

Helena Boschi

World-Renowned Applied Neuroscience Psychologist

The Neuroscience of Change. Many 'change leaders' or change management programmes fail to take into account how the human brain is set up to operate. All too often change messaging is constructed around the business rationale, which makes logical sense to those at senior level but rarely has the desired effect among the people who are expected to make any changed process or structure successful.

This session offers a fascinating and valuable look at why change efforts typically don't work and explains why the human brain is not inclined to 'embrace' change. Specifically the session covers how human beings typically respond to uncertainty, why change creates imbalance and stress in our systems and the emotions that drive us to act. The session also provides simple and practical strategies to enable new ways of working at all levels, from creating the right conditions for change to reducing uncertainty and providing a sense of control for those who are both driving and implementing change initiatives.

The Biased Brain. The human brain is designed to make fast judgements and mental short cuts about information it receives so that it can keep us alive. However these short cuts can also lead to cognitive distortions and biased thinking. Understanding how and why our biases work is an important first step in improving our decision-making and building inclusive relationships.

This fast-paced session provides an informative and engaging view of how biases work in the brain and how we can mitigate against possible cognitive errors. The session brings together the disciplines of neuroscience and behavioural economics (including nudge theory) to provide practical and relevant examples of the biases we use every day, often without realizing it! The session also offers valuable insights into how to frame language and pricing in order to get the outcomes you want.

Feeling Fear and Fostering Psychological Safety. Psychological safety is a phrase that is now being widely used with organisations to enable conscious and considered approaches to building a culture where people feel able to speak out and be heard. First brought to attention in the late 1990s, psychological safety is now recognised as an important element of healthy and collaborative work environments and a strong predictor of team performance. But it is hard at the best of times to establish and foster psychological safety, and this becomes even more of a challenge at a time of significant change and uncertainty.

To ensure we build and maintain a psychologically safe environment where we can all thrive and perform at our best, we need to develop new ways of working and learning together - sharing failures as well as successes and showing our own vulnerability to build trust and reduce anxiety in others.

This session explores the role of fear in our lives and why human beings are designed to register fear as a primary emotion in uncertain times. The session discusses behaviours that emerge when we don't feel safe, the human need for conformity and social inclusion and how psychological safety can mitigate the greatest human fear of all: social rejection.

The Hybrid World, the Erosion of Trust and our Attitude to Risk. What has been the impact of the pandemic on our ability to trust and form meaningful relationships? Scientists are predicting that empathy, trust and our ability to relate to others will undoubtedly have degraded as a direct result of lockdowns across the world. As many employees are now reconsidering their priorities (the 'great resignation' is being much debated worldwide), and with many also reluctant to give up the control and freedom of working from home, now is the time for organisations to rethink some of their existing operational models and structures.

This session explores the human brain's need to build relationships and why we need to recover the connections that we may have lost over the last two years. It also looks at the building blocks for trust and compassion, as well as different attitudes to risk in the aftermath of lockdowns and working from home. The session will also discuss how to get the best out of the hybrid model and virtual world as people make decisions about how they are prepared to live.

The Neuroscience of Innovation – and How to Develop New Insights. The human brain craves distraction and is being constantly bombarded by sensory information, but we simply don't have the brainpower to process it all. Whilst our attentional system steers our perception, the brain has to make a choice about what it focuses on.

This stimulating session helps us challenge what we think we see in order to stretch our thinking and develop new insights. Because we tend to see the world through our own lens we often develop a narrow perspective, based on the expertise we master throughout our career. But true innovation demands that we become more divergent and exploratory in our idea-generation, turning accepted wisdom upside down and challenging our norms, even when they work. The session forces us to question what we think we see and take in to account the fact that we rarely perceive the 'truth'. The session also looks at how to increase cognitive agility, creative thinking and openness – in order to become a constant, continual learner.

The Psychology, Power and Pitfalls of Language. Language is the main tool that we use to express ourselves. With language we indicate how we are feeling, we convey information and we influence the behaviour of others. Because language is part of our everyday life we often use it without realising the profound impact of the words we are speaking and their effect on the brain and behaviour of others. The way we use language is both cultural and psychological, and language shapes our reality in ways that we don't always realise. Communication issues are generally caused by the use, or misuse, of language.

This session will explore the use of language at work, the words that switch the brain on in both a positive and a negative way, how we interpret the words we see or hear depending on our background, culture and experiences and how to use language effectively with those around us.

Specific outcomes include: how to select words carefully, how to use the framing effect, how to reduce cognitive load and make words easy for the brain to digest, how to move from abstract to concrete concepts to increase meaning and comprehension, how to use words to create inclusive environments, how to motivate and improve performance (including giving feedback) and how to use tonality across the world.

Dealing with Burnout and Understanding Post-Traumatic Growth. Burnout is increasingly being cited around the world as a critical problem for both employers and employees. The longer Covid continues in its various mutations, the longer the time needed for recovery. But in many cases pressures are building among working parents, caregivers and the younger working population who are all having to adopt a variety of roles with differing demands.

This session deals with the physical and psychological manifestations of stress, trauma and burnout. It also explains the resilience paradox, the performance-arousal curve and the notion of posttraumatic growth in the organisational context. The session also explains how to achieve emotional, physical and psychological wellbeing and why all of these need to be considered together, rather than as separate topics.

The session provides the key focus areas for consideration by organisations as countries slowly emerge from the pandemic, such as the need for control and fair treatment, the right kind of rewards and the importance of a strong social support system.