

SMARTER Culture: Cognitive Agility in Action

In a recent IFTDO webinar, [Allan Fair](#) and [Cosiamo \(Peter\) Bavuso](#) engaged professionals from **ten countries** in a deep exploration of **Cognitive Agility** and its role in building **high-performing, inclusive workplaces**. Using insights from **Cognitive Neuroscience, Social Neuroscience, Social Analytic Theory, and Positive Psychology**, the session highlighted practical tools—such as **Emergenetics and the Rediscover U Card Deck**—to help organizations create cultures where **everyone feels seen, valued, and engaged**.

The Loneliness Crisis and the Three Divides

One of the most pressing challenges facing organizations around the world today is the **growing sense of loneliness and disengagement** among employees. According to **Gallup's 2024 State of the Global Workplace Report**:

- **20% of employees feel lonely daily**, a figure that jumps to **25% for remote workers**.
- **52% of employees** are actively **seeking or watching for new job opportunities**.
- **41% report experiencing significant daily stress**, particularly when working under **disengaged managers**. In parts of the **Middle East, North Africa, and USA** and **Canada** about **49-52%** of all respondents experience significant daily stress.

These findings emphasize the urgent need to **build workplace cultures that foster belonging, collaboration, and psychosocial safety**. The **D.E.E.P. framework**, paired with **Cognitive Agility strategies**, provides a powerful solution to this challenge.

D.E.E.P. Framework: A Whole-Brain Approach to Collaboration

A key tool for fostering **Cognitive Agility** is the **D.E.E.P. Framework**, which enhances communication and teamwork by integrating different cognitive styles.

D.E.E.P. stands for:

- **Details (Structural Thinking):** Organizing, planning, and executing with precision.
- **Evidence (Analytical Thinking):** Making logical, data-driven decisions.

- **Empathy (Social Thinking):** Understanding and valuing the people perspectives.
- **Prospective (Conceptual Thinking):** Thinking big-picture and fostering innovation - a mutual consent to a shared vision for the future.

Why Use D.E.E.P.?

By combining all four thinking styles, **D.E.E.P. improves Cognitive Agility, enhances team synergy, and helps organizations bridge communication gaps.** This model aligns directly with **Emergenetics**, a science-backed tool that helps individuals and teams **understand their unique cognitive and behavioral preferences.**

Emergenetics: Unlocking the Power of Cognitive Agility

Emergenetics provides a **scientific approach to understanding cognitive and behavioral preferences** in individuals and groups. It categorizes thinking into **Analytical, Structural, Social, and Conceptual** domains, helping leaders:

Improve **team collaboration** by recognizing multiple perspectives.

Reduce **decision-making bottlenecks** by leveraging **complementary strengths.**

Foster **an inclusive culture** where employees are valued for their unique contributions.

Real-world **case studies** presented in the webinar demonstrated how **Emergenetics helps organizations address challenges** such as **friction in decision-making, slow to no execution, and disengagement** by fostering multiple perspectives and effective coaching and facilitation practices.

Rediscover U Card Deck: A Strengths-Based Approach to Engagement

The **Rediscover U Card Deck** was referenced as a tool to **help individuals identify and cultivate their strengths and the strengths of others.** This deck consists of:

- **10 Cognitive Strengths** based on **Emergenetics Theory.**
- **24 Character Strengths** inspired by **Positive Psychology research (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).**

Practical Applications:

- **One-on-One Coaching:** Leaders use the cards to **help employees recognize and apply their strengths.**

- **Team-Building Activities:** Organizations **foster psychological safety and trust** by encouraging employees to acknowledge and appreciate each other's unique strengths.
- **Mindfulness and Reflection Practices:** Each card integrates a **breathing or meditation practice** to **reduce stress and enhance focus**.

Research confirms that strengths-based interventions **increase engagement, reduce anxiety, and enhance well-being**. The **Rediscover U** approach ensures that **every employee feels valued for their unique contributions**.

Call to Action: Seeing and Valuing Every Employee

We closed the session with a call to action:

"Loneliness and disengagement cost us more than dollars—they cost us our humanity."

By integrating **SMARTER Culture, Cognitive Agility, Emergenetics, and Rediscover U**, organizations can **bridge the gaps in retention, mental health, and belonging**. Creating a workplace where **everyone feels seen, valued, and empowered** is not just an ethical responsibility—it's a **strategic advantage**.

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Rediscover U Card Deck: A Strengths-Based Approach to Engagement and Well-Being

During the webinar, the **Rediscover U Card Deck** was highlighted as a **transformative tool for leadership development, stress reduction, and organizational culture change**. By helping individuals **identify, cultivate, and appreciate their strengths and the strengths of others**, the deck empowers teams and leaders to create **an inclusive, strengths-based culture**. The **deck's foundation** combines **10 Cognitive Strengths** (rooted in **Emergenetics Theory**) and **24 Character Strengths** (inspired by **Positive Psychology research**, Peterson & Seligman, 2004), making it a versatile tool for **fostering well-being, empowerment, and sustainable performance**.

Strengths-Based Leadership: Building Resilience and Empowering Teams

The **Rediscover U approach** shifts traditional leadership models by **focusing on what employees do well, rather than trying to “fix” weaknesses**. Leaders using the deck cultivate **self-awareness and emotional intelligence**, critical elements for **reducing workplace stress and promoting well-being**.

How it Works:

- **Leaders facilitate personalized strength discovery:** During one-on-one sessions, leaders use the cards to **help employees uncover their cognitive and character strengths**. For example, a leader might guide a team member to recognize their **social thinking strengths (empathy) or analytical skills (evidence-based reasoning)**, offering ways to apply these attributes to achieve personal and organizational goals.
- **Strengths empower resilience:** By focusing on strengths, employees **build confidence** and are better equipped to handle challenges and change. This strengths-based mindset **helps buffer the effects of workplace stress**, as employees are more likely to feel empowered, capable, and valued.

Fostering Psychological Safety and Trust through Team Building

The Rediscover U cards play a key role in creating **psychologically safe environments** where employees feel comfortable **expressing themselves and taking risks**.

Team-Building Activities:

- **Acknowledging and celebrating strengths:** Team activities using the deck foster **mutual recognition of contributions**, enhancing trust and collaboration. For example,

in a team workshop, participants select cards that represent their teammates' strengths, sharing stories of how those strengths positively impacted the group.

- **Bridging cognitive diversity:** By highlighting the cognitive and character strengths of each team member, the Rediscover U deck helps teams **understand and appreciate diverse ways of thinking**, reducing conflict and improving communication.
- **Promoting inclusive leadership:** Leaders who understand their team's unique strengths are better positioned to **distribute tasks effectively, address team dynamics, and ensure everyone's voice is heard**.

This **strengths-based approach** not only fosters connection and trust but also helps reduce **loneliness and isolation in the workplace**, key factors associated with **decreased retention and well-being**.

Mindfulness and Reflection Practices: Managing Stress and Enhancing Focus

One of the most impactful aspects of the **Rediscover U Card Deck** is its integration of **mindfulness, meditation, and reflection exercises**, which are designed to help employees **regulate stress and improve mental clarity**.

Practical Mindfulness Applications:

- **Daily Reflection:** Employees select a card each morning, reflect on its affirmation, and consider how to apply the associated strength throughout their day. This practice **grounds them, reduces anxiety, and promotes a sense of purpose**.
- **Breathing and Meditation Exercises:** Each card comes with a corresponding **breathing or meditation exercise** tailored to its theme. For example, a card focused on **patience or self-regulation** may encourage **deep breathing exercises to manage stress**, while a card centered on **creativity or perspective** may involve **visualization techniques** to enhance focus and innovation.
- **Team Check-Ins:** Leaders can incorporate short mindfulness sessions using the cards during team meetings, creating opportunities for **collective reflection and stress reduction**.

Research in Positive Psychology and Cognitive Neuroscience supports the link between mindfulness practices and **reduced stress, increased engagement, and enhanced problem-solving**. The Rediscover U approach ensures that these benefits are **woven into daily work routines** to create a culture of continuous growth.

Strengths-Based Interventions: Enhancing Engagement and Well-Being

The Rediscover U Card Deck is more than just a tool for individual growth—it's **a catalyst for organizational change**. By integrating **strengths-based interventions** into daily leadership and team activities, organizations can achieve measurable improvements in employee well-being:

- **Increased engagement:** When employees recognize and apply their strengths, they are more likely to **experience job satisfaction and feel motivated**.
- **Reduced anxiety and stress:** Strengths-based approaches help employees **reframe challenges as opportunities to apply their unique strengths**, reducing the emotional toll of setbacks.
- **Enhanced well-being:** Employees who use their strengths regularly report **better mental health and resilience**. This is particularly critical in high-pressure environments where stress can lead to burnout.

The **Rediscover U approach** helps embed these benefits into organizational culture, ensuring that **well-being and engagement become enduring leadership priorities**.

A Culture of Empowerment and Belonging

In closing, the webinar emphasized that strengths-based tools like the Rediscover U Card Deck are **not just individual development tools—they are culture change tools**. When leaders foster strengths, trust, and mindfulness practices, they create **workplaces where employees feel empowered, resilient, and seen**.

In a SMARTER Culture, where strengths, meaning, and relationships are prioritized, organizations can **combat the loneliness crisis, improve retention, and foster sustainable growth**. As demonstrated through practical applications and research-backed evidence, Rediscover U provides **a roadmap for transforming well-being into a strategic advantage**.

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Organization Resource Guide: Rediscover U Card Deck

A Strengths-Based Approach to Engagement, Empowerment, and Well-Being

Overview

The **Rediscover U Card Deck** is a powerful, evidence-based resource designed to help organizations **enhance engagement, reduce stress, and foster a strengths-based culture**. Built on **10 Cognitive Strengths** (inspired by **Emergenetics Theory**) and **24 Character Strengths** (from **Positive Psychology** research, **Peterson & Seligman, 2004**), this tool is ideal for leaders, teams, and individual development.

Why It Matters:

- **Increased engagement and productivity** by leveraging individual strengths.
 - **Reduced stress and anxiety** through mindfulness and reflection practices.
 - **Improved well-being and collaboration** by fostering psychological safety and trust.
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Core Components of the Rediscover U Card Deck

Each card features:

- **An affirmation and reflective quote** to encourage self-reflection.
 - **Strength-focused insights** rooted in cognitive and character-based approaches.
 - **Mindfulness or meditation practice** tailored to reducing stress and enhancing focus.
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How to Use the Rediscover U Card Deck

1. One-on-One Strengths Coaching for Leaders

Encourage leaders to conduct individual sessions using the cards to help employees:

- **Identify their core strengths:** Leaders can guide employees through selecting cards that resonate with them and discuss how these strengths apply to their roles.
- **Create action plans:** Once key strengths are identified, collaborate on how to **use them to overcome challenges, develop professionally, and increase performance.**
- **Address stress through strengths:** Employees can use the card deck to identify a strength-based approach to managing work stress (e.g., applying empathy to build connections or using structural thinking to prioritize tasks).

Tip for Leaders:

Use cards that focus on **self-regulation, resilience, and adaptability** during high-pressure situations to help employees reframe challenges positively.

2. Team-Building Activities: Strengths-Based Collaboration

Foster team synergy and trust by incorporating the card deck into regular team-building exercises.

Sample Activities:

- **Strength Spotting:**
 - Team members select a card that represents a strength they've noticed in a colleague and share why.
 - This activity **builds trust, improves relationships, and fosters a culture of appreciation.**
- **Strengths in Action Exercise:**
 - Select a card as a team and brainstorm ways to apply its theme to a current project or challenge. For example, a team might draw the "**Perseverance**" card and discuss strategies for staying committed to long-term goals.

Outcome:

Team-building exercises using the deck promote **psychological safety** by ensuring that team members feel valued and heard, which reduces **loneliness and disengagement.**

3. Daily Mindfulness and Reflection Practices

The Rediscover U Card Deck integrates **mindfulness, meditation, and reflection techniques** to **reduce stress and enhance focus.**

Daily Practice Suggestions:

- **Morning Reflection:**
 - Employees select a card each morning and reflect on its message throughout the day.
 - For example, drawing the **"Gratitude" card** may prompt them to identify three things they appreciate by the end of the day.
- **Mindful Breathing:**
 - Each card comes with a **tailored breathing or meditation practice**. For example:
 - The **"Self-Control" card** may involve deep breathing exercises to **promote calmness during stressful meetings**.
 - The **"Creativity" card** may guide employees through **visualization exercises** to stimulate innovative thinking.
- **Team Check-Ins:**
 - Leaders can use cards during weekly meetings to **facilitate collective reflection**. Ask the team to reflect on how they applied their strengths during the week and how it contributed to team goals.

Outcome:

Embedding mindfulness practices into daily routines **improves focus, reduces workplace anxiety, and enhances resilience**.

4. Strengths-Based Leadership and Culture Change

The Rediscover U approach is not just a personal development tool—it's a **culture change tool**. By **empowering leaders to embrace strengths-based management**, organizations can transform how teams operate and improve **retention, well-being, and performance**.

Actionable Leadership Tips:

- **Strength-Based Recognition:** Recognize employees publicly for contributions related to their strengths.
- **Feedback and Development:** Provide strengths-based feedback, focusing on how employees can further leverage their strengths to improve performance and well-being.
- **Incorporate Strengths into Job Design:** Align work assignments with employees' strengths to **enhance job satisfaction and productivity**.

Example: If an employee consistently demonstrates strengths in **conceptual thinking and visioning**, consider involving them in **strategic planning or innovation projects**.

Research-Backed Benefits of Strengths-Based Interventions

Studies in **Positive Psychology, Cognitive Neuroscience, and Social Neuroscience** confirm the following benefits of strengths-based practices:

- **Increased engagement:** Employees who use their strengths daily are **six times more likely to be engaged at work** (Gallup, 2020).
- **Reduced stress and anxiety:** Focusing on strengths during challenges helps **reframe negative experiences positively**, reducing emotional burnout.
- **Enhanced well-being:** Employees report **higher levels of resilience, happiness, and job satisfaction** when strengths are recognized and applied.

Example Activity: Weekly Strengths Check-In

Objective: Foster ongoing strengths development and team reflection.

Duration: 15-20 minutes during weekly team meetings.

Steps:

1. **Card Selection:** Each team member selects a card at the start of the week.
2. **Reflection:** During the meeting, they share how they applied the card's strength during the week.
3. **Discussion:** Discuss how the strength helped achieve team goals or improve collaboration.
4. **Mindfulness Practice:** Conclude with a short breathing or mindfulness exercise to **reduce stress and refocus the team**.

Outcome: Regular strengths-based check-ins **reinforce positive behaviors and foster continuous learning and development**.

Bringing Rediscover U to Your Organization

By integrating the Rediscover U Card Deck into leadership practices, team-building exercises, and mindfulness routines, organizations can create a **SMARTER Culture** that prioritizes **strengths, meaning, accountability, relationships, trust, and well-being**.

Key Takeaways:

- Empower employees by **focusing on their strengths** rather than weaknesses.
 - Reduce workplace stress through **tailored mindfulness and reflection practices**.
 - Build stronger teams by fostering **trust, psychological safety, and collaboration**.
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Next Steps:

1. **Distribute the Rediscover U Card Deck** to managers and teams across the organization.
2. **Conduct workshops** on strengths-based leadership and mindfulness.
3. **Monitor progress** through regular check-ins and feedback sessions to ensure **sustained engagement and well-being improvements**.

Let's work together to build a workplace where **everyone is seen, valued, and empowered** through their unique strengths.

Contact us to implement Rediscover U in your organization and foster a culture of engagement, resilience, and well-being.

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Giving them the lifeline for working in teams successfully.