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Beyond Resilient: How Mental Health Care Leaders Can Use Applied Foresight to Be Future Ready

A Guest Article by Simon Anderson

Often during periods of disruption and rapid change, we focus on being resilient - able to “weather the storm” and survive the challenges of the day. As a futurist, I believe that with the right mindset, tools, and practices, mental health care leaders can move beyond resilience to become Future Ready. This means being able to spot future challenges while there is still time to do something about them and recognizing important new technologies so you can put them in use much sooner to accomplish goals like improving patient outcomes and increasing employee satisfaction.

Because of this, my career is dedicated to helping leaders be better prepared to navigate the challenges and capitalize on the opportunities created by rapid change. Mental health care is certainly experiencing change today. In addition to all the challenges already being faced pre-pandemic, new challenges, like the alarming rise in youth mental health issues are emerging.

To help leaders not just avoid the worst potential outcomes, but to also find ways to benefit from new trends and disruptive technologies, I created a Future Ready framework, called “3A Thinking.” Using this framework is a simple way to begin integrating applied foresight in your organizational planning and strategy.

It starts with **Attention**. This includes looking at the technologies and trends currently still at the “edges” for a preview of what may demand your attention in the future. (A few great places to find advancements at the edges are MIT Tech Review, the Verge, Ars Technica, and WIRED.) It is also important to consider our generational perspective, as this can affect what we pay attention to or what we might not even be seeing at all.

Today, some of the important trends for mental health care leaders to pay attention to are: the fast-forward digital transformation we have experienced since the pandemic began, changes in how we communicate using technology, blockchain advancements beyond cryptocurrency and digital art, new advancements in mental health care technology, and the changing future of work.

Once we are paying Attention, we can use **Anticipation** to consider “what if, what then?”. This may require us to challenge our assumptions and unlearn experiences that no longer serve us. We also should remember that advancements don’t happen in a vacuum. They mix and remix with other advancements, as well as existing technologies, and may accelerate more rapidly than we would have initially anticipated. (Check out this [Foresight Scenario Worksheet](#) to practice and grow your anticipation skills.)

Lastly, once we’re paying Attention and Anticipating the possibilities, we need to have a bias toward **Action**. If we don’t take action, it won’t matter if we are paying attention or if we are anticipating.

What specific actions can we take today to be better equipped for the potential changes that we have anticipated? And, will these actions optimize current practices or be truly innovative? There is a place for both, but it's important to recognize which we are doing as we prepare our organizations for the future.

Rapid change can be more than something we just survive. Change creates opportunity when we're ready for it. As mental health care leaders, you have an amplified impact. When you lead your organizations to be Future Ready, you create a ripple effect that positively impacts the lives of many people in your communities. Using this 3A Thinking practice in weekly planning sessions, board meetings, or with your leadership team can help you better position your organization and your community to not just survive, but to thrive in our fast-changing and ever-challenging future.

Simon Anderson is a futurist and Applied Foresight Consultant with his company, Venture Foresight, LLC. He recently spoke at the mhca Spring 2022 conference (members can view the full conference presentations at mhca.com) This article covers some key take-aways from his presentation and workshop. Simon can be reached simon@simonspeaks.com or @Futur1st.

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