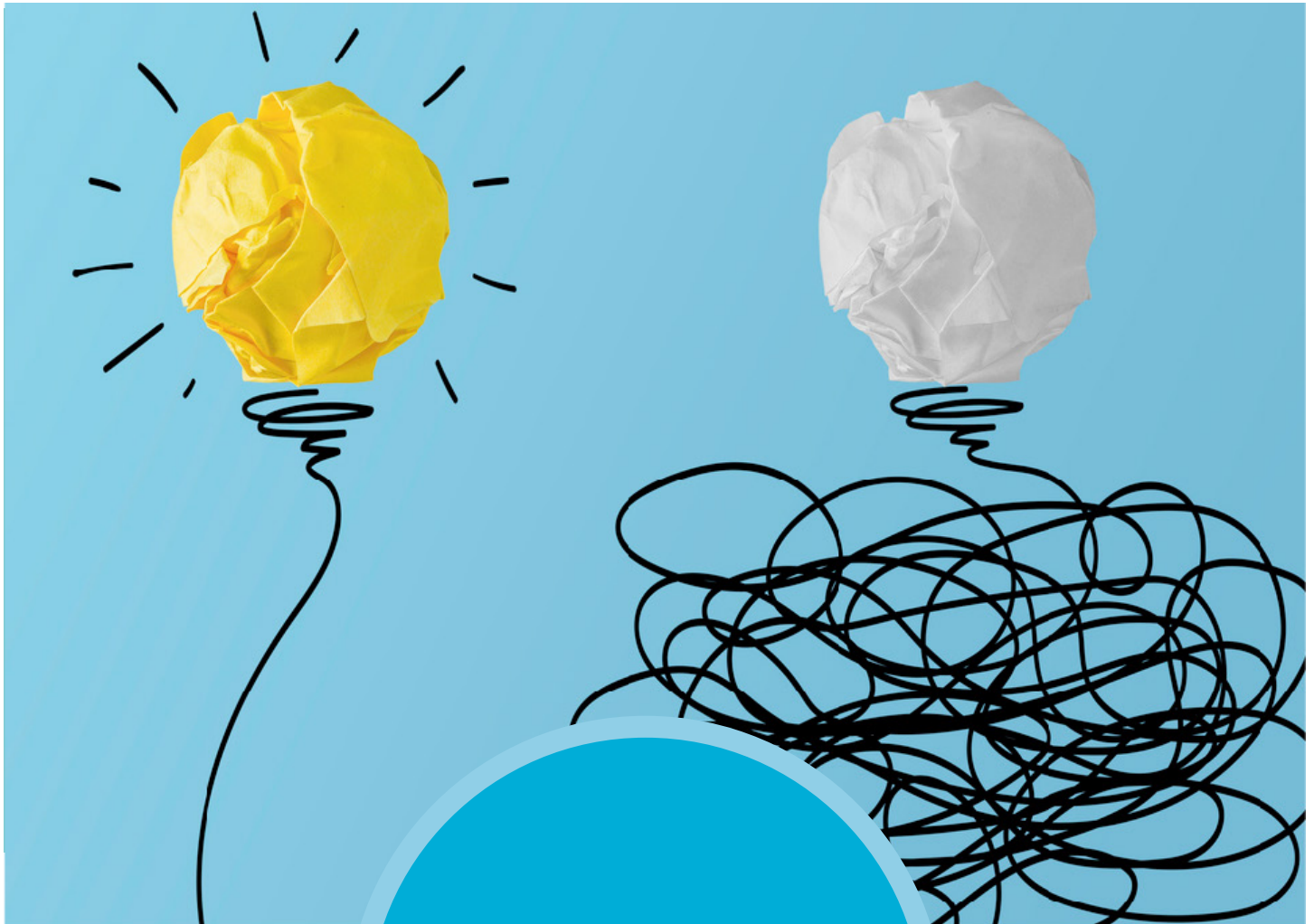




NAVIGATING
CHANGE
TOGETHER

WORKPLACE GUIDE

THECHANGELAB

FROM THE MICHELLEMCQUAID GROUP

THE NEW NORMAL

Have you noticed that just when you think you've got a handle on one change, three more appear out of nowhere? It's not your imagination. We're living in what researchers call a "super cycle" of transformation - a time when multiple seismic shifts are colliding and amplifying each other in ways that make our heads spin.

Think artificial intelligence that leaping forward. Climate patterns laughing at our forecasts. Economic rules rewritten before our eyes. Political and social contracts being reimaged. And that's just before lunch.

Here's what makes this moment uniquely challenging: These aren't isolated changes we can tackle one at a time. They're interconnected forces creating what futurist Amy Webb calls an "Oh FUD" moment - that visceral feeling of Fear, Uncertainty, and Doubt that washes over us as we try to navigate a world where everything feels increasingly unpredictable.

Our bodies have something to say about all this change, and they're not being subtle about it.

You see, keeping us safe is our brain's most fundamental mission. In times of rapid change, it's constantly scanning our environment for threats across three essential domains:

- Our physical safety (Will I still have a job?)
- Our emotional safety (Can I be myself here?)
- Our social safety (Do I belong here?)

When faced with today's tsunami of transformation, we find ourselves experiencing what mindfulness expert Jon Kabat-Zinn describes as a fundamental overwhelm - "our lives are somehow unfolding faster than the human nervous system and psyche are able to manage well." Our neural circuitry responds by flooding our bodies with alert signals, leaving us feeling increasingly vulnerable just when we need to feel most grounded.

So where does this leave us? We're entering an era where novelty isn't just an occasional visitor - it's the new normal. The question isn't whether we'll face unprecedented unpredictability in the years ahead (spoiler alert: we will), but rather: How do we build the internal capacity and external support systems to not just survive but actually thrive in this environment of constant change?

HOW DO YOU LEAD CHANGE?

When your brain is screaming “Oh FUD!”, traditional step-by-step change frameworks miss what matters most -that human change is subjective, dynamic, and complex. The reality is that our experiences are shaped by our emotions, relationships, and individual responses to uncertainty. We need an approach that creates space for this complexity while acknowledging both the neurological reality of change and our fundamental need for safety.

Just as our nervous systems are wired to detect threat, they're also equipped with incredible capacities for regulation and resilience. When we intentionally create conditions that help calm our individual and collective threat responses, we can access the parts of our brains that enable clearer thinking, stronger connections, and more innovative solutions. This is where HEART comes in -- not as a perfect solution, but as a human-centered way to regulate and navigate change together.

Why? Because it's important to recognize that feelings of safety - whether physical, emotional, or social - ripple throughout human systems at multiple levels. What happens at the organizational level (us) shapes team environments (we), which impacts individual experiences (me). Similarly, individual responses influence team dynamics, which in turn affect organizational culture.

This means each component of HEART needs to be supported and monitored through a systems lens. For example, when we Honor All Feelings, we're not just creating space for individual emotional expression - we're cultivating team psychological safety and reinforcing organizational values around honesty and integrity. By attending to these ripple effects, we can create the conditions for sustainable change that supports wellbeing and performance across all levels of the system.

Try to remember, HEART isn't a linear process or a checklist to complete alongside the technical requirements of change. It's an ongoing commitment to bringing our full humanity to change - something we need to nurture continuously as we navigate both the practical tasks and emotional terrain of transformation. Because while we can't control the uncertainty swirling around us, we can control how we show up for each other. And sometimes the most powerful thing we can say isn't “Don't worry” or “It'll be fine.” It's “I'm here. You're not alone. We'll figure this out together.”

LEADING CHANGE WITH HEART



HONOR ALL FEELINGS

When we make space for all emotions during change - from excitement to fear -we help regulate our threat response. Acknowledging every feeling as valid reduces the stress of having to pretend we're "fine."

What signals are you sending about which emotions are "acceptable" during change?



ENGAGE IN DIALOGUE

Our nervous systems calm when change feels like something done with us rather than to us. Meaningful conversations create the psychological safety needed to process uncertainty together.

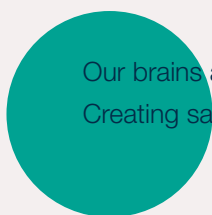
Are you talking at people or with them about this change?



APPRECIATE EACH OTHER'S STRENGTHS

Recognizing our individual and collective capabilities helps calm our threat response during uncertainty. Building on past successes creates the confidence we need to face whatever comes next.

How might you build on your strengths to navigate this change?



REACH OUT & CONNECT

Our brains are wired to regulate through connection, making social support vital **R** during uncertainty. Creating safe spaces to share struggles and successes helps calm our collective nervous systems.

How are you making it safe to support each other through this change?



TAKE TINY STEPS TOGETHER

Small actions help regulate the overwhelming feelings that often paralyze us during change. Breaking big changes into micro-moves creates momentum through shared learning rather than analysis paralysis.

What's the smallest step you can next take together that would make the biggest difference?

THE HEART SCALE

The ‘Oh FUD!’ moments of fear, uncertainty and doubt don’t just drain our energy - they hijack our nervous systems in ways that shut down clear thinking, meaningful connection, and innovative problem-solving. The key to regulating these responses lies in psychological safety - our belief that it’s okay to be ourselves, take risks, and make mistakes as we navigate change together.

When we feel psychologically safe, we’re more likely to acknowledge our strengths and our struggles, ask for help, and learn from our experiences. When we create psychological safety with others, we make it easier to have honest conversations about what’s working and what isn’t and how we want to go forward together. This is why regularly checking in with ourselves and each other using the HEART scale is so vital.

By honestly assessing where we are and sharing our experiences together, we can get clear on what we’re learning, identify what support we need, and continue adjusting and adapting as required. The key is remembering that wherever we are on the scale is perfectly okay - these check-ins simply help us have the conversations we need to transform fear into hope, uncertainty into choice, and doubt into confidence.

MY HEART SCALE

Think about how **you** have navigated change at work over the past two weeks. Rate each statement from 0 (not at all true) to 10 (completely true).

HEART FACTOR	STATEMENT	SCORE
HONOR FEELINGS	I struggled to express my true thoughts and feelings about the changes.*	
ENGAGE IN DIALOGUE	I engaged in meaningful conversations about the changes	
APPRECIATE STRENGTHS	I was unsure how to use my strengths to contribute meaningfully towards the changes.*	
REACH OUT & CONNECT	I asked for help when I needed it around the changes	
TAKE TINY STEPS	I took actions that helped move the changes forward	

MY TEAM'S HEART SCALE

Now think about how **your team** have navigated change at work over the past two weeks. Rate each statement from 0 (not at all true) to 10 (completely true).

HEART FACTOR	STATEMENT	SCORE
HONOR FEELINGS	My team spoke honestly about how we felt about the changes	
ENGAGE IN DIALOGUE	My team did not have meaningful conversations about the changes*	
APPRECIATE STRENGTHS	My team recognized and utilized our individual and collective strengths to navigate the changes	
REACH OUT & CONNECT	My team reached out to others for help to navigate the uncertainty created by the changes	
TAKE TINY STEPS	My team struggled to break down the changes into manageable steps we could take without feeling overwhelmed*	

MY WORKPLACE'S HEART SCALE

Now think about how **your workplace** has navigated change at work over the past two weeks. Rate each statement from 0 (not at all true) to 10 (completely true).

HEART FACTOR	STATEMENT	SCORE
HONOR FEELINGS	My workplace acknowledged that uncertainty during change can trigger a range of emotions	
ENGAGE IN DIALOGUE	My workplace involved us in meaningful conversations about changes affecting our work	
APPRECIATE STRENGTHS	My workplace did not clearly communicate how we can use our strengths to navigate changes*	
REACH OUT & CONNECT	My workplace provided clear pathways to connect with others for support during changes	
TAKE TINY STEPS	My workplace broke down change goals into small wins that built confidence and learning	

Think of your HEART Scale results as conversation starters, not report cards. They open up two deceptively simple but powerful questions: “How am I showing up to navigate these changes?” and “How are we supporting each other through uncertainty?” The magic happens when teams get real about both.

Here’s where the interesting conversations begin:

- **WHAT’S WORKING WELL?** Spotlight the bright spots - those surprisingly effective approaches that are helping you navigate the mess. Even small wins count, and yes, having this conversation is definitely one of them.
- **WHERE ARE WE STRUGGLING?** Make this your judgment-free zone for acknowledging the messy reality of change. If transformation was easy, everyone would nail it on the first try. Each challenge is just pointing you toward what you need to learn next.
- **WHAT ARE WE LEARNING?** This is where patterns emerge and insights surface. What’s this change teaching you about yourselves and how you work together?
- **WHAT DO WE WANT TO TRY NEXT?** Time to get practical about moving forward. What small experiments could help you navigate this change more effectively? How can you set each other up for success?

Remember: These conversations aren’t about having all the answers - they’re about creating space to better navigate change together. By regularly checking in with the HEART Scale and having these honest discussions, you’re not just managing change - you’re building the kind of team that can turn uncertainty into opportunity. And that’s worth more than any perfect score.

TURNING FEAR INTO POSSIBILITY

The most powerful way to defuse “Oh FUD!” isn’t with answers - it’s with better questions. When we’re navigating uncertainty, our instinct is to ask questions that help us regain control: “Is everyone on board?” “Who’s resisting?” “What could go wrong?” But these very ordinary questions often backfire, triggering threat responses that shut down the exact conversations we need to be having. The antidote isn’t certainty - it’s curiosity.

Think of extraordinary questions as fear diffusers. They work like emotional aikido, redirecting our anxiety about what we can’t control into energy for what we can create together. And unlike ordinary questions that often feel like interrogations, extraordinary questions open up possibilities we hadn’t considered before.

HONOR FEELINGS QUESTIONS

- **ME:** What am I feeling about this change that I haven’t given myself permission to express? 8
- **WE:** When do we feel most psychologically safe with each other during times of change?
- **US:** How might we make it normal to bring our full humanity to work, especially during uncertainty?

ENGAGE IN DIALOGUE QUESTIONS

- **ME:** Which conversation am I avoiding because it feels uncomfortable?
- **WE:** What assumptions about this change haven’t we questioned yet?
- **US:** How might we turn our biggest disagreements into our most valuable discussions?

APPRECIATE STRENGTHS QUESTIONS

- **ME:** What’s my track record of navigating uncertainty that I’m underestimating?
- **WE:** Which of our team’s unique capabilities are we not fully leveraging?
- **US:** What organizational strengths could become our secret weapons for thriving through change?

REACH OUT & CONNECT QUESTIONS

- **ME:** Who could help me see this situation differently?
- **WE:** How might we become better change partners for each other?
- **US:** Where are the untapped connection points across our organization that could accelerate positive change?

TAKE TINY STEPS QUESTIONS

- **ME:** What's the smallest experiment I could run in the next 24 hours?
- **WE:** What quick win would give us confidence to tackle bigger challenges?
- **US:** How might we make it ridiculously easy for people to take their first step forward?

Here's what makes these questions transformative: They aren't just information-gathering tools - they're invitation-extending instruments. Behind every eye roll is often an idealist who's been disappointed too many times. Behind crossed arms frequently lies someone protecting their hopes from being crushed again. The magic happens when we don't just ask extraordinary questions, but listen with extraordinary attention to the possibilities hiding in plain sight within each answer. Because sometimes the most powerful response isn't simply providing clarity - it's creating space for people to discover their own way forward together.

Why? Because every action we take is preceded by a question - whether we ask it consciously or not. The best questions help us see old situations in new ways. To flip your ordinary questions into extraordinary questions try:

- Notice the everyday questions in your hallways and meetings
- Transform problem-focused questions into possibility-focused ones
- Shift from "What's wrong?" to "What's possible?"

FOR EXAMPLE:

- **Ordinary:** "How's everyone handling the change?" **Extraordinary:** "What's helping you navigate this change most effectively?"
- **Ordinary:** "What obstacles are we facing?"
Extraordinary: "What opportunities are we discovering?"
- **Ordinary:** "Who's not on board yet?" **Extraordinary:** "What would make this change meaningful for everyone?"

When you find questions that spark real dialogue, share them generously - they're the best antidote to "Oh FUD!"

TINY HEART NUDGES

When change falters, we often blame poor communication. And while it's true studies have found that leaders typically under-communicate change by a factor of seven, the deeper issue tends to lie in whether people feel safe enough to engage with that communication - to ask difficult questions, raise uncomfortable concerns, and actively shape what happens next.

Psychological safety isn't just a buzzword; it's the backbone of effective change. Without it, collaboration crumbles, innovation withers, and burnout flourishes. These Tiny HEART Nudges are designed to create that safety net—helping teams build trust, fostering transparency, strengthening accountability, and protecting wellbeing. The goal isn't just surviving change—it's thriving through it and coming out stronger.

These tools work at three critical levels:

- **ME:** Personal practices that help us regulate our own responses to uncertainty
- **WE:** Team approaches that build the psychological safety needed for honest dialogue
- **US:** Cultural norms that support compassion, collaboration, and continuous learning.

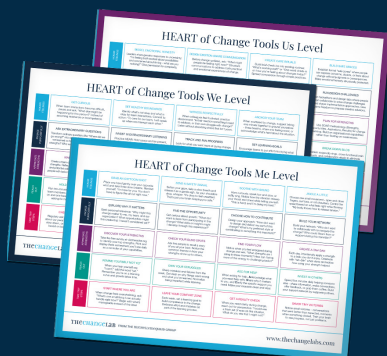
To make them part of how you work, anchor them to what's already in place: routines like meetings, rituals like team coffee breaks, rules like policies and procedures, and role modeling from leaders who set the tone.

Rather than trying to eliminate “Oh FUD!”, these Tiny HEART Nudges help you to develop the psychological safety you need to navigate it together - transforming primal threat responses into opportunities for collective learning and growth.

TINY HEART NUDGES

	ME (INDIVIDUAL)	WE (TEAM)	US (ORGANIZATION)
HONOR FEELINGS	NAME TO TAME When uncertainty hits, pause and label your emotion specifically - are you frustrated, anxious, hopeful?	MOOD RING Kick-off meetings with a quick-fire sharing of one word for how each person is feeling about the change. No explanations, just raw honesty.	LEAD THE WAY Create "Courageous Conversations" forums where leaders share their own change struggles and uncertainties.
ENGAGE IN DIALOGUE	FLIP YOUR FRAME Before disagreeing, ask yourself "What's one valid point in their perspective that I haven't acknowledged yet?"	CLASH LAB Create spaces where teams can safely debate different perspectives, treating diverse viewpoints as fuel for innovation.	CHANGE CHECK Replace top-down announcements with facilitated conversations where everyone helps shape the path forward.
APPRECIATIVE STRENGTHS	HIGHLIGHT REEL End each day by noting one strength you used to navigate uncertainty. This builds your "confidence portfolio" of capabilities.	STRENGTHS CIRCLE Start team meetings by having one person share a colleague's hidden talent they've noticed and its positive impact.	STRENGTHS MAP Create a strengths directory that let's employees showcase their strengths, making it easier to match people with projects and challenges.
REACH OUT & CONNECT	START THE ASK When stuck, ask for help by framing your request clearly: "I'm working on X and need help with Y. Can you assist me?"	HELP HUDDLE Normalize asking for help at the end of meetings with "What support do you need?" Frame help-seeking as wisdom rather than weakness.	HELP BANK Build a "Help Bank" where employees can post what they need help with and offer their own expertise. Create a giving culture.
TAKE TINY STEPS	10 MINUTE SPRINTS Choose one small, safe step you can take in the next 10 minutes to make progress on your change goals.	FIRST STEPS Launch change initiatives with a "First Step Festival" where team members commit to small actions to get momentum moving.	PILOT PODS Use pilot projects to test ambitious changes on a small scale. Learn fast, iterate, and scale what works.

FOR MORE



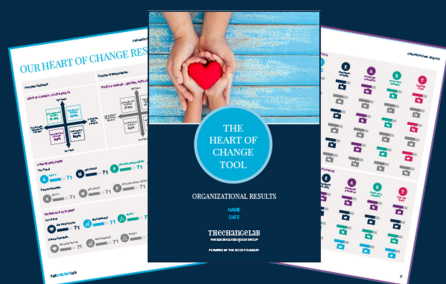
THE HEART OF CHANGE INSIGHTS EVENT

Are your people 'quietly cracking' during change? This live 90-minute workshop reveals hot-off-the-research-desk insights from 1,000+ workplaces about what actually works when everything feels uncertain. You'll discover evidence-based approaches that support people's nervous systems during change, plus receive 60 HEART of Change tools across individual, team, and organizational levels. [Click here to learn more.](#)



THE HEART OF CHANGE MASTERCLASS

Learn how to help people navigate uncertainty and change together without quietly cracking or burning out. This live online masterclass series teaches neurologically-informed practices that build psychosocial safety and includes assessment tools, conversation templates, and done-for-you micro-practices you can immediately co-brand and share. [Click here to learn more.](#)



HEART OF CHANGE SURVEY TOOL: FOR TEAMS

The HEART of Change Survey Tool translates these neurological responses into practical insights through a simple, confidential 5-minute assessment. You can see exactly where your team needs support and help everyone move from feeling overwhelmed to taking meaningful action that builds confidence, even in the midst of constant change. [Click here to learn more.](#)



OUR CHANGE BLUEPRINT

Build sustainable momentum that continues long after the initial excitement fades. This practical guide helps you create change processes that naturally generate ongoing commitment and action. Features real-world case studies and implementation steps that show how to structure meaningful engagement at every phase of your change journey. [Click here to buy now.](#)

FOR MORE



APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY QUESTIONS GUIDE & DIGITAL POSTER

Spark meaningful dialogue that surfaces hidden possibilities within your organization. This practical guide provides strength-based questions that help people articulate their hopes and aspirations during times of change. With over 20 versatile templates, you'll create conversations that build collective ownership rather than compliance. [Click here to learn more.](#)



THE MESSY TRUTHS ABOUT NAVIGATING CHANGE WORKSHOP

Develop adaptive capacity that thrives amid uncertainty rather than merely surviving it. This workshop equips your teams with practical tools that acknowledge the neurological reality of change. Participants gain a shared understanding and concrete approaches for navigating complexity together, even when the path forward isn't clear. [Click here to talk to our team.](#)



APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY SUMMIT TOOLBOX

Cut through organizational silos and build momentum for complex changes in just one day together. This comprehensive online toolbox gives you everything needed to bring diverse stakeholders together for meaningful co-creation. Includes step-by-step guides, how-to videos, and ready-to-use templates that make facilitation straightforward and effective. [Click here to learn more.](#)