The Learning Forward Loop
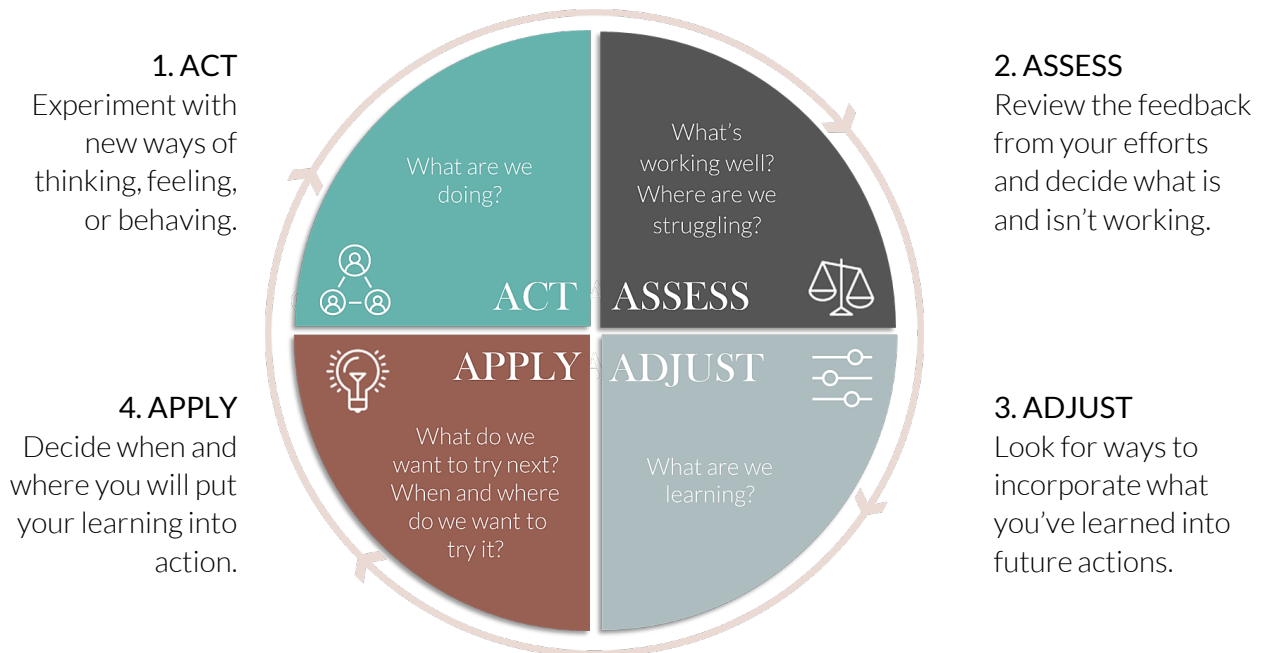
Based on Kolb's reflective learning cycle the Learning Forward Loop comprises four stages:

1. ACT
Experiment with new ways of thinking, feeling, or behaving.

2. ASSESS
Review the feedback from your efforts and decide what is and isn't working.

4. APPLY
Decide when and where you will put your learning into action.

3. ADJUST
Look for ways to incorporate what you've learned into future actions.

ACT — What are we doing?

ASSESS — What's working well? Where are we struggling?

APPLY — What do we want to try next? When and where do we want to try it?

ADJUST — What are we learning?

The Learning Forward Loop helps us in several ways. First, the **Act** stage is action oriented, which moves us from *thinking* about doing something to actually doing it. This also means that our learning is based on lived experience rather than just theorising about what could or might happen.

The **Assess** stage keeps us curious and reflective so that we can assess the impact of our actions. It's important at this stage not to let your inner critic take over. Asking What went well? What did I learn? can help you resist the urge to be judgemental and also provide a sense of achievement, which gives your brain a hit of the happy hormone dopamine and helps sustain your motivation to keep moving through the learning journey.

The **Adjust** stage builds capacity to try new things and increases our threshold for the perfectly imperfect nature of the real work that leaders have to do every day. This is particularly important in the ambiguous environment of the Decade of Disruption.

And finally, the **Apply** stage ensures we take action on this learning so that we keep making progress and moving forward in our own leadership and with the people we lead. This is how we bring accountability and personal responsibility to the process.

In order to build our capacities to take action – even when it feels hard - the Learning Forward Loop must be repeated over and over to wire our neural pathways towards mastery. By keeping the actions and risk small we keep our brains feeling safe, which boosts our motivation and confidence to try something new and learn forward as we do.