

# The Leader's Compass: How to Navigate Ambiguity to Build a Resilient and Innovative Team

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Unexpected challenges are part of the job. Constant uncertainty and ambiguity is draining mental well being and impacting our decisions. Here's what you need to know about the impact of ambiguity and uncertainty on leadership, decision-making and innovation.

## Definition of Terms



### Ambiguity

A situation, event, or piece of information that can be interpreted in more than one way. It is external and neutral. Ambiguity is a threat.



### Uncertainty

Our internal, emotional reaction to ambiguity. It often feels like stress, anxiety, or confusion. In Uncertainty, w default to status quo solutions.



### Tolerance of Ambiguity (TOA)

The skill of being calm, focused, and less stressed when faced with the unfamiliar. Build with creativity and mindfulness.

## Start Here - Quick Actions to build your TOA!

- Art Appreciation event - go to a gallery, or allow employees or local talent to display art at work.
- Explore Fiction - Book Club, Short Story Competition, or group discussions about Movies.
- Mindfulness Breaks - Training, Provide a Quiet Room, Reward deliberation vs reaction.
- Celebrate Failures - "worst idea" contests, review a failed initiative with positive intent.
- Creative Meetings - Incorporate Creative Problem Solving strategies in every meeting.
- Novelty - Take a team scavenger hunt, try a new activity or learn a new skill.
- Creative teams - Find time to dedicate to task-free creative thinking.
- Walking Meetings or Walking Meditation - Get in nature!
- Cultivate Curiosity - Do an "ask only questions" exercise or 5 "Whys"
- Fail Forward - try something without overthinking it, like adding an ingredient to a dish, pick up the phone instead of sending an email, add some artistic flair or non corporate speak to your report.

# The 3C Framework: Your Compass in Ambiguity



## CATCH ON (Awareness)

The first step is to notice the subtle signals of ambiguity and your internal reaction (e.g., a gut feeling, physical tension, love/hate an idea)

**Key Principle:**  
Unnoticed ambiguity leads to rigid thinking



## CONSIDER DATA (Mindfulness)

Instead of reacting, take a pause. Resist the pull of the status quo and intentionally gather data and diverse perspectives before acting. Get comfortable with the discomfort of ambiguity.

**Key Principle: Trust your gut, but verify with data**



## CREATE SOLUTIONS (Action & Innovation)

Move from analysis to action. With the clarity gained from Considering Data, you can experiment, innovate, and build new solutions or paths forward.

**Key Principle: Adopt a "Fail Forward Faster" mindset**

## Building Your Ambiguity Muscle: The Pillars of TOA



Your ability to use the 3C approach in ambiguity effectively depends on your underlying Tolerance of Ambiguity (TOA). Like any muscle, it can be strengthened with practice.



### Pillar 1: CREATIVITY (Practice for the Unknown)

Engage in any activity where there isn't one "right" answer - artistic or not. Train your brain to be more flexible and comfortable with uncertainty. Try this: brainstorm, a new recipe, art appreciation, journaling, a new hobby.



### Pillar 2: MINDFULNESS (Befriending Discomfort)

Practice being present with your feelings without immediately needing to "fix" them. Be comfortable in the discomfort of not knowing. Try this: Grounding exercises, box breathing, long exhales, say "tell me more" when you have a strong reaction to someone's idea or suggestions.

## Want to Go Deeper? We've only scratched the surface.

Thank you for exploring The Riptide of Ambiguity with me. To dive deeper into building Tolerance of Ambiguity and leading through change, check out the resources below.



### Blog

Blog & Resources on creativity and ambiguity for a happier mindset, problem solving and optimism in ambiguity

<https://carolinebrookfield.com/blog/>



### LinkedIn - Connect with me!

[linkedin.com/in/carolinebrookfield/](https://www.linkedin.com/in/carolinebrookfield/)



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### Phone/Video call

Book a time to chat here:

<https://zcal.co/carolinebrookfield/30min>

## How you can Work with Me:

I hope you enjoyed this quick tour through Ambiguity, Uncertainty, Creativity and Mindfulness today. There's so much more to explore! For instance, did you know that you can take a [validated assessment](#) to find out your Ambiguity "Blind Spots" and what to do about them?

If you, your team or organization needs support navigating the Riptide of Change and Ambiguity, for increased well being, problem-solving and optimism for the future of work, here are a few ways I can help

1. Interactive Keynotes (just like this one!)
  - a. The Reluctant Creative
  - b. Leading through Ambiguity
  - c. Unapologetic Originality
2. Professional Development Workshops
3. Leadership Training
4. IAM Ambiguity Assessment - to find your "ambiguity type" and how to leverage strengths and mitigate weaknesses.
5. Personalized Team Building experiences



***Please forward this to a friend who is struggling to navigate the riptide of change, or anyone who is looking to bring a new perspective, and a new approach to make work better.***