Truth 1
Life is 10% of what happens to you and 90% of how you react

As managers, we work longer, smarter, and harder, but it seems that we can never get ahead. The pace of business is ever-increasing; expectations for results are in real-time; we are asked to make dozens of decisions a day, often with limited information; much work follows us home at the end of the already-far-too-long day; our span of control is stretched beyond capacity; and it seems that any energy and stamina are eroded by noon.

It is not pretty, but it is reality. Change is a given. The chaotic “better, faster, and cheaper” world is here to stay.

In many respects, we do not have control over many of these dynamic business challenges; however, we can control how we react. The best indicator for us to personally monitor in this regard is stress.

Stress is somewhat difficult to define. It is a natural by-product of life -- a subjective sensation associated with a variety of symptoms that differ for each of us. It involves mental, emotional, or physical tension, strain, or pressure. It touches all aspects of our lives, but it is particularly evident at work where surveys and studies have shown that occupational fears and pressures are by far the leading source of stress in American workers’ lives and that the trend is increasing.

Research tells us -- contrary to popular opinion -- that a certain amount of stress can be healthy, having a positive impact upon your productivity. Your heart rate, blood pressure, respiration, and metabolism all increase, helping your body react quickly and effectively to increased pressure or anxiety. By consequence, it helps you perform at a heightened level.

Where stress gets a bad name is when it takes over.

Too much stress, such as derived from dealing with potential job insecurity or change, can be crippling.

Emotional responses range from a sense of loss, much like grief, to eventual energy rejuvenation. Its early troubling stages include numbness, paralysis, irritability, and resistance.

Behavioral responses include one of four adaptation strategies: ignoring what is going on around us, clinging to existing myths and paradigms (fight); escaping through rationalization or a radical change in direction (flight); making some minor modification in our behavior (hoping that the situation will somehow change); or embracing the change as a new learning and application opportunity.

While it is not your place to judge how others are reacting to and absorbing the transformation around them, it is important to be aware of the potential emotional and behavioral responses for self-monitoring, as well as to help others through the experience. To this end, there are some scientifically proven tips to deal with anger, frustration, and exhaustion -- helping you keep your head while those about you are losing theirs.

First, recognize there may be some early ambiguity, misinformation, and confusion about possible courses of action for your business and your role during times of organizational change.