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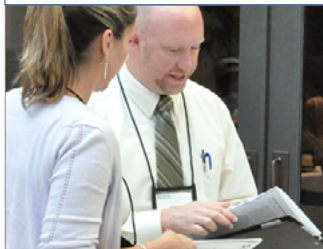


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Leadership Skills for New Academic Administrators

Sara Zeigler and Russell Carpenter

As new academic administrators begin and advance in their academic careers, they will need new skills and strategies for leading complex initiatives, programs, and tasks. New academic administrators will be expected to guide their higher education institutions through change and ensure continued focus on related vision, mission, and goals. They will also face unprecedented challenges as the higher education environment adopts new technologies and pedagogies, adapts to decreased state funding, and shifts offerings in response to changing demographics. New academic administrators will require

- strengthened skills in multiple academic roles and content areas;
- enhanced knowledge of academic committee and program-level leadership, including how differences in style, strategy, and approach affect collaborative work;
- an appropriate balance between action and consultation;
- improved skills for those leading academic programs and committees at the department, college, and university levels; and
- an enhanced ability to identify emerging leaders for committee work and future academic leadership roles.

RECENT DISCUSSION IN LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

“Institutions of higher education have the responsibility to invest in developing leadership programs that prepare young or early-stage faculty to become leaders, as well as to become more purposeful contributors to the broader university strategic goals.” (Coll, 2016)

As budgets tighten in the face of decreased enrollments, changing demographics, philanthropy fatigue, and student demands for nicer and more extensive facilities, it is tempting to reduce investment in leadership development at the same time that academic leaders need to be more skilled, thoughtful, adaptable, and astute than ever. There is ample evidence of the need for increased attention to the cultivation of aspiring leaders in higher education (Ashe & TenHuisen, 2018; Coll, 2016). Employees need tailored and individualized options that resonate with their experiences and provide tools that they can apply immediately (Wilks et al., 2018).

Not only do employees need focused professional development, they also need it delivered in a convenient, self-paced, accessible format that permits interaction with others but does not require expensive and time-consuming travel (Ruben et al., 2018). Virtual and asynchronous options also allow faculty to balance professional development with personal obligations, which potentially addresses class, race, ethnic, and gender disparities in access to leadership development opportunities. Excellent leadership programs will also ensure coverage of topical, timely content and reliable data to support leaders in creating budgets that reflect their values, focusing on increasing enrollment, and dealing with entirely unpredictable conditions such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

ESTABLISHING LEADERSHIP GOALS FOR NEW ACADEMIC ADMINISTRATORS

A key challenge for new administrators is understanding what they don't know, what they need to know, and how to transform knowledge into action. As faculty members, we learn to collect data, be attentive to nuance, provide deep and comprehensive analysis, and develop expertise in specific content areas. These academic skills are helpful in that they allow leaders to be thoughtful, thorough, and deliberate. They are also a liability in that they can slow decision making, allow leaders to seek information that does not necessarily assist in making a decision, and keep attention on a narrow issue when the problem is broad and overlaps multiple areas. Most faculty are accustomed to working alone, with almost complete control over their scholarly and pedagogical decisions. The perfectionism that we seek in our scholarship can be an obstacle to managing an administrative workload. Some work requires swift action, some must be delegated, and some must be done despite uncertainty that it will work or disagreement with the direction set at a higher level or necessitated by external pressures.

To make this critical transition, there are skills that new academic administrators must develop and access. New administrators will need to be able to

- reflect on their own leadership values;
- assess leadership strategies and skills in day-to-day scenarios;
- prioritize leadership decision-making;
- explore approaches for expanding leadership skills in different situations;
- discuss leadership scenarios and potential outcomes;
- explore valuable leadership resources and tools;
- develop a leadership action plan for use across a variety of academic contexts;
- empower those under their supervision to contribute and develop leadership skills of their own;
- manage meetings in an efficient, productive, and inclusive way;
- confront and navigate conflict without anxiety or self-doubt; and
- manage budgets, including reallocation of resources when necessary.

STRATEGIES FOR NEW ACADEMIC ADMINISTRATORS

New academic administrators can prepare for their roles through deliberate and focused professional development. As early as possible upon assuming a leadership role, a new academic administrator should do the following:

- **Develop a leadership mission statement.** This exercise will help the new administrator in reflecting on values, developing a clear sense of purpose, and identifying a focus for initial work. It will also help the new administrator set and accomplish leadership goals and priorities beyond daily tasks.

- A mission statement should be short (no more than a paragraph) and broadly framed to identify goals for leadership rather than strategies for task completion.
- The mission statement can serve as a guide in determining which projects to undertake.
- **Create a support network.** A new administrator will need allies who are not under the administrator's immediate supervision. It is important to be able to process information, talk through problems, script difficult conversations, and check biases. The options below can help:
 - *Check-in sessions:* A regular, 30–60-minute weekly conversation with a trusted colleague will provide valuable support. The colleague could be a peer, a person from another institution, a personal friend, or anyone who is discreet and trustworthy.
 - *Professional networks:* Some professional organizations provide opportunities to interact with others facing similar challenges. The American Council on Education (ACE) Women's Network state chapters, the Higher Education Resource Services (HERS) Network, the Professional and Organizational Development (POD) Network, discipline-based organizations for administrators (such as the Council of Colleges of Arts and Sciences), the Association of American Colleges & Universities (AAC&U) Project Kaleidoscope (PKAL) STEM Leadership Institute, or major academic leadership meetings (such as the Leadership in Higher Education conference) can provide opportunities to meet other new and aspiring leaders.
- **Ensure good communication with “next-level down” employees.** While managers can be helpful and spare the new administrator time and effort, it is important to know what employees who are secondary reports to you think.
 - Open office hours, held weekly, biweekly, or monthly, can be a way to encourage them to share information without undermining the authority of their direct supervisors.
- **Engage in intentional reflection.** New administrators should seek opportunities to secure timely feedback. As you transition to a leadership role, bear in mind that people will be more reluctant to speak frankly and directly because of your new authority. Options for securing feedback include
 - brief, anonymous surveys;
 - coaching sessions with trusted peers and mentors who have observed meetings or projects managed by the new administrator; and
 - debriefs after challenging conversations or meetings, with questions as to what went well and badly to steer the debrief to the outcomes rather than the performance.

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Post-pandemic Cultural Considerations for Online Learning

Courtney Plotts

Post-pandemic teaching will ask us to focus on our classroom culture and how we connect with our students. Online learning culture is a specific culture found within the academic framework of higher education. Terms such as independent learning, self-efficacy, and self-identity are frequently associated with online learning culture. These terms align with individualistic cultural norms and the struggle of ethnically diverse learners who identify with communal cultural norms to find a place. Ethnic culture influences social and learning experiences (Aronson & Laughter, 2016; Booker et al., 2016; Campbell, 2015). This article presents a model of cultural presence to be used in conjunction with the community of inquiry (CoI) framework in online spaces.

CoI theory is widely applied to online teaching practices and course development. Available data suggests that CoI creates robust learning and social interactions in online spaces. It is often associated with online learning best practices and consists of three interconnected aspects of online learning: *cognitive presence*, *social presence*, and *teaching presence* (Garrison, 2000; Garrison et al., 2010). Cognitive presence is one's ability to make meaning of academic content (Garrison et al., 2010). Social presence is the psychological and social attribute of online spaces, and teaching presence is the skill of facilitation and delivery of curriculum and content in online spaces (Garrison et al., 2010). Although CoI is frequently referred to as a model of best teaching and learning practices, the influences of ethnicity and culture on social, psychological, and cognitive presence are not represented within the model, nor do any of the previous studies list this absence as a limitation. Communal cultural norms differ significantly from norms associated with online learning culture, such as independence and self-focus. Cultural differences increase acculturative stress among first-generation and diverse student populations (Cox-Davenport, 2014). By ignoring cultural differences, current best practices contribute to experiences of marginalization, isolation, and depression among underrepresented students taking online classes.

To bridge this gap in the research, I've developed a model of culture presence to increase the cultural scope of the CoI framework. I define cultural presence as "the intentional inclusion, use, and application of ethnic and cultural norms within the teaching and learning process that supports learning, student well-being, and meaningful outcomes. Cultural presence applies to teaching and learning, course design, and the student socialization in the online space" (Plotts, 2018, p. 2). There are five aspects of course design and teaching that construct cultural presence:

- Intentionality
- Transactional versus relational course design
- Convergent versus divergent thinking
- Collaboration and contextual learning
- Independent versus interdependent learning

These five aspects of cultural presence are designed to work in tandem with the current model of CoI and are used to enhance learning experiences for underrepresented student populations.

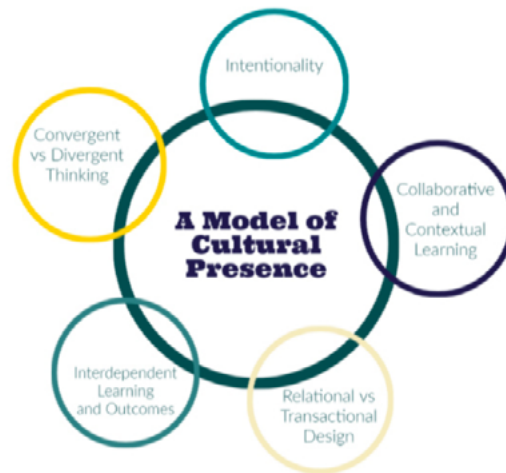


Figure 1. Model of Cultural Presence

Intentionality is one's ability to understand the how and why of what is occurring in their online space. Researchers noted that a specific and intentional focus from faculty is required for knowledge and skill regarding culturally responsive teaching (Soper & Ukot, 2016). To facilitate cultural presence in online spaces, faculty require specific training in areas such as collaborating effectively across culture, building and maintaining community, and fostering appropriate learning climates in virtual spaces with the use of culturally responsive models of teaching (Plotts, 2019).

Current design models of online teaching are transactional. These transactional models contribute to significant barriers to creating human connection. Transactional connections in online spaces are orchestrated and quantified (e.g., week one: post once, respond twice). Instead, faculty can focus on the relational nature of information delivery and exchanges by focusing on building a sense of community and course climate. This will help create more meaningful connections between students and their peers and students and the course content.

Independent learning is often associated with online learning outcomes. But the concept of independence is Eurocentric in nature. Instead, creating cultural presence focuses on the interdependence of learning for students in online spaces. Cultural presence applies opportunities such as social modeling, building peer support, and the increase of interconnectedness as cultural norms within the online course.

Online culture is often associated with one's ability to think critically. Garrison et al. (2010) originally placed more value on cognitive presence (critical thinking) than on social and teaching presence, but they found that cognitive presence, social presence, and teaching presence were equivalent and contributed equally to learning outcomes in online spaces. Yet, communal cultures often support or show preference for divergent (creative and imaginative) thinking over convergent (critical) thinking. Applying the model of cultural presence within an online course increases opportunities for divergent thinking within the teaching and learning process.

Finally, collaborative and contextual learning are associated with online learning best practices. The current models of CoI and collaboration, however, rarely highlight the role culture plays in collaborative

experiences. Current models omit the importance of how ethnic student groups use cultural norms to socially position themselves in collaborative experiences. This absence contributes to negative experiences for underrepresented populations. Social positioning via cultural norms is an important aspect for many minoritized students working collaboratively in online spaces (Maldonado Torres, 2014).

Cultural presence is an important facet of effective online teaching and learning. Community psychology, multicultural psychology, and learning and cognition research highlight the importance of effective culturally responsive teaching for minoritized student groups. The lack of culturally responsive teaching in online spaces contributes to the acculturative stress among various student populations. Using this model of cultural presence for online spaces can support faculty and instructional designers in creating robust learning experiences for students of various ethnic groups.

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The Inclusion Habit

Amanda J. Felkey

This evidence-based solution transfers inclusion work to the individual and focuses on changing behaviors and habits. The program is designed to help individuals be proactive in making their behavior more inclusive through six habit-building phases: embracing that inclusion matters, understanding biases and their sources, dispersing the negativity associated with bias, thinking more deliberately, reprogramming incorrect intuitions about others, and becoming more empathetic. It uses small, daily activities designed to mitigate biases and microaggressions while creating new habits of understanding, empathy, and inclusion.

THE LIMITS OF POLICY AND PROGRAMMING

Enhancing inclusive behavior needs to be propelled by the college or university but start with individuals. The workplace is the best place to enhance inclusive behavior. Indeed, it is likely the only place to make strides toward a more inclusive society. In all other facets of our lives, we surround ourselves with people who are like us. Our family members are like us, we choose friends who are like us, we live near people who are like us and we go to church with others like us. Dr. Martin Luther King noted that 11:00 a.m. Sunday morning is the most segregated hour in America. For most of us, work is the only place in our life that is truly diverse, making it the institution's responsibility to arm employees with the resources necessary to face, embrace, understand, and be inclusive of diversity.

Inclusion policy is ineffective given that those who currently hold the most social, political, and economic power are not representative of the general population. For example, broadly considering the dimensions of race and gender, the following figures demonstrate the lack of accurate representation among those in power. Our power pipeline is not filled and fostered to be representative. Figures 1 and 2 show how short we fall from equity. Those sitting at our policy making tables do not have experiences that encompass those of our whole society. Without those experiences there is little hope they can design truly inclusive policies. A 2017 survey of American tech workers confirms that individuals agree the government is not the key to meaningful changes in inclusion ([Atlassian, 2017](#)).

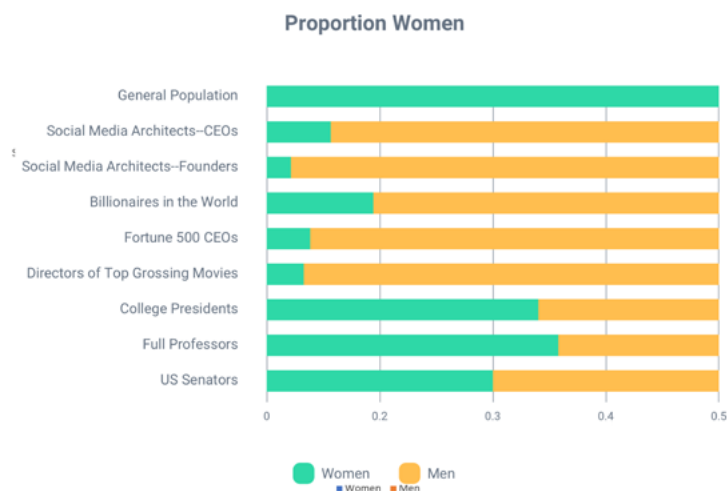


Figure 1.

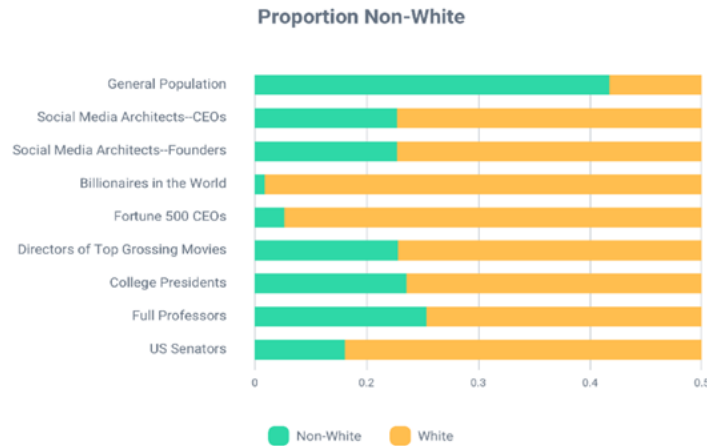
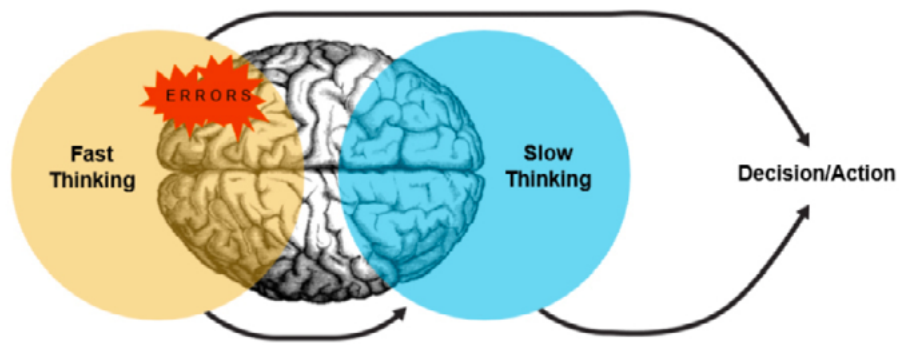


Figure 2.

** Statistics come from Brenner (2018), Center for American Women and Politics (2019), *Chronicle of Higher Education* (2018), Erbland et al. (2019), Frank (2018), Moody (2018), and US Census (2018).

To date, organizations have relied heavily on programming—speakers, trainings, and workshops—to enhance diversity and inclusion in their workplaces. While programming is a cost-effective way to convey information to large numbers of people, it is limited in effectiveness for two reasons. First, programming does not accommodate how we learn and retain information. Models of information retention, beginning with Ebbinghaus’s forgetting curve from the 1880s, demonstrate that the effects of mass communication of persuasive ideas are subject to rapid decay (Hill et al., 2013; Murre & Dros, 2015). This is exacerbated by the fact that recollection is far more robust and accurate when we see and do something rather than when we simply hear it. Remember the Chinese proverb: “Tell me, and I’ll forget. Show me, and I may remember. Involve me, and I’ll understand.”

The second reason for programming’s limited effectiveness is that awareness does not automatically translate into changes in behavior. This translation into action is especially limited in the realm of inclusion, where we have unconscious biases and our fast thinking (our intuition and our gut reactions) is not always in line with our slow thinking (our deliberate decisions, intentions, and values). Since our brains operate as efficiently as possible, we rely more heavily on our fast thinking when we are performing difficult tasks, multitasking, or are under time constraints, allowing our biases to creep into our decisions.



Moving beyond programming is essential for organizations because its ineffectiveness is beginning to wear on workers. A 2018 survey showed that workers prioritize fostering inclusion and diversity but are becoming tired of simply talking about its importance (Atlassian, 2018). They are frustrated that programming does not generate meaningful action and create sustainable change.

BUILDING THE INCLUSION HABIT

Inclusion needs to be tackled at the individual level and become a new habit. If we successfully address inclusion at the individual level, then our power pipeline will become representative of our general population. Through the pipeline, individuals will bring those inclusive ideas to our decision-making tables and changes in the social design will follow. These changes will reinforce the original individual change toward inclusivity.

Genuine individual change requires new habits that come from self-understanding, consistent attention, and repeated effort. With small, daily tasks, individuals can create a habit of being inclusive. Reflective tasks raise self-awareness and allow individuals to be more conscious of their actions. Action tasks facilitate the expansion of an individual's comfort zone, providing them with authentic interactions that enhance understanding across social barriers.

This habit-based inclusion solution is designed to help individuals make their behaviors more inclusive by (1) embracing inclusion, (2) understanding biases and their sources, (3) dispersing the negativity associated with unconscious biases, (4) practicing thinking more deliberately, (5) reprogramming incorrect intuitions about others and (6) becoming more empathetic. The six habit-building phases of this solution use evidence and methods on the frontiers of research to provide small, daily activities that will modify behavior and create new habits of understanding, empathy, and inclusion. Given how individuals retain information, this solution has the potential to take us beyond the limits of DEI programming.

Phase 1: Embrace inclusion. For an individual to engage in creating a new habit, they must believe the new habit will be beneficial. The initial phase creates an accurate understanding about the advantages of inclusion and the current status of inclusion and diversity in today's workforce. Tasks ask individuals to personalize and operationalize this information. They enhance their acknowledgement of advantage and grow their positive perceptions of diversity and inclusion. The goal is for individuals to believe that inclusion is worthy of the work needed to create a new habit.

Phase 2: Recognize biases. Before an individual can start to create new habits that will override their biases, they need to know what biases they hold, what parts of their intuition is incorrect, and when those biases creep into their decisions and actions. This phase equips individuals with diagnostic labels for biases and behaviors that are readily accessible. This makes biases easier to identify, recognize, understand, and anticipate. It will also promote self-awareness as individuals identify their own biases and reflect on their origins.

Phase 3: Disperse negativity. Biases and discrimination are surrounded by negativity that propagates self-defensive reactions. For example, being or acting racist is so fraught with negative emotion that when we have a racially biased thought we immediately shut down and devote attention to explaining why and how we are not racist. We do not critically examine that bias or systematic error in our thinking. Since, in large part, our biases are an artifact of the architecture of our brain and the social systems into which we are born, we can work to mitigate much of the negativity accompanying these thought errors. To minimize

the defensive avoidance responses, this phase focuses on normalizing the existence of biases and creating self-affirming behaviors, so biases are no longer denied but rather can be examined and challenged.

Phase 4: Think slowly. Our slow thinking is deliberate, informed, and contentious; it is responsible for most of our decisions and actions. When conditions allow, our slow thinking will filter, modify, and maybe even censor our fast thinking or intuition, where our biases reside. Our slow thinking is what keeps our actions in line with our intentions and values. This phase teaches individuals to recognize situations in which they are more likely to make decisions that incorporate their biases. It helps them think more deliberately in those circumstances.

Phase 5: Change intuition. Periodically relying on our fast thinking is inescapable. In fact, it is indispensable as it is what allows each of us to perform at a high level. Since fast thinking is essential, individuals need to diligently examine their intuitions to ensure they are providing correct, unbiased information. This phase creates new intuition that will override old biases. Since our implicit attitudes are malleable, this phase challenges what we know about people different from us, changes our intuition about other groups of people and creates intuitions that focus on individual attributes rather than group stereotypes. With new, more accurate intuition, individuals will act more inclusively, even when they are thinking fast.

Phase 6: Enhance empathy. Empathy is essential to being inclusive for two reasons. First, enhancing our ability to truly understand others will allow us to build more correct intuition for use when thinking fast in the future. Second, empathy, including listening well and picking up on unspoken cues, allows us to be inclusive of the diversity we cannot see, the diversity people do not explicitly share. This phase encourages individuals to expand their comfort zones and interact authentically with people different from themselves, communicate with a goal of understanding, and cultivate a curiosity about others.

EVIDENCE OF EFFECTIVENESS

In early 2020, The Inclusion Habit® was tested at a Fortune 100 financial services firm. After two months, 90 percent of participants indicated behavior changes. Nearly half of those changes affected how the participants interacted with others. Participants also said they felt more connected, reflective, and mindful. The Inclusion Habit was delivered with a technology that employs insights from behavioral economics. A platform called ProHabits delivered daily micro-commitments via text or email. The platform uses commitment devices and social accountability (everyone can see whether you complete what you commit to) as behavioral motivators.

Although traditional inclusion programs raise awareness, the actual effect is minimal. Programming offers limited returns and false confidence. Only by moving beyond programming and toward changing individual action and behavior can higher education institutions truly make meaningful strides toward a genuinely inclusive environment.

Enhance psychological safety



Expand Your Comfort Zone

Interacting with colleagues socially takes you beyond superficial discussions. It will enhance your understanding of their ideas and perspectives. Not only will this new connection improve your working relationship, but you might even make a new friend.

Invite a colleague you wouldn't normally ask to have coffee or tea. As you are finding out what your colleague finds important remember to share what you truly care about.

I commit

Reframe assumptions



Notice Commonalities

No matter how different we seem, remember that as human beings there is significant overlap in our hopes, desires, dreams and fears. In fact, we all believe we have the basic rights of health, justice, education, safety and love and belonging.

Challenge yourself to identify what you have in common with those with whom you interact today. Asking open ended questions will help you find similarities.

I commit

Identify biases



The Halo Effect

The halo effect is when our overall impression of a person influences how we think about that person's character. For example, we determine overall the person is "nice" and then conclude that she is also "smart".

Pay attention when you encounter someone new today. Do you conclude specific information from your overall impression? Think critically about whether the specific conclusions are warranted.

I commit

Understand your biases



Explore your Cultural Lens

The values and beliefs with which we were brought up create a lens through which we see the world and that lens shapes both our actions and interactions. Understanding our lens and how it was tinted by our cultural background can help us act with more intention and purpose.

Write down one element from your childhood that shaped your values or thinking. Contemplate how it affects your interactions.

I commit

Enhance empathy



Practice Empathy

Empathy begins with understanding someone else—understanding their tastes, feelings and perspectives. Empathy is also letting that understanding guide your decisions and actions. When you act in ways that respect the perspectives of others you create a more inclusive environment.

Today practice truly listening. When you are listening don't interrupt and don't think about what you are going to say next.

I commit

Combat microaggressions



Notice Microaggressions

Single microaggressions often go unnoticed because they are small. But because they are pervasive their effects add up quickly and can take a toll on those who are on the receiving end.

Make note of who interrupts who in your meetings today. Notice who is doing the interrupting and who is being interrupted. Are one-down group members more likely to do the interrupting or be cut off?

I commit

Photo credits: Daoudi Aissa, Ganapathy Kumar, Joshua Ness, Perry Grone, Xan Griffin, Josh Calabrese, Annie Spratt, and Maria Krisanova

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Creating Positive Cultural Change in Record Time

Gayle Lantz

Institutions in higher education have been hit hard by the pandemic. Events over the past year have exposed weaknesses, deficiencies, and vulnerabilities that threaten their potential to be successful and compete effectively.

Students have been hit hard as well. Numerous studies show the mental health impact on college students, who are now experiencing depression, anxiety, and loneliness (see, e.g., Boston University, 2021). People are stressed, exhausted, and craving connection.

But there is tremendous opportunity for educational institutions that can act quickly to learn from the challenges they've experienced and inspire positive change. Creating a culture of engagement and collaboration to help people thrive in the new paradigm is key. Now is the time to commit to new ways of working together and moving forward.

The idea of driving cultural change may sound daunting, but it can happen more easily and quickly with effective leadership and stakeholder engagement. As you prepare to jump-start your change initiative, it's important to note a few factors that often work against institutions that want to quickly make cultural shifts:

- **Analysis paralysis.** Academics typically enjoy conducting thorough research. It's their nature to investigate and debate ideas. But too much analysis can hinder the process or divert focus to less important issues.
- **Slow decision making.** Decisions are often made by committees, but not all of them should be. Committee decision-making takes time. The virtual work environment has contributed to slow decision-making as well during a time when many decisions often need to be made more quickly given the speed of change.
- **Ego, status, and hierarchy.** Just one egotistical leader can create a negative impact. Hierarchy-driven organizations inhibit upward communication, preventing the flow of good ideas and useful feedback.
- **Layers of bureaucracy and politics.** Some people are afraid to speak up and express their own views. Internal politics are an invisible threat to progress.
- **Lack of leadership skills, knowledge, or experience.** Educators and researchers are experts in their subject matter, but many simply haven't had the exposure they need to even basic best leadership practices. They have strong intelligence quotient (IQ) but lack emotional intelligence (EQ).
- **Aversion to risk.** Educational institutions tend to reward longevity, attracting people who seek a "safe" career path. Entrepreneurs thrive on new ideas and risk-taking. They enjoy challenging the status quo, knowing that failure is part of the process. Playing it too safe can hinder growth.

Although these forces seem to be working against institutions that want to quickly create positive cultural change, there is one advantage to leverage: people’s desire to make a positive difference.

Higher education attracts people who are driven to make a positive impact—in the lives of students, in their communities, and in the world. By harnessing this desire to make a positive difference, you can begin creating the cultural shift you want to see.

Start by envisioning your desired future as an organization at its very best—asking questions about what’s possible. This is not a vision statement exercise. Instead, consider it an invitation to explore in detail what the new future state could look like. It is a co-creative process that, by design, engages multiple stakeholders in conversations that are focused on the future.

The inclusive process itself models effective engagement and collaboration. It introduces faculty, staff, administrators, students, and others to a new way of thinking and interacting. Instead of orienting around problems to solve, you deliberately look at new possibilities to explore or create. You begin to experience the new kind of culture that people want to sustain going forward.

In my consulting work with organizations, I see an eagerness to “figure out what’s next.” But slowing down initially to think about how you’re thinking is a good starting point. In your leadership role, you’ll need to build your entrepreneurial mindset. Be willing to experiment, take more risks, make bold moves, and embody the culture you want to create.

I integrate variations of an approach known as *appreciative inquiry* (AI). As Stavros et al. (2015) describe it,

AI is about the search for the best in people, their organizations, and the strengths-filled opportunity-rich world around them. AI is . . . a fundamental shift in the overall perspective taken throughout the entire change process to “see” the wholeness of the human system and to “inquire” into that system’s strengths, possibilities, and successes. (p. 97)

The approach differs from traditional problem-solving approaches in the following ways (Figure 1):

COMPARISON TO PROBLEM-FOCUSED APPROACHES

Problem Solving	Appreciative Inquiry
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ What to fix ▫ Underlying grammar - problem, symptoms, causes, solutions, action plan, intervention ▫ Breaks things into pieces & specialties, guaranteeing fragmented responses ▫ Slow! Takes a lot of positive emotion to make real change ▫ Assumes organizations are constellations of problems to be solved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ What to grow ▫ New grammar of the true, good, better, possible ▫ ‘Problem focus’ implies that there is an ideal. AI starts by focusing on that ideal and its roots in what is already good ▫ Expands vision of preferred future; Creates new energy fast ▫ Assumes organizations are sources of infinite capacity and imagination

Figure 1. Adapted from *Appreciative Inquiry Handbook* by D. Cooperrider, D. Whitney, and J. M. Stavros. Copyright 2003 by Lakeshore Publishers.

As you leverage people's desire to make a positive difference and ultimately create cultural change, here are a few keys to success:

Be radically inclusive in your approach. Engage a wide range of diverse stakeholders in the process: educators, researchers, students, parents, administrators, alumni, and business executives.

Communicate frequently in the process. Creating cultural change is an organic process. Not a "one and done" event. Share observations, learnings, next steps as you go along.

Prepare for resistance. Although many people talk about wanting to move forward in new ways, some will want to hold on to "the way we've always done things." They will look for reasons to complain or criticize.

Rally your advocates. Find people in the organization who want to be engaged and are open to new ideas. They can be positive influencers and prompt needed action.

As a change-agent leader, your role is to be a catalyst in a process, not a heavy driver.

When it's done well, you'll find the experience to be both energizing and rewarding for yourself, those you lead, and the institution you serve.

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To learn more about appreciative inquiry, see Champlain University's AI Commons here:

<https://appreciativeinquiry.champlain.edu>

Becoming Stewards: Transforming New Leaders through Reflective Practice

Scott Greenberger, Greg Rogers, and Rick Holbeck

Whether one subscribes to the notion that leadership is simply one of several roles a manager plays in an organization (Mintzberg, 1989) or that *management* and *leadership* are two distinct processes, with the latter being the more visionary and inspiring of the two (Kotter, 1990), one cannot dispute the plethora of research on the topic of becoming a leader. In most industries, a leader grows by progressing up an organization's hierarchy, learning the characteristics of a successful leader from their immediate supervisor and others of similar status. Higher education, conversely, does not follow the same pyramidal organizational form of most industries. For this reason, a different circumstance awaits a new leader in higher education and demands different tools to remedy this.

CHALLENGES OF TRANSITIONING TO A LEADERSHIP ROLE

Leadership in higher education has some specific challenges that are not always apparent to those who transition from a traditional faculty role. The complexity of higher education institutions is something for which few new leaders are prepared. Because of this, there is a steep learning curve involved in the transition. In addition to the learning curve, new leaders often end up learning on the job as there is a lack of formal leadership training, which can lead to frustration and a feeling of being overwhelmed (Roy, 2014). Responsibilities of academic leaders expand to a wider range of institutional stakeholders (Palm, 2006). This greater responsibility requires learning the bigger picture of the institution while supporting and leading others to a vision of the future.

Academic leaders have other challenges as well. Many leaders face cynicism from former colleagues (Palm, 2006). Even the most heartfelt decisions will not please everyone, which can put leaders in a difficult position (Roy, 2014). As a result, new leaders may feel a bit of isolation from those they lead. In addition, academic leaders sometimes must give up their own academic careers to focus on the mission of the institution and college (Palm, 2006); however, academic leaders can gain credibility in the eyes of faculty through their continued work as academics. Stepping into a leadership position is often a one-way trip. It is rare for someone to transition to a leadership role and immediately transition back to faculty. The move to leadership should be carefully considered (Roy, 2014). Even with these challenges, leadership roles bring with them many rewarding outcomes.

Unlike other industries, where a leader's role grows over time, the move from faculty to academic leadership can be much more abrupt. Where once they were the experts in their fields and familiar with their place in their department or college, new leaders must look beyond those somewhat limited boundaries and develop a sense of the new culture they must operate within—one that spans the entire institution. There may be cultural norms within the broader organization that the leader must be reinforced but also a recognition that the new leader can have an effect on this culture (Bass & Avolio, 1993). Just as each organization has its own culture, there is no single manual or guide to inform the new leader as to what the culture is and how to make sense of it.

While there may be some leadership preparation programs in place, there is no better training than actual practice. Yet, some of the problems with this approach are inherent. First, there is a precipitous learning curve because of the added responsibilities of academic leadership. Next, former peers and colleagues will begin to treat leaders differently. The transition from faculty member to academic leader requires becoming a problem solver and visionary. Although a lot of hard work is necessary, academic leaders have a large influence on the success and improvement of multiple institutional stakeholders.

STEWARDSHIP

Higher education leaders serve as stewards of their institutions. They supervise and manage the day-to-day alignment of operations with strategic goals. This means that they must safeguard the institution's well-being (Braxton & Ream, 2017). Although this role is provisional, stewardship has long-lasting consequences for the institution and corresponding stakeholders. As such, higher education leaders must consider self-assessing and restructuring their personal and professional goals to ensure consistent results for their institutions. This takes a focus on adaptability and continuous improvement for leaders to sustain the integrity of their institutions in the long term. One way to think about this sustained achievement of strategic goals is through the scholarship of practice—more specifically, reflective practice.

There are three procedural improvements higher education leaders might implement to ensure sustained stewardship in their institutions. These improvements include (1) using empirical evidence for action, (2) publishing and sharing empirical evidence about their practice with other leaders, and (3) building a knowledge base for administrative work (Kramer & Braxton, 2017). In making these changes, higher education leaders may not only engage in better decision-making but also likely ensure the continued success of their respective departments, colleges, and institutions.

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

Achieving these practical and scientific goals requires reflective practice, which can be characterized in a variety of ways. A synthesis of the literature provides the following characteristics: (1) a developed skill of intentional thinking, (2) a method of inquiring about problems of practice, (3) a contextually bound activity, (4) a situationally transformative engagement, and (5) a practice that is theory guided (Fergusson et al., 2020; Greenberger, 2020). Ultimately, reflective practice can be used to sustain stewardship.

Structured reflective practice offers many benefits for higher education leaders. Some of these benefits include increased self-awareness (Meierdirk, 2016), improved decision-making (Pope et al., 2018), efficient practical problem-solving (Hong & Choi, 2015), and enhanced well-being (Stevenson, 2020). Improving decision-making and problem-solving are two of the most important benefits. Reflective practice can also be personally and situationally transformative. For all of these reasons, leaders can use reflective practice to sustain the health of higher education institutions. They can also use it to publish and share empirical evidence about their practice and build a knowledge base for their administrative work.

Greenberger (2020) developed a tool to both document and make public the reflective practice of leaders. Originally developed for faculty to document their scholarly engagement, the *Guide for Reflective Practice* also provides a step-by-step tool to organize, document, and publish the reflective practice of academic leaders (Greenberger, 2020). The guide supports leaders in defining their problem of practice, identifying reasons for problems, evaluating reasons, and making a decision. Essentially, the product of the guide is evidence based—ready for organizing a solution to the problem and publishing the practical insights in an academic journal. With this goal in mind, academic leaders may make more effective decisions, share

their insights with other leaders and scholars, and begin to build that knowledge base that is so critical to sustaining stewardship in their institutions. The *Guide for Reflective Practice* is published in Greenberger (2020) and is also available online [at this link](#). For more information, you may contact Scott Greenberger at scott.greenberger2@gcu.edu.

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Mission Success: Creating a Culture of Positivity on Campus!

Joshua L. Seery

Academic leadership, faculty, staff, and students alike can influence how classes, colleagues, peers and the educational institution itself are perceived and involves the psychological concepts of the perceptual set and the self-fulfilling prophecy. Altering perception to be grounded in positivity has been stated can have positive effects on the staff, faculty, and students (Ackerman, 2019).

This article is relevant to any and every institution that has leadership whether that be the president of the college, a dean, a director, or even a committee chair. In addition, the information outlined in this article is even relevant outside of education and can be applied by businesses, athletic teams, or even a group of people attempting to complete a personal project.

A step-by-step guide to create a culture of positivity on your campus!

STEP 1: EVALUATING THE CURRENT STATE OF YOUR CAMPUS'S CULTURE

Questions to consider:

- How do staff speak of one another in front of students?
- How do staff speak of students in front of students or other staff?
- How do staff speak of courses, instructors, and the institution in front of students or other staff?
- How do students speak of one another in front of other students?
- How do students speak of staff in front of other students or staff?
- How do students speak of courses, instructors, and the institution in front of other students or staff?

A strong suggestion is getting feedback from all staff across all departments and of course, the student body. Making a survey and allowing staff and students to complete it anonymously will result in more truthful responses.

You may find that some of the responses and overall data can be quite sobering. I recommend listening to upbeat music (or whatever else keeps your spirits high) while you read.

STEP 2: UNDERSTANDING HOW A CULTURE OF POSITIVITY ON CAMPUS CAN IMPACT THE INSTITUTION

According to Ackerman (2019), a culture of positivity can

- encourage, empower, and energize faculty and staff;
- increase creativity and overall productivity among faculty and staff; and
- support the personal and professional growth, development, and well-being of faculty and staff.

STEP 3: DEFINING THE PERCEPTUAL SET AND SELF-FULFILLING PROPHECY

Statement 1: Academic advisor to a student on the fence regarding which class to take to fulfill a general education requirement.

“Have you taken the psychology course yet? It’s so interactive, interesting, and fun-you will love it!”

Statement 2: Dean of the college to a prospective student.

“Have you toured campus yet? Absolutely stunning and aesthetically pleasing.”

Statement 3: A junior student to a first-year unsure of where to eat.

“The cafeteria, you have to eat there! The food is so fresh, they offer variety, and the desserts are to die for!”

As dean of teaching and learning, one of my roles is to lead by example and foster positivity on campus. And as the primary instructor of psychology at my institution, I understand the effects statements above can have on an individual’s perception.

Every human being has a **perceptual set**: the effect our frame of mind can have on our perception (Feist & Rosenberg, 2019).

A few quick examples:

1. When you’re in a good or even great mood, doesn’t every experience during that time just seem a tad more wonderful? I mean, that barista you got your coffee from was just so pleasant and friendly and not to mention this spot on Iced Vanilla Latte!
2. When you’re in a bad mood or even terrible mood, doesn’t every experience during that time just seem a tad duller and more frustrating? I’m being asked to take the garbage out NOW right when I got home?! Ugh.

Our frame of mind sets the foundation for how we interpret and perceive our experiences. The vital piece of this story to understand is that we have the ability to influence not only our own frame of mind (and therefore perception), but also other people’s frames of mind.

Another piece of this psychological puzzle is the concept of the **self-fulfilling prophecy**. More often than not, self-fulfilling prophecies state a prediction of negativity. Therefore, being consciously aware of this we can deliberately anticipate events in a positive light which can have profound results.

Consider this example:

I am excited to go the baseball game tonight and I really want the New York Mets to win, but regardless of whether they win or lose, I am going to have a great time.

After the game:

I did have a great time especially when Joshua spilled his ice cream cup all over his lap- That was hysterical!

STEP 4: APPLYING THEORY TO PRACTICE

Let us revisit the statements at the start of step 3 and apply what we have learned.

Statement 1: Academic advisor to a student on the fence regarding which class to take to fulfill a general education requirement.

“Have you taken the psychology course yet? It’s so interactive, interesting, and fun—you will love it!”

The academic advisor is providing a positive review of the course and telling the student what they are going to experience. In essence, the advisor is altering the perceptual set and frame of mind of the student to view the course in a more positive manner. Following our recipe, this will lead to the student setting a self-fulfilling prophecy that this course will be interactive, interesting, and fun and will seek out confirmations of this prophecy and in turn will end up loving the course.

Statement 2: Dean of the college to a prospective new student.

“Have you toured campus yet? It’s absolutely stunning and aesthetically pleasing.”

The prospective student’s perception of campus is now influenced in a positive manner.

Statement 3: A junior student to a first-year unsure of where to eat.

“The cafeteria, you have to eat there! The food is so fresh, they offer variety, and the desserts are to die for!”

This is a simple example of altering the perceptual set in creating a more positive self-fulfilling prophecy for the experience in the cafeteria.

STEP 5: USING POSITIVE LEADERSHIP TO CHANGE THE CULTURE ON CAMPUS

What is positive leadership?

“Positive leadership is an area of study within positive psychology concerning leadership styles, techniques, and behavior that can be classified as deviant-positively deviant” (Ackerman, 2019).

According to Ackerman (2019), the characteristics of positive leadership include:

- Self-awareness (asking for feedback)
- Relational transparency (having a clear leadership philosophy)
- Balanced processing (using active listening)
- Ethical behavior (following through on what you say you will do)
- Trustworthiness (treating others with respect and keeping your word)
- Supportiveness (giving appreciation and support to followers)
- Empowerment (giving your followers freedom and choice)

STEP 6: GETTING THE REST OF CAMPUS TO GO “ALL-IN” WITH POSITIVITY

You must believe in, support, and display positive leadership. Set the precedent!

Mentor your staff about positive leadership and host and conduct your own professional development workshops on campus. These efforts should also include providing a presentation on the perceptual set and the self-fulfilling prophecy and the influences on perception.

Lastly, B. F. Skinner stated that the reinforcement of desirable behaviors more strongly alters behavior than punishing undesirable behaviors (Feist & Rosenberg, 2019; Ormrod et al., 2020). The lesson here: reinforce the desirable behaviors of positive leadership in your staff! A step further could be to include the characteristics of positive leadership in formal performance evaluations to track overall development.

What’s next? Our students.

Repeat the steps above and watch as your campus blossoms into a beautiful culture of positivity.

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Communicating through Conflict: Dos and Don'ts

Domenick J. Pinto

In academia as in every other aspect of life, effective communication is a key skill. And we must never minimize the importance of having this skill. Communication can either make or break a negotiation and resolve or escalate conflict. It can also make the difference between success and failure and in many cases raises one's profile considerably.

Let's consider two scenarios: one that was effective and one that was not. Strangely enough, the effective example did not actually produce the desired outcome but raised the credibility of the communicator considerably. The second, "poorly worded" case caused a great deal of embarrassment to the communicator but ultimately resolved the problem at hand.

CASE 1

You are being extremely generous in offering me an orchard full of apple trees. There are a lot of advantages to apple orchards . . . think of all the pies and applesauce and baked apples you can have!

But I really want ONE ORANGE TREE because I need to have orange juice . . . I need that tree. I would happily agree that you can give me fewer apple trees in exchange for that one orange tree.

You see . . . you cannot get orange juice from an apple tree!

Case 1 highlights a request that I personally made several years ago for a particular type of hire for what was then a school of computing of which I was director. The request was denied, but the powers that be were so impressed by my creative request that they ultimately gave me more than I expected.

CASE 2

You have alienated the rest of the department with your meddling and destructive behaviors.

It has become so difficult to work with you.

I will continue to work with you when needed but want no further contact with you unless absolutely necessary.

Case 2 is an example a colleague provided of a poor way of communicating. A chair sent it in an email to a faculty member after growing frustrated with that person's behavior. The dean needed to get involved, and the situation escalated much more than it needed to. Ultimately, the meddling did stop, and collegiality was restored, but it took a great deal of time.

Although the dean understood why this message was sent as an email, the dean pointed out that a chair needed to stick with facts and not editorialize. Oddly enough, even though this was a very poor example of self-expression, the situation did eventually improve considerably and has remained on neutral ground.

Here are some strategies that I have found useful for effective communication:

- Be willing to listen and hear what the person is saying.
- Think before responding.
- Do not let emotions take over—for you or the person you are communicating with.
- Where possible, meet in person to discuss. Try not to use email if the situation is tentative or your responses are likely to be misconstrued. I have found meeting over coffee or lunch to be most effective.
- Be as calm as possible.
- Be willing to compromise but not to the point of backing down every time.
- Offer a follow-up meeting.
- Avoid the use of the word *you* and use *we* instead.
- Make certain that the faculty member understands the “department’s” position and that you understand their position on the issue . . . LISTEN!
- Be firm and strong if you need to, but without showing anger.
- Do not make it personal.
- Be concise and to the point.
- Remain as objective as possible.
- Maintain transparency.
- Keep to the situation; don't wander around or waver.
- If emotions do take over, suggest that you end the meeting and discuss again soon.

SOLVING PROBLEMS . . . SOONER RATHER THAN LATER

- Do not allow bad feelings to fester; make every attempt to address problems early.
- If the problem involves several faculty members meet with each one separately as soon as possible before bringing them together.
- Let people know you are willing to talk as soon as you perceive a problem.
- Do not prejudge.
- Ask the faculty why they think this problem arose and if there is anything that they or you could have done to prevent it or make it less toxic.
- Try to handle the problem without bringing in senior administration if possible BUT if it is necessary to do so let the other party know why.

HANDING COMPLAINTS FROM FACULTY OR STAFF

- Listen carefully and speak with a positive attitude while ascertaining the extent of the problem.
- Avoid personal issues if possible.
- Promise to investigate any problem areas but do NOT promise that the situation will be resolved.
- Assess the seriousness of the situation.

HANDLING COMPLAINTS FROM STUDENTS

- Decide whether is more prudent to meet with students individually or as a group (if more than one student is involved in the complaint).
- Ascertain how well or poorly the students are doing in the course.
- Give the students a timeline as to when you will respond to their comments.
- Tactfully approach the faculty member for their input on the situation.

Consider the following scenario:

Three of the best students in the program come to you separately with complaints about one of your faculty's classes. All three are hard-working, high-achieving students whom you know personally from classes you have taught them in.

They complain that the professor plays favorites, seeming to favor those from a certain ethnic group, and considers these three individuals disruptive and inconsiderate and tells them so. You speak with the professor, tactfully asking whether there any issues with the class. The professor responds that he enjoys the class, the differences in viewpoints in it, and composition of it. He commends the three students who came to you. You have a positive relationship with the professor and have not encountered these types of problems before in dealing with said professor.

What do you do next?

Do you do anything?

Having used this scenario in many of my workshops, most attendees have indicated that they would keep an eye on the situation but not step in just yet. Some suggested that the chair discreetly speak with some other students in the class to get their perspective (maybe not a good idea!).

SUMMARY

As leaders, we all make errors in judgement and sometimes feel the need to backtrack. It is perfectly acceptable to admit this both to yourself and others involved in the communication (whether to someone who reports to you or someone you report to). We are human, have bad days, and sometimes also need to reflect on a situation before we act and communicate. It may be best to acknowledge a problem immediately but also take a bit of time before offering a response or suggestion. Listening is an extremely vital component in the process of resolving conflict and it is often the missing piece in any communication effort.

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Emotionally Intelligent Leadership That Empowers, Moves Culture, and Creates Engagement

David R. Katz III

The core of these beautifully powerful and elegantly simple concepts on the neuroscience behind emotionally intelligent leadership is the happy wedding of over 40 years of teaching and leading experience with the current research on motivation, learning, and empowerment. My leadership roles as a teaching professor, head college basketball coach, and executive-level college administrator have taught me that first and foremost I must positively connect with the faculty and staff I am hoping to lead.

Since positive connection is a prerequisite to people being open to being led, it is helpful to keep in mind that the neuroscience is clear on the fundamental orientation of human beings (Davidson & Begley, 2012). We process, filter, and understand the world first through our emotions. Then we develop our understanding cognitively, ascribe meaning, and respond behaviorally. As leaders, our ability to appreciate the impact of emotions on cognition, motivation, persistence, resilience, and a sense of inclusion is essential to our practice. A corollary concept is that as leaders we have a profound effect on the emotional states of the people we engage with each day because of the ways we interact with them and the relationships we establish.

Consider this: how we treat people affects their emotional state; their emotional state impacts their brain chemistry; their brain chemistry impacts their ability to think clearly, solve problems, persist, trust, feel safe, feel confident, and be their best, most generous selves. I believe leadership is about empowering others, and empowering others requires an ability to cultivate affirming relationships. So for me it has always been about how I apply this knowledge. I have to wrap skill around the insights so I can actually use this in my real life with the real human beings I am trying to inspire and lead. The good news is we can develop skills, which build relationships that put people in a positive emotional state that supports their most productive contributions and generous engagement.

When we look at people's emotional states, the primary and, from an evolutionary perspective, most primitive and least nuanced response is the stress, fear, or threat response. By any name it is well designed to maximize our ability to survive by launching an immediate response to perceived danger (*response* suggests reaction, not thought). Adrenaline and cortisol levels soar, heart rates climb, blood pressure rises, respiration increases, and we are poised to fight, flee, or freeze.

The chemical cousins of this stress response maximize our ability to physically react quickly by hijacking cognition that would come from activation of the prefrontal cortex. So stress inhibits cognition. The stress response literally makes it difficult for the people you are leading to be thoughtful as opposed to reactive. It is vital that we appreciate the fact that when human beings do not feel safe, secure, included, respected, cared about, or affirmed, they are likely to be in some degree of stress. This is not a moral statement about a person. All of us, when feeling threatened and unsafe, are subject to this response and the behavioral offspring it produces.

For great leaders, this insight creates an obvious imperative: to build relationships with those we are leading that ameliorate the stress response and create feelings of connection, safety, and caring. In the face of the current pandemic, the reawakening around social justice and systemic bias, and the myriad of forms othering can take, this insight becomes even more critical. The prerequisite to creating a sense of inclusion, connection, and equity within the communities we are privileged to lead is to have the emotional intelligence to nurture relationships that mitigate the stress response.

The really good news is that we do have an antidote to the damaging effects of the stress response and its chemical cousins of adrenaline and cortisol. Our secret sauce is to ignite the reward pathway in the brains of the people we are leading. The reward pathway of the brain is connected to areas of the brain that control behavior and memory. Whenever human beings engage in behavior that dramatically improves our chances of survival, the reward pathway is ignited. The brain begins to make connections between the critical, survival-enhancing activity and the release of an entirely different set of chemical hormones that are extremely pleasurable, thus ensuring that we will repeat the behavior.

We have most likely all heard of these chemical cousins (sometimes dubbed the happy hormones) that are released when we ignite the reward pathway in our brains, and we have certainly basked in the warmth of their uplifting effect. Dopamine creates a sense of joy, excitement, and pleasure. It plays a role in motivation and is your brain's signal that a reward is at hand, meeting a basic need (think chocolate). Serotonin stabilizes our mood, feelings of well-being, and happiness (think great sleep). Oxytocin promotes bonding, generosity, and establishing trust (think physical affection). It is a neurotransmitter that helps regulate stress responses and calms the nervous system. Endorphins trigger a positive feeling in the body, similar to what morphine does (think exercise and laughter).

What's most remarkable about igniting the brain's reward pathway and flooding our systems with these happy hormones is this: it dramatically enhances our ability to think clearly, solve problems, be creative, persist in the face of challenge, and behave cooperatively, generously, and magnanimously. Our sense of efficacy, confidence, and motivation improves. In short, we are operating at far closer to our full potential and the learning centers of our brain are opened up instead of being hijacked.

So for us as real-world team leaders, the most critical question is, What are the activities and behaviors that ignite the brain's reward pathway and engender the release of these stress-inhibiting, potential-opening happy hormones? We can then build them into our consistent everyday leadership. They cannot be once-in-a-while practices that we pull out when things aren't going well. That will rightly be perceived by the folks we are leading as disingenuous.

There are three major conditions which are so critical to human survival and well-being that the brain's reward pathway is ignited to reinforce the behaviors that create these conditions. Our goal is to develop skills that help create these conditions.

CONDITION #1: CARING RELATIONSHIPS

When someone is in the presence of another person whom they perceive as caring about them, respecting them, wanting to help them, and seeing them as important, that person *feels* safe and valued. The happy hormones are released, and they are empowered to be their best self. What if every day in our leadership practice we prioritized building trust and leading with empathy, and in each interaction (text, email, Zoom, face to face) communicating our desire to be helpful and supportive? Unbelievable as it sounds, our very

presence could ameliorate the stress response and ignite the reward pathway. We could literally alter the brain chemistry of those people we work with to their benefit.

CONDITION #2: SENSE OF BELONGING

The brain's reward pathway is ignited when people feel a powerful sense of belonging, acceptance, and inclusion within a group. When they feel part of a team that is safe, connected, cooperative, and interdependent. Our very survival and success evolutionarily can be traced back to our social and communal roots. We thrived physiologically, emotionally, and spiritually within the context of a caring group that was invested in our success and well-being, and in return we were invested in the success and well-being of the group. This powerful symbiotic synergy exponentially improves our chances of survival and thereby ignites the reward pathway. What if through our leadership we created work cultures designed to create a sense of belonging, acceptance, and interdependence? What if the work our teams did became opportunities for connection and cooperation by design?

CONDITION #3: PATTERN FINDING AND PROBLEM SOLVING

The third condition that triggers the ignition of the reward pathway is pattern finding and problem solving. When people are in safe, caring relationships and part of supportive teams, they love to solve problems that move them and their group forward. The pattern finding behavior is so primal that it has an addictive element that can be seen when observing someone playing a video game. The key for us as leaders is manageable, solvable challenges where we provide the resources, training, and emotional support while carefully aligning the challenges to our groups' and individuals' capacity. No one wants to play a video game where there is no sense of progress or success.

My leadership experience has reaffirmed these principles of neuroscience. The emotional state and morale of the people we lead is the single greatest factor in helping them to reach their full potential individually and as team members.

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