



FÜRSTENBERG  
INSTITUT

**NEWS**  
May, June | 2020



**Strengths  
and resources**  
making the most  
of potential



**Must papa always work?**  
How fathers can reconcile  
work and family life

**Dear readers,**



For several weeks now, we have been living and working in conditions that we could have scarcely imagined beforehand. From one day to the next, we have had to work from home, digitally and in a completely new way. Besides all the changes that are accompanied by worries and fears, as well as a new form of relaxation, there are many good things happening too: we are on the move! Familiar routines, patterns and methods no longer work, so we must and are able to rethink things. For some people, this releases previously untapped potential and casts work and other aspects of life in a new light.

Potential is also one of the topics we cover in this newsletter, as well as how we can discuss – also virtually – unpleasant issues without disrupting the sense of togetherness. In addition, we have included an article about fathers and reconciliation in the newsletter, which will take on a whole new meaning for many of us now working from home.

I wish you plenty of inspiration and all the very best!

Kind Regards,

Reinhild Fürstenberg

## Strengths and resources – making the most of potential



Whether it's manual skills, a good grasp of mathematics, an ability to empathise or a talent for organisation – everyone has individual strengths. Sometimes these strengths go unrecognised, partly because people only look for them superficially. Whereas some people can easily name 10 to 20 strengths they have, others find it much easier to say what they can't do: "I am neither creative nor artistic, my use of language is quite good but not really great, and I'm absolutely hopeless at maths – it seems that I don't have any special strengths ...". And the subject is quickly brought to an end.

## What are your strengths?

The strengths people have can be interpreted in a wide variety of ways. Flexibility, for example, is defined by some as always having time and working a bit longer into the evening or even over the weekend. For others, however, it means the willingness to let go of everything you had worked for so far and start out with something else when required.

As part of your strengths analysis, try to focus as clearly as you can and ask yourself the questions, "What benchmark do I use to decide if I am flexible? In which situations can this be seen?" These questions will automatically take you one level deeper and enable you to become more specific.

## Weaknesses - why does self-criticism come easier than self-praise?

Many people can name their weakness more precisely and are less inhibited to talk about them than about their strong points. Why is this so? Sayings like "self-praise is no praise" have left their mark on people across the generations. People were considered to be arrogant or smug if they spoke in positive terms about their abilities. Even at school or during our childhood we were more likely to hear about our mistakes than our successes. Doing something well is often merely taken for granted. If we are afraid of appearing conceited when we praise ourselves, why do we not fear feeling inferior when criticising ourselves?

## The greater my self-confidence is, the more strengths I can assign to myself

If we shift our focus away from problems and weaknesses, we can access our strengths and resources, and grow with them. When in a healthy balance with our resources, we are more able to develop and foster our strengths. To identify your own resources, you can ask yourself the following questions:

- What is good for me?
- What helps me to relax?
- How and in what situations do I experience an energy boost?
- Do I need an active or passive activity in order to gain access to my strength?

## How you can identify your strengths

When is a strength a strength? What are possible indications of it? When you find an activity easy or natural, this could be an indication of a strength. When you enjoy something or find it really interesting, it certainly belongs to your strengths. Ask yourself the following questions and spontaneously write down what comes to mind:

- What do I enjoy?
- What am I good at?
- What do I find easy?
- What comes naturally to me, but less so to others?
- What did I already enjoy doing as a child?



**Author:**  
**Susann Amir-Moazami,**  
counsellor  
Fürstenberg Institut

Ask your friends and relatives what they think. What do they like about you? What do close friends think makes you special? You will certainly be touched and strengthened when you hear the answers. You may even learn something new about yourself – strengths you didn't know you possessed. Or you might feel validated and gain more confidence to make the most of your strengths.

The Gallup Institute provides a comprehensive online strengths test for €54, also for the general public.



The test contains 177 questions, lasts approx. 30 minutes and works out the individual order of 34 talents and strengths.

<https://www.gallup.com/cliftonstrengths/en/home.aspx>

## Unpleasant topics: talk or stay quiet?



They make work unnecessarily difficult: inconsiderate and loud colleagues, little digs from the boss, dissatisfied customers. Friction will always occur whenever different people come together. Even conflicts in the office cannot always be avoided. However, we are not powerless to act against them: we can learn to solve them. And this is exactly what we should do. After all, a bad atmosphere and smouldering conflicts may not only stop you from enjoying your work, they can also make you ill over the long term.

Having a tricky conversation with the boss or colleagues is not always a pleasant experience. Nevertheless, it is in our interests to raise the conflict issue in good time. If we keep putting the topics off, it will become even more difficult to raise the subject. It is seldom a good idea to remain silent about conflicts due to shame or fear.

You will certainly be aware of situations in your own life when you have recoiled from directly discussing an unpleasant topic. This may be due to the fear of:

- upsetting the other person,
- hurting the other person's feelings,
- being misunderstood or
- because the whole thing is just embarrassing

However, there are good reasons why you should bravely confront unpleasant topics:

- **It's about your interests, your well-being and your sense of satisfaction.**

From time to time, think about what it means for you to put up with a stressful situation over the long term.

- **In many cases, the other person is unaware that you have a problem with something.**

For this reason, he will not think of changing the way he behaves or acts. And why should he if, from his perspective, everything is fine? It is your job to create an awareness of the problem by raising the subject in the first place.

- **It is possible that, in the end, your openness will do the other person a great favour.**

You may well not be the only one to feel unhappy about certain types of behaviour, characteristics or unnecessary mishaps. Other people feel the same way and this damages the reputation of the person concerned. Your openness can help him to avoid similar conflicts in future. It will spare him further moments of embarrassment and protect him from more serious consequences.

## How do I overcome my reservations and raise the subject?

By not beating about the bush and mentioning the subject openly and directly, without causing offence. Words instead of vague gestures. Avoid putting the issue off for too long. In the worst case, this could lead to the onset of negative feelings so that the conversation becomes too emotional and the issue could escalate even further. Arrange an appointment for the meeting and plan enough time for it. Inform the other person(s) what you would like to discuss so that they are not taken by surprise.

If you are already boiling over with anger, it will be difficult to remain friendly and calm during a conversation. In the heat of the moment, sparks can often fly. Of course, this doesn't mean that you should not raise topics that have been brewing inside you for a long time. In this case, make an even greater effort to prepare thoroughly for the upcoming discussion.

It is important that you succeed in staying composed and fair. You might be able to find an entry into the conversation that is appreciated by the other party by referring to commonalities or projects that you completed successfully together.

Stick to the problem area that you want to clear up and avoid "wiping the whole slate clean" and criticising the other person for their perceived misbehaviour or general attitude over the past months and years. Try to remain moderate in the points you make. Even if the other person mentions other problems, do not change the subject and suggest, for example, discussing any other issues at a later date.

Consider in advance who should moderate the meeting. If you are in



**Autorin:**  
Stefanie Schlüter,  
counsellor,  
Fürstenberg Institut

doubt, you can always seek support from the Fürstenberg Institut or ask someone you trust to get involved – someone whom the other person could also accept as a moderator.

Finally, it is always better to hold a tricky conversation with someone in a relaxed atmosphere and not spontaneously wherever you next meet. Stay focused on your needs and it will then be easier for the other person to accept your wishes and comments.

### Tips for difficult conversations

#### ■ Tip 1: Do not try to win at any cost

When difficult conversations escalate, this is often due to the fact that we have switched into battle mode. This turns the conversation into a zero-sum game with a winner and a loser. The truth is, however, that when conversations take this course, everyone looks bad and loses – particularly at work. The real winner is not one of the participants but the battle mode itself. You can overcome this attitude with the right strategy and skills.

#### ■ Tip 2: Recognise feelings and concentrate on the issue at hand

Fear, anger, embarrassment, a defensive attitude – such conversations can trigger all kinds of negative feelings in us that we would not normally have. Some people react aggressively, while others try to sweep things under the carpet as quickly as possible. Sometimes there is a bit of to-ing and fro-ing between two counterproductive poles. Try to find a happy medium instead and formulate clearly what you want. The negative feelings won't



suddenly disappear, but with some practice you will learn to concentrate more on the desired outcome.

#### ■ Tip 3: Show respect

Scrutinise your attitude honestly before the conversation. Are you really open for a solution that puts both sides on an equal footing? This will certainly be very hard to find without mutual respect. Make sure that you behave respectfully throughout the conversation. This applies to your choice of words as well as to your body language. Eye-rolling and loud sighs have no place in conversations about conflict. Remain respectful even when your counterpart acts with open hostility towards you. Point his behaviour out to him and set limits, but stay respectful while doing so.

#### ■ Tip 4: Do not be caught out by tricks

Lies, threats, holding back, sarcasm, tears, shouting, silence, complaining, feeling insulted: some people will seek to use any trick in the book. Just because you try not to end up in battle mode,

this does not necessarily apply to your counterpart. Take the sting out of a nasty trick by making it the topic of the conversation. If the other person no longer says anything, for example, simply say something like, "I am not sure how to interpret your silence."

■ **Tip 5: Be open-minded with regard to your counterpart**

Optimists believe that a difference of opinion is just a misunderstanding between two well-meaning individuals; pessimists think that the disagreement is a consequence of unfair attacks. In the heat of the discussion, we lose sight of the fact that we cannot know what other people's intentions are – we can only know our own. Bear in mind that both you and your counterpart will have to deal with this ambiguity. If you feel that a conversation is going nowhere, you could try saying the following: "If we talk to each other like this, I notice that I don't fully understand how you view this problem." Admitting that you don't understand something can be an effective strategy in bringing the conversation back on the right track.

■ **Tip 6: Do not lose sight of the aim**

The key to any conflict discussion is not to lose sight of the objective. Go into the meeting with a clearly defined, realistic aim. You should clarify what your working relationship with your counterpart should be like and also think about what difficulties could arise. (Remember: winning is not a realistic aim because your counterpart will probably not be willing to accept defeat as the outcome of the conversation).

From: <https://www.harvardbusinessmanager.de/fotostrecke/fotostrecke-77496.html>

## Book tip:

### Relationship skills at work: building bridges with empathy and non-violent communication

by Vera Heim und Gabriele Lindemann



Developing constructive working relationships with customers, colleagues and bosses is the key to being successful at work. This book clearly shows how you can open doors at work with empathy and non-violent communication, and foster a spirit of togetherness.

You will get to know the five key factors of empathy, find out how to open doors using language and learn how to deal with a "no".

The two authors have extensive leadership, consulting and management experience. Easy to read and with plenty of useful examples, they really put readers in the mood to try out some new strategies.



Pocket book: 128 pages  
Publisher: Haufe Lexware;  
Edition: 1st  
(15 February 2016)  
Language: German  
ISBN-10: 9783648080603

### We are organising a draw for 3 books

write with the subject line "Fürstenberg-Buchtip" to  
[marketing@fuerstenberg-institut.de](mailto:marketing@fuerstenberg-institut.de)

The entry deadline is 01.07.2020.

The winners will be notified

## Must papa always work? How fathers can reconcile work and family life



For a long time now, fathers have not just wanted to be the “breadwinner” and nothing more. They would like to spend more time with their children and share the family work with their partner. To achieve this, they are willing to work less. Although a quarter of fathers with children under the age of 18 would happily reduce their weekly working hours, only 5% of them actually manage to do so. This is revealed by figures from the German Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth.

While more and more fathers are taking parental leave, there is a considerable difference between fathers and mothers. On average, mothers stay at home with their babies for 11.6 months whereas the equivalent figure for fathers is just 3.1 months.

And while 85% of fathers return to the same working model after parental leave, only 22% of mothers work in the same way as before.

### Rethinking fatherhood and family

New father role meets outdated company structures

**Interview with Volker Baisch**, Managing Director of Väter gGmbH, and **Dr. Martin Bujard**, Research Director at the Federal Institute for Population Research (BiB)

#### **Mr Baisch, what is the reconciliation of work and family life for men really like in practice?**

The partner months for fathers have mostly worked out well. However, many fathers would like to take parental leave for longer than just two months. But in most cases, there is no organised substitution management. It is still expected that managers, in the main, distribute the work among the rest of the team or do it by themselves. Secondly, the wish for longer parental leave, which many men have, is not really implementable in the light of the gender pay gap.

#### **Mr Bujard, we talk about the transition of the father role and, at the same time, notice considerable difficulties in achieving more involvement of fathers. Why is that?**

Young fathers no longer consider themselves to be primarily breadwinners, but see themselves as active fathers and emotionally bonding parents. However, these new attitudes come up against older structures. Our survey of 20 to 39 year-olds showed that 52% of women and as many as 64% of men believe that fathers should cut back on their work. By contrast, the decision about career opportunities is taken very early on in life with respect to the old school of thought among men. According to this pattern, taking time out or doing less overtime means harming your career. Fathers not only work longer than their



**Volker Baisch,**  
Väter gGmbH



**PD Dr. Martin Bujard,**  
Forschungsdirektor BiB

partners, but also longer than men who do not have any children. This extra work results in better career opportunities and income for men. For this reason, the term “rush hour of life”, meaning the burden of work and family demands, also applies to fathers.

### **How do young fathers view the topic of reconciliation and what does that mean for companies?**

Baisch: Fathers between 35 and 40 are much different to the baby-boomer generation. They want to have more time for family, and attach greater importance to organising their own time and being less controlled by a boss. They also like the concepts of flexitime, trust-based working hours, sabbaticals and similar things. They want to take parental leave, do more of the housework and help their partners advance their careers. This includes fair payment for both partners. Studies show that when women earn as much as men, the likelihood will increase that fathers take parental leave for longer.

From the handbook “Fathers and reconciliation”, BMFSFJ

<https://www.bmfsfj.de/bmfsfj/service/publikationen/vaeter-und-vereinbarkeit/121316>

### **Is your company a customer of the Fürstenberg Work-Life Service?**

If so, you can receive counselling on topics such as applying for child benefits, parental allowance and parental leave, as well as topics related to returning to work after an absence and looking for suitable childcare facilities or schools. The customer log-in section on our website also offers you tips for filling in application forms and sample letters.

The counsellors at the Fürstenberg Work-Life Service also offer individual counselling sessions, information and documentation on topics as wide-ranging as care needs, precautions, authorisations, court orders, care and financing options, as well as solutions regarding the care and support of family members.

[www.fuerstenberg-institut.de/kundenlogin.html](http://www.fuerstenberg-institut.de/kundenlogin.html)

only  
in german

### **information about**

### **Fathers in the Corona Crisis Family succeeds together!**

by Väter gGmbH

[www.vaeter-ggmbh.de/corona](http://www.vaeter-ggmbh.de/corona)



## Corona and care

### – what you now need to know



The corona crisis also has far-reaching consequences for caring relatives and their family members in need of care. In many cases, the result is loneliness, uncertainty and difficulties in reconciling work and family needs.

The challenge now lies in facing up to the new realities of life and adapting to them. While doing so, it is important to find a happy medium between providing care and mental overload.

There will continue to be strict visiting rules in all **nursing homes**. Basically, such visits are not allowed. Relaxations to the rules will only be made on a home-by-home basis in line with an in-house hygiene concept. The homes will have to be contacted individually to find out what the requirements are.

### Day care and care groups are closed. What alternatives are there?

If a crisis situation arises due to a lack of care, you can look for help from a stationary short-term care facility. Up to 30 September 2020, this could also be suitable rehabilitation facilities.

Providers of hourly-based care services (home helps) can continue to work in compliance with the applicable hygiene conditions at the home of the person in need. The willingness to take on new clients can be discussed in one-to-one conversations.

The German Alzheimer's Society provides an app for the relatives of people suffering from dementia, containing tips on how to organise daily life. <https://www.deutsche-alzheimer.de/angehoerige/app-alzheimer-you-den-alltag-aktiv-gestalten.html>

To find out about further individual possibilities, such as using stand-in carers, please contact our care counsellors.

### My parents are alone at home. I cannot visit them so often anymore and can no longer do certain jobs for them. What can I do?

It is possible to have medicine and food delivered to their home. Find out about the delivery options from your local pharmacy. There are also mail-order pharmacies like DocMorris, myCare, Apotal and Shopapotheker, which send the medicine by post. In addition, you can order online via [www.aponow.de](http://www.aponow.de) and get your medicine from a local pharmacy.

A variety of supermarkets such as EDEKA, NETTO and REWE offer online orders, with deliveries mostly being made via the postal service.

If friends or relatives who do not belong to a risk group live nearby, they can also help out and take care of some of the errands on your behalf. If this is not the case, you can look for assistance for your relatives from the following platform: <https://www.quarantaenehelden.org/#/>

In this new situation, additional security can also come in the form of an emergency alarm system. This allows people to call for help in emergencies by simply pressing a button.

**The following updates have been made as a result of the care laws**

### Questions and answers on the latest updates and stipulations

#### **I have applied for a care level.**

##### **How is the assessment now made?**

There will no longer be any home visits up to 30 September 2020. The Medical Service and Medicproof (for the privately insured) will make the assessments based on their records and an interview by telephone or video.

#### **I receive a care allowance and must therefore prove that I have attended a consultation as per §37. 3. How does this work now?**

Such consultations have been cancelled up to 30 September 2020. However, should you need a consultation, please contact your care insurance company. A consultation can also be held over the phone.

#### **I use the allowance for specific care and nursing products. Has anything changed there?**

Yes, there is an increase to the allowance up to 30 September 2020 from €40 to €60 in order to cover the increases to the product prices.

## New digital services



The new coronavirus has turned our working world completely upside down. Our work with others is now largely digital, which involves all kinds of new challenges as well as opportunities. While some people enjoy the peace and quiet of working from home, others find it difficult to cope with the distractions of home life. Many people now face a double burden as the current work situation also leaves them with childcare and home-schooling duties. We aim to offer you the best possible support for all these topics!

Our counsellors have put some short YouTube clips on our website that offer you helpful tips. Handouts summarising all the topics are also available for download.

[www.fuerstenberg-institut.de/fuer-unternehmen/digitale-unterstuetzung-corona.html](http://www.fuerstenberg-institut.de/fuer-unternehmen/digitale-unterstuetzung-corona.html)



FÜRSTENBERG  
INSTITUT

## Impressum

Fürstenberg Institut GmbH  
Gorch-Fock-Wall 3  
20354 Hamburg

Phone 040 / 38 08 20-0

Fax 040 / 38 08 20-20

info@fuerstenberg-institut.de

www.fuerstenberg-institut.de



**Follow us on XING!**

### Editorial:

Vi.S.d.P.: Anika Ohlsen

Articles by: Susann Amir-Moazami, Stefanie Schlüter, Paula Schneider

Layout: Jenny Poßin

Translation: Michael O'Callaghan'

Credits: Titel: ©shutterstock\_wavebreakmedia, kl: ©Halfpoint\_iStock,  
S.3: ©shutterstock\_Tyler Olson, S.7: ©Charles Deluvio, Unsplash, S.11: ©Tim Gouw,  
Unsplash, S.13: ©haufe S.14: ©shutterstock\_OksAks,  
S.15: ©privat, ©privat, S.18.:shutterstock\_Suzanne Tucker,  
S.21: Brooke Lark, Unsplash  
S.2, 5, 9: ©Fürstenberg Institut