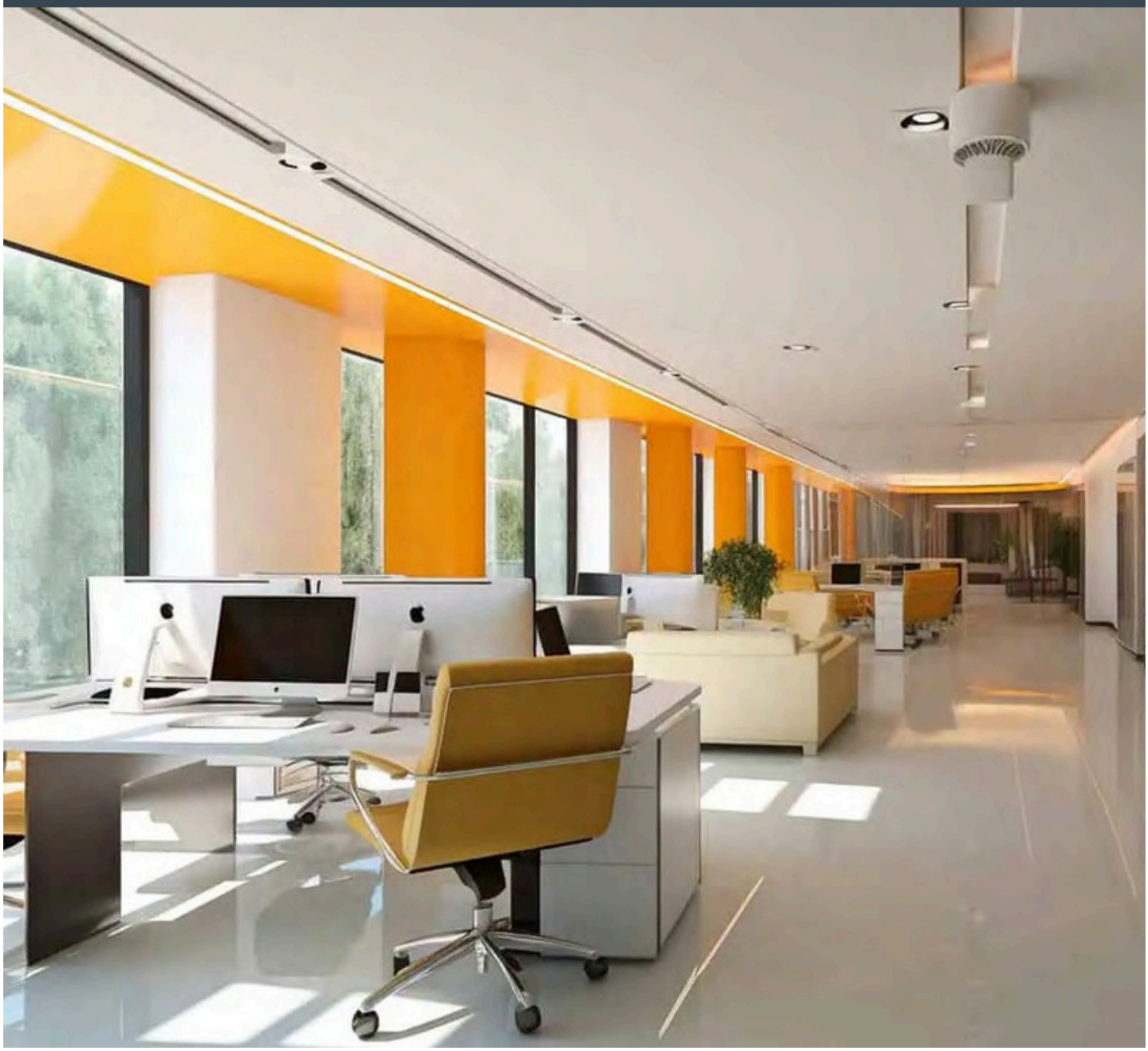
BESIDE LEADERS GLOBAL

A Leaders Restructure Communication Toolkit



How To Your Team Through A Restructure: A Guide For Government Leaders

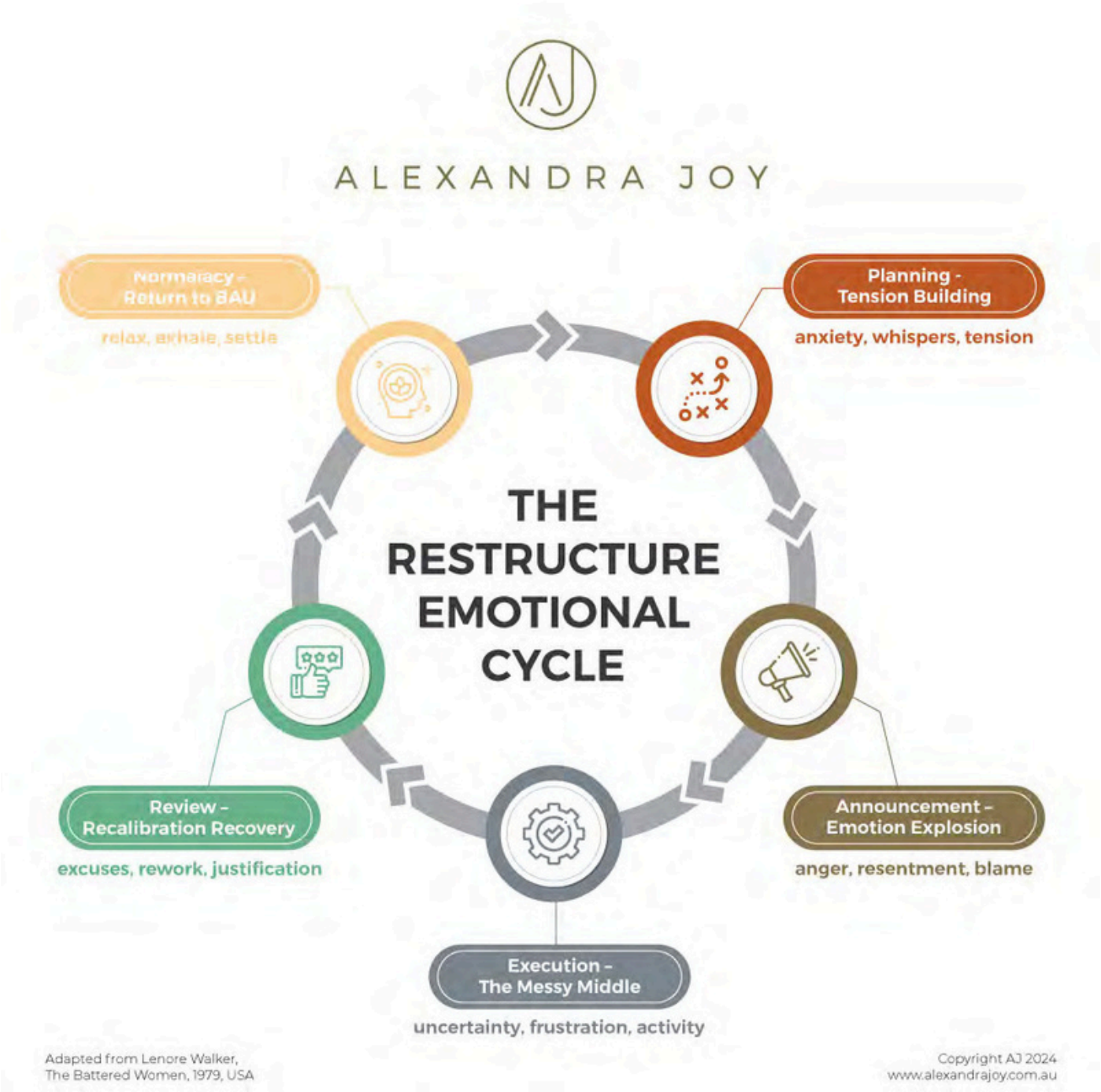
Contrary to popular belief, it is possible to build a high performing team even during times of great change and uncertainty such as a restructure, using an empowering leadership approach in government management roles.
Navigating a government restructure requires delicate communication and strategic action. Below is a guide for leaders to effectively manage each phase of the restructuring process without burning out themselves and their people.
Poor organisational change management regardless of the size or reason for change, means changes that are poorly planned, communicated, supported or managed. With new psychosocial legislation, it is imperative that managers and leaders understand their people, their emotions and can help minimise risk and harm during a change phase. Poor change management becomes a hazard when it is severe (e.g. very poor management), prolonged (e.g. long term) or frequent (e.g. happens often) – sound familiar!!!
Poor organisational change management happens basically when the leaders lead from a place of fear (think power and control) and not love (think collaboration and connection), often unconsciously. Issues typically show up when:

- No consultation on changes - e.g. not talking to workers or genuinely considering their views - *how many times have you been consulted via an info email! Not what do you think because I care about you*
- Not thinking about how a change may impact workers' performance - e.g. not allowing extra time to do things while people learn a new process – *how often have you heard a leader say "you have to stay motivated to keep delivering on your BAU plus learn the new stuff. Huge empathy, not."* Poorly planned changes - e.g. changes
- are disorganised or do not have a clear goal – *uh hum how many times have you seen this – lack of clarity are so frustrating right?*

- Changes are poorly communicated - e.g. information about the changes isn't provided or is unclear – *How many leaders have you heard say "trust me, I am telling you everything I know right now."*
- Not enough support for the changes - e.g. not training workers on how to use new tools - *expectation they'll sort it out amongst themselves, great leadership right?*

The Restructure Emotional Cycle

The Restructure Emotional Cycle, based on the cycle of violence theory, developed by Dr Lenore Walker in 1979, describes the phases of emotions people typically go through in the lead up to and following a major event such as a restructure. The model looks at the stages of a restructure or major change program, and how it affects employees emotions and their challenges and reactions to the cycle.



There are five stages to the emotional cycle typically experienced during a restructure:

1. **First is the tension building** phase. In this phase, senior leaders have started some high-level discussions about potential change which of course gets heard, felt and shared through the informal grapevine. People gets edgy, anxious and tension begins to build up.
2. **Second is the emotional explosion** phase where the big announcement of change occurs. It can last from a few minutes to several hours. Typically the shock sets in and people feel angry and resentful, disrespected and tend to blame leaders for doing this to them.
3. **Third is the messy middle** where the change plan begins getting executed. Typically people find themselves feeling frustrated and overwhelmed due to the uncertainty and heightened activity where they have to continue with their BAU work as well as the additional meetings, workflows and adjustments needed for implementing the change.
4. **Fourth is the recalibration**, recovery phase, this is when the changes that have been implemented so far begin being reviewed, people start executing on new workflows, teams or positions. Typically there is a lot of rework happening, people make excuses for why they can't get things done or they justify why they need to stick to doing some things how they were done before.
5. **Fifth is the return to Business As Usual (BAU)** phase. Also known as the honeymoon phase, this is where people become relaxed, they begin to exhale and settle into the new normal. Typically their nervous system has finally begun to calm down and they feel a sense of greater calm.
   However, the tension almost always starts to build again, as new leaders have new ideas for change, thus continuing the cycle once again.

Phase 1: Planning - Tension Building

Objective: Mitigate anxiety, manage whispers, and reduce tension.

Things to Say	Things to Do	Things to Avoid
1. "We are assessing the current structure to ensure it aligns with our strategic goals and future needs." This reassures employees that changes are being considered thoughtfully and not arbitrarily.	**1. Engage in informal discussions** with key stakeholders to gauge initial reactions and concerns. This helps to identify potential issues early on.	**1. Do not make definitive statements** about the outcomes of the restructuring before they are finalized. Premature announcements can increase anxiety.
2. "I understand that this period may feel uncertain. Our goal is to communicate openly and keep you informed as soon as we have concrete plans." This reassures employees that changes are being considered thoughtfully and not arbitrarily.	**2. Develop a communication plan** that outlines how and when updates will be provided. Ensures structured and consistent information flow.	**2. Avoid being overly vague** about the process or timeline. Lack of clarity can heighten anxiety and speculation.
3. "Your feedback is important to us. Please share any concerns or suggestions you have about the current structure." Encourages input and shows that leadership values employee perspectives.	**3. Monitor and address rumours** or misinformation actively. Helps control anxiety and misinformation.	**3. Do not ignore informal feedback** or signs of growing tension. Addressing concerns early is crucial to maintaining trust.

Phase 2: Announcement of Restructure - Emotion Explosion

Objective: Manage anger, resentment, and blame.

Things to Say	Things to Do	Things to Avoid
1. "We recognize that this news may be upsetting and we are here to support you through this transition." Acknowledges the emotional impact and shows empathy.	**1. Host a town hall meeting** to explain the restructure in detail and answer questions. Provides a platform for direct communication and addresses immediate concerns.	**1. Do not minimize or dismiss employee emotions.** Ignoring or belittling feelings can escalate resentment.
2. "The decision was made after careful consideration of all options and was necessary to align with our long-term objectives." Provides context and rationalizes the need for change.	**2. Offer one-on-one meetings with employees to discuss** their individual concerns and provide tailored support. Personalized attention can help manage resentment and confusion.	**2. Avoid making vague or inconsistent statements.** Clarity is crucial during this emotionally charged phase.
3. "We will be providing resources and support to help you navigate this transition and address any concerns you have." Reassures employees that they are not alone and resources are available.	**3. Provide clear documentation** outlining the restructure details and next steps. Helps employees understand the changes and their implications.	**3. Do not engage in defensive or confrontational behavior.** Stay calm and professional to de-escalate tensions.

Phase 3: Execution - The Messy Middle

Objective: Navigate uncertainty, frustration, and activity.

Things to Say	Things to Do	Things to Avoid
1. "We understand that the transition is challenging, and we are committed to supporting you through this process." Reinforces ongoing support and empathy.	**1. Implement regular check-ins** with employees and individuals to assess progress and address concerns. Keep communication channels open and responsive.	**1. Do not ignore or overlook ongoing issues** or feedback. Addressing problems promptly is essential to maintaining trust.
2. "We are closely monitoring progress and will make adjustments as necessary to address any issues that arise." Shows flexibility and responsiveness to emerging challenges.	**2. Offer additional training or resources** to help employees adapt to new roles or processes. Supports staff in handling new responsibilities.	**2. Avoid making sudden, unplanned changes.** to the restructuring plan. Stability is crucial during execution.
3. "Please continue to share your feedback. It helps us identify and resolve issues more effectively." Encourages ongoing communication and involvement.	**3. Celebrate small wins and progress** to maintain morale and motivation. Recognizes efforts and keeps the team engaged.	**3. Do not let communication lapse** during this phase. Regular updates are key to managing uncertainty.

Phase 4: Review - Recalibration Recovery

Objective: Address excuses, rework, and justification.

Things to Say	Things to Do	Things to Avoid
1. "We are evaluating the outcomes of the restructure review and are open to making necessary adjustments based on what we've learned." Indicates a commitment to continuous improvement.	**1. Conduct a thorough review** of the restructure's impact and gather feedback from all levels. Ensures an informed evaluation of the process.	**1. Do not ignore or dismiss critical feedback** or areas of concern. Engage with feedback to make meaningful improvements.
2. "We appreciate your patience and resilience during this transition. Your feedback is vital for refining our approach." Acknowledges efforts and emphasizes the importance of feedback.	**2. Make data-driven decisions** to adjust strategies based on feedback and performance metrics. Supports objective and effective adjustments.	**2. Avoid making excuses** for issues that arose during the restructure. Address problems honestly and focus on solutions.
3. "We will share the results of our review and any changes we plan to implement to ensure ongoing improvement." Promises transparency and continued communication.	**3. Communicate any changes or refinements** clearly to maintain morale and motivation. Recognizes efforts and keeps the team engaged.	**3. Do not delay the review process** or the implementation of necessary changes. Timely action is essential for maintaining trust and effectiveness.

Phase 5: Normalcy - Return to Business as Usual

Objective: Support relaxation, exhale, and settling.

Things to Say	Things to Do	Things to Avoid
1. "We have now reached a new phase where we can focus on moving forward and building on our successes." Signals a return to stability and progress.	**1. Reinforce the new structure** of the restructure's impact and through team-building activities and alignment sessions. Helps integrate changes into daily routines.	**1. Do not abruptly shift focus away** from the restructure without acknowledgment. Transitioning smoothly is crucial for maintaining stability.
2. "Thank you for your hard work and adaptability throughout this process. Let's now concentrate on our goals and future success." Acknowledges the team's efforts and refocuses on goals.	**2. Recognize and celebrate successes** achieved during and after the restructure. Boosts morale and reinforces positive outcomes.	**2. Avoid neglecting ongoing support** or feedback channels. Continued engagement is important for long-term success.
3. "We will continue to support you and ensure that any lingering issues are addressed as we move forward." Reassures ongoing support and attention to any residual concerns.	**3. Conduct follow-up surveys** to assess the overall effectiveness of the restructure and identify areas for further improvement. Ensures that the transition is fully completed and areas for enhancement are identified.	**3. Do not ignore any remaining issues** or dissatisfaction among employees. Address any lingering concerns to ensure a smooth transition to normalcy.

As a caring, conscious and constructive leader or manager you want to navigate change successfully and help your people navigate change and restructures and the emotions that go with it so you minimise the impact for your team and keep your culture tight.

Read this guide, follow it, share it and as a caring leader you will begin to navigate the complexities of restructuring or major change in a humane way that supports your people as much as possible to navigate through each phase effectively.

www.besideleadersglobal.com

BESIDE LEADERS GLOBAL