Leading and managing in times of high uncertainty

It's clearly an extremely challenging time to be managing, and working in, teams in the NHS right now. There's a great deal of uncertainty and sometimes we can only focus on the here and now as we don't know what's coming. Here are a few tips for managing in this kind of situation.

1. Meeting the needs of the Unconscious Mind

Our Unconscious Mind is the domain of our emotions, and it can be thought of as a 6-7 year old child. And we all have one. While we need our rational, Conscious Minds to help us be effective at work, our Unconscious Minds can easily sink us if they become too triggered (this could be with anxiety, with anger, with sadness, with grief).

One way of managing this is recognising that the emotional needs of the Unconscious Mind are the same emotional needs of a 6-7 year old child: validation, acknowledgement, being heard, feeling safe, being cared for, security, belonging, and love. If we can meet these needs in our colleagues, even in small ways, we can bolster the Unconscious Mind, helping us to feel as resilient and supported as we can. For example, opening a space where people can share how they're feeling, even briefly, can be really helpful. As well as regularly acknowledging people's efforts, and making extra contributions in terms of treats, time.
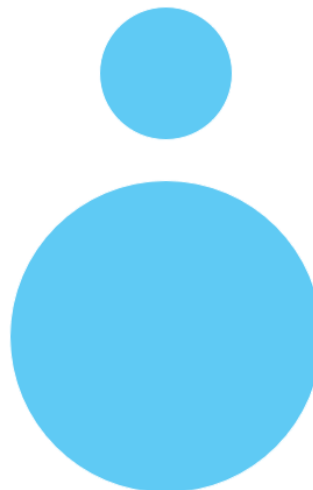
This will look different for everyone and every team - but *what might it look like for you? For your team? For the people around you? How could you help meet these needs today?*

Conscious mind

- Thinking mind
- Analytical

Unconscious mind

- Emotional domain
- Combines all factors

2. How to increase perceived stability

There is a balance of Stabilising and Destabilising forces in all of our lives, and these forces are in relationship with each other. If we encounter too much Instability (e.g. losing a relationship, a job, a home), this can make us overwhelmed. The current situation brings a great deal of Instability with it as we don't know how things are going to develop tomorrow, let alone next week.

We can't change this inherent Instability, but we CAN increase the feeling of perceived Stability. You might think of the mind as like an island. When we have destabilising forces

around us, it's like the tide is rising and threatening to flood us. We can't control the tide, but if we raise the land of our island - i.e. increasing our feeling of stability - we can withstand the high tides.

Destabilising forces

Stabilising forces

New destabilising forces

New stabilising forces
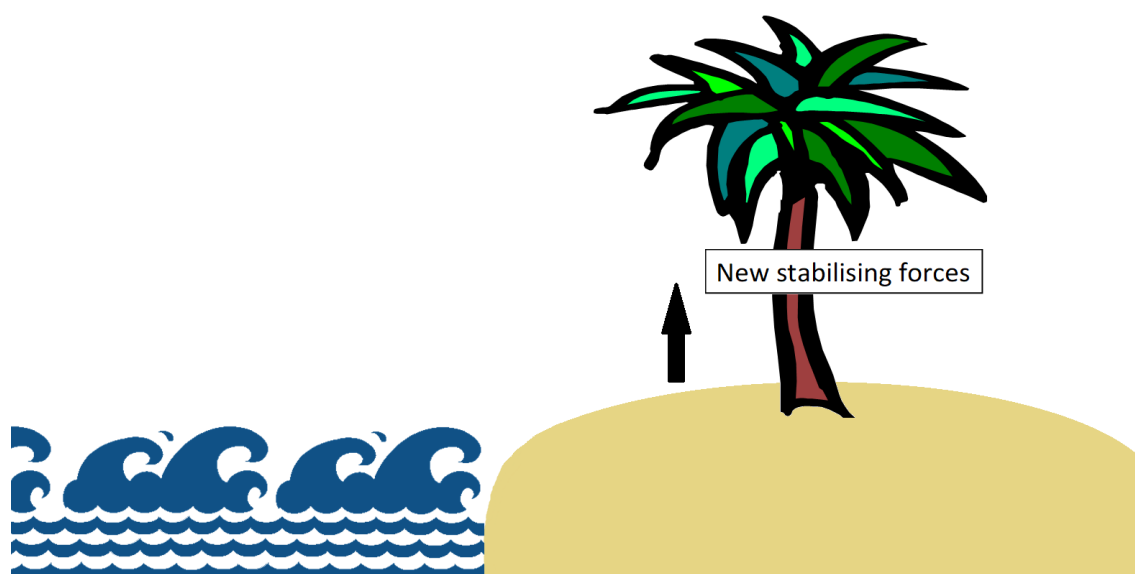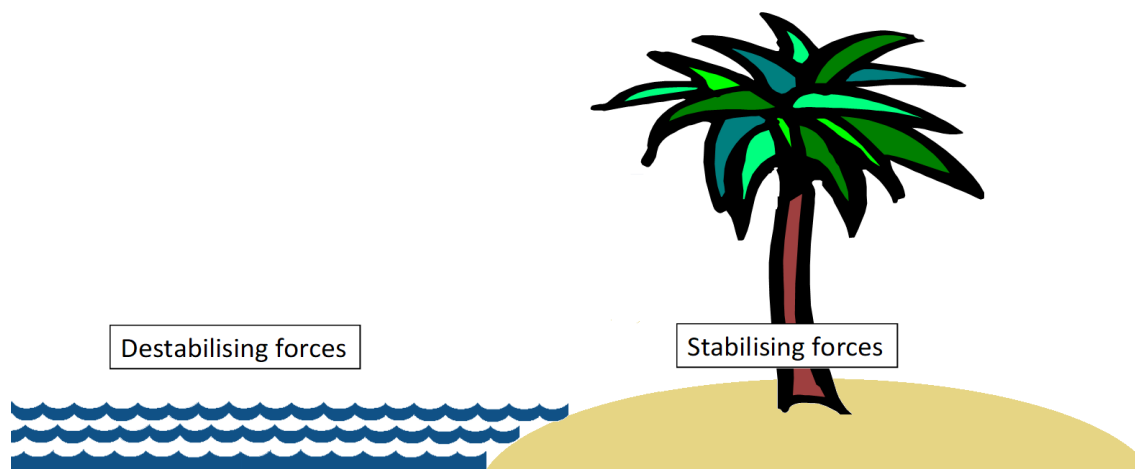
Conversation Tips

In our teams and workforces, this can be done in simple ways:

- Coming up with a shared vision/values in this difficult time
- Regular check-ins to make sure everyone's on the same page (more regular than normal)
- Simple rituals/activities you do together (no matter how small, and even if respecting social distancing!), around e.g. food, exercise/stretching, chatting, sharing funnies, an opportunity to share some of the emotional heaviness
- Clear roles and responsibilities
- Procedures to deal with upcoming changes (e.g. regular scheduled meetings) even if the changes aren't known yet

These are just examples. ***How could you help your teams/colleagues feel more stable today, even in tiny ways, not always associated with work?***