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master1305/Getty Images We have made our coronavirus coverage free for all readers. To get all HBR content delivered to your inbox, subscribe to the daily alert newsletter. I hate saying it right now, but I haven't felt this energized for years, one CEO I advise admitted to me during the first week of Covid-19 stay-at-home bookings. When I asked about the source of this energy, the CEO noted that the crisis allowed unusual freedom of movement - strategically and as a leader - that he had forgotten about. Another leader told me that she had never been more productive and felt vital by the fact that suddenly every important task is getting done right now... not a year later ... not early next week, but right now. She worked in state non-stop stakeholder management, giving interviews, dealing with her executive board, handling immediate threats, talking to competitors, and even teaming up with old enemies. The chief executive summed up his experience this way: Everything just moves faster, priorities become crystal clear, and most people step in and unite around getting our company through the crisis in one piece. These three observations show that for many the first weeks of the crisis feel extremely meaningful and energetic. But when I went back to the same leaders a few weeks later, they reported that something had happened to their energy and the way their team was cooperating. The adrenaline-based pace of the initial response to the crisis began to be sprayed. The problems have become more complex and debilitating. The varnish began to crack. The glory faded. The fuses were short. What explains this shift? In my experience as a psychologist and executive consultant, I have found that crises follow a rough pattern: an emergency. Regression. Recovery. At the beginning, when the emergency becomes clear, the team's energy increases and performance improves. Almost all of us have unknown reserves. As the experiences of the executives reflect, this response feels full of purpose and much gets done. Leaders tend to become a better version of themselves at this stage, and teams instinctively rally and become very productive. Few doubt the authority of the leaders, and the teams work restlessly, but harmoniously. The urgency created by the shock paves the way for quick decision-making and turbocharged team bias to action. Then the second phase hits: the regression phase, when people get tired, lose their sense of purpose, start fighting for little things, and forget to do things like eating or drinking -- or they eat and drink too much. The concept of regression comes from the psychology of development and how people roll back to a less mature stage when faced with pressure. Regression is one way of the mind to protect oneself from confusion and uncertainty by retreating into an emotional comfort zone. From combat psychology in particular, we know that regression is the most dangerous stage for teams. The most stressful events for soldiers are not really related to

dangerous missions that require courage and action. They actually include anticipation: being in the middle of nowhere for a position, repairing equipment and handling administrative tasks, unable to use your specific skills. It turns out that boredom, lack of new impressions and monotony can be much more intense than fighting. I see this fatigue of the war room in the leaders right now - and in their teams. It's real and it's contagious and it hits you like a hammer from one day to the next. The regression phase is inconvenient. It is also inevitable and cannot be missed. Understanding what phases look like and how you can go through the difficult part of the crisis will help you mitigate the drop in performance. The challenge for leaders is to move constructively through the regression phase and move on to the recovery phase in order to reopen, recover and prepare for the future. Here's how it's done. Getting through the regression phase first, you have to determine how deep you and your team are in the regression phase. If you are unsure, you can look for evidence at meetings: Energy will fall, decisions will be made longer or not taken at all, and confusion and conflicts may arise about the little things. Blabbering is a sign, as much as silence or absence. You can also look at yourself for indicators. As a leader, has your sense of conviction disappeared? Are you tired, mentally or physically? Do you have any promptings to leave? Is your flash character uncharacteristic? Second, you can make three key moves to pull your team out of regression. To disrupt the team and create a new day first. The CEO on the same team I'm working with felt stuck when she saw this dynamic game on her executive team. The group was proud of its emergency performance, but now the conference calls mostly consisted of people arguing about the details, second guessing each other, and interfering in each other's areas. Thus, she acted quite decisively in the team itself, radically changing it. She sent one team member home temporarily, who didn't add value at this stage. She then turned to the rest of the team, saying she personally wanted to take a step back to make sure she had the time and space to take a long look again. She told her executive team members that they should all be able to take on her role and act as if they were director on a daily basis. It then introduced a new structure and assigned new roles to each of the team members. One member was given the role of CEO day-to-day crisis time. Another participant was asked to lead the planning and work out the recovery phase as CEO. And then rather unusually, she added a new temporary member - up-and-coming talent - and accused him of driving long-term strategic change faster. What happened? Those who have been appointed to new posts have become motivated and energetic and have been given a clear mandate. Everyone was happy not to waste time on non-cost input. And the CEO returned to the balcony to borrow a phrase from Harvard Kennedy School Professor Ronald Heifetz about the importance of getting perspectives and spending time on the major issues facing the company. Even if you're not a CEO, this tactic can work: You can release energy by dropping the team structure and assigning new responsibilities to capable team members, allowing them to cross outdated hierarchies, rigid role definitions, and red tape. Learn how to calibrate your team's emotions. Another method that I've observed for leaders who use effectively in the regression phase involves the so-called team arousal level. The purpose of this is to create an environment where it is safe and legitimate - even for supposedly hard-footed team members - to be honest about your state of mind so you can start moving forward. Think of your arousal level as if you have an internal volume control or thermostat that you need to adjust. Start by asking yourself: Am I too hot emotionally, or too cool and relaxed? Rate yourself on a scale of 0 to 10. (The theory behind the method comes from Steve de Chaser's solution-oriented therapy; many therapists use large-scale issues like this to calibrate their understanding of the client's state of mind.) Ten includes super-red alerts and high-energy feelings. At the other end of the scale, 0 feels completely passive and drained. When you drive through a crisis, the optimal place to be in the 6-8 range: alert and ready to act, but not trigger-happy or manic. You can keep steady. When you are between 2-3, it feels almost like you are mentally and physically hungover. You may feel that what you are doing is useless in any way and you begin to feel annoyed, frustrated by the little things, or preoccupied and unavailable to your team. This type of large-scale surveys can also be used by your team. The groups I work with found it helpful to start team meetings by asking, What's your number today, or they used messages for each other: Today I am in low single digits. In most cases, simply sharing numbers sets in motion the conversation and support needed to move up the scale again. out of business as usual. In times of crisis, the textbook expectations of business leaders are to do everything necessary to protect the value of their company. But sometimes goes beyond this survival first instinct is what can make your yours see the light again and pull out of the regression. The most effective leaders I have seen today are spending their time thinking and talking about how their company can help solve the biggest problems that this pandemic is digging up. Instead of working through all the immediate clutter, they begin to face the future, anticipating what's next and where they can provide the greatest value. In crisis psychology, we call it reorientation. Reorientation is a trigger that guides your team's attention to the recovery phase. You change the question from the question How can we deal with the crisis? to the question, How can we get out of the crisis? Being more than just about business, you left your company not as a victim of crisis or crisis survivor, but as an important actor - contributing to solving complex medical, social and economic events. Consider the following cases: A.P. Moller Maersk used its logistical capabilities to create a fast air bridge to ensure the delivery of millions of face masks, facial shields and surgical curtains to health care workers. Luxury goods giant LVMH quickly switched its production capacity from perfume manufacturer to hand sanitizer. Inditex, the owner of clothing retailer zara, used its very flexible supply chain to produce protective clothing for medical staff to prevent shortages. The CEOs of these companies are not just managing the company's own crisis; they also help manage the system. That kind of thinking is not just a game for the Giants. The reorientation begins with changing your team's focus from short-term risks to a bigger picture of your company's contribution and long-term opportunities. Cutting out the team's time to look ahead and talk about the next big steps can help your people gain energy, feel challenged, and reunite around a shared aspiration. Leading through the phases of crisis for a leader, the crisis can be like the best hour and the darkest day. Teams will remember their actions and decisions - good and bad - for years to come. So, as you navigate the waves of the crisis, remember that each stage requires a different approach. Sometimes phases don't come in a neat sequence, so think of them as currents and counter-currents speeding up or hindering your team's progress. Yes, first of all, you can succeed by leading from the front line. But after the first few weeks of an emergency, take a step back and make sure your team goes through an inevitable regression phase. This stage is inconvenient, but also useful, because conflicts in the team can cause the most difficult questions, bring new answers and reset expectations to more realistic Only then can you begin to chart a path to recovery and emerge from the crisis as a strong team and and Company. 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