



BOUNCE BACK

AS A TEAM POST-CRISIS



By **Edouard de La Moissonnière**, co-founding Partner of Turningpoint,
& **Bernard Tollec**, director of Positive Transformation at Turningpoint,
both Executive coaches.

Build on **strengths** and seize **opportunities**

The current COVID-19

crisis has dramatically highlighted the fact that we live in a volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous world. Some of us have been faced with exceedingly difficult situations. Our economic situation is critical. You might be grieving after losing someone close. It is crucial to begin by accepting that these difficulties exist without denying their existence.

Fortunately, despite an imposed confinement, we are not alone. We are all part of a collective – whether it is professional, personal, linked to outside activities like sports or volunteering, as the person in charge or as a member. The family is also a collective. Therefore, in this article, when we talk about a “team,” it is in the larger sense of the word: a “collective.” And it is with this collective that we will be able to bounce back post-crisis...

Questioning our convictions and our course of action in the face of a crisis

To be able to start bouncing back, we first need to question our convictions and course of action in the face of the current crisis. First, our convictions. Currently, we are hearing two opposing viewpoints of what tomorrow will bring: some are saying that tomorrow, nothing will be as it was before.



And others on the contrary believe that this crisis will have simply been a digression and that things will go back to the way they were. In reality, it will probably be a mix of the two. So then what do we keep and what do we change?

At Turningpoint, we have a very strong belief which is anchored in our research and experience: to find the answers to these important questions, we need to reconnect with our resources and those of our team, in order to identify opportunities and take advantage of them.

	<p>Crisis? <i>Wei Ji</i></p> <p><i>Wei</i> = Danger <i>Ji</i> = Opportunity</p>
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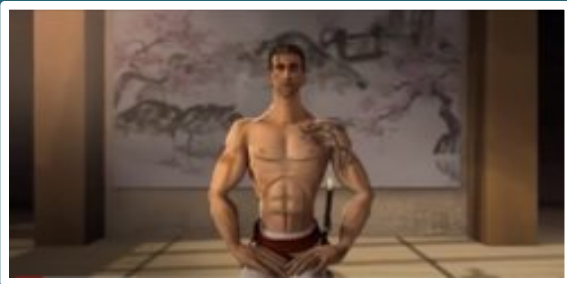
As you may know, the Chinese character for “crisis” is made up of 2 characters – one that means “danger” and the other that means “opportunity.”

The natural reflex during a crisis is to focus on the impending dangers. But we are now going to explore how we can learn to focus more on the opportunities and adopt an appreciative mindset.

The samurai is suddenly in another realm, with another perspective: he finds himself in a Japanese garden where there are no flies, only cherry blossoms floating through the air. He takes one in his hand and suddenly he is back in his meditation room. He opens his fist and the fly takes flight.

Adopting an appreciative mindset

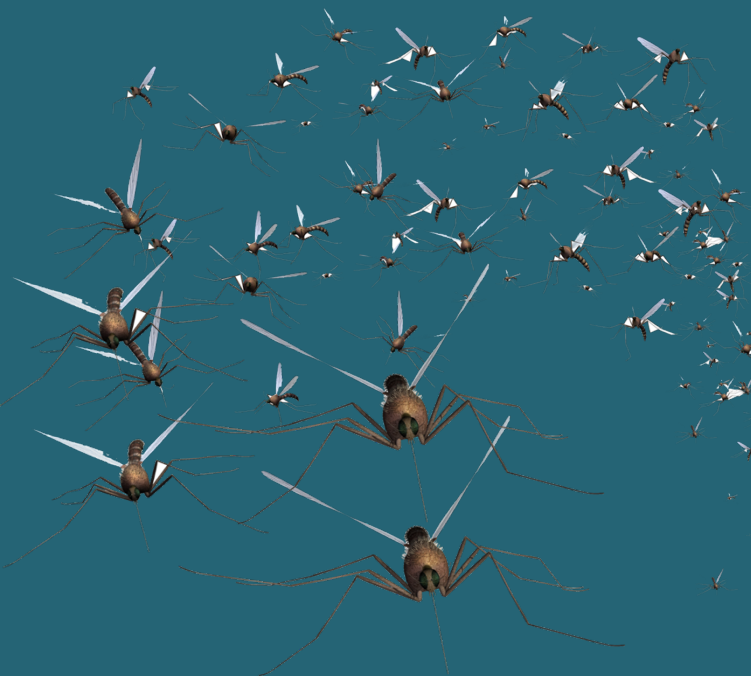
Have you heard the story of the samurai and the fly?



You can watch it [here](#). A samurai is meditating in a room when a fly lands on his shoulder (he tries to stay zen despite this annoyance). But he cannot help it and pulls out his sword and cuts the fly in two (impressive!). The fly falls to the ground and a few seconds later, the parts of the fly form not one, but two flies.

With the same movements the samurai continues killing the flies - which in the meantime keep multiplying - until he falls over, exhausted. He then sees a fly land on a Japanese print...and the fly changes into a cherry blossom!

The flies represent problems, worries, what is lacking, frustrations, fears... Take a few moments to ask yourself the following question: what are my "flies" and my team's "flies" in the current situation? The more you try to fight them without accepting them, and without changing perspective, the more they will multiply.



What we focus our attention on **grows**.

According to the University of Michigan, we have between 60,000 and 80,000 thoughts a day. **95% are repetitive and 80% are negative** (the flies). The good news is that we can choose what we think about and therefore transform the flies (red dots) into cherry blossoms (green dots).

Pay attention to the conversations you have with your team: are we focused on the flies, or are we able to see the cherry blossoms?

It does not mean denying that there are difficulties and problems, it means looking at the from another angle.

It is up to you!



Implementing the **S.O.A.R.** approach as a team

We propose a pragmatic approach in 4 steps and easy to remember with the acronym S.O.A.R :

Strengths of the team

Opportunities

Aspirations

Results.



Step 1: Identifying the Strengths and resources of the team (S)



The team's strengths and resources

are the sum of its assets, talents, skills, learnings from the crisis, what each person has realized about him or herself and about others, what has helped each person to carry on in an uncertain situation, new ways of doing things, and what we want to last.

An example: a few years ago, we worked with an organization that wanted to make a relatively complex film but did not have the budget to do so. In the end, one of the team members volunteered to do it – he had that specific talent and used it frequently outside of work. This was an unexpected resource, born from constraint, to make a film that otherwise would not have gotten off the ground.

Take time in your team to ask the following questions:

During this period of confinement:

What **strengths and resources** have you discovered within yourself that you did not know were there or that were not fully confirmed?

What did you notice about the other members of the team that you consider to be **assets** and that could be important post-crisis?

What did you end up **liking the most** about working with the team during this time that you would like to keep or even amplify?

However, these questions are not as important as the stories they will generate. It is the power of stories that will allow you to **re-connect with yourself and with others, with the goal of finding the strengths and resources to bounce back.**

On the Turningpoint website, we have made an interview guide and protocol available for you and your team:

Interview guide



Through these stories and having reconnected with your personal and collective strengths and resources, you can now go to Step 2.

Step 2: **Identify the best Opportunities (O)**

What does the current situation invite us to consider differently? Using the « switch » you will transform problems, difficulties, threats, weaknesses (the flies or red dots) into opportunities (cherry blossoms or green dots).



SWITCH



Let's look at two examples:

The first example is from the film Apollo 13 and illustrates how to go from looking at what is missing to looking at what is available. As the astronauts are on their way back to earth, an element of the cockpit breaks down and they risk asphyxiation if the problem is not resolved within the hour.

The NASA engineers could only work with what was available in the cockpit – and from these elements they were able to find a solution to repair the damage. They used what they had, worked together, and relied on their creativity – and in the end saved the lives of the astronauts on board.

How much time do we spend regretting what we do not have instead of considering how we can use what we do have to a greater extent?



The second example illustrates how we can take an error and look at it as an innovation. What is the common factor between a Post-it, champagne, and tarte tatin (ndlr, French apple upside down cake)? Each one was initially a mistake: the Post-it was supposed to be a test for a highly resistant glue, the tarte tatin was created when the original tart fell on the wrong side, and champagne was white wine that people thought had gone bad!

These “mistakes” invite us to change perspective, to be curious, to look at what stands out rather than what conforms...



Here are a few questions to ask within your team to identify new opportunities:

What does the current situation invite us to look at differently?

What was considered a weakness that we were able to transform into a strength?

What was seen as a threat that ended up being a source of innovation?

What was considered impossible and became possible?

If you dig deeply enough into the answers of these questions, they can have an impact on the **raison d'être** of your team, the formulation of your team's mission, and your ways of working.



This collective discussion opens the door to Step 3.

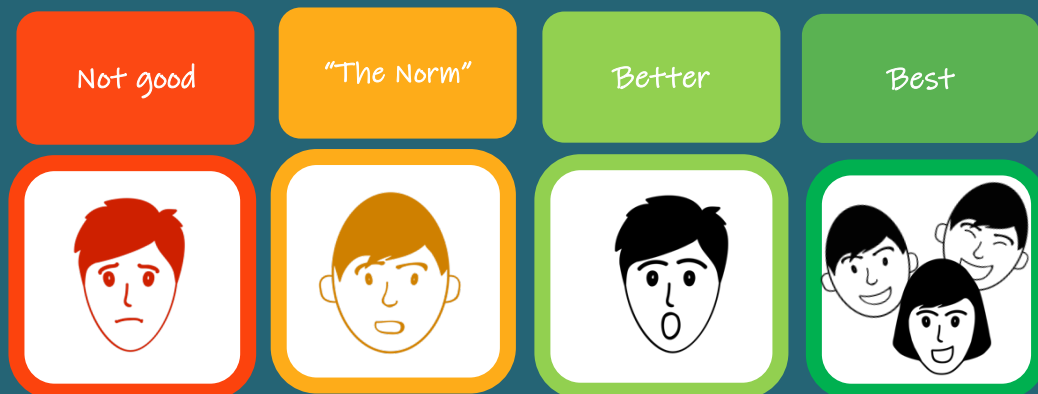
Step 3: Define our Aspirations and new directions (A)

Our aspirations are the new directions for our team for our "bounce back." They are the answers to the questions: **What do we want? Where do we want to go? To what do we aspire?**

To find this aspiration, we propose a simple but very efficient tool called the "flip."

The flip is the action of turning something over - in this situation turning a problematic situation into a subject that is stimulating for the whole team and all stakeholders to drive engagement.

Let's take a look at the faces here below.



A stimulating topic for all

Each one symbolizes the 4 attitudes we can adopt when we need to get out of a complicated situation.

The first attitude

is our natural reflex, digging deeper into the problem to be solved and the gaps to fill, and digging so much that we multiply the flies. Wallowing would mean continually regretting what was lost, what is no longer available...

The second attitude

is a return to a "normal" state – a state in which the problem does not exist anymore. Concentrating on a return to the norm, the status quo, means ignoring new opportunities and using up precious energy to get back to the norm. That is what happens when we convince ourselves that we need to double our energy to make up for what is lost.

The third attitude

is asking ourselves, "and what if things were better than the norm? what would that look like?"

But there is also a fourth attitude possible:

It is going above and beyond

the here and now and giving ourselves permission to dream. But not alone – with the members of your team. And not just with them – with the people with whom your team has a special relationship. With all these actors, you describe what the situation would look like if your dreams became reality. This means taking off from "normal" which is still tied to the problem, the gap...and landing on an inspiring subject. This stimulating subject englobes the problem without denying it and aims to discover what is profoundly desirable for all parties involved. With this attitude we find available resources linked to new opportunities, which invite us to reinvent ourselves.





Let's look at an example

of more distant crisis – the textile crisis in Europe in the 1960's which hit the north of France particularly hard. The Boussac Saint Frères company bore the full brunt of the crisis and had to delocalize most of its production in Asia. The company's executives could have put their energy into analyzing the causes of the problem (though that would not have helped them much). And returning to normal did not appear to be possible.

With their engineers and employees, they started to dream. The textile production could be moved to Asia because it did not need highly qualified workers. So, they decided that they needed to create a very technical type of production. They realized that their trade, their know-how, was not fabricating textiles, but weaving threads. And they bounced back by producing high-tech woven products.

Going back in time, we could also look at an example from the beginning of the 20th century when automobiles began replacing horses as a means of transportation. The Hermès company was in the business of saddles. So normally, no more horses meant no more demand for saddles. They could have left it at that, but instead they allowed themselves to dream – their profession was travel. And we all know how this story turned out!

You may know that recently companies like L'Oréal and LVMH began producing hand sanitizer, that automotive suppliers decided to build ventilators and visors...

And everywhere within public service, particularly in hospitals, teams have had to change their priorities to face the crisis head-on. But looking ahead, what will be the "stimulating project for all" that will help you and your team to avoid post-traumatic shock and to re-engage your stakeholders?

In your team and with your stakeholders, we invite you to reflect on the following question:

What aspirations does the current situation generate for our team?

But defining the aspiration is not sufficient. You have to get moving. This is the 4th step.



En remontant le temps, on pourrait prendre un exemple du début du

Step 4: **Define the Results we want to achieve (R)**

The results come from the implementation of the actions that we decide to take as a team to complete the project we defined.

You are most likely familiar with building an action plan: what (actions to take), by whom (who is in charge and who contributes), when (milestones and deadlines), with what (resources).

Often, we define too many actions, which then makes it difficult to keep up. We propose using a "baby steps" strategy.

What are the first three actions we can take to move towards our aspiration, building on the best of our resources, embracing opportunities, and imagining the best version of our aspirations?



Achieving the results implies driving these actions. We sometime have a tendency of looking at what we have not accomplished, the gaps that are still present and we get discouraged about the way things are moving. We suggest looking first at what has worked, what has advanced in order to understand why – and then to amplify those actions using the 4A's:

Appreciate

Look at what is working, what is moving forward

Amplify

Do more of what is working, with more people, more often, on a larger scale

Add

Consider what we need to more of or differently regarding the progress we are making

Abandon

Identify what is no longer useful (no regrets!); it is also about defining limits of our action

Objective	Actions	Deadline	Person in charge	Resources	Indicators

Concluding... by opening

We have proposed a pragmatic approach to bounce back with your team by identifying:

The **Strengths** and resources of your team through the power of real-life stories,

The best **Opportunities** with the "switch",

The team's **Aspirations** and new directions through the "flip" which helps define an inspiring and motivating subject for all,

The **Results** and follow-up with the 4A's.

But more importantly, we invite you to completely change your mindset by choosing to focus on the cherry blossoms rather than the flies. In practice, this means focusing on:

Opportunities rather than problems or threats.

What works rather than what does not.

What exists rather than what is missing.

...and doing this even in situations that seem unsolvable, even in ones that seem desperate. This is not blissful optimism; it is in fact realism since the invitation is simply to look at reality from another point of view.

In conclusion, we leave you with the masterly teaching of René Char in a simple and magnificent verse: "The essential is constantly threatened by the insignificant." This crisis invites us to cut out what is ultimately insignificant and clutters our lives in order to focus on what is essential. A weight off your shoulders means that you are lighter for bouncing back!



« The essential is constantly threatened by the insignificant »

René Char

To go further:

- An interview guide and a protocol to help you identify your team's resources:
[An Interview guide and a protocol](#)
- Other articles, related to this theme:
[Article SOAR](#)
[Article 4S project](#)
- A 3-hour digital program to deploy this approach in your team. Contact us:
edouard.delamoissonniere@turningpoint-leadership.com
- A training program in the appreciative mindset (« Appreciative Inquiry ») : visit our A.I. website to consult upcoming dates (in French, in English, in person or online): www.turningpoint-appreciativeinquiry.com

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