



Maryland Career Development Association

June 2021 Newsletter

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2021-2022 MCDA Executive Board Elected

We are pleased to announce the results of this year's elections. Congratulations to the newly elected MCDA Executive Board and many thanks to all who ran for office. The MCDA Executive Committee Officers will be:

President - Natasha OrtizFortier ~ <https://www.linkedin.com/in/creativecareerchic/>

President-Elect - Tessa W. McKenzie ~ <https://www.linkedin.com/in/tessa-mckenzie-6a713464/>

Secretary - Viktoriya Lotkina Selden ~ <https://www.linkedin.com/in/viktoriya-selden/>

Secretary-Elect - Paula E. Waters

Immediate Past President - Julie Neill ~ <https://www.linkedin.com/in/julieneill/>

Treasurer - Maria Schaeffer (elected in 2020 for a two-year term)
<https://www.linkedin.com/in/mariateresaschaeffermedcdf/>

Treasurer-Elect - Latara Jones

Additional approved Board Members include:

Legislative Chair - Natalie Kauffman ~ <https://www.linkedin.com/in/kauffmanncareersllc/>

Credentialing Chair - Rosemarie Howard

Congratulations to all our elected officials! We look forward to a year of new beginnings and renewed vigor. If you are interested in getting involved with President OrtizFortier's Presidency, please reach out to her at MCDA.PElect@MDCareers.org, until July 1 when her email will become MCDA.President@MDCareers.org. Here is a current list of MCDA Committee openings for the 2021-2022 Program Year:

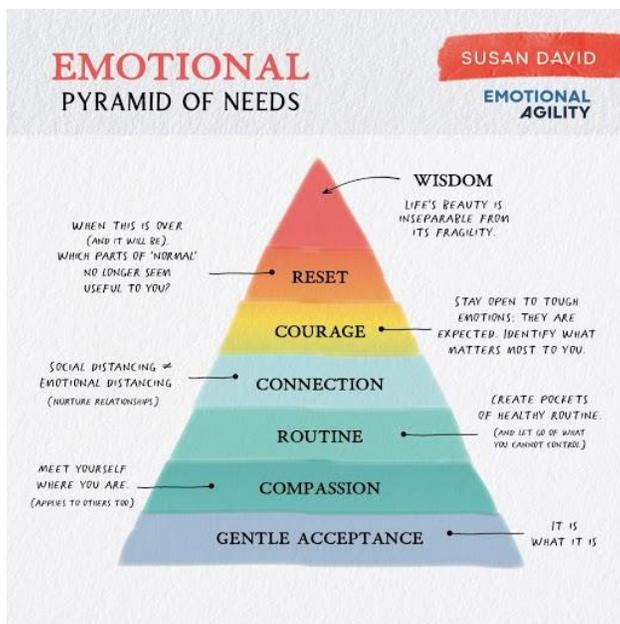
- Awards

- Conference
- Public Relations
- Membership
- Mentoring and Outreach
- Website
- Newsletter
- Program
- National Career Development Month

Learn more about the roles of MCDA Committee Chairs by accessing the bylaws at [Maryland Career Development Association - Bylaws & Minutes \(mdcareers.org\)](http://Maryland Career Development Association - Bylaws & Minutes (mdcareers.org)) on pages 7 and 8.

Thanks to all the members who took time to vote. Consider becoming a member and/or getting more involved. We encourage you to engage in a way that aligns with your interests--serve on a committee, write a newsletter article and/or attend MCDA events. Your participation makes MCDA a robust organization!

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Emotional Agility

By Karol Taylor

Taking a moment to assess our situation is typically a good idea. It's important to notice our emotional responses and consider how well we are thriving and/or surviving in any circumstance. I recently learned about a newly developed model for successfully adapting to our feelings in relation to the pandemic and the pivot it forced us to make. The Emotional Needs Pyramid was developed by Dr. Susan David, an Instructor in Psychology at Harvard University. She is the author of the book *Emotional Fragility*. This model illustrates what a healthy emotional response to the pivot would look like. If we learn these steps and follow them, our opportunity for increased resiliency and adaptability can create a stronger emotional agility than we may have previously thought we were capable of.

Like Maslow's Hierarchy of needs [The 5 Levels of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs \(verywellmind.com\)](http://The 5 Levels of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (verywellmind.com)), this pyramid begins at the bottom and works its way up.

Step 1. Gentle Acceptance suggests that under uncontrollable situations feelings of anxiety, hopelessness or grief can be expected, therefore accepted. Acceptance is the prerequisite for positive change.

Step 2. Compassion: During unprecedented times such as the current pandemic, forgiveness, flexibility, and compassion—for both yourself and for others—can alleviate anxiety and burden.

Step 3. Routine: Routine provides a sense of order, the glue that holds us together from day to day. When faced with the unfamiliar, we tend to fill in the gaps with fear; instead, we can fill the gaps with things that are comfortable, familiar, and connected with our values. Healthy routines are essential, specifically those associated with sleep, exercise and eating. Our bodies and minds are so inter-connected and our physical health is reflected in our psychological state.

Step 4. Connection: Physical distancing is not synonymous with social distancing. Connection is more important than ever. Nourishing relationships, especially if you're feeling lonely, can be done despite physical distance.

Step 5. Courage: Research now shows that the radical acceptance of all of our emotions—even the messy, difficult ones—is the cornerstone to resilience, thriving, and happiness. Slow down and face into your difficult emotions with courage. What you find there will direct you to make better decisions and take values-based actions.

Step 6. Reset: This is the time for reflection. What priorities did you once have that no longer seem important? What parts of 'normal' do you not want to rush back to? Gather your data, and reflect on what you learn about yourself. This will guide you as you move forward.

Step 7. Wisdom: Life's beauty is inseparable from its fragility. The only certainty is uncertainty, and once we realize this as truth, the healthier and more authentically happier we will be. Courage is not an absence of fear; courage is fear walking.

If you want to self-assess you can take Dr. David's quiz at [Quiz | Emotional Agility — Susan David, Ph.D.](#) This site provides quick and basic feedback information based on your responses, but if you want to learn more you will have to pay. I think you will receive enough insight based on the manner in which you go about determining your response to each question that you will not need to pay for any further interpretation.

Best wishes for success in your continued emotional agility!

Reference: [The Emotional Pyramid of Needs - AMI-Quebec \(amiquebec.org\)](#)



Karol Taylor has been a member of MACD/MCA and MCDA for more than 17 years, 13 as an MCDA Board member and executive leader, and 8 on the MACD/MCA Board. Karol is an award-winning expert in the federal job search, but she also has expertise in leadership and organizational development. The emergence of COVID-19 motivated Karol to consider how people might respond in the new telework-place.

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What is Your Greatest Weakness? A TWIG May Help Clients SOAR into the Job!

By Sean Lybeck-Smoak

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For many, interviewing is stress-inducing, especially in the virtual environment that we find ourselves. Whether it is anticipating and preparing for the interview, the interview itself, or following up with thank you notes, the job

of career service providers is clear. Career service providers offer clients resources, guidance, and strategies to reduce their anxieties and navigate the process with success.

SOAR & STAR Techniques



The SOAR (Situation, Obstacles, Action, Results) and STAR (Situation, Task, Action, Results) techniques are great tools for helping clients organize strategic interview stories. The intelligent use of acronyms describe straightforward, easy to remember strategies that help clients prepare for the interview. The acronyms tell clients exactly what they need to do in the interview.

- Sell oneself
- Demonstrate STAR candidate qualities
- SOAR past the competition
- Secure a job offer.

By remembering the four words of the acronym, clients can prepare stories that effectively market their value proposition, employability strengths, accomplishments, and approach to problem solving. With preparation and practice, clients may experience reduced stress as they gain confidence in telling compelling interview stories that come across as authentic and conversational (Kelley, 2017).

SOAR and STAR are great techniques for many questions, but not necessarily for when clients are asked to “name weaknesses” during the interview. While it is possible to adjust the SOAR strategy, it lacks the natural fit with the “between the lines” intent of the interviewer. Namely, is a client self-aware and “open to admitting, taking responsibility for and learning from your mistakes” (Kelley, 2017). While there are easy ways to describe interview strategies to clients, it is difficult to find a similar acronym that is as memorable, on-point, and descriptive for the weakness question. A variety of interviewing resources describe cookie cutter-type answers and plenty of “don’ts and dos.”

Don’t share a weakness that would:

- disqualify oneself by admitting something big;
- use the word “weakness” (Kelley, 2017) or create negative sound bites (Kelley, 2017);
- cast blame on others or talk bad about one’s employer;
- give too many details;
- make it sound like a cookie-cutter or memorized answer;
- use clichés (Kelley, 2017);
- claim one’s “weakness as a strength” because the interviewer has heard it before and does not believe it.

Do:

- use the sandwich technique by surrounding the negative with two positives (Kelley, 2017);
- choose a weakness closely aligned to a strength (Kelley, 2017);
- demonstrate self-awareness and a commitment to improvement by spending more time talking about overcoming it (Kelley, 2017);

- identify areas for improvement, and explain ways of working to overcome shortcomings (List of Weaknesses: 10 Things to Say in an Interview, 2020);
- keep it brief.

While the sandwich technique is easy to remember and effective, it is not an easy to remember and descriptive acronym, like SOAR, that clients may carry with them into the future. While pondering the desire for an acronym, it is clear that there is opportunity to make a small adjustment to the strategy that will help clients improve their interviewing skills in the short-term and their career management mindset in the long-term. By adding another positive (growth) to the end of the “positive – negative – positive” sandwich technique, clients can both demonstrate a personal commitment to overcoming a weakness, and take a small step towards adopting a “Growth Mindset.” Having a “Growth Mindset,” as described by Carol Dweck (2014), is beneficial to long-term career management. An ever-growing number of leaders and businesses are adopting growth mindset approaches, and taking advantage of the opportunity to define themselves in growth terms could benefit the client in the job hunting process.

TWIG Techniques

By adding the extra positive, it no longer makes sense to refer to it as the sandwich technique. Additionally, PNPP (Positive, Negative, Positive, Positive) is an unappealing acronym that is neither memorable nor descriptive. There is an avenue for creating an effective acronym in line with the ancient practice of offering an olive branch (not much bigger than a twig) as a symbol of making amends and moving forward. This new acronym is TWIG (Trait, Weakness, Improvement, Growth). In the case of job hunters, the olive branch or TWIG offered to interviewers is a compelling story of reflecting on a weakness, making amends by making improvements, and moving forward towards a growth mindset.

TRAIT

- Remind the interviewer of a positive trait, strength, skillset that is part of one’s personal value proposition.
- Introduce a new trait to promote.

WEAKNESS (a negative factor closely aligned to the challenge, failure, difficulty, mistakes, or reason for leaving a previous position, etc.)

- Demonstrate one’s ability to be reflective and recognize a growing edge.
- Keep it brief and manageable.
- **IMPROVE** Demonstrate the ability to be reflective and to self-manage.
- Describe positive steps taken to improve the situation and oneself.

GROWTH

- Focus on the growth witnessed in oneself and in the workplace.
- Describe potential for continued growth.

Now SOAR!

As career services practitioners, we can explore this technique with clients, explain the symbolism, and have clients offer a TWIG of growth when confronted with the weakness interview question. This will help them SOAR into the job.

References

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Sean Lybeck-Smoak is the Director of Experiential Learning and Career Education at Cardinal Stritch University. He holds a Bachelor of Arts from Centenary College and a Master's from Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary. In over eighteen years of higher education experience, Sean has specialized in the facilitation of high-impact co-curricular experiential-learning opportunities, including the Federal Work-Study Community-Service program and internship programs. Over the last few years, he has worked closely with the academic leadership at the university to help design and launch a series of required career development courses for undergraduate students, and teaches the pre-internship course for the university. He can be reached at sismoak@stritch.edu

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Newsletter Article Submissions

MCDA welcomes article submissions on topics of interest to the career practitioner community. We are seeking articles that address emerging trends, and best practices. For best consideration, please submit articles (maximum length 700 words, although shorter is preferred) by the 15th of the month prior to the desired month of publication. The newsletter will be published monthly. The article deadline for the July 2021 issue is June 15, 2021. For article submissions or questions, please email: Rachel Loock, Editor,

MCDA.Newsletter@MDCareers.org

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