

LEADERS' GUIDE TO

Leveraging Disruption to Create your New Normal

March 2021

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Reflections from March 2021

When I developed the '4 phases of normal' concept in May 2020, I knew from conversations I was having with clients and feedback I received, that the idea was resonating with leaders.

What I did not anticipate was the longevity of this concept!

I was naively expecting that by the end of 2020 we would be well into creating 'New Normal'. I was hoping that by March 2021 'stay at home orders' would only be a painful memory, masks would no longer be a fashion staple, and international travel would be resuming!

Ahhh – that's not the case. Not yet anyway!

While our focus is on creating our New Normal, we are definitely still firmly in Current Normal. Leaders are tired, especially in Victoria where the long lockdowns took their toll.

Over the last six weeks I have received many calls from leaders looking for help to reconnect their teams and support to work out a pathway forward. The '4 phases of normal' has provided a framework for some valuable group conversations, prompting me to re-release this Leaders' Guide now. I hope you find it useful.



Could COVID-19 be an opportunity?

Bill Gates has claimed that COVID-19 is a 'Once-in-a-Century Pandemic'. We have seen the horrid personal, social, health and economic impacts of this corona virus.

What if, despite all the difficulties it has created - or perhaps because of them - COVID-19 was also a 'Once-in-a-Century Opportunity' for significant positive change?

What are you willing to do - and believe - in order to seize that opportunity?

If there was ever a time for Fearless Leadership® it's now.



So much change!



Getting to this point has required so much change!

Change generates uncertainty, and uncertainty triggers a threat response in the brain. Progressing does take conscious attention and energy. We get tired, and so do our people. That's understandable, and empathy is a useful leadership skill. Empathy for ourselves and empathy for others.

And... change is with us.... to stay...

The more we learn to deal with change, the more energy we have for all the other wonderful things in our life (as well as our work)!

NOTE:

If you would like to learn more about leading change, you can watch the video '*Leveraging your change profile. How your below conscious motivation for change influences your leadership – for better and for worse!*' at <https://corrinnearmour.com/leveraging-your-change-profile/>.

So what is 'normal' anyway?

Great question!

What's a normal day? Close your eyes – imagine a 'normal' guy... What does he look like – hair colour, skin colour, clothes? We all have different ideas of 'normal' right? And that changes over time...

What's a 'normal' meal? A 'normal' meeting?

The Oxford languages dictionary define 'normal' as 'conforming to a standard; usual, typical, or expected'.

That doesn't quite work for our context. Normal is not fixed – it shifts with context and time.



normal
/'nɔ:m(ə)l/

**A shifting construct of what's
'usual' or 'expected'**



We won't be going 'back to normal'!

Have you noticed yourself thinking or saying 'when things get back to normal I will ...'?

Sorry to disappoint you. We won't be going 'back to normal'! We can't. We have changed, our organisations have changed, and our world has changed.

There will be a 'normal', but we won't be going 'back' to it.

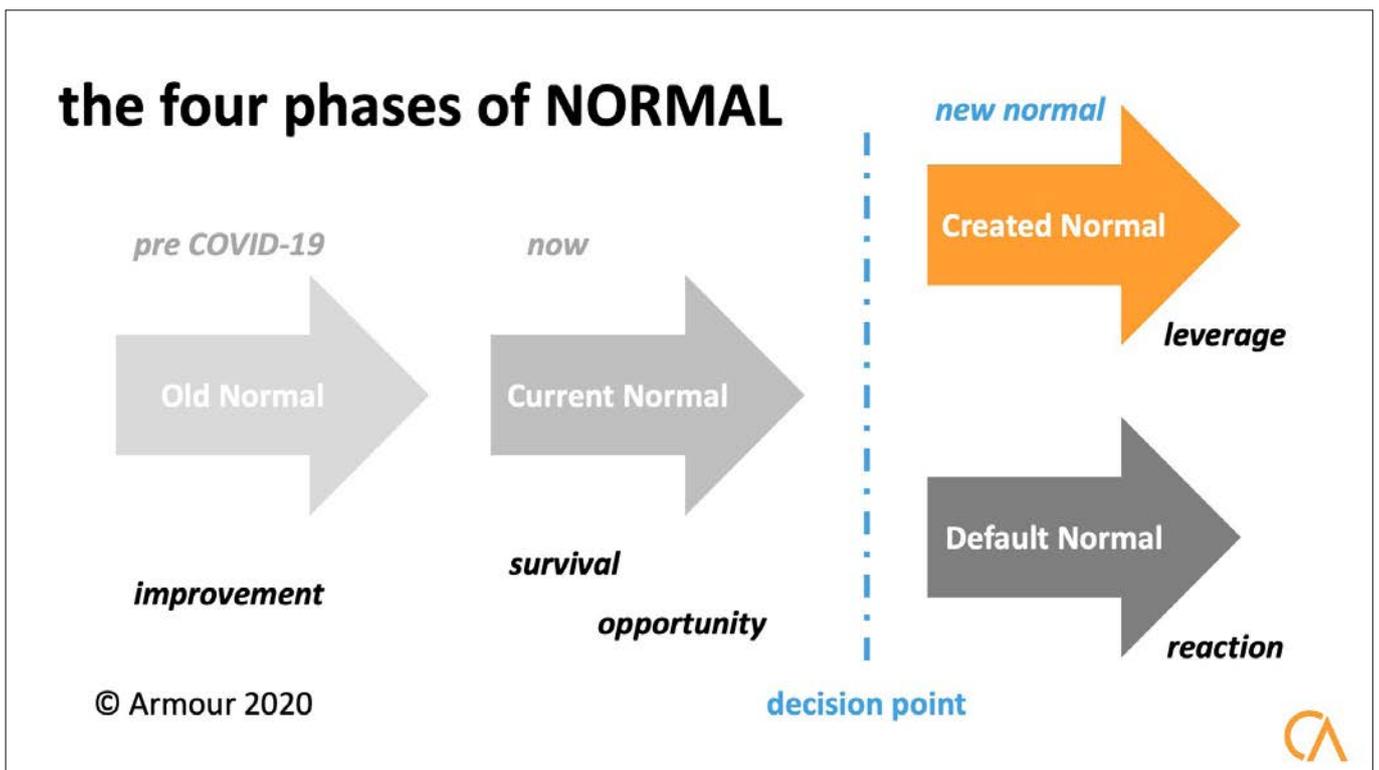
It will be a New Normal. And the exciting bit is that you get to choose what your New Normal looks like.

The 4 phases of normal

Old Normal was what we had pre-COVID-19. Remember that? A world when we didn't know what PPE stood for, social distancing wasn't a thing, we only 'zoomed' if we drove a Mazda, and there was no WFH hashtag!

As leaders, our focus was predominately on improvement. Our quest was to improve productivity, staff engagement, commercial results. We all aimed to improve our communication skills, our leadership ability...

And then COVID-19 hit!



Current Normal is where we are now.

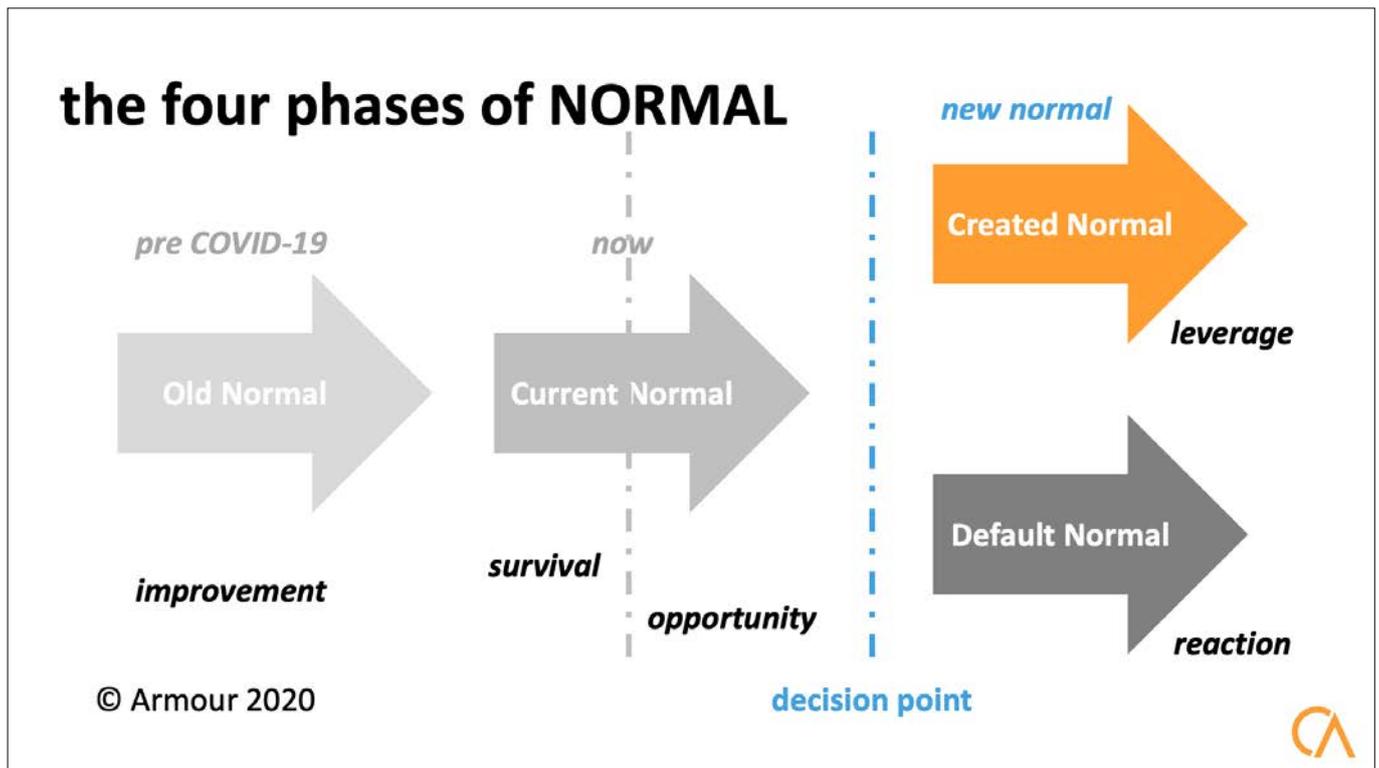
We have worked out how to run our teams, organisations, communities and families in a in COVID-19 impacted. We have changed rapidly, making adaptations like remote working in weeks and even days – changes that in Old Normal would have taken us months or perhaps years.

We have pushed our technology, challenged our service delivery models, and learned new ways of communicating and leading.

Initially we focussed on mission critical stuff (a technical term for all the programs, products, services and activities of our businesses). We put some stuff on hold. We have made priority calls – some challenging and some obvious under the circumstances.

Our leadership focus, especially initially, has been on **survival**. We know that this phase is temporary, and not all the changes we are making are sustainable in the long term.

As Current Normal stretches out much longer than many of us might have hoped or anticipated, we have added an improvement focus onto our survival, working to do Current Normal better. We are seeing and capitalising on **opportunity**.



New Normal is where things get really interesting, because this is where we get to choose!

As leaders we face a decision point – what is the future that we want?

Default New Normal is not the same as Old Normal. Default New Normal is the normal that will develop gradually, indiscriminately picking up behaviours, beliefs and practices from the past and present, merging them to build a default approach to work and community.

Default New Normal will result when leaders focus on reaction. Do you want to leave your future to chance?

Created New Normal is what we choose. It's aspirational.

Create New Normal is an opportunity to take the best of Old Normal and Current Normal to create practices, organisations and communities that we want to live and work in.

This is the once in a lifetime opportunity.

Create your own New Normal.

Don't just let New Normal happen. That would be such a waste of the pain, suffering and loss of COVID-19.

Creating a New Normal matters in our personal lives as well as our professional lives.

Work with your family, your team, your community to create your own New Normal.

The 3 'Simple' Questions

We have an opportunity to create our own New Normal by exploring 3 'simple' questions. Simple to ask... Not too hard to answer... The tricky bit is having the commitment to implement.

The 3 Simple Questions to ask to create your New Normal:

1. What have we lost that was valuable? (Old Normal)
2. What have we gained? (Current Normal)
3. How can we ensure we have both in our Created New Normal?

These 3 questions provide the framework for a team discussion. You may want to cover one question per 'sitting' or set aside a few hours and explore them all at once. Go lightly and have fun. Generate as many responses as you can, and then prioritise, plan and commit.



Question 1. What have we lost that was valuable?

Thinking about Old Normal:

- What have you lost that you miss, that your clients want, that your stakeholders need?
- What would add joy if you could bring it back?
- What would aid your productivity and the ease with which your team can get things done?
- How and where has communication been reduced, or relationships negatively impacted?
- What old beliefs have you outgrown?
- What unwritten 'rules' are no longer valid?

Question 2. What have we gained?

Thinking about Current Normal:

- What have you gained that you want to keep?
- What new ways of working have been created?
- How have you leveraged technology effectively?
- What have you dropped that no one has missed? Was it necessary?
- Where and how have relationships been strengthened?
- What new beliefs have you developed?
- How have people around you grown and why?
- Where has trust been developed?

Question 3. How can we ensure we have both in our Created New Normal?

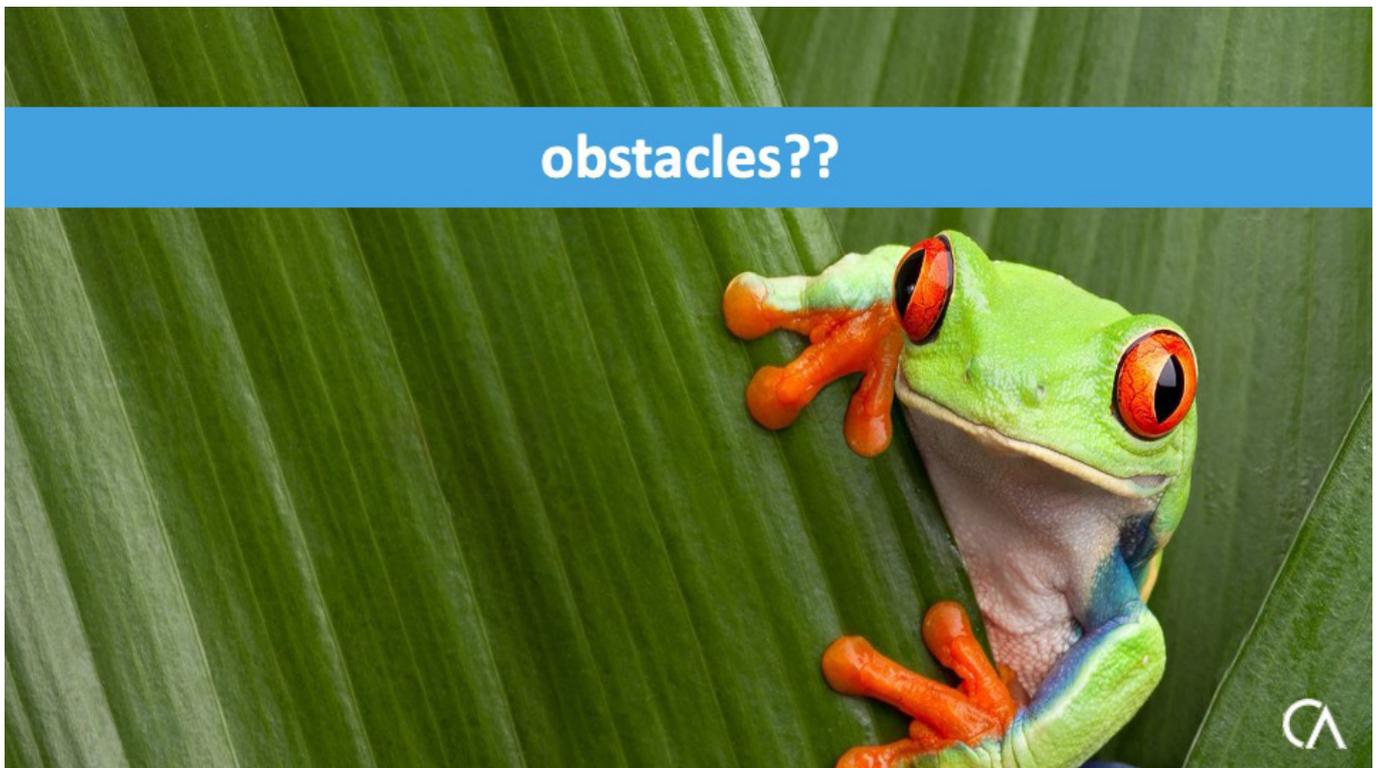
Thinking about the New Normal you want to create:

- How can you bring the best of Old and Current Normal together?
- What do you need to believe to make this happen?
- Who do you need to include?
- How can you help people to remain resilient as you build New Normal?
- What other considerations would be useful?

There may be obstacles...

Not everything is smooth sailing, and there may be obstacles in the way to creating our New Normal.

- What are the limiting beliefs and unwritten 'rules' that could limit our New Normal?
- What are the key risk factors?
- What might pull us back towards Old Normal?



Great – now you have identified them, you can put plans in place to leapfrog them.

Fearless Leadership® is the courageous shift to engage in essential conversations that build trust and move us forward.

What conversations do you need to have? With who? What's your plan for doing that?

What's your responsibility as a Fearless Leader?

It's frustrating and deeply concerning when I hear senior leaders say things like 'It will be interesting to see where we land' when talking about the post COVID-19 normal in their business.

Come on! Step Up!

If you are in a position of leadership, and you are 'waiting and seeing' or 'curious to see how things land' after the impacts of COVID-19 begin to recede, you are not leading!



Your responsibility as a leader is to work with your people to create the New Normal you want to work and live in. 'It will be interesting to see...' doesn't cut it.

You don't have to have the answers. You do need to create the space for – even lead – the conversation. Help us all create our New Normal.

Go fearlessly!

Profile - Corrinne Armour

Corrinne is Australia's leading thinker in Fearless Leadership®. Over 10 years in corporate leadership roles, 2½ years living and teaching in the jungle on the edge of a warzone, and almost 15 years in and out of board rooms working with senior leaders, she's learned much to share about leadership. Corrinne gets first-hand the challenges and competing priorities and of leadership because she's been there.

Leaders Who Ask: Building Fearless Cultures by telling less and asking more, Corrinne's latest book was released in 2018. She is also co-author of *Developing Direct Reports: Taking the Guesswork Out of Leading Leaders* and two specialist texts in human behaviour used by coaches and consultants worldwide.

At home she is married to an ex guerrilla fighter, mother to two beautiful daughters, and an amateur zookeeper with a growing domestic menagerie, so she knows a thing or two about life balance.

Corrinne shares lessons that help leaders identify the courageous shift that will help them engage in essential conversations that build trust and move us all forward.



Get in touch

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How can Corrinne help you?

Corrinne is known for helping leaders and leadership teams get out of their own way and develop Fearless Leadership. Senior leaders and their teams work with her to build connection, deepen engagement, increase productivity, develop culture, and lead successfully through periods of significant change or growth.

Corrinne supports her clients develop leadership in three key areas:

Fearless Leadership - Creating the conditions for organisational success. Leveraging the professional expertise and combined wisdom of senior leadership teams, forging one team - aligned and fearless.

Leaders Who Ask - Creating a Fearless Culture where people leaders spend less time stuck wondering how to proceed, and more time having the conversations that matter. What needs to be done gets done faster.

Entertaining, provocative and inspiring keynotes - Bringing Fearless Leadership to life from the stage (real and virtual) by sharing insights into brain science, tales from her life in a jungle refugee camp on the edge of a war-zone, and stories of inspiring leaders. Corrinne's keynotes are underpinned by almost 15 years in and out of board rooms working with senior leaders.

How? Training, facilitation and coaching. She writes on leadership.

For conferences and events, Corrinne is an entertaining, provocative and inspiring keynote speaker. You can see her speak at <https://corrinnespeaks.com/>

