

ADAPTING TO A NEW REALITY: If you've suddenly become a virtual team

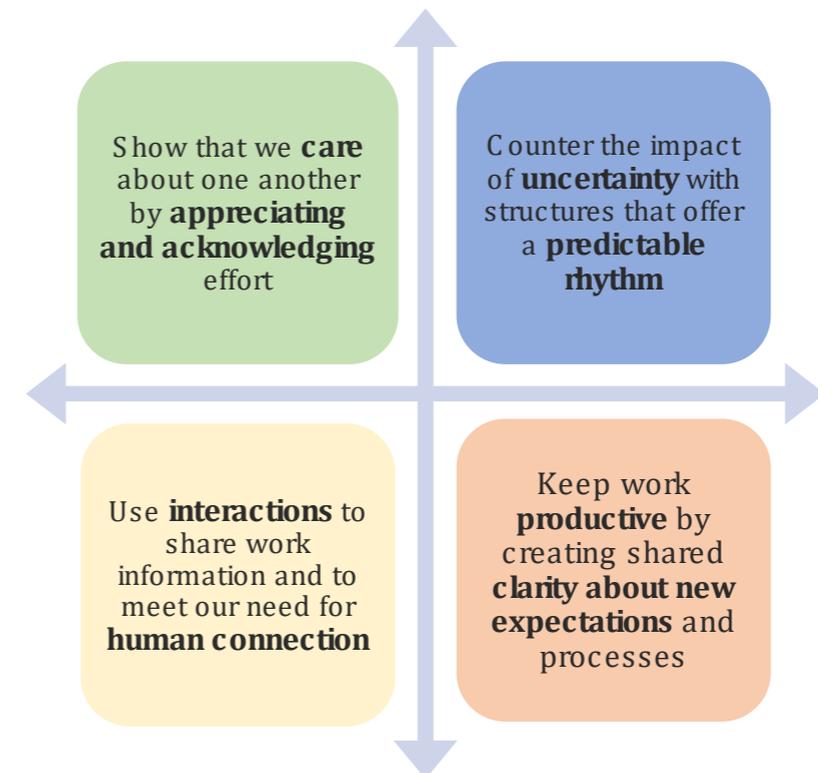
Organizations, leaders and teams everywhere are facing a significant **adaptive challenge** as they are trying to deal with the impact of the COVID-19 situation. One of these challenges is that many teams had to move to virtual working very fast – a massive **change in how teams need to get their work done**.

The first focus was to **ensure that work can technically be moved from in-office to remote** – which really means in home for most of us! Congratulations on getting this part done. This is a chance to be grateful for the many technology solutions we have available!

Now that you have done that, **what comes next?** The task for teams (and leaders of teams) is to **put smart attention on the factors that are key to ensuring high quality team collaboration in this new format**. It is important to do this with an awareness of, and appreciation for, the enormous change this represents for most teams. This means that we need to look not only for what we can learn from established virtual teams, but also to how to cultivate high quality collaboration in the midst of tumultuous change and stress.

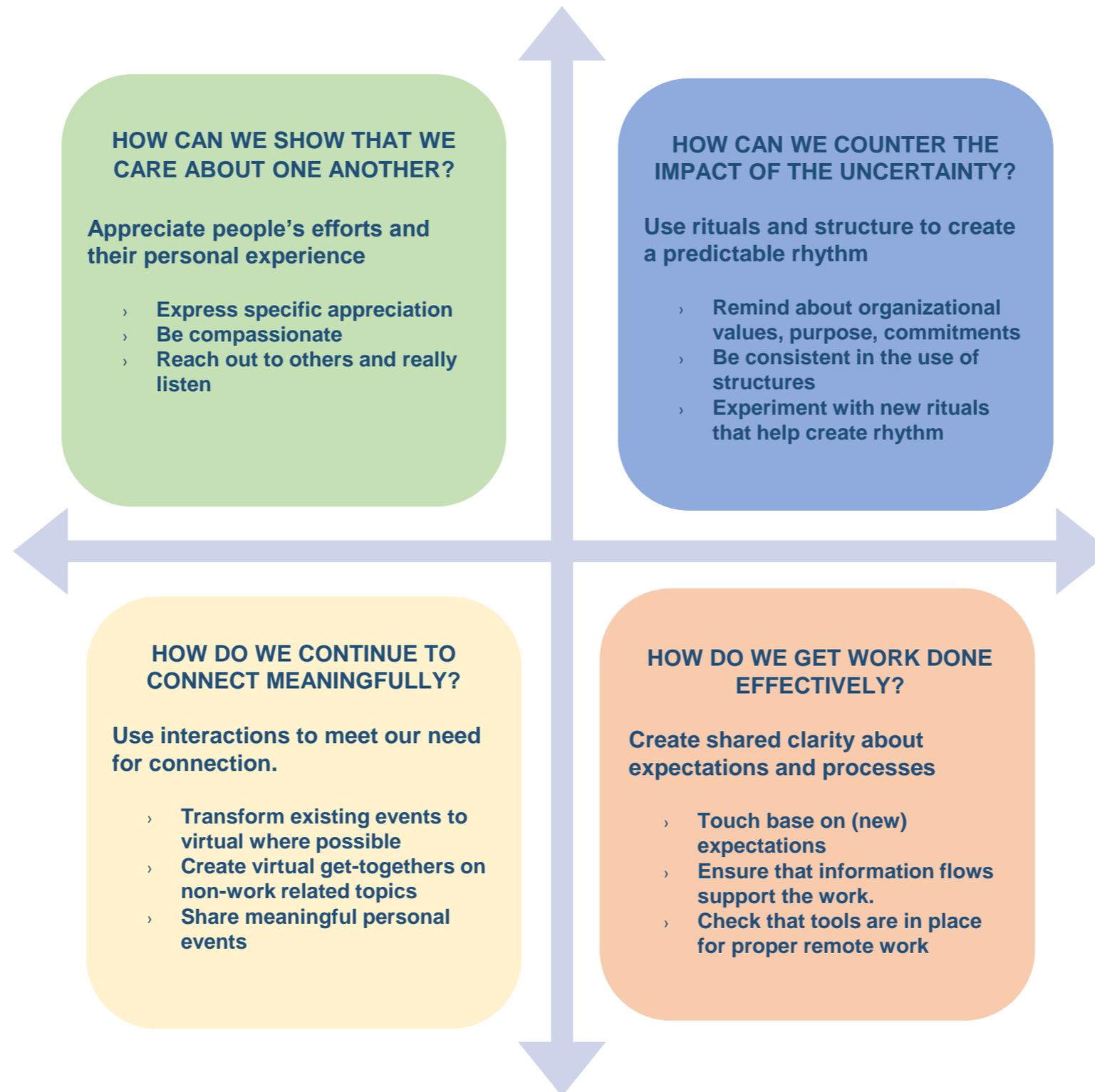
To support you and your team in this, we offer a structured view of **four key areas to pay attention to as you adapt to the new team reality**. We also offer some ideas about specific **“next things” your team can do right away**. For more details on all of this, see the pages below.

Created by the team from *PeopleDynamics Learning Group* and the *Business Coaching Advantage Program*, in collaboration with *Create Brainspace*
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Four key areas to focus on



ADAPTING TO A NEW REALITY: If you've suddenly become a virtual team More on the four areas (cont.)

HOW CAN WE SHOW THAT WE CARE ABOUT ONE ANOTHER?

We are all in this together - our extraordinary efforts are in service of a shared purpose. And we are also unique human beings with our own unique experience of this new reality. We can show that we care about one another as human beings by our loud acknowledging and appreciating all.

- ▶ During team meetings and in one-on-one conversation, express specific appreciation for people's effort, their strengths, their resilience.
- ▶ Be compassionate with yourself and others as we figure out how to do our work right in the middle of disrupted personal lives.
- ▶ Reach out to others and really listen when you see them struggling; offer support (mental, emotional, practical).

HOW CAN WE COUNTER THE IMPACT OF THE UNCERTAINTY?

Humans crave certainty. And the reality is that we are faced with massive uncertainty which creates a sense of threat for us. We cannot undo that. However, within the team space we can use structures and rituals to create a degree of predictability day by day and week by week.

- ▶ Create regular opportunities to help people keep a focus on the values, purpose, and commitments of the organization and of their team.
- ▶ Be consistent in using team-specific structures that focus on the practical (virtual team meetings) AND the personal (the virtual water cooler).
- ▶ Experiment with new structures and rituals to help create a rhythm for the team; gather input from team members and try things out.

HOW DO WE CONNECT MEANINGFULLY?

Human beings are wired for connection; we need a sense of belonging. As all our interactions shift to virtual, people might feel disconnected, even lonely. The key is to think of interactions not only as an opportunity to share work-related information, but also as a chance for real human to human connection with colleagues.

- ▶ Think through what existing opportunities for connection can be translated into a virtual form, and keep them going.
- ▶ Give employees opportunity (and time) to connect for fun in small-groups on non-work related topics, or with a cup of tea in hand.
- ▶ Create opportunities to continue sharing meaningful personal events (joyful and otherwise) – e.g., celebrate birthdays, accomplishments, loss.

HOW DO WE GET WORK DONE EFFECTIVELY?

Our organization needs our team to create the results we are accountable for. And we all want to be successful in doing our part in getting valued things done together. The key to doing this in our new reality is extra focus on clarity.

- ▶ Continue talking about (new) expectations on everyone. Check and clarify even more than before.
- ▶ Make sure that information flows in ways that support the work. Keep communication lines open. Communicate a lot. Adjust communication processes and structures as needed.
- ▶ Check that everyone has the tools and resources they need to do their work remotely. If you have budget, help employees get what they need for their "new office". Ask for suggestions and creative ideas.