

Bailey & French.

Psychological Flexibility

The Skill Leaders Need Now

baileyandfrench.com



INDEX

What is Psychological Flexibility?	<u>2</u>
Why Now?	<u>3</u>
Leading Through Change	<u>4</u>
More Than Engagement	<u>5</u>
What the Research Says	<u>6</u>
How We Bring Psych Flex to Life	<u>7</u>
Why This Matters	<u>8</u>



What is Psychological Flexibility?

Psychological Flexibility – or Psych Flex – is the ability to stay open, adaptable, and effective when things don't go to plan. Many of our clients describe it in their own words: some call it human agility, others talk about rapid acceptance. However you frame it, it's about moving forward in the face of challenge, uncertainty, and change.

Where resilience is about “bouncing back,” Psych Flex is about moving with, and through, the reality of what's in front of us. It's not resistance. It's response.



Our model of Psych Flex is based on research from Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), an evidence-based approach developed by psychologist Steven C. Hayes in the 1980s.

Why Now?

The speed of change is only accelerating. AI, global disruption, shifting expectations of work leaders can't rely on yesterday's playbooks. Traditional approaches like Six Sigma or Agile processes have their place, but they don't deal with the human side of change.

This is where Psych Flex comes in. It equips people and teams with:

- ✓ The capacity to **accept chaos and discomfort** without losing focus
- ✓ The skill to **pivot rapidly** without clinging to "the old way"
- ✓ The mindset to **stay steady under pressure**, while still delivering performance

Unlike resilience, which is about surviving shocks, Psych Flex is about thriving in the everyday turbulence that never stops.



Leading Through Change

Managers can't make work perfect for everyone. Organisations can't remove all uncertainty. And leaders can't promise that disruption will slow down.

But they can help people take accountability for how they show up when things feel messy, uncomfortable, or unfair. That's the real power of Psych Flex: it provides individuals and teams the tools to keep working, growing, and succeeding, even when the environment around them is unpredictable.

Beyond Psychological Safety

Psychological safety has been valuable – reframing wellbeing and DEI conversations under a shared language of “safety.” But safety alone isn't enough to sustain performance.

To truly thrive, people need more than space to speak up. They need the skills to act with agility once challenges are on the table. Psychological Flexibility provides that missing link: it's the bridge between feeling safe and being able to adapt and perform in real time.

For a deeper dive into this, read our [Humanising Change Paper here](#).



More Than Engagement

Engagement and motivation tell us how people feel. Psych Flex goes further. It's a skillset that shapes how people respond, both individually and collectively, to the inevitable pressures of modern work.

When people can flex, they can:



Take accountability

Flexibility isn't about waiting for perfect conditions. It's about showing up, owning your part, and keeping things moving, even when the situation feels messy or unclear.



Accept reality quickly

The faster we acknowledge what's happening, the sooner we can respond effectively. Rapid acceptance helps teams stay grounded, avoid wasted energy, and make decisions based on what's real, not what we wish were true.



Shift focus

Once reality is clear, energy should go into moving forward, not assigning fault. Flexible teams concentrate on what they can influence, unlocking new approaches and opportunities even under pressure.



Insights from Leading Experts

Psychological flexibility is increasingly recognised as a crucial skill for navigating the complexities of modern work environments. The following resources delve into various aspects of this concept, offering both theoretical foundations and practical applications.

➤ **Todd Kashdan – "Psychological Flexibility"**

In his article, Todd Kashdan emphasises using emotions as tools and aligning behaviours with the demands of a situation, enabling individuals to adapt effectively.

➤ **BBC Science Focus – "Mental Flexibility: The Best Predictor of Willpower"**

This article highlights research indicating that mental flexibility is a stronger predictor of sustained willpower than traditional positive thinking. It suggests that individuals who can adapt their thoughts and behaviours in response to challenges are better equipped to maintain self-control and achieve long-term goals.

➤ **Alex Bailey – "Psychological Flexibility is a Skill We Can All Develop"**

In this short video, Alex discusses the significance of psychological flexibility in the workplace.

➤ **Alex Bailey & Josh French – "Increasing Psychological Flexibility in Organisations"**

This in-depth discussion between Alex and Josh explores strategies for enhancing psychological flexibility within organisations.

➤ **National Library of Medicine – Flexibility drives engagement and buffers distress**

Research with adult and paediatric intensive care staff found that higher psychological flexibility was linked to stronger work engagement and reduced the negative effects of distress.

➤ **MDPI – Suppressing negative emotions among leaders during crisis**

Interviews with business leaders during COVID-times showed many suppressing negative emotions (anger, anxiety, frustration), hiding them from both followers and themselves. This behaviour is linked with emotional exhaustion and burnout over time.

Bringing Psych Flex to Life

We make Psychological Flexibility practical and accessible across organisations. Our approach helps leaders and teams move from theory to action, giving them tools, experiences, and frameworks they can apply every day.

✓ **Free Online Webinars:**

Interactive sessions to build understanding and everyday application.

✓ **Large Events:**

We have keynote speakers available for virtual and in-person events globally.

✓ **Manager Discussion Tools:**

The Psych Flex Conversation Mat is a self-facilitating tool that anyone can use. They help teams open discussions around acceptance, presence, values, and action, guiding them to discover practical ways to respond to challenges with clarity and confidence.

✓ **Psych Flex Options:**

From introductory workshops to skill development modules and leadership programmes, our Psych Flex Options show the different ways organisations can build flexibility into daily work.

✓ **Benchmarking:**

Compare your organisation's data with global datasets to see how its human agility measures up against others.





Agility doesn't come from systems or AI alone – it comes from people. And the organisations that thrive in 2025 and beyond will be those where leaders and teams can flex, adapt, and still deliver when the pressure is on.

Psych Flex isn't a buzzword. It's the human skill of the future.

Want to see how this
fits your organisation?
Scan to connect



Bailey & French.

HUMANISING THE WORLD
OF WORK



baileyandfrench.com

