things in life, you are building mental toughness.

3. Confront the beast

There are a few times when the avoidance theory has merit, but as a general rule, we will need to face the beast at some point. The reason is simple: if we don’t face our fears, they will control us.

Trauma and abuse often require enormous mental resilience, but this doesn’t mean we all need to take the Rambo approach and become warriors. Yale psychologist Andy Morgan believes that two factors influence how we develop the mental toughness to survive a crisis:

1. Training. Special Forces training creates the same fear they would experience in capture, interrogation and torture. The fear produced by these exercises causes the cortisol to spike about as much as in a patient undergoing heart surgery -- about 20 times the normal rate.

Morgan’s research has shown that those who successfully finish the training had elevated levels of another hormone, called neuropeptide Y, which is believed to be a natural relaxant.

Morgan found that how we talk to ourselves about stress and threatening situations influences our neurobiological response to it. Once you express fear to yourself -- "Oh my God, this is awful" -- you release

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REMEMBER THESE THREE BASIC PRINCIPLES AS YOU EVALUATE APPROPRIATE CUTBACK BUDGETING MEASURES FOR YOUR LOCAL GOVERNMENT.

by Kurt Thurmaier, distinguished engagement professor and chair, Department of Public Administration and director, School of Public & Global Affairs, Northern Illinois University, and ICMA member

Research by public budgeting scholars about the past few recessions suggests managers should remember three basic principles as they evaluate appropriate cutback budgeting measures.

Strategic plans and priorities are made for cutback management periods.

What are the city's priorities and how do you protect them as revenues drop? The governing body’s policy agenda and top priorities should frame discussions and guide decisions.

If one priority is the major streets improvement plan and the other is the crime prevention program, it is important to protect them in a cutback environment. Managers need to avoid the political instinct for across-the-board cuts, “sharing the pain.” We should remind citizens, department heads, and city councils by asking the question: Why are we treating our top priorities the same way as services that are nice but not essential?

It's raining again!

Rainy day funds are created for the first- and second-year revenue shortfalls, such as the COVID-19 pandemic period. The duration of the last 11 recessions between 1945 and 2001 is about 10 months. The Great Recession lasted a bit longer. It's important to not panic. We don't know how long this Covid-19 recession will last, but knowing the average length helps us plan. It's going to be pouring down rain for the next few quarters and we will need to respond to that. But rainy days will end and the regular budget season will go on again.

Key point: If you have a fund balance reserve that you built for a rainy day, now is the time to use it. Why take drastic cuts early in a recession period when you don't know how long it will last beyond the 10-month average? The federal response to previous recessions has never pumped trillions of dollars into the economy so fast! The key is framing the discussion for elected officials and the public that the council had the discipline to build the fund balance—and now they should use a disciplined approach to spend it in the short term—the rest of this fiscal year for example, and some for the next.

TANSTAAFL

It's important to remember: There Ain't No Such Thing As A Free Lunch. Resist the political pressure to defer important capital maintenance projects. It might be reasonable to delay a new building project or
construction of a new pedestrian bridge over a busy highway. But research has shown that deferring critical maintenance or road work has long-term negative impacts on community infrastructure and it often raises the overall cost of the project. So if one of the council’s strategic priorities is major roadway maintenance and construction, consider that interest rates on bonds are incredibly low now; the Federal Reserve is practically giving away money. Borrowing for a capital project now at these rates, and putting that money to use in your community by paying construction workers and road builders, is good money management and good economic recovery policy.

Consider a simulation tool for internal discussions and/or citizen engagement.

I am using a budget balancing simulation software, Balancing Act, to highlight these principles in my MPA budgeting course. I have modeled the River City cutback budgeting tradeoffs on the Dubuque, Iowa, budget. (Dubuque uses the software for citizen engagement.) River City had a fund balance that’s $2.4 million higher than their 20% fund balance policy minimum. Then Covid-19 hits, revenues drop at least $2.4 million in the fourth quarter of the current fiscal year, and another $4.2 expected in the next fiscal year. What are the options for balancing the budget?

The simulation lets participants choose:

- How much of the fund balance they want to use.
- How much to cut in street repairs. (Recall that this decision violates a top council priority.)
- How many vacant police and fire positions to fill or leave vacant. (Recall that filling police positions to increase crime prevention is a top council priority.)
- How much to raise property taxes. It is stable this year but its decline will lag a year.

Simulations like Balancing Act help citizens understand cutback budgeting politics, the nuances that matter to each community. They are likely to pay attention to internal and external factors. They can be reminded of TANSTAAFL when they select options with important consequences.

Simulations can also be used internally with department heads needing to select reductions for themselves as well as other departments. TANSTAAFL quickly rings true for those who face the long-term consequences of cutback decisions.

There are really two broad approaches to cut-back budgeting. A political approach focuses on spreading the pain equally to minimize political conflicts: We will all share the pain together. The management approach focuses on strategic plans and priorities and as a guiding decision tool. Managers focus on long-term perspectives that avoid deep cuts to capital maintenance that result in long-term harms to the community and the budget. Needless to say, as an MPA department chair, I recommend the management approach—with a big ear to the ground for the political pressures and nuances that we know constrain these difficult choices.

- Be strategic, protect priorities.
- Don't drain the rainy day pail in the first year, but don't hesitate to use a good bit for the short term.
- Avoid deferring capital maintenance projects that will raise overall costs in the long run. Instead, consider borrowing today at incredibly inexpensive interest rates and put money in your local economy while you repair critical infrastructure.

The actual FY2021 budget adopted by Dubuque can be found on the city website.
POST-9/11 VETERANS MORE LIKELY TO HAVE A SERVICE-CONNECTED DISABILITY

By Jonathan Vespa

Post-9/11 veterans, the youngest and most educated group of our nation’s veterans, face the highest disability rates from their service in the armed forces.

More than a third (1.5 million) of the nearly 3.8 million men and women who have served in the U.S. Armed Forces since September 2001 and are veterans, have a service-connected disability.

The findings come from a U.S. Census Bureau report released today on the characteristics and health of veterans in the United States in 2018: Those Who Served: America’s Veterans From World War II to the War on Terror.

Post-9/11 Veterans

Thanks to medical advances, veterans today are more likely to survive once-fatal injuries. But as fatalities have declined, the number of disabled veterans has risen.

Veterans who served after 9/11 are more likely than other veterans to have a service-connected disability, even after accounting for differences in age, health, sex and economic resources.

Post-9/11 veterans, on average, have a 43% chance of having a service-connected disability. In comparison, Gulf War veterans have a 27% chance; Vietnam Era 16%; and peacetime-only veterans a 9% chance.

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs classifies a disability as service-connected if it determines service in the armed forces caused or aggravated an injury or illness.

The most obvious cases stem from combat injuries and trauma. But disabilities go beyond combat-related wounds. They include a range of injuries, diseases and illnesses, such as hearing loss, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), degenerative arthritis and cancer.

Disability Ratings Highest for Post-9/11 Veterans

Not only are Post-9/11 veterans the most likely to have a service-connected disability, they are the most likely to have the highest disability rating.

Set by the Department of Veterans Affairs, disability ratings range from 0% to 100%, with higher ratings reflecting a more severe disability or combination of disabilities.

Among Post-9/11 veterans with a disability, there is a more than a 1-in-3 chance that they will have the highest disability ratings (in this case, at least 70%), significantly more than any other group of veterans.

In comparison, Gulf War veterans with a disability have a 21% chance and Vietnam Era veterans with a disability have a 24% chance of having the highest disability ratings.

These findings hold true even after accounting for differences in the age, health, sex and economic resources of veterans.

From “Shell Shock” to PTSD

Veterans of earlier wars and service periods experienced many of the same injuries and traumas as Post-9/11 veterans, but their disabilities may have gone undiagnosed or untreated.

In other words, we are better at diagnosing some
injuries today. During the first and second world wars, “shell shock” and “combat fatigue” were widespread. But it was initially thought to stem from the concussive effects of bombardment or was sometimes viewed as a matter of soldiers’ exhaustion. Systematic efforts to diagnose and treat post-traumatic stress disorder did not come until decades later.

Post-9/11 veterans may also face distinctive tours of duty or service conditions, which veterans of other service periods did not experience. For example, they may face longer or repeated deployments, both of which could increase the risk of disability.

Which veterans from earlier service periods are still alive also plays a key role.

For example, the sickest and most injured veterans from the Vietnam Era and Korean War may have already died, leaving a relatively healthier pool of survivors compared with Post-9/11 veterans.

In contrast, the healthiest Post-9/11 service members may still be actively serving, which would leave the current group of Post-9/11 veterans with disproportionately higher rates of disability.

Some other report highlights:

- Between 2000 and 2018, the number of veterans in the United States declined by one-third, from 26.4 million to 18.0 million.
- Women make up a growing share of veterans. Today, about 1.7 million or 9% of veterans are women. By 2040, it is projected that number will jump to 17%.
- Veterans from recent service periods have the highest levels of education. More than 75% of Post-9/11 and Gulf War veterans have at least some college education and more than a third of Gulf War veterans have a college degree.
- Gulf War veterans (who served between 1990 and 2001) have the highest median income of any group of veterans: $61,400. In comparison, Post-9/11 veterans have a median income of $50,100.

Jonathan Vespa is a demographer in the U.S. Census Bureau’s Social, Economic, and Housing Statistics Division.
find yourself doing the same thing two hours later? Have you even navigated to a business-related Facebook® page only to find yourself scrolling through your newsfeed an hour later? Setting timers for each is a helpful way to keep you on track and focused on what priorities you need to accomplish each day. Timers are also useful for reminding you to get up and stretch and to take breaks. Nobody should be spending large swaths of time hunched over a computer monitor. Standing up, taking a short walk (even if it is just down the hall), stretching, and short periods of meditation will refresh and recharge you, enabling you to produce better work.

Positive Reinforcement

Whenever you accomplish a task, reward yourself. A reward should be commensurate with the size of the task accomplished. Small tasks can be rewarded by simply putting a check mark (with flourish) next to the task on our Prioritized Daily Task List. More complicated or elaborate tasks may be rewarded more tangibly. Determine what you enjoy doing and allow yourself to indulge in small rewards every time you complete a larger task.

Regular Updates

Send regular updates to your supervisor. Such updates may take the form of a daily or weekly activity log. Keeping your supervisor in the know is a great way to focus your attention on those issues that matter most and to demonstrate that the time spent working remotely is time well spent.

Check your work:

I once had a math teacher who drilled into my head the need to check my work. That advice has carried through into my professional life. Checking your work allows you to objectively look at the work you have produced from both a quality aspect, and a timing perspective. Did I produce the best-quality work, and did I meet my deadline obligations? Two very important considerations when we speak of accountability. If anything is going to be a motivating factor in holding yourself accountable when working remotely, it is going to be your own desire to produce quality work.

Trust

Finally, I think the cornerstone to an effective workplace, whether it is an in-person worksite, a remote worksite, or a combination of the two is trust. Management must trust its employees. Management must trust that expectations it has established are being met. Management must trust that regular as well as extraordinary business activities are being addressed. Management must trust the system. A little bit of trust goes a very long way. But trust is a two-way street. Employees must have trust also. Employees must trust management to provide sufficient opportunities to perform. Tasks and projects must be available for the employees the attack. Employees need to have trust that their accomplishments and completion of projects will be acknowledged and appreciated by management. Employees need to trust that they will be provided with sufficient feedback to ensure that the finished project meets expectations. In short, employees need to trust the system as well.
How to Become Mentally Tough
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more cortisol. When you say “I know what to do here,” this turns into a positive response and produces more neuropeptide Y.

2. Childhood. Yale psychiatrists asked soldiers to fill out a questionnaire about childhood trauma. Among regular soldiers, people who reported trauma and abuse were more likely to be upset by survival tests during training.

The situation became reversed among Special Forces. Those who grew up with trauma and abuse were more resilient. Morgan speculates the story we tell ourselves about our stress, trauma and abuse predicts our future. If we see ourselves as the victim, we become more sensitive to future threats. If, however, we feel tougher because we survived it, we have the mental toughness to survive anything life can throw at us.

How to make it work for you: In his excellent article “The Age of Coddling Is Over,” David Brooks discusses how our efforts to eliminate stress or hardship a child might encounter have backfired. Our overprotection doesn’t shelter people from fear; it makes them unprepared to deal with the fear that inevitably comes.

Instead, train children to master hardship, endure suffering, and build something from the wreckage.

4. Pursue personal growth

If you are seriously interested in sharpening your mental toughness, you need to read. Books. Articles. Blogs. I have never met a mentally strong person who was not a voracious reader.

The reason?

The mentally tough are learners who understand that the world is not made of up of winners or losers; instead, the world comprises learners or non-learners.

If you have mental toughness, you learn new skills and expand your horizons, study to become more intelligent, and make yourself more likable and attractive.

If we were born smart and talented, we seldom have to work hard at something because it all comes naturally to us. So when times get tough, we give up.

Mentally tough people are scrappy folks who know that just because they may have started out the smartest, it doesn’t mean they’ll will end up the smartest. They always look for ways to learn, improve themselves, and grow their mental strength.

How to make it work for you: People who are mentally tough will tell you that the will to succeed has to come from within. You must must pursue work that provides both value and meaning. Be on the continual lookout for opportunities to learn and grow in areas that are both engaging and meaningful.
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