

50 Tips for Uncertain Times

Application Points for Job Seekers, Career Changers, Unemployed and Under-Employed Workers

Our story takes place in the context of an organization and the career of a young manager, highlighting what we consider to be best-practice, evidence-based development programs. But we realize the world of work is experienced by many people in ways that are much different than this. You may be struggling just to survive in the current challenging economic conditions driven by the global pandemic of 2020-21, as well as the political turmoil and continued racial injustice in our nation and around the world. You may be seeking a job because you lost one or it's no longer providing a livable wage. You may feel forced to find another career path, or you may have used the experience of the past year to reassess where you are and where you want to be, resulting in a change of direction.

We believe the underlying principles of growth and development in this book can be applied by anyone in any phase of their life and career. Whether you're just starting out or starting over, aiming for the next step in your career or changing to an entirely different path, these principles will serve you well.

These tips also serve as a supportive review of key points from the book to apply regardless of your current circumstances. We believe that you will find at least one from the 50 below that can help you with these uncertain times.

Tips for Ongoing Growth, Learning, and Positive Development on Your Best Self Journey

1. **Foster a Growth Mindset.** Many people operate from a fixed mindset where they feel that they have only a limited set of resources, talents, and capabilities. They view failure as final and limiting. People with a growth mindset know they can build new skills and knowledge to become more effective, and failure is just an opportunity to learn how to do something better next time.
2. **Keep Learning.** Seek out opportunities to gain new skills and knowledge for personal and professional growth. These learning opportunities – training classes, job aids, resources – often happen within companies but can also be accessed at little or no cost through your local community college, workforce development agencies, and online resources.
3. **Seek Feedback.** Ask others you trust for feedback to get better. A simple format that makes it easy to give and receive constructive feedback is to ask people to complete two sentences for you with regard to your skills and behavior: (a) “You are effective because...” and (b) “You would be even more effective if...”. Ask several people and listen for common themes and ideas you can put into action.

4. **Lead Yourself First.** Self-awareness and self-leadership are major themes in our book. Remember that you need to first apply the lessons you're learning to yourself before you'll be ready to go and help support others.
5. **Acknowledge Your Own Best Practices.** Write down several examples of past success when you did something you enjoyed doing, did it well, and had a feeling of satisfaction and fulfillment from doing it. Look for the common themes of skills, behaviors, and motivations that describe you at your best. Be prepared to share those examples in job applications and interviews so others can truly see you at your best.
6. **Implement the HHHF Framework.** Consider the framework of head (thinking), heart (feeling), hands (doing), and feet (changing). While each of us can do all of those things, we tend to be naturally drawn to one (or maybe two) of those over the others in our baseline orientation to work and life. Which one do you lead with? How could you put that to use and do it even more in your present circumstances?
7. **Pinpoint Behaviors from HHHF Framework.** This book describes the four broad realms of strengths as Thinking, Relating, Doing, and Persuading (similar to the four categories of skills listed above – head, heart, hands, and feet, respectively). Which of the four realms tends to be your focus most of the time? What are examples of the specific talents or strengths you employ within this realm?
8. **State Your Aspiration.** Write a statement that summarizes “the kind of leader I want to be.” (You can substitute “professional” or “worker” if you're not aiming to be in a leadership or management job right now, although we believe all of us have opportunities every day to be leaders and influencers.) This is a statement of aspiration, a profile of you at your best – your best self at work! Keep your statement in a place where you will see it regularly and be reminded about the person you are becoming.

Tips for Finding Support and Camaraderie on Your Best Self Journey

9. **Friendship.** Find someone to talk with about the challenges you're experiencing. A true friend is always willing to listen and be with you through the difficulties you're facing. Listen back.
10. **Find Allies.** Who's on your team? Even if you're unemployed or under-employed, chances are there are current or previous bosses, peers, and co-workers, as well as friends and family members, who know you and want the best for you. Actively recruit them – ask them to be a part of your team to support you in your goals for a new job, a better job, greater use of your skills, etc.
11. **Hang with a Mentor.** Who do you know who could be a mentor or coach for you today? What opportunities do you have to learn from them? Consider a phone call, sharing a meal, taking a walk, or just sitting down for a conversation together. Don't

look for just one, perfect mentor; realize that you can learn different things from many people. Make it a regular practice to spend time with others you can learn from.

12. **Meet-Up.** Ask others to join you in reading a book (like this one!), taking a class, or finding videos and other resources online that provide new lessons and examples for a challenge you share in common. Share the resources with each other and meet regularly to discuss how to put the ideas into practice.
13. **Emulate the Best in Strengths.** Who is the best leader you have personally known or worked for? What strengths made them a great leader? What did they do or say that had a positive influence on you? In what ways do you want to be like them? What will you do today to think, speak, and act more like this person? What strengths are being expressed?

Tips for Assessment and the Inward Part of Your Best Self Journey

14. **Assess for Growth.** What are some of the assessments and surveys you've completed in the past that helped you understand yourself better? What areas would you like to understand about yourself better? Chances are good that you can find free assessments online, in addition to those provided in this book, to help you gain new insights about yourself and begin to grow in new ways.
15. **Take a Strengths Assessment.** Complete an assessment of your strengths such as the free Values in Action Inventory of Strengths (VIA-IS) at <https://www.viacharacter.org/>
16. **Study Your Results.** Study the results of your strength assessment(s); read more about the themes that emerge; talk to others about your results. These steps will help you to be more purposeful and intentional about using and building on your strengths.
17. **Highlight the Positive Self.** Describe your personality. While that may sound like a difficult task, people talk about personality characteristics all the time. Think of 3-4 *positive* words or phrases people have used when describing you (for example, organized, passionate, steady, creative). Write these down.
18. **Highlight What Needs Changing.** If there was one thing you could change about your personality or behavior, what would it be? Each of our personal characteristics give us positive aspects to utilize and negative tendencies to avoid or overcome. You don't necessarily change your personality but you can change your behavior to be more effective. And yes, write this one down too.
19. **Bring Strengths into Job Application.** Your strengths should be clearly expressed and highlighted in every job application you submit, in your resume (if required in your field), and in responding to questions in job interviews. Practice with a friend

or co-worker to ensure you can share clear and concise examples of your strengths in action.

Tips for Emotional Intelligence (EI): General

20. **Remember Emotional Intelligence.** Assess your ability to understand emotions in yourself and others, and to manage your own emotions as well as managing interactions with others in the context of emotions. These four aspects are the essence of emotional intelligence. Everyone has it to some degree, and most of us need to use it more!
21. **Identify EI Areas Needing Growth.** Emotional intelligence is a skill set we all can continually improve on. After assessing where you're starting from, consider where you most need to improve. This is often easiest to determine in the context of a specific situation or challenge you're dealing with. Identify specific behaviors you want to change and skills you want to gain.
22. **Get to Know the Best in EI.** Consider others who do well with different aspects of emotional intelligence (self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management) and learn from them. Observe their behavior and, if you have the opportunity, ask them to describe how they deal with different situations.

Tips for EI Self-Awareness

If you're working to improve or enhance your self-awareness of emotions and how they affect you, consider these suggestions:

23. Learn to name the emotions you're feeling in order to deal better with them. If you're struggling to put your emotions into words, think about how emotions are expressed in music, movies, and books. These examples can help you understand and be able to better express how you feel.
24. Identify the things that trigger the emotions you feel. Know your early warning signs, especially for negative emotions. Identify people and situations that "push your hot buttons" and get you into a bad state of mind.
25. Examine your values. What are the beliefs you live by (such as responsibility and equity) and the end-states you work to achieve (wisdom, love, happiness)? Write down your top 5-7 values. Assess how well you're living those values in how you spend your time and your money.
26. Know your strengths and limitations, especially as it pertains to interactions with others and dealing with challenging situations.

Tips for EI Self-Management

If your focus is on improving self-management in an emotional context, apply these ideas:

27. Count to ten silently when you feel the rush of adrenaline in an emotional or difficult situation (the “fight, flight, or freeze” response). This gives your rational brain time to catch up with the emotional reaction you’re feeling and helps ensure you don’t say or do something that you’ll be sorry for later.
28. Practice self-control in your self-talk and how you express emotions to others in words and actions. Talk about what you’re feeling rather than taking direct action.
29. Make sure you’re getting enough sleep, good nutrition, and other factors that keep your mind and body healthy and able to deal with the challenges you face.
30. Use your planning and organizing skills to make a plan and follow through in addressing troubling emotions or past difficulties, whether these emotional circumstances are immediate or long-standing.

Tips for EI Social Awareness

If you want to get better at awareness of emotions in others, consider these ideas:

31. Work on reading facial expressions and body language for greater awareness of when others are experiencing negative emotions.
32. Practice active listening – be attentive, block out distractions, lean into conversations, maintain good eye contact, and give good verbal feedback (like “mm’s” and “ah’s”) to let others know you are tracking with what they’re saying.
33. Ask people you trust to tell you when they become aware of difficult emotions in others around you so you can learn to be more aware and empathetic.
34. Learn to ask questions about what emotions other people are feeling and how they’re coping with difficult situations. Your efforts to better understand others and their emotions, if done sincerely, will help them see you as empathetic.

Tips for EI Relationship Management

If you want to get better at managing relationships in emotional circumstances and difficult situations, try these steps:

35. Take time to analyze a past situation or interaction with others that didn’t go well and to learn from it. Reconstruct what happened, what you were thinking, what was said, and the impact it had. Determine where things went wrong and decide what you will do differently in similar situations in the future.
36. Look for opportunities to be part of a team in order to enhance your communication and influence skills. Even if you work mostly alone, recognize that we are social beings and can benefit from talking with others and learning from them.

37. Use a range of approaches in dealing with conflicts and negotiations, working to strike a balance between understanding where others are coming from and asserting your own point of view. Most people will appreciate your perspective more if they know you're also hearing their concerns and issues. Seek first to understand, then to be understood.
38. Aim to be a positive influence with others in your words and behavior, especially when others are struggling with emotional circumstances. When you make a decision, tell others the "why" behind your decision or action so they can better understand your values and motives.

Tips for Aligning EI and Strengths

39. Use your strengths to help you develop and refine your EI for greater effectiveness in your work. Each of the four strength realms can give you a firm cornerstone in EI. Specifically, strengths in the Thinking realm support the skills of self-awareness and personal insight. Strengths in the Doing realm align with and support Self-Management. Relating strengths provide a foundation in social awareness and empathy, and influencing strengths give a head start on the skills of Relationship Management, including influence, negotiation, and conflict management.
40. While understanding the alignment above is important, you can use any (and all!) of your strengths to develop skills in any of the four areas of emotional intelligence, as well as other skills you may want to develop or improve. Use the strengths you have to accomplish the things you want to do.
41. Also, use your EI to regulate the best application of your strengths. Learn when to "dial up" or "dial down" a strength based on the situation and the people with whom you're interacting. This will help ensure your strengths don't become weaknesses through overuse or misapplication.

Tips for Cultivating Resilience and the Five Cs of Resilience

42. **Let Stress Teach You.** Hardship is, well, hard – but still can be an excellent teacher. Many people look back and express that their times of greatest growth came through the most difficult times of their lives. What kinds of trials and difficulties have you been through, and what have you learned? Keep good notes (literally – write things down) to remind yourself in the future of what you've learned and how far you've come. Consider purchasing Dr. Bennett's book "Raw Coping Power: From Stress to Thriving" which includes over 30 exercises for cultivating resilience.
43. **Daily Reminders, Affirmations, and Songs that Inspire.** There are dozens of aphorisms or positive sayings that help us when we get bogged down by stress and adversity. For example, "When life hands you lemons, set them on fire," or "When the going gets tough, the tough get going." Find your favorite and keep it posted near

you or on your phone as a reminder. Similarly, find songs or other inspiring affirmations and use them when you need to.

- 44. Play up Your Five C Strength.** From your review and assessment of each of the Five Cs, determine which one is your strongest and ask others what they would say about you. Do the same for them. Whether it is centering, confidence, commitment, compassion, or community, we each can identify with at least one and help others do the same.
- 45. Spend Time with Other Five C People.** At the same time, identify which of the Five Cs needs development in you. Seek out others who you feel are good in that area and just spend time talking to them about how they have developed that in themselves. Really listen. For example, “How did you get so good at staying calm in crisis?” (Centering) or “What makes you keep focused and persevering even when there are so many obstacles?” (Commitment). Very often, these conversations can be powerful for both you and them.
- 46. Cultivate Team Resilience in Your Family.** During difficult times (like with the pandemic, political strife, etc.), it can help to sit down with members of your family and have them each take the Five C assessment in this book. Have each person go around and give example of when they saw how a behavior in a family member demonstrated one of the Five Cs. Share positive appreciation and think about family activities that will help grow those qualities even further. Give everyone a chance to talk.
- 47. Be Mindful of Mental Health.** While all the tools, assessments, and tips in this book are geared to bringing out your best self, it is important to also remember your limits when it comes to potential problems with mental health. Depression, anxiety, substance abuse, personality problems, suicidal thinking, serious relationship conflict: these may require the help of a mental health professional. Make sure you reach out for help as there is a lot available. Most communities, churches, schools, and workplaces offer help. The United States Department of Health has a 24/7 mental health helpline: 1-800-662-HELP (4357).

Tips for Alignment of Strengths, Emotional Intelligence, and Resilience

- 48. Be Creative About “The Best of the Best.”** The great thing about the many resources and strengths described in this book is that you have many to choose from. Specifically, as you read and reflect on all the topics covered, ask yourself “Which particular story, tool, or topic most resonated with me?” and “Which strength, EI area, or Five C was THE ONE that I can definitely say is a core strength?” Treat that area as a totem or anthem in your life. You can imagine it as a coat of arms or a code of excellence or credo that you draw, write about, or make a poem about.
- 49. Contemplate the Give-and-Take.** We believe that strengths, EI, and resilience constantly work together. When one area lacks another one comes in for support.

When life gets particularly difficult, all three areas sort of team up to help. Reflect on a time in your life (perhaps now) where you can see how these all work together to make you strong.

50. Write to Us. We would love to hear from you about which of these tips you found particularly helpful. When you take a moment to share your story with the authors, it has a certain solidifying or crystallizing effect on your strength. Also, other areas start to come into focus. We bet that when you take that step to share your story, you will also notice how complementary resources come into play. For example, if you write about one of the Five Cs of resilience, you might notice how the HHHF framework, and EI area, or a particular strength is also part of the story. You can write to us at: <https://www.YourBestSelfAtWork.org/>