

Key question

What are
the most effective ways
to help others
deal with letting go of
old knowledge, assumptions,
mental models and ideas
that don't serve us anymore?

*“A solitary act that happens in relationship with others . . .
making the strange familiar
as well as making the familiar strange.”*

DAVID KOLB

Unlearning: Overview of theories

- Lewin “Unfreezing”
- Mezirow “Transformative learning”
- Kolb “Experiential learning”

Unlearning is Deleting

Hedberg (1981)

Obsolete knowledge is deleted while new knowledge is created.

1

This process is different from forgetting because it is intentional.

Unlearning is Storing

Klein (1989)

Obsolete knowledge is stored in memory beside the new knowledge.

2

It will degrade if not used for some time, or it can be retrieved if the individual returns to the old context.

No unlearning, emergence

Wheatley (2006)

Obsolete knowledge is continually redefined, added to, and recomposed in a continuous process.

3

“We never pause to unlearn before we engage in learning and adaptation.”

What is the “Unlearning Process”?

1 An individual process of personal transformation

- *with the intention to change ideas, attitudes or skills*
- *through personal emotional/cognitive work*
- *as well as a dose of courage and adventure.*

2 A team process of group transformation

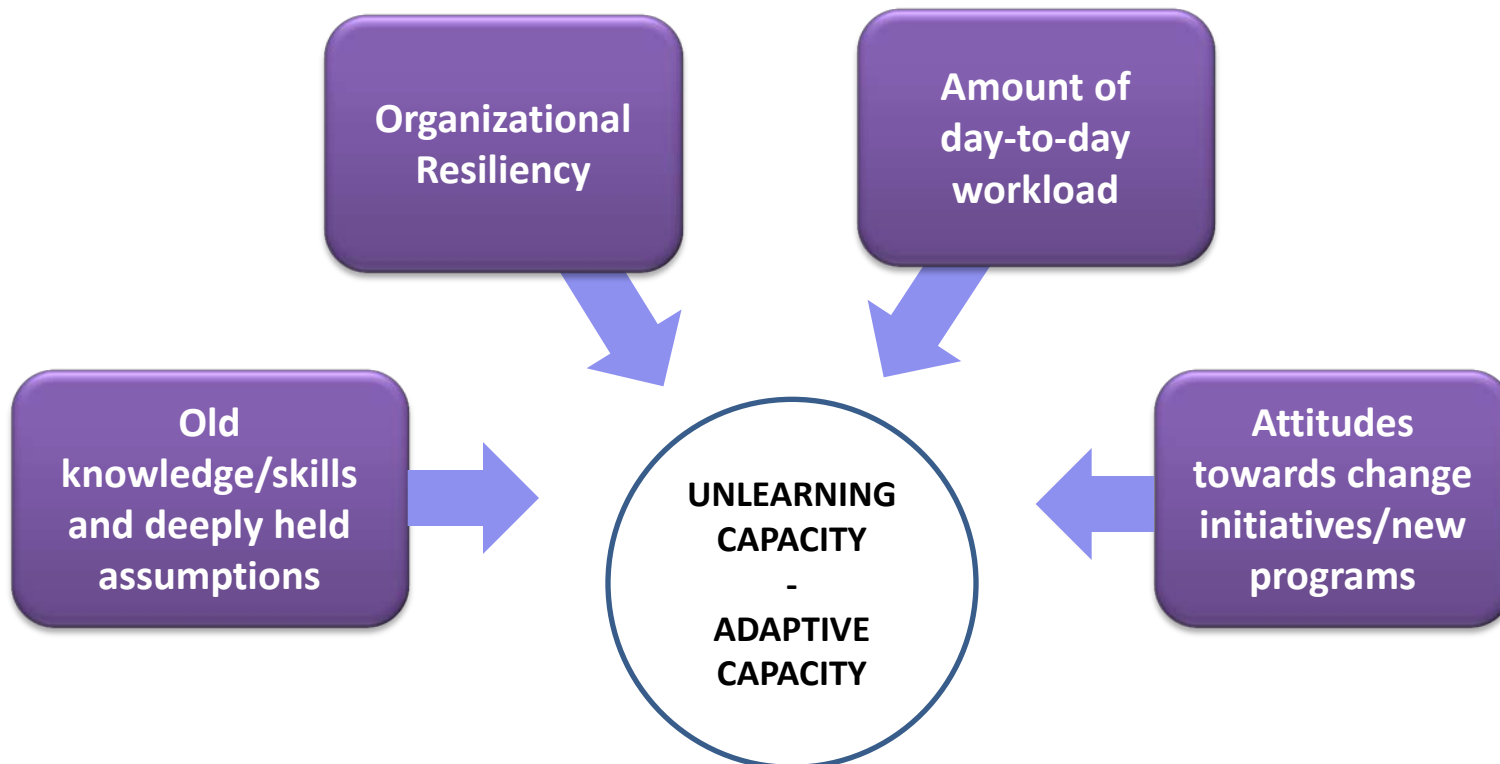
- *that works intentionally to release and transform prior learning, assumptions, and mental frameworks*
- *in order to accommodate new information or values.*

3 An institutionalized capacity for continuous improvement

- *to understand unlearning as a key process for change and adaptation*
- *to reflect and throw away assumptions that do not serve the organization anymore (ability to be a learning organization)*

Why pay attention to the Unlearning Process?

To strengthen the possibilities
for renewal and change.



To simplify the process of unlearning in your department...

PREMISE:

*Acknowledging unlearning
is the beginning*



1 DEFINE UNLEARNING OBJECTIVES



2 PROVIDE TIME FOR UNLEARNING



3 PROVIDE SPACES FOR UNLEARNING



4 MODEL UNLEARNING, AND COMMUNICATE ACCORDINGLY

Learning more about... Unlearning?

- *Get a copy of this slide show at www.leadersh1p.com*
- *Download a research article I published at www.leadersh1p.com*
- *Practice it and learn it by doing asking **unlearning-friendly** questions like:*

1 What unanswered question, if answered, could make the most difference to the future of our department?

2 What's the deeper purpose (the big "why") that is really worthy of our best effort?

3 What do we know so far and need to unlearn in our specific situation?

4 What would someone who had a very different set of beliefs than we do say about our specific situation?