



Functional Fluency in times of Corona

Leading through the crisis

The Coronavirus has ripped through the fabric of our society and economy, challenging business and civic leaders to respond in an effective manner, incorporating key aspects of the practical Functional Fluency Model to mitigate its far-reaching effects, writes transformational leadership expert Leona Bishop.

People who understand the Functional Fluency Model and know how to use it are better equipped to respond, rather than react when adversity strikes. In uncertain and chaotic times, they use their ability to do complex accounting; the capacity of humans to reflect, consider, imagine and problem solve.

Important accounting functions include assessing what is relevant in a situation, working out what is significant in the circumstances, imagining possible implications and considering what needs to be decided. Then comes the choosing of options and necessary conditions for action to take place. All of this uses energy internally, 'head, heart and gut', which is why we say that accounting works like an internal 'mode of behavior' i.e. it's not observable.

Accounting, therefore, is what a person does internally in order to choose what to do or say next (Temple, 2020).

Key Questions

- How do we behave in the midst of the Coronavirus turmoil?
- Are you behaving in a way that is beneficial to yourself, to others and your community?
- Or is the outcome of your behavior harmful to yourself or others?
- How are you using your energy?
- Are you reacting or are you responding?
- Are you organizing tequila and lock-down parties at your house? Or are you adapting to the rules of staying at home, only going out when really necessary and social distancing?

What is so unique about Functional Fluency?

Like many of my colleagues and clients, I know how extremely useful the Functional Fluency Model is and how transformational it can be in a person's professional and personal life. However, it takes curiosity, openness, willingness and effort to fully understand how it works, to become aware of your behaviour and the effect of it on yourself and others, and to learn how to put it to use in everyday life.

During the past few weeks I have been observing how people are behaving in the midst of the Corona crisis, and clients have been asking me for extra coaching because they are in need of support whilst having to deal with the adversities they are personally experiencing.

It made me think even more how wonderful it would be if everyone had learned about Functional Fluency. What a huge positive difference that would make in the world on all levels (individual, group, team, organization, community, country and world). The happenings around the Coronavirus inspired me to write this article with

the objective for more people to understand how the model and tool work and how they can use it for the safety and benefit of themselves, and the communities/countries they live in.

It is all about responding more and reacting less!

Firstly, I would like to illustrate how the Functional Fluency Model can be used by referring to a number of current examples, some of which you might recognize. I will then give a recap of the steps for you to take if you find yourself struggling with the situation. It is all about responding more and reacting less!

Example 1 – The young entrepreneur

She is in her early thirties, a single mother and is running a successful business. She employs three

people and hires others on a contract basis. She has big ambitions and is extremely courageous. She is currently expanding her business which implies getting a loan to be able to pay for the relatively big investment needed. She has signed a contract to rent a larger space for the multi-services she is planning to provide. She has been able to find an investor and has set a number of people to work on the interior of the venue, aiming to open her new expanded business for clients on April 1st.

She has just returned from abroad where she was supposed to attend a conference for professionals in her working field. And then Corona hits the country she is in and the country where she lives. The conference is cancelled. A week after her return she sends me a WhatsApp message saying that she is hyperventilating and having anxiety attacks because of the situation she is in. We agree to have a call the next morning.

During the call I listen to her story and I ask her how she is using her energy in view of Functional Fluency. She understands the Functional Fluency Model and we can quickly pin point what is going on. Her anxiety (Compliant/Resistant mode) is causing her to hyperventilate, however it is not preventing her from taking action.

I invite her to do some accounting taking realistic stock of the situation

She reaches out to me expressing her need for help (Cooperative/Spontaneous mode). As soon as we are on the call, I invite her to direct her energy to the Accounting mode – being in the here and now, being 'with it', and dealing with whatever is happening in a realistic way. Accounting is something you do!

Taking action

I ask her to make a list of issues that need her attention (Structuring mode). I notice how much effective action she has already taken. As soon as she arrived back home from abroad, she closed down her business due to the possibility that she might be carrying the Coronavirus and could infect her colleagues and clients. She decides

to stay at home and sends out emails to all her clients to let them know that the business will be open again in two weeks, considering she is Corona-free (Nurturing mode).

She informs her clients of the Corona regulation policy once the doors open again (Structuring/Nurturing mode). She has also started to sell products her clients are in need of online (Spontaneous mode).

I ask her to reflect on what she is doing and how effectively she is doing it all. Her anxiety fades away and is now able to see that she has the inner strength, the creativity, the ability and the resilience to do what needs to be done. She then tells me what else she needs to do (Structuring mode). When people are really scared, their overriding need is for relevant information and protection. As her coach, this is what I have made possible for her.

Her anxiety fades away and is now able to see that she has the inner strength and resilience



Example 2 – The judgmental, fault-finding, know-it-all colleagues

One of my clients works at a company where the CEO has directed employees to work from home due to Corona. He tells me angrily about how his manager wanted him to come into work because he was needed.

My client is annoyed and says it is contradictory to what the CEO has told everyone to do. He goes into work reluctantly (Compliant/Resistant mode). Sitting behind his desk, a colleague walks in and – with a strict tone of voice – asks him why he is in the work place and if there is something he needs to tell her (Dominating mode).

My client is not a fan of this specific colleague (to say the least) and with an arrogant look and tone of voice he replies: 'What are you talking about?' (Dominating mode). His colleague punitively tells him that he was stupid to handover a laptop the day before to another colleague who had just come back from the United States of America – who could be carrying the Coronavirus (Dominating mode). And now he was putting others at risk. They get into a quarrel about who is right and end up getting nowhere.

Knowing your triggers

I ask my client to use his energy to assess the situation (Accounting mode) and find out what he could have done differently, starting off with viewing the colleague from a fair perspective and finding out how he can connect to get along with her in a positive way (Cooperative mode).

My client has become aware that his colleague triggers him to become angry just by looking at her and that he needs to be grounded to make sense of what is going on between them. It is a repetitive dysfunctional pattern and it is energy draining for him.

I encourage my client to investigate the relevance of this pattern and specifically his own reaction.

Does he recognize the pattern? All of a sudden my client's eyes fill up with tears and he tells me how he was never good enough for his mother, for his family and for his ex-wife.

As soon as he doesn't feel valued or recognized, his ability to do accounting shuts down, and fueled by anxiety (Compliant/Resistant mode) he unconsciously uses his energy to fight back by showing judgmental, fault-finding and knowing-better behavior (Dominating mode).

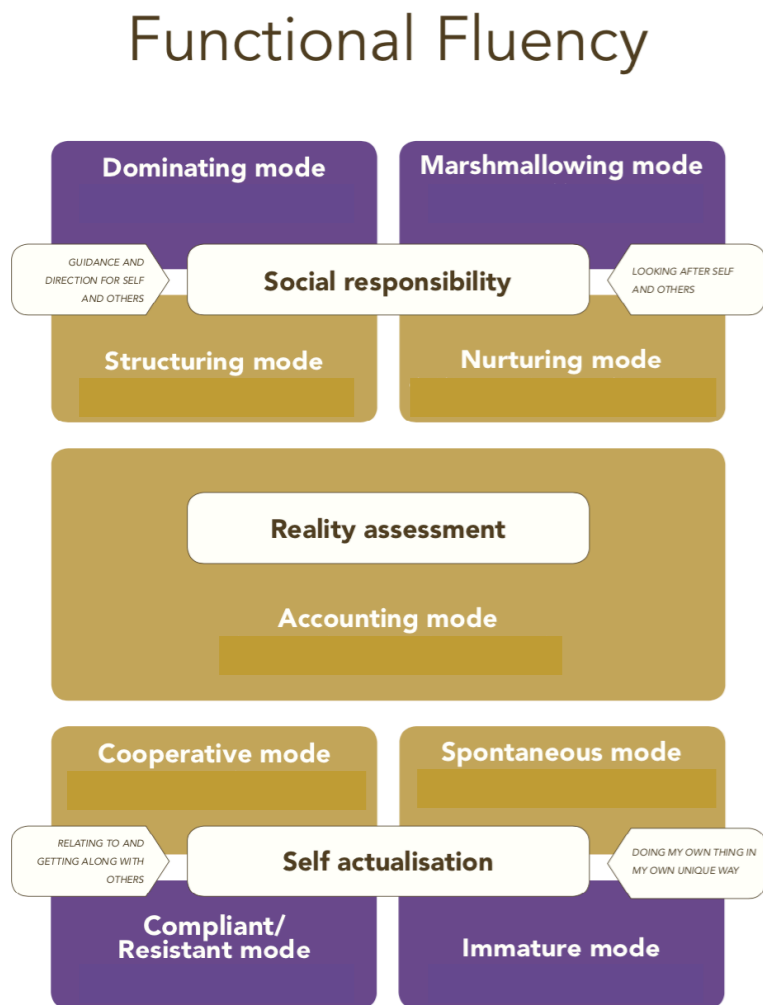
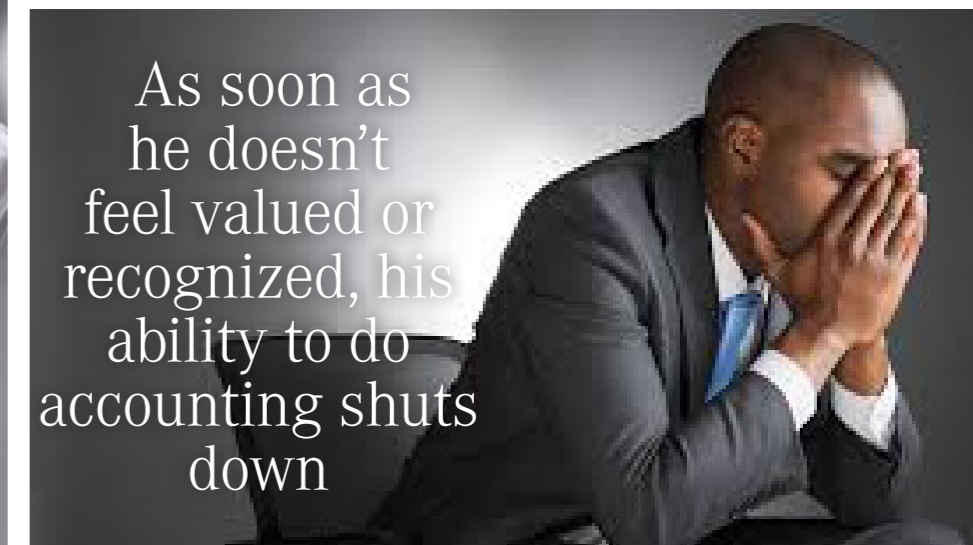
Interestingly, his colleague reacts in a similar way, so what might that be about?

Shifting ineffective behavior

What now comes into my clients' awareness is that his colleague is a trigger for an old relational pattern of behavior to emerge and repeat itself. As my client becomes grounded and more able to investigate and evaluate the situation (Accounting mode), he realizes that this pattern is no longer serving him and that he has a choice in ways to respond (effective modes of behavior) instead of automatically reacting (ineffective modes of behavior).

We explore the possibilities together: he could acknowledge the concern of his colleague about the possible risk of infection (Nurturing mode), explain calmly with a kind and understanding look and tone of voice that it was not his intention to be at work and that he completely understands the risk; however his manager had called him in.

And then ask his colleague what she thinks is needed to resolve the situation (Cooperative mode). Chances are that his colleague's energy will be shifted into effective modes of behaviour with a better outcome for both.



Example 3 – The anxious mom

She is working as a team manager in a company which is part of a large international organization. She is great at her work, although she does tend to take on a lot of the concerns of her team members. She is mother of two teenage daughters who have both just moved abroad to study.

And now she is worried sick to her stomach about what could happen to her children, who are in a country where Corona is spreading quickly. She asks me for support to help her cope with the situation in an effective way.

Reacting instead of responding

I invite her to take a good look at what she is doing internally, to find out what she needs to know to be able to respond effectively to the situation. She is aware that she is reacting instead of responding. Her energy is draining, she feels dead tired and it has come to a point that she is no longer able to concentrate.

Her reactive behavior is an invitation to her daughters to also behave in that way

Because of her anxiety she is constantly phoning her daughters and telling them what to do and what not to do. She has even ordered Paracetamol online to be delivered to her daughters houses just in case they haven't bought any, just like she

has told them to do. She gets annoyed with her eldest daughter for taking the train to look after her younger sister, who is studying in another city. She tells her off for it.

Her anxiety is triggering her to behave in an over-protective and smothering way, whilst she is in denial about not taking good care of herself (Marshmallowing mode = ineffective care).

It is also causing her to use energy to try control the situation by phoning her daughters continuously, telling them that mom knows best and that they must listen to her (Dominating mode = ineffective control).

It has come to a stage that her daughters have told her that they don't want to pick up the phone anymore when she calls (Resistant mode).

I explain to my client that her reactive behavior is an invitation to her daughters to also behave in a reactive way. The more she uses her energy for ineffective control and ineffective care, the more probable it is that her daughters will react by behaving in either a submissive or rebellious way (Compliant/Resistant mode) or perhaps a reckless, childish or egocentric way (immature mode).

She decides to do things she loves, that make her happy and energized

The hidden message

The hidden message that she is actually (unconsciously) conveying to her daughters is: 'You are not good enough' and 'you are inadequate'. Her

behavior is actually 'robbing' her daughters of their autonomy.

My client realizes that she needs to be present and in touch with the 'here and now' and use her energy first to care for herself (Nurturing mode) and to connect with her daughters in a different way. She decides to do things she loves, that make her happy and energized. She gets back a better connection with her daughters by using effective modes of behavior; for instance by calling them up and telling them that she is having fun and asking them about nice experiences they are having (Spontaneous mode).

Or calling her eldest daughter to apologize that she got annoyed (Spontaneous mode) that she had travelled by train to be with her younger sister, that she understands why her daughter did it and that she is proud of her for taking care of her sister (Nurturing mode).

She tells her daughter that she reacted out of concern and that she realizes that her behavior is ineffective (Accounting mode) and then asks her what she thinks is necessary to keep safe (Structuring mode). The message she will then be conveying to her daughters is: 'you are loveable and valuable' and 'you can do it and succeed'!

Example 4 – The reality assessing entrepreneur, mother, grandmother and spouse

So how do I deal with the adversities that I am experiencing?

I am an entrepreneur and very lucky to be the mother of two wonderful grown up daughters, and a partner to a loving and caring man. Four months ago, my first grandchild was born – a beautiful baby boy. There is a distance of almost 8 000 kilometers between me and my loved ones. My work is currently the reason why we are apart and the possibility for me to go back and forth to visit them makes it doable. And then Corona came about.

My daughter, grandson and his father were supposed to come for a two-week holiday and stay with me. Last week inbound flights were cancelled due to Corona. After doing some accounting, I quickly decided to book a flight to go and see them and also be with my husband and other daughter.

I had spoken to a number of my clients and arranged to continue working online with them. Other clients had put the work I am doing for them on hold because of the risk of infection. This gave me space to leave the country (Structuring and Cooperative modes).

Half an hour after booking my flight, news reached me that residents were not allowed to

leave the country, so my plan fell through. I was able to reschedule my flight (Structuring mode).

We breathe and keep on using our CEO part of the brain

In the meantime, both my daughter and her partner had been sent home from work because the businesses had closed down due to Corona.

They both work on a contract basis, meaning that they have no income if they don't work. And they have rent to pay and a baby to take care of.

Of course, all of this could stress us out. However, we are being mindful, grounded, alert, and aware, while making sure we breathe and keep on using our CEO part of the brain (Accounting mode). And we are choosing to respond in a way that is beneficial for all of us and others:

- Adapting to the measures that are being taken by our governments (Cooperative mode), meaning no tequila and lock-down parties for us that could be considered as reckless, selfish and childish (Immature mode).
- Investigating options and creatively working together to support my daughter, my grandson and his father whilst being deprived of work and income (Accounting, structuring, nurturing, cooperative and spontaneous modes).

Using the space that has been created as a consequence of work slowing down to:

- Have video calls and wonderful conversations with my grandson (spontaneous)
- Be responsive and empathic to my daughters' and my husband's needs (nurturing)
- Check in daily with my 85-year old mother who lives in Spain and who is afraid to go out. Luckily, we bought her an iPad for her 80th birthday (nurturing)
- Have beautiful walks with my dog along the empty seaside (spontaneous)
- Have fun with my upstairs neighbour whilst making our garden even more beautiful (spontaneous and cooperative)
- Focusing on setting up a new online multi-sided business (structuring, cooperative and spontaneous)



Leona Bishop

- Creating things that I have long wanted to create, like writing this rather long article (spontaneous)

Leona Bishop

So how do you do Accounting?

It is based on Susannah Temple's Continuing Practice (Temple, 2018).

These are the steps you take if you find yourself struggling with the situation. It is all about responding more and reacting less!

Step 1:

You breathe and ground yourself

Step 2:

You do a mental sorting of what is relevant about the situation

Step 3:

You sort out what is relevant into what is most important or significant

Step 4

You search for information that you need to come up with a solution. What is it that you are not yet seeing? What is it that you need to see and to know?

Step 5:

You assess your options for action with regard to their consequences

Step 6:

You consider whether to apply any condition that would assist a good outcome

Step 7:

You decide what you will do or say leading to a successful outcome for your own benefit and the benefit of others

I suggest that you take advantage of the space you have as a consequence of Corona and make an effort to be more consciously reflective and aware of going through this neurological process of 'doing Accounting'. And if you need any support, I invite you to get in touch with

About the Author

Leona Bishop is the Founder and CEO of Dare to Care Leadership. She is a transformational leadership expert who is passionate about creating sustainable change within leaders, teams and organizations. Leona is a Licensed TIFF® Provider, trainer for Functional Fluency & TIFF® and coordinator for Functional Fluency in the Caribbean. Working with Functional Fluency and TIFF® has greatly increased her own personal and professional effectiveness.

As she is passionate about improving individual and collective well-being, she wants to contribute to the world by spreading the use of Functional Fluency in organizations, teams, groups and individuals, and providing TIFF® as a tool for increasing success and satisfaction both personally and professionally.

If you would like to know more about Functional Fluency and TIFF®, please contact info@functionalfluency.com or visit our website: www.ffcaribbean.net.

About Susannah Temple

Susannah Temple PhD is the creator of the Functional Fluency Model and the related behavioral tool called the Temple Index of Functional Fluency TIFF® for which she gained her doctorate in 2002. She has a long professional experience in Adult, Community and Early Childhood Education. Though retired from many aspects, Susannah is still active in the UK with some consultancy and supervision nationally and internationally and further translations of Functional Fluency and TIFF® in other languages as the use of the model and instrument are spreading over the globe.