

# **Problem-solving, Decision-making and Crisis Prevention**

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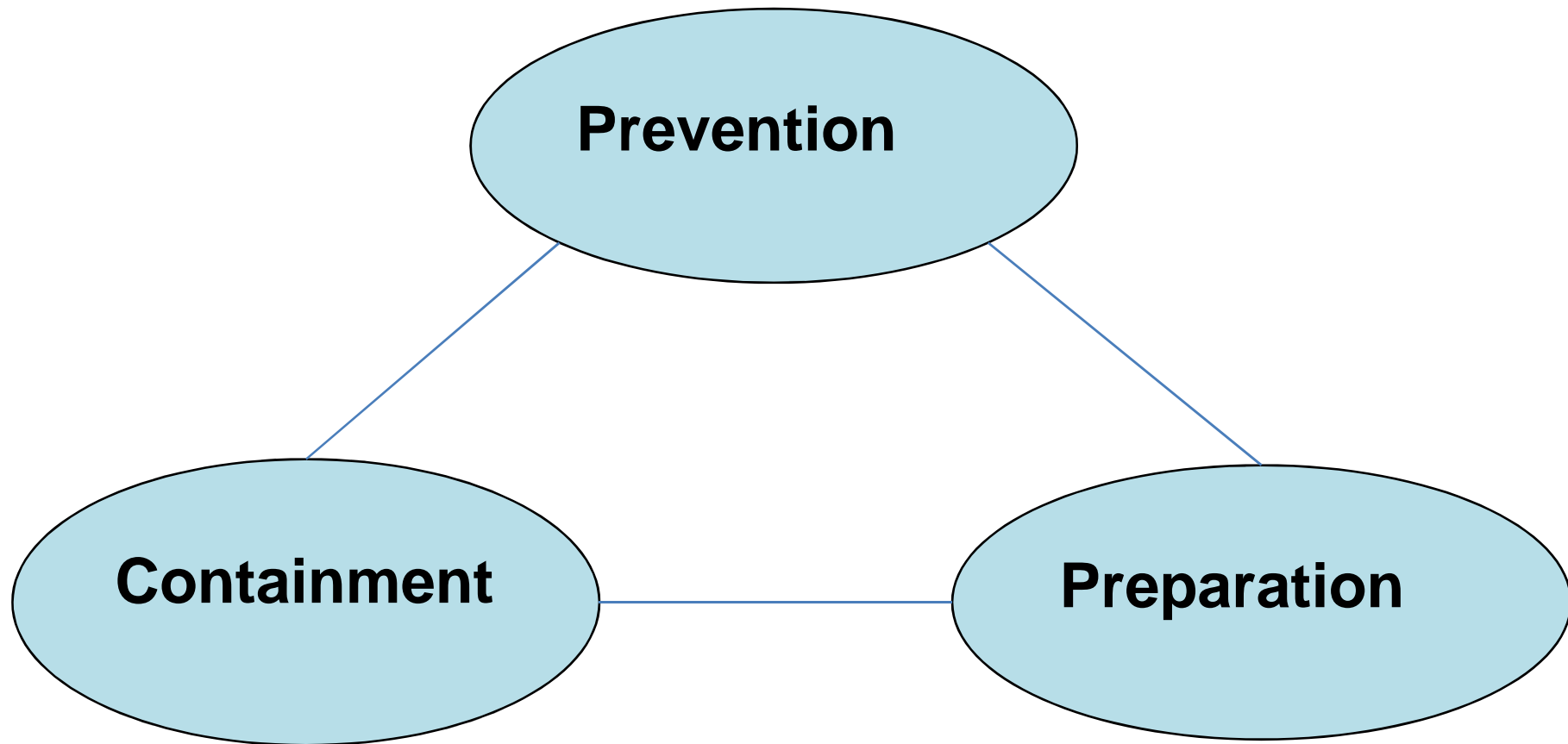
Abstract: Here, in this Chinese American Scholars' Association: C.A.S.A. paper, the mental ballasts, certain values and/ or ways in which one can better deal with problems and decision-making (and grow) with the end result of preventing crisis are examined.

The proverb, “A stitch in time saves nine” becomes relevant and true if one or even the organization gets used to the habits of solving problems, deciding well and being decisive while moving forward.

## Abstract (cont'd.):

Human (organizational) life has many issues to deal and grapple with. And we have to solve problems and decide well. And truly the way forward is to adopt these (if not several of the) mental ballasts – discussed in the paper.

*Figure 1* shows the Crisis Management Shield: Prevention/Preparation/Containment  
(Source: Low, 2006)



The Dictionary.com defines ballast as **“anything that gives mental, moral, or political stability or steadiness”**. That being the case, mental ballast can be taken as the **total emotional and intellectual response – a stable or a steady response –** of an individual (organization) to external realities. Next, **values can be taken as key beliefs and convictions** held by the individuals and organizations.

*Figure 2:* The 4 mental ballasts serve as the four legs of the table giving good standing and support to the processes of problem-solving and decision-making.

**1. ‘Always Be Prepared’**

**2. ‘Prevention Is Better than Cure’**



**3. “The Untrapped Mind”**  
(PHP Institute, Inc., 1994).

**4. Self-help  
and Resilience**

Illustration 1: emphasizes the need to be ready and prepared to avoid delays; one has to think ahead and plan. And here, **one should really have ready templates, frames and checklists** to solve problems and make decisions.

**‘Always Be Prepared’**



**PLANNING**

# **1. 'Always Be Prepared'**

One should also explore the key solutions, workable alternatives and least costs options.



**Table 1 shows a sample template of Problem-solving**

**O What are the symptoms?**

**O What are the causes?**

**O What are the real, key or underlying causes?**

**O What are the key solutions?**

**\* Among the key solutions:**

**O What are the pragmatic or workable alternatives?**

**O What are the least costs alternative(s)?**

**O Which alternatives involve the minimum manpower?**

Adair's (2011: 105) idea 56 also speaks of a **checklist** in terms of **sharing decisions**. Here, these checks include:

O Have you, as the leader, agree the aims and objectives with the team?

O Has the leader involved the team in collecting and sifting the relevant information?

O Has the team helped the leader to generate a number of possible courses of action?

O Has the leader used the synergy of the team members' minds to firm up the feasible options?

Cont'd

O Has the leader tested for consensus to see how far, in the circumstances, a course of action you favor is seen to be the optimum one?

O Has the leader secured everyone's commitment to make it work?

O Has the leader reviewed the decision with the team so that the lessons of success and failure are learned for the future?

This author has **an added pointer in the checklist**, and that is:

O Has the leader created belief in the team and motivated the team members?

**To the author, one also gets prepared and/ or plan well (thinking ahead and arranging for contingencies or emergencies) by focusing on failures and mistakes to learn from them to move forward.**

And indeed **practice makes perfect.**

“To be good at anything at all requires a lot of practice, and to be really good at taking decisions you have to have plenty of practice at taking decisions”

(Lord Thomson of Fleet, Canadian media entrepreneur cited in Adair, 2011: 81).

And there is thus a **quality touch**, if not style, with a **kaizen approach to the problem-solving and decision-making processes**. Problem-solving through **PDCA: Plan-Do-Check-Act** (Armstrong, 2011; 2011a) is also reinforced. One learns and improves oneself. In fact, as indicated by Tinsley, Dillion and Madsen (2013), when one pays attention to near misses and study past errors/near catastrophes, one can also be better in problem-solving and decision-making and can improve predicting and preventing crisis.

Next...

An ounce of prevention is  
worth a pound of cure  
- Benjamin Franklin -

## **2. 'Prevention Is Better than Cure'**

To prevent is to be proactive. To react is no good as one is caught with a surprised and, in fact, with one's pants down



### **3 “The Untrapped Mind”**

Like a blank page, the “untrapped mind” (PHP Institute, Inc., 1994) is open enough to see many possibilities or options, humble enough to learn from anyone and everything, perceptive enough to see things as they really are, and wise enough to judge their true value. This idea and practice came from the late Matsushita Konosuke, the Japanese industrialist.

#### **4. Self-help and Resilience**

One works hard and resolves one's own problems. One goes on working with the mental ballast and value of self-help and resilience, together with the idea that no one or even the world owns the person a living or anything.

Moreover, one toughens up with more tough decisions made.

WAN WAN  
COCO FUL  
BASKIT

**Translation** *One cocoa at a time fills the basket.*

**Meaning** *If you persevere you will achieve success in the end.*

**SINGAPORE**

0 km 2 4 6 km

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- Natural park
- Park area
- Urban area
- SINGAPORE (4, 131,000 In 2001)



Wanting to bounce back after a setback, “Singapore turned the shock of the British pull-out into a business possibility. The vacating by the British of their naval base at Sembawang gave Singapore ready-made dry docks and ship-repair facilities, and so Sembawang Shipyard was born.”

(Anderson, Cowling & Springham, 1995: 9).



**Q & A**