

Change is rarely easy,

but altering the way we actually think and make decisions is probably one of the most difficult transformations of all to achieve and, ultimately, sustain. The ability to make that change, however, can often be a vital component in becoming or remaining a good leader.

According to Dr Kevin Fleming, president and CEO of the US-based neuroleadership consultancy and coaching firm Grey Matters International, the process of transforming how we think can involve actually rewiring the brain.

Fleming, who has a PhD in clinical psychology, says he has spent the past 10 years working to refine the neuroscience of leadership and behaviour change and help people think more about their thinking.

Working with clients that range from Fortune 100 CEOs, White House officials, professional athletes and people with addictions, he says that “utilising alignment principles of human nature, virtues/ethics, and working with the ways of the brain”, he is in the practice of “moving individuals, partnerships, families, and teams away from rote behavior toward areas of creativity and shared accomplishment”.

Simply put, his solutions are about using neural science to rewire the brain and its ingrained ways of thinking, followed by one-on-one coaching.

“A lot of people talk about rewiring, but I don’t think people really do it,” he says. “Because my background is in neuropsychology, I’m able to at least understand a bit how neural plasticity works and what are those conditions of changing your thinking.”

He often works with high-powered, high-profile individuals who find themselves at a breaking point in their careers or personal lives, people who are described as ‘derailed executives’. “There’s some impairment in decision-making, be it at work, at home, or both,” he explains.

“There are times in your professional career when you have problems on a different level, where all of a sudden your strengths become your problems. This is a hidden area for a lot of cognitive, analytical, bright people, who are used to solving problems through effort, and smarts and manipulation or influence.

“I work with people at that tipping point. Einstein said it best when he said no problem will ever get solved on the same level of thinking the problem was created on. In my opinion, there are some no-turning around places in the brain where once you get to a certain level you need some new thinking.”

The first step in dealing with the problem, he says, is to fix “the sabotaging capacity” of the brain. “If you have a shopping bag and it’s full of stuff and you try to put more stuff in it, it’s going to fall out.

“We’ve really got to rearrange the neural networks and make sure that we aren’t sabotaging ourselves. Nine times of out ten, most human beings in this modern world are suffering from some kind of emotional trauma, unconscious sabotaging, some kind of disordered or imbalanced brainwave patterns.”

This, he maintains, is not because of dysfunction or mental illness, but because of constant demands on the brain. He

references Stanford neural biologist, Robert Sapolsky, author of *Why Zebras Don’t Get Ulcers*, who observed that while zebras go face-to-face with trauma in the savanna, every moment of stress has a beginning and end point.

“The brain in modern times has no starting and stopping point,” says Fleming. “So we have to reset the systems.”

He says he uses technology that helps him to literally reoptimise the brain. “If one side or one lobe is functioning too much to compensate for another, we have to reorder that,” he explains.

One traditional way of doing that, he says, has been through neural feedback, where the client is being trained to train their brain to reorganise.

“If I have a depressed person in my office, I have an idea of what a non-depressed protocol of frequency of brainwaves in the right order should be like and I’m going to programme that so that when they’re doing a task cognitively, the computer’s going to reward the brain when it gets it right.”

Fleming, however, favours a new, quantum physics version of neural feedback. “It’s like neural feedback on steroids! You remove the error variance that comes from any experiment or error around diagnosis.

“With the quantum level tool, I can allow the brain to view itself molecularly. And when it does, the brain’s going to reorganise to its own way. The brain is like a fingerprint – it has its

own pattern that it knows it needs to reset to. If you can allow the brain to do that more naturally, it’ll reset without any kind of preset norm.”

“Neural feedback is basically saying, I’m going to train you Johnny, to train your brain. [With the quantum version] we can skip over Johnny, we’re going to train your brain.”

Using the quantum level tool, Fleming says the brain can reorganise within 10 to 12 sessions over five days, twice a day.

“From there you’re having to maximise the neural plasticity potentially you’ve just opened up. All I’ve done is remove the extreme negative variance that accounts for bad decision-making. Now I’ve got to add in, and that’s where the coaching part can really be joyful.”

Fleming believes that the ability to change our ways of thinking is particularly important at this time. “It’s very challenging to get people to think transformationally at these moments, when it’s all about survival thinking,” he says. “I argue that how you do survival is linked to this vision, because neurons that fire together wire together. If you spend too much time in survival mode and then wake up one day ready to change, you’ll find that your brain doesn’t want to move there.

“This is arguably the time for Irish leaders to really seek this next level, because then you’re going to be practising new thinking at a time when it’s contrary to logic. That’s good. That’s what you need to be doing.”

THE BRAIN TRAIN

CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGIST DR KEVIN FLEMING SPECIALISES IN REWIRING PEOPLE’S BRAINS, HELPING THOSE IN LEADERSHIP POSITIONS, OR ‘DERAILED EXECUTIVES’, TRANSFORM THEIR THOUGHT PROCESSES THROUGH THE REARRANGEMENT OF THEIR NEURAL NETWORKS. HE TELLS **GRAINNE ROTHERY** HOW IT’S DONE

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