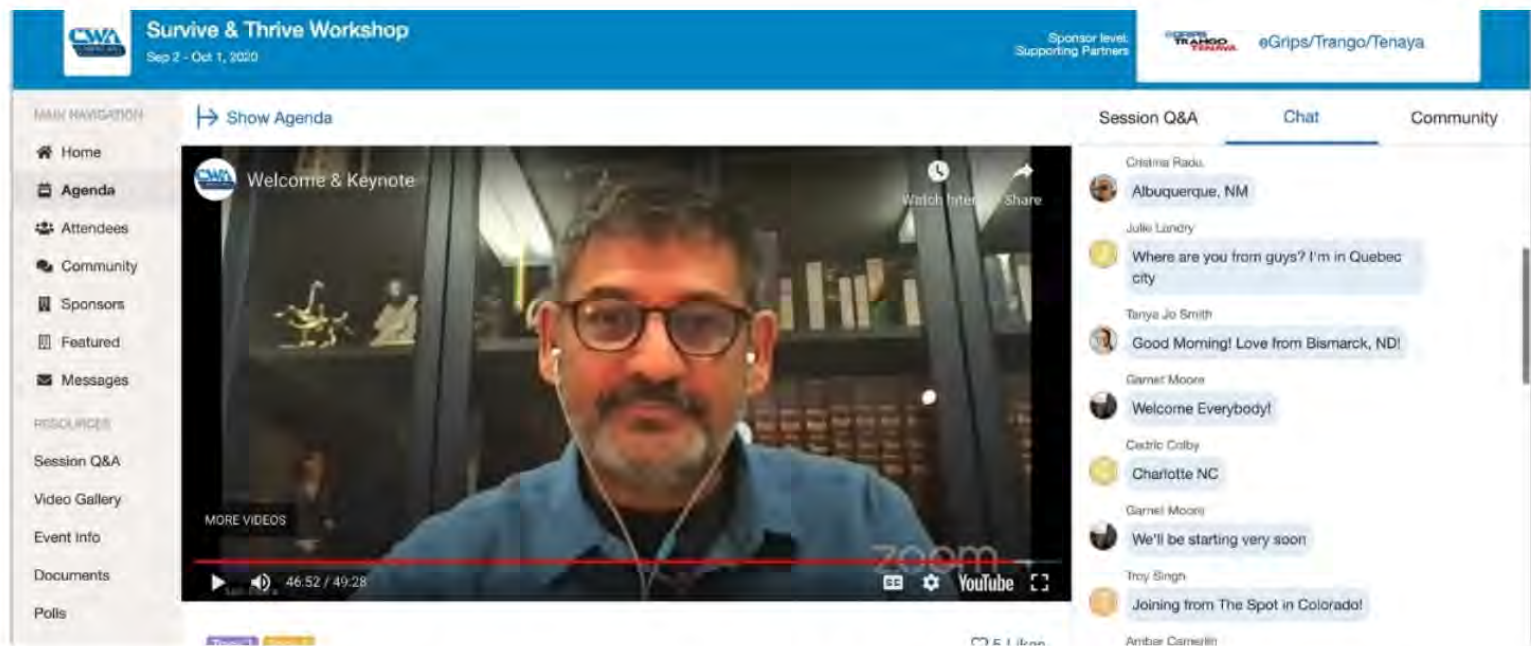


Maneuvering Through COVID-19 With CARE

September 22, 2020

in [CWA Blog](#)



The pandemic was a shock to the climbing industry. In addition to other disruptions to daily life, gym closures have been devastating to the entire industry. It's clear that the path forward cannot be the same one previously taken. A new path forward has to be forged.

The Climbing Wall Association was equally impacted, canceling its annual in-person conference, the CWA Summit, to instead focus our efforts on creating resources for our members and the climbing industry at large. We began hosting twice-a-week [Community Calls](#), published a [Roadmap to Reopening](#) and more than two dozen other [helpful articles](#), and organized our first-ever virtual workshop, the Survive & Thrive Workshop, which is still [accessible on-demand](#).

The workshop goals are simple:

- Provide actionable strategies to survive this uncertain time
- Generate ideas to strive for growth and forward thinking
- Foster connection
- Inspire - spark creativity and a sense of optimism
- Have fun!

Within the first 30 minutes of the workshop, gyms were empowered to look inward for the answers. Opening keynote presenter Sam Thiara, a business coach with Ignite the Dream Coaching, is also a calm, introspective storyteller and professor.

He showed a picture of a monk in yellow robes and commented that he is not that monk, he does not have all the answers. But he can provide a framework for listeners to define their questions, reframing their challenges to find solutions. What follows is a quick overview of Sam's keynote session.

You have the answers, and here's how to find them:

- Collaboration
- Adaptability
- Resilience
- Empathy

Collaboration:

Now more than ever is the time to lean on your team. Bring everyone together and first make sure you're in alignment on your company's mission, vision, and values. Only by understanding where you are presently can you move forward as a team, and in so doing build trust and fortify those relationships. Strengthen your relationships by taking care of your team (and don't forget about yourself). This will create more solid footing in a global environment that feels anything but solid.

Adaptability:

It is an understatement to say that climbing gyms have had to get creative during these unprecedented times. Change is tough, but a few tactics can make it easier. These tactics have to do with your own mindset toward change.

As opposed to resisting change, accepting and even embracing it can allow for greater creativity. We are now back to square one in a way, so having that "learner's mind" and an "improvised mind" can really help. Moreover, getting strategic so that you are being proactive versus reactive shows leadership and empowers your team to try things and keep adjusting. Just remember, when implementing organizational change:

- Be transparent with those around you
- Communicate in the most efficient way
- Engage others to let them be a part of the change (not top down)

Resilience:

We know now that COVID isn't going away anytime soon. This is a marathon, not a sprint. It's more important than ever to look after yourself and those around you. The best way to build resilience are with these tactics:

- Acceptance
- Define yourself (don't let the situation define you)
- Use this as an opportunity to learn
- Demonstrate gratitude

Creating a supportive environment centered around trust, appreciation, reflection, and collaboration will create strength and unification, two major pillars of leadership.

Empathy:

Great leaders care for those around them. Really put yourself in the shoes of those around you. What is their mood? What might be going on in their lives, outside of the assumptions you may hold? The only way you can know the answers to these important questions is by establishing a greater level of communication.

When engaging, really listen. Be present. Just as self-care works for you, treating your team with empathy is a form of self-care for them, which has a trickle-down effect for the customers they interact with and, in turn, the way these customers feel about your business. This is called the “Service-Profit Chain Model,” another tactic you can take with you from the Survive & Thrive Workshop.

In summary, when we focus on the solutions versus our deficits, we are doing what’s called “Appreciative Inquiry.” Reflecting on how you got to where you are (what Sam Thiara calls your “base”), where you’re going (your “dream”), how you’re going to get there (your “design”) and delivery is a great way to structure your team’s approach to this unique moment.

And just remember, you’re not in it alone.

[Join the Survive & Thrive ecosystem](#) to gain access to networking tools with all attendees, ongoing Community Board forum conversations, and more valuable content like this session! Once on the platform, you’ll have access to the content and networking tools for the next 6 months! Ticket sales end September 30. [Register at cwameetings.org/surviveandthrive](https://cwameetings.org/surviveandthrive).

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