



# Self-leadership in tough times: three ways to do what's needed

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Times are undeniably tough for a lot of businesses and their leaders, says Karen Gately, founder of *Corporate Dojo* in Melbourne, Australia, a specialist in leadership and people management.

As governments across the world try to take steps to protect communities from the *coronavirus pandemic* and its devastating health consequences, many leaders find themselves having to battle for the survival of their business. Economies are contracting sharply – Germany and the *US* recorded the *biggest quarterly drops on record* on Thursday.

Adding to the complexity of finding ways through are the rapidly shifting circumstances in which decisions need to be made.

Karen Gately said whilst it isn't possible to control the external forces impacting on all of our lives, there are steps leaders can take to ensure their team and business have not only a fighting chance of survival, but also the opportunity to thrive.

"As the widely attributed 'don't waste a crisis' quote suggests, even in the most devastating of times, great things can be born when we find the courage to do what's needed," said Gately, who is the host of Ticker TV's *Black Belt Leader*.

Karen Gately found the time to list three ways leaders can find the courage to do what's needed.

### 1. Manage you



The ability to maintain an optimistic albeit realistic attitude is key.



Begin by recognising you only have the power to control what you do, Gately said.

“How you respond to your circumstances, reflected in the mindsets you adopt, emotions you indulge and behaviours you bring, will have the biggest influence on success. Your ability to maintain an optimistic albeit realistic attitude is key. If you are unable to see solutions to the problems you face, or opportunities in the future, your team are entirely unlikely to.

“The simple reality is what your business needs most right now is strength of leadership. For any team to successfully navigate these times leaders need to have courage, articulate clear strategies and be decisive. Denying reality, tip toeing around difficult issues or avoiding tough decisions undermines any leader’s ability to have an enabling impact of their team’s success,” she added.

### Step past fear



Learn to be comfortable with discomfort. Photo: Mimi Thian / Unsplash

"Being courageous doesn't necessarily mean being fearless," Gately said. "Take note of the wise words of Nelson Mandela who said "I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it. The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear". Courage takes stepping past fear and doing what's necessary irrespective of the discomfort we feel.

"Among the most powerful ways of developing courage is learning to be comfortable with discomfort. While it's natural to want to get back to a space where we feel safe and assured, we have the power to choose to stay in the uncomfortable moment, deal with it and do what's needed despite how we feel.

"Recognise the impact adrenaline is having on your body and accept it as a natural response designed to keep you alert and protect you from threats. Remind yourself that the emotional pain, discomfort, or stress you are experiencing is temporary and related to your desire to avoid the circumstances you face," she added.

### 3. Understand what stands in your way



Make decisions that help ensure the viability of the business.

“When you're finding it difficult to move forward with decisions you know you need to make, reflect on what is holding you back,” said Gately.

“Understanding what you fear and why, will make a big difference to your ability to challenge limiting beliefs and steps past uncomfortable emotions. For example, fear of failure and the sense of loss or shame that come from that, is at the heart of why a lot of people don't 'take the plunge' and step onto new paths. Being aware of that will allow you to put limiting beliefs aside and focus on the fact that there is no shame in trying.

“When courage starts to wane and fears creep back in, refocus your mind on the benefits or opportunities that can be realised through the actions you are taking. For example, while it may be confronting to have to stand down members of your team, if doing so will go some way toward ensuring the future viability of the business, it makes all the sense in the world to make that call,” added Gately.