

# Exceptional Times – For All of Us

These are definitely **exceptional times**.

Typically, our Blog of the Month focuses on strategies, tips, or best practices to help us all develop our leadership game or enhance our leadership impact. However, given the global challenge we are facing right now, I thought we should shift our focus to how do we respond and adapt. Our social distancing, working remotely, and reducing opportunities for the spread of COVID-19 are a part of our daily lives now and for the foreseeable future. Naturally, this will change the way we lead, collaborate, and learn.

Fortunately, humans have one thing going for them: the ability to evolve and adapt. Because we are social beings, we are always finding new ways to share information, create new ideas, and pass on knowledge. This is how we, as humans, are able to adjust to new situations. With this on our side, we can use these exceptional times to evolve and adapt – intentionally.

To help you be more intentional, here are 10 key steps we all can use to confidently manage these exceptional times. The steps are divided into 2 categories:

- **Personal**
- **Professional**

## For you ... personally.

### 1. **Keep Learning**

There are hundreds of online learning opportunities – [Coursera](#), [Udemy](#), [CSPN](#), and more that you can engage with to keep you connected to the world. From art, design, and business, to social sciences and engineering, you are sure to find something to broaden your horizons.

### 2. **Organize and Clean**

Organize your junk drawers, purge your phone of bad photos and contacts you don't need, or clean out your clothes closet and load up a giveaway bag. Clean your screens, keyboards, desk, and doorknobs. It will feel like a huge accomplishment!

### 3. **Talk on the Phone**

Now that everyone is focused on social distancing and isolation, you can take some time to recharge old friendships by connecting with them on the phone.

### 4. **Enjoy Museums**

Google Arts and Culture has partnered with more than [2,500 museums and galleries around the globe](#) in order to offer virtual tours and online displays of their collections – right from the comfort of your home office.

### 5. **Take Vitamins**

People deficient in Vitamin D (and, most of us are) who start taking the supplement every day can have a 70% reduced risk of contracting any viral (or bacterial) respiratory disease. This is based on a rigorous scientific placebo study of 10,000 people. If you don't get enough sunshine, take Vitamin D pills, or eat foods like [tuna and egg yolks](#).

## For you ... professionally.

### 1. Be Flexible

It is easy to say we embrace risk-taking and being agile when things are going well. In tough times like these, being flexible means being creative, trying to be innovative, and at least anticipating, or trying to anticipate, what's next. From great challenges, there is great opportunity, and it usually means finding the 'new and different' that will make your organization better in the future.

### 2. Daily Check-Ins

Establish structured daily check-ins. Many successful remote teams establish daily calls (conference calls) with their remote colleagues. This could take the form of a series of one-on-ones, a team call, or simple chats using Microsoft Teams. To remain productive, remote team members need to be able to give themselves a structure that still provides a sense of connection and accessibility when a central working space like the office is not available.

### 3. Schedules & Breaks

Give your day more structure by making and sticking to schedule for the day ahead. Make an hour-by-hour schedule (either the night before or the first thing in the morning) that includes priorities for the next day and when they will be tackled.

Do not forget breaks. All of us have gotten caught up responding to emails or crafting content and then realize we have not moved for almost 3 hours. Taking breaks is critical to managing energy and productivity. Anything you can do to get away from the computer will actually boost your energy levels for the rest of the day.

### 4. Bring Your "A" Game

Benefits of working remotely is escaping office distractions that are imposed on you. So, at home, continue to bring your "A" game and avoid "home" distractions like turning on TV or scrolling through newsfeeds. You probably know this already, but multitasking doesn't work. Switching between tasks can result in as much as a 40% loss of productivity according to in the [American Psychological Association](#).

### 5. Blocked Time & Sprint

We all need quiet time to really get work done. In an office environment, we might shut a door or put headphones on, and the rest of the team will understand that we need focus. When you are remote, nobody knows the best time to interrupt you, so don't be afraid to protect your time – just ensure you set expectations when you do.

When you have this set-up blocked time – focus. Focus can be an issue for anyone, but when working remote, we may feel it more as there are even more distractions. To allow yourself dedicated time to a task at hand, work in sprints of no more than an hour at a time before you take a break. This way, your main task gets your entire focus for the allotted time, and then you can take a break for a few minutes to recharge. Check out the [Pomodoro Technique](#) and other online options you can use to track your time.

These are some ideas that can work for you both personally and professionally. The key will be starting with one that works for you in both categories and build from there. Like I mentioned earlier, we all have

the ability to evolve and adapt, and when we do these with **intention**, the faster we will be able to ride out these turbulent times.

I also want to hear from you on successes you have had working remotely, as well as challenges you need help with. Please [email us](#) to share your tips or challenges and we will share with our CSPN learning community.

**Stay safe everyone!**

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**Corey Atkinson**, VP of Strategic Learning & Development

corey@mycspn.com

Office: 905-477-5544

Cell: 416-898-6433

Follow Corey on [LinkedIn](#). His focus is to deliver meaningful and measurable strategies for organizations to harness team potential and create engaging leaders. With over 20 years in the learning, development and training industry, Corey is well known for his ability to connect with any audience at any size. He has provided participant focused learn and development design and consulting, professional speaking, coaching and training for organizations of all sizes across North America. He has a focused results-based partnership approach to develop and deliver customized solutions that meet an organization's unique business needs and resolve their most significant issues, helping them to create a lasting competitive advantage.