

FAST Pathways Example Successes – Preventing a Resignation

Rachel has a challenging role, trying to lead a change in culture across her organisation. She described her senior stakeholders as mainly alpha males, with the old school tie network running strongly between them. As an outsider to that, getting herself heard hasn't always been easy, and the political manoeuvring had really knocked her confidence. She was seriously thinking about leaving.

One key relationship was horribly toxic. She felt undermined and ignored, and her absolute frustration was bubbling up to the edge of tears - not the way to make the kind of impact she wanted to. She didn't feel strong enough to get agreement on the key decisions needed.

Within her first FAST Pathways session, Rachel started to feel ready to stand her ground – and leadership meetings started to go much better. She learned to manage her frustrations and harness new techniques, and feedback from across the leadership team's been incredibly positive about the impact that's having.

Rachel's still frustrated by some behaviours, but she's no longer dreading having to deal with certain people. Instead of slogging it out, she's enjoying the creative challenge of changing mindsets. Month on month there's been steady progress, and she's happy to keep going and see it through.


Anything to Avoid an Aeroplane

Amber sometimes needs to travel abroad for work, which would be fine, except that she was terrified of flying. She'd already resigned from one job because she couldn't deliver without travelling; and her new employer was starting to make more requests for her to visit other European projects. She was too embarrassed to tell them about her fear of flying, and was again considering handing in her notice.



She'd tried toughing it out, and always had a horrendous time with the panic she experienced – the distress amplified even further by the embarrassment she felt, as she put it 'freaking out' in front of strangers. She'd also tried to overcome it with sheer force of will, booking a holiday with friends, in the hope that being surrounded by a supportive entourage would help. It didn't. She got as far as the airport check-in before she couldn't handle it, and went home losing all the money she'd paid for the holiday. And each time she 'failed' it amplified the feeling that this thing was insurmountable.

Using the FAST Pathways skills, she spent an hour or so working out how to change each element of the fear inside her thinking. Once her body was back to comfortable, she imagined every part of the



journey – getting up and dressed, the journey to the airport, the queues at check-in and security, and all the little details of the flight itself, tweaking any discomfort to stop it from escalating.

A few days later she travelled to Lithuania. She felt a little anxious in the airport, but managed its effects without it hijacking her as it used to. By the time she reached the place itself she was feeling fine. And once the first trip was under her belt, and she'd proved to herself that the old habits were gone, she's been able to take many others in complete comfort.

An Emotional Allergic Reaction

I was supporting Angela's organisation with achieving Operational Excellence. She'd been hand-picked from a comprehensive recruitment process – it had taken ages to find the right person, and a couple of months into the role she was absolutely loving it. So I was really surprised when she took me aside to tell me she was about to leave.

She'd got off on the wrong foot with someone, a difference of opinion which had escalated until they couldn't be civil to each other. And unfortunately he was the business owner – let's call him Len. Her boss had tried to help, giving them both feedback and trying to mentor them through it, but it had only got worse. Len wasn't the easiest of people, but Angela was having what I can only describe as an emotional allergic reaction to him. It was off the scale - being near him made her feel physically sick.

Being excused from any meetings he was attending was significantly impacting what she needed to deliver. She'd keep tabs on where he was in the building to avoid him – making her so distracted that she got next to nothing done, and still went home feeling absolutely drained. As often happens in fight-flight reactions, her creative thinking had shut down, leaving her able to see only two possible solutions to the situation. Get him to change (which no one had been able to), or leave the job she loved.

I talked her through the FAST Pathways Shield technique – it's helped overcome all sorts of difficult relationships, professional and personal; and she was quickly able to imagine herself in his presence without any discomfort. I could tell she wasn't convinced that it'd work in practice.

So on my next visit a couple of weeks later, I was pleased to see that she was still there. At the first opportunity, she took me aside again to ask what I'd said to Len. I was a little confused, because I'd had no contact with him for weeks. As she put it "He's stopped being a prat", so she assumed I'd somehow managed to convince him to change. Of course, it was her who'd changed – but because her Shield was operating automatically, she hadn't realised.

Once she no longer felt threatened, she'd stopped the pre-emptive attacks, to which Len used to respond so badly. They'd found some common ground for communication, and two weeks in, it was gathering pace. By my final visit a couple of weeks later, all the hostilities were completely forgotten. She summed it up as "We'll never be drinking buddies, but he's actually OK. You've just got to know how to handle him". And with just those few minutes' guidance, she'd learned how to.