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LEAP LEADERSHIP AND DEVELOPMENT

Theory and Methodology of Leadership Development within Life in Leadership

Life in Leadership's style of coaching, delivery of LEAP (our accelerated leadership development intensive) our workshops and short courses are all based on the principles of Transformative Learning Theory, Collaborative Relationships and Adult Attachment Theory.

Transformative Learning Theory (Mezirow, 1997) moves away from the idea of knowledge as the springboard for change and speaks of the process of change as one which is transformative of a person's frame of reference. A person's frame of reference is the set of assumptions through which they understand their experience. It is the frame of reference that selectively shapes and delimits expectations, perceptions, cognitions and feelings. According to Transformative Learning Theory if we want an enduring change in action and behaviors a person needs to find a way to both locate and revise, these sets of assumptions and beliefs in the light of current information.

Collaborative Enquiry is based on the idea that words spoken are not "pieces of information imparted", but rather "a bridge thrown between myself and another". It is these relational bridges thrown back and forth between two or more people on an "equal footing" that create the context for a spontaneous, creative and expressive-responsive enquiry, which is both supportive of trust and the context most likely to the level of detailed understanding required for transformational learning. Emphasis is placed on moments of "shared understanding" or "common reference". Such shared understandings create the basis for authentic acceptance and understanding, without which positive long-term change does not occur. Moments of "shared understanding" also provides a complexity of detail from which critical reflections of great precision can emerge, creating opportunities for transformations in assumptions and belief, a change in self.

Taylor (2000) found that the key ingredient most common in the process of transformational learning was the context of relationships. Critical elements of such relationships were: the role of educator or coach as an equal participant and this was achieved by shifting power, responsibility and decision-making to the learners - learners have their own design (Taylor, 2000): autonomous thinking: and control and choice (Grabove, 1997; Mezirow, 1997), the coach/educator remains available to the roles of helper/facilitator/skilled guide/provocateur as needed, there is a coherence between personal and professional ways of being such that when a professional is doing his/her work, he/she is also present as a person; collaborative participants are open to hearing feedback and making use of it, learning environment is one which is open, free and creative where spontaneous activities are welcome, changing needs can be met, and unforeseen perceptions and opportunities which emerge along the way are to be seen as opportunities to be taken advantage of.

Attachment Theory states that a person's "internal model of attachment" is the mental model or schema in which implicit memory arranges and summarizes past attachment experiences. These mental summaries form a frame of reference called an "internal model of attachment". Attachment research has noted the stability of the "internal model of attachment" across the lifespan, influencing a person's ability to self-reflect, to have an accurate and detailed personal narrative, their cognitive functioning, emotional regulation and social relatedness. Clutterbuck (2005) and Foley (2008) have shown that inner attachment models influences leadership behavior in the work setting. Focusing on the "internal working model of leadership" Foley has explored the implications of this schema for the ways leaders experience their leadership, how they attempt to influence others, engage in conflict, caregiving and even their availability to experiencing satisfaction in their relationships at work. The "internal working model of leadership" has also been shown to have profound influences on a leader's self-care under times of stress. To what degree a leader will attend to or neglect their own needs for care and support, whether they are effective in meeting their own needs in times of stress, affects how easily the leader will return to feeling secure and steady in themselves. There is even an interesting link between self-care and leadership, in that it can be shown that how effectively a leader can meet their own needs in times of stress influences their availability to remain "connected to the "outside world": available to relating to others and solving problems in the work setting.

By combining collaborative relationship with a flexibly structured, individually tailored enquiry process in which the leader is invited to participate as an equal collaborator, the Leadership Exploration Action Program or LEAP, Foley and Short (2008) provide the context for accelerated leadership development experience with the key ingredients for transformational learning.