Authentic Leadership and Emotional Intelligence: A Combination for Low-Stress Success

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Presented at:
ACLEA 49th Mid-Year Meeting
February 2-5, 2013
Clearwater, FL
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Saint Paul, MN

Fred McGrath has been designing and delivering experiential, interactive keynotes, seminars, and webinars for legal professionals and business leaders for over 20 years. His strong advocacy of inclusive, improv-based training stems from a successful acting/screenwriting career in Hollywood. Before focusing solely on leaderships training, Fred was a busy working actor and veteran of over 100 national commercials as well as numerous co-starring roles in network dramas and sitcoms. Always exceeding expectation with no shortage of fun and laughs, Fred engages participants on a wide variety of topics with his unique approach. Year after year, Fred continues to be one of the highest-rated professional development trainer/coaches anywhere.
“In the corporation of the future, new leaders will not be masters, but maestros. The leadership task will be to anticipate the signs of coming change, to inspire creativity, and to get the best ideas from everybody.
--Ned Herrmann, author of The Creative Brain

“Cognitive learning promotes improved knowledge. Experiential learning promotes improved behavior.
--Fred McGrath

Introduction

My experiential workshops have been designed to deliver learning objectives largely via interpersonal activities and improvisation-based exercises. And, as is true with all improvisation, there will be no shortage of “in the moment” and unexpected discovery within the given learning structures.

In over twenty years of facilitating workshops, I have discovered that participants are often better served in more of a “we” setting rather than the more traditional facilitator talks/participants listen model. A collaborative approach to learning about a given topic promotes both inclusiveness and actual participation. This dynamic stimulates a mind ripe for learning, creativity, play, and fun. Most importantly, it promotes skill-building and understanding that can be felt, exercised, reinforced, and strengthened after the workshop until it becomes truly integrated into a learner’s life. Successful learning in the area of personal development is measured through the desired behavioral change rather than a mere increase in knowledge.

I always find it most beneficial not to over explain learning structures and modalities before the workshop begins. This helps us all to stay “in the moment” as we experience the desired learning as it unfolds. After each experiential exercise, however, it is important to understand and discuss how it “ties in” to the specific learning goals and objectives before moving on to the next element.

The Authentic Self

The disconnect between the technological demands of high-paced, Westernized society and our actual location in the evolutionary process contributes to the common feeling of needing to be what John Bradshaw terms “human doings” rather than “human beings.” It is so easy in both our personal and professional lives to believe that we have to create manufactured elements beyond our authentic self in order to make it all work. However, this is a formula for constant anxiety and stress.

The answer to “low stress success” in today’s world involves moving in the opposite direction and adhering to Polonius’ advice in Shakespeare’s Hamlet: “Above all else: to thy own self be true.” That is, to always maintain and trust your authentic self. Your true core will always provide you with the most power, insight, intuition, empathy, and overall leadership capabilities. When your values, ethics, gifts, and all that defines the real you
absolutely align with what you say, think, and do, then your personal and profession life will both become empowered and stress-free beyond anything you could possibly manufacture. When you are committed to bring who you are to where you are there is no fuel for stress, anxiety and a host of other maladies.

Yet, one must be authentic before one can be an authentic leader. It’s an “inside job” requiring a high sense of emotional intelligence. In today’s society, it is enormously challenging to remain grounded in our true selves. Moreover, it can be difficult to even get in touch with your authenticity. What one needs is a conscious determination to discover and maintain who you really are and work towards sustaining this identity with tools like meditation, mindfulness, compassion, empathy, and intuition.

**Emotional Intelligence**

Based on years of behavioral research, Daniel Goldman reported in his groundbreaking book, *Emotional Intelligence*, that an IQ oriented view of intelligence is far too narrow. Goldman points out that EI is the most critical factor in creating a successful career and life. Those with high “EQ” build flourishing careers and lasting meaningful relationships. Unlike IQ, which is set for life, EQ can be considerably improved by way of emotional-based training and workshops.

Emotional Intelligence (EI): The degree of mastery over one’s emotional world; a an adept relationship between feeling, thinking, and acting; the skill to manage, control and shape his or her emotional states so they become reliable assets; the ability to consciously manifest feelings in order to help achieve desired successes and goals; the intuitiveness to engage various levels of empathy and sympathy in order to enter, influence, maintain, grow, and enrich both professional and personal relationships.

The four major skills that make up emotional intelligence are:

*Self-Awareness* – The ability to read one’s emotions and recognize their impact while using gut feelings to guide decisions. This is the gold standard of emotional intelligence, the foundational element on which all other emotional competencies are built. According to research, people who lack self-awareness are much more likely to derail in their careers than people who are skilled in these competencies. This cluster includes an awareness of one’s inner emotional life, knowledge of one’s strengths and limitations, as well as self-confidence.

*Self-Management* – Involves controlling one’s emotions and impulses as well as adapting to changing circumstances. Awareness of your emotions is not enough. Another key set of competencies revolves around the ability to take the next step: managing those emotions. In research that centered on business leaders who were pursuing promising careers and then "derailed," the most significant factor leading to derailment was lack of impulse control. In other words, whether or not they were aware of their emotions, they allowed them to erupt in ways that caused trouble.
Mindful of Others - The ability to sense, understand, and react to others’ emotions while comprehending social networks. Emotional intelligence competencies include not only dealing effectively with oneself, but also dealing effectively with others. This cluster of competencies includes the ability to be empathetic, to understand organizational politics, and to be service-minded.

Relationship Management – The ability to inspire, influence, and develop others while managing conflict. This includes being able to have a palpable influence on friends and colleagues in order to advance the connection. Another key attribute to this stage of EI is the skill to resolve conflicts without jeopardizing interpersonal connection(s). Someone with EI skills also has the ability to rally people towards worthwhile causes and goals, author social connections and team building, and inspire leadership.

Additional benefits from optimizing emotional intelligence include:
- Mastering the “dance” between emotions, thoughts, and actions.
- Consistent understanding and control over one’s emotional states.
- Successful movement toward beneficial integration.
- Increased capacity to master conflict resolution through empathetic understanding.
- Skillful development and maintenance of desired interpersonal relationships.

IQ vs. EQ

There was a time when it was assumed that a good IQ was all that mattered when evaluating one’s “intelligence” and ability to perform well in the workplace.

Not any more.

Based on brain and behavioral research, Daniel Goleman maintains in his groundbreaking book, *Emotional Intelligence*, that our IQ-oriented view of intelligence is far too narrow. Goleman points out that emotional intelligence (EQ) is the most critical factor concerning a successful career and life. Emotional intelligence is defined as the mastery of self-awareness, altruism, personal motivation, empathy, and the ability to like and be liked by friends, colleagues, and family members. People with high emotional intelligence are able to build flourishing careers and lasting, meaningful relationships. And unlike IQ, which is set for life, EQ can be considerable enhanced by way of emotional-based training.

Additional benefits from development a strong emotional intelligence include:
- Mastering the “dance” between emotions, thoughts and actions.
- Consistent understanding and control over one’s emotional states.
- Successful movement toward beneficial integration.
- Capacity to master and utilize thorough empathetic understanding.
- Skillful development and maintenance of desired interpersonal relationships.
In addition:

- A study of 515 senior global executives found the most successful executives had the strongest emotional intelligence. In fact, EQ was a better predictor of leadership success than relevant business experience, previous academic achievement, or IQ.

- The Center for Creative Leadership conducted a "Derailed Executives" study which analyzed rising stars that burned out prematurely. The primary cause of derailment was "interpersonal deficits," not technical abilities.

- American Express Financial Advisors’ attended EQ training and increased sales by 18%. Overall sales in regions where the managers attended the program were 11% greater than sales where managers did not attend.

**Added Value in Today’s Business World**

In the business world, emotional intelligence goes “hand-in-hand” with maintaining authenticity. Here are some interesting facts:

- The reasons for losing customers and clients are 70% EQ-related (e.g., didn't like that company’s customer service). *Forum Corporation on Manufacturing and Service Companies, 1989 - 1995*

- 50% of time wasted in business is due to lack of trust. *John O. Whitney, Director, Deming Center for Quality Management*

- In one year, the US Air Force invested less than $10,000 for emotional competence testing and saved $2,760,000 in recruitment costs. *Fastcompany "How Do You Feel," June 2000*

- In a multinational consulting firm, partners who showed high emotional intelligence earned 139% more their partners with lower emotional intelligence. *Boyatzis, 1999*

- American Express tested emotional competence training on financial advisors. Trained advisors increased business 18.1% compared to 16.2%, and nearly 90% of those who took the training reported significant improvements in their sales performance. Now all incoming advisors receive four days of emotional competence training. *Fastcompany "How Do You Feel," June 2000*

- After supervisors in a manufacturing plant received emotional competency training, lost-time accidents were reduced by 50%. Formal grievances were reduced from an average of 15 per year to three per year, and the plant exceeded productivity goals by $250,000. *Pesuric & Byham, 1996*

- Top performing sales clerks are 12 times more productive than those at the bottom
and 85% more productive than an average performer. Technical skill and cognitive ability only accounts for one-third of this difference. Emotional competence accounts for the remaining two-thirds. *Goleman, 1998*

- UCLA research indicates that only 7% of leadership success is attributable to intellect, while 93% of success comes from trust, integrity, authenticity, honesty, creativity, presence, and resilience. *Cited in Cooper and Sawaf, 1996*

- At L’Oreal, sales people appointed on the basis of certain emotional competencies significantly outsold sales people appointed using the company’s old selection procedure by $91,370, increasing net revenue by $2,558,36. Salespeople appointed on the basis of emotional competence also had 63% less turnover during the first year. *Spencer & Spencer, 1993; Spencer, McClelland, & Kelner, 1997, cited in Cherniss, 2000*

- The most effective leaders in the US Navy were warmer, more outgoing, emotionally expressive, dramatic, and sociable. *Bachman, 1988, cited in Cherniss, 2000*

- Workers with high work pressures and poor time management skills are twice as likely to miss work. Employees who have strong self-management skills cope better with work pressures. *Essi Systems, 1997*

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**Ten Things Authentic Leaders Do**

*Courtesy of Robin Sharma*

1. **They speak their truth.** In business today, we frequently ‘swallow our truth’. We say things to please others and to look good in front of The Crowd. Authentic leaders are different. They consistently talk truth. They would never betray themselves by using words that are not aligned with who they are. This does not give anyone a license to say things that are hurtful to people. Speaking truth is simply about being clear, being honest, and being authentic.

2. **They lead from the heart.** Business is about people. Leadership is about people. The best leaders wear their hearts on their sleeves and are not afraid to show their vulnerability. They genuinely care about other people and spend their days developing the people around them. They are like the sun: the sun gives away all it has to the plants and the trees. But in return, the plants and the trees always grow toward the sun.

3. **They have rich moral fiber.** Who you are speaks far more loudly than anything you could ever say. Strength of character is true power — and people can feel it a mile away. Authentic leaders work on their character. They walk their talk and are aligned with their core values. They are noble and good. And in doing so, people trust, respect, and listen to them.
4. They are courageous. It takes a lot of courage to go against the crowd. It takes a lot of courage to be a visionary. It takes a lot of inner strength to do what you think is right even though it may not be easy. We live in a world where so many people walk the path of least resistance. Authentic leadership is all about taking the road less traveled and doing, not what is easy, but what is right.

5. They build teams and create communities. One of the primary things that people are looking for in their work experience is a sense of community. In the old days, we got our community from where we lived. We would have block parties and street picnics. In the new age of work, employees seek their sense of community and connection from the workplace. Authentic leaders create workplaces that foster human linkages and lasting friendships.

6. They deepen themselves. The job of the leader is to go deep. Authentic leaders know themselves intimately. They nurture a strong self-relationship. They know their weaknesses and play to their strengths. And they always spend a lot of time transcending their fears.

7. They are dreamers. Einstein said that “Imagination is more important than knowledge.” Great things are born from our imaginations. Authentic leaders dare to dream impossible dreams. They see what everyone else sees and then dream up new possibilities. They spend a lot of time with their eyes closed creating blueprints and fantasies that lead to better products, better services, better workplaces, and deeper value. How often do you close your eyes and dream?

8. They care for themselves. Taking care of your physical dimension is a sign of self-respect. You can’t do great things at work if you don’t feel good. Authentic leaders eat well, exercise, and care for the temples that are their bodies. They spend time in nature, drink plenty of water, and get regular massages so that, physically, they are operating at planet-class levels of performance.

9. They commit to excellence rather than perfection. No human being is perfect. Every single one of us is a work in progress. Authentic leaders commit themselves to excellence in everything that they do. They are constantly pushing the envelope and raising their standards. They do not seek perfection and have the wisdom to know the difference. What would your life look like if you raised your standards well beyond what anyone could ever imagine of you?

10. They leave a legacy. To live in the hearts of the people around you is to never die. Success is wonderful, but significance is even better. You were made to contribute and to leave a mark on the people around you. In failing to live from this frame of reference, you betray yourself. Authentic leaders are constantly building their legacies by adding deep value to everyone that they deal with and leaving the world a better place in the process.
Mindful Living

So much of our contemporized mind struggles in a secret world of duality between our natural authentic-self and our ego-based, manufactured self. In our roles as businessperson, parent, partner, friend, or consumer, we find little time for reflection. This inherent dissonance leaves no room for fully experiencing the now in our daily lives.

Our natural “non-duality” state provides us with the harmony to access gifts which we all naturally possess: peace, empathy, and compassion, to name but a few. As the natural self emerges, the fear, stress, and self-judgment authored by the shadowy manufactured self dissolve.

When we are fully present (this is sometimes referred to as “mindful living,”) negative brain chatter can be upstaged by our simple commitment to the moment. With this commitment, even drinking a glass of water can be very engaging.

So how can we move away from this “daily duality” where so much fear and tension is manifested? By practicing the opposite. Let’s call it a living meditation. Instead of pretending to be fully listening to a client or colleague while instead thinking of something else, listen with intent.

And when the duality begins, politely decline the invitation and go back to the intent of simply listening. Again and again and again . . . this is the way back to “no mind” (the opposite of “being in your head”) and being part of the present.

Practice being in the now every chance you can. At this time in history, we can only counter the forces that pull us in multiple directions and dissociate us from the moment by our dedication to the practice of being fully present in the now as best we can.

There will be strong “habit energy” calling, tugging, and nagging you back toward the world of distraction. Notice, allow, and let it pass. Observe your breath, study details, and relax.

Surrendering to this black hole of distractions wears away at the integrity of who we are. Our lives are less than they could be and that is a tragedy – not as a forest fire or earthquake is pure, quick tragedy, but as rain hits a rock until one day, the rock erodes and cracks open. We measure our life experience in just that: experience. To spend most of our time maintaining a purgatory of consciousness is to remove oneself from life itself – a human dreaming rather than a human being. And that’s a high price to pay, one moment at a time.

16 Ways To Stay in the Moment

1. Remind yourself it is impossible to be anywhere other than where you are at any given time. These perceptions of elsewhere are created in one’s imagination.
2. Commit to returning to authenticity and let go of “manufacturing.”
3. Remind yourself if you’re not in direct, pending danger, fear is most likely optional.
5. Focus with sincere intent on the present reality and truly believe you are exceptionally qualified to participate in it.
6. Fully trust your authentic actions, reactions and input. A commitment to this simple principal will banish judgment, fear, and insecurity.
7. Relinquish the constant “self-monitoring.”
8. Breathe.
9. Inadequacy is an illusion we rehearse in our minds. The objective data does not support your self-judgment.
10. If you do not feel centered, then empty your mind, focus on the now, tune in, fully believe in yourself, and pay attention.
11. Do not judge silence. There is no need to fill the space with words. Speak when you have something to communicate.
13. Do your homework and always know more than you are expected to know.
14. Confidence is simply the byproduct of an unwavering acceptance that who you are at any given moment is more than adequate.
15. Remember the truism: you are not what you do; you are someone who does.
16. Practice, practice, practice the above in all situations.

**Power of Empathy**

The "secret" is no secret at all: Emotion is a powerful resource, yet many leaders just don't optimize it. Much communication occurs nonverbally. Consequently, a critical leadership skill is **empathy** - the ability to sense and respond to the feelings of others. Why? Well, it's easy to find out what the business issues are; it takes savvy to uncover the personal issues that drive or resist change.

**Mastery of True Empathy Empowers Leaders to:**
1. Understand team member from *their* point-of-view.
2. Defuse conflict using five simple steps.
3. Enhance team performance capabilities.
4. Strengthen team dynamics via identifying and honoring “archetypes.”
5. Improve/ensure desired results.
6. Use creativity to optimize projects’ processes and outcomes.
7. Invite all to bring who they are to where they are.
8. Create a dialogue, not a monologue, which promotes ownership, pride, respect, and synergy.
Mindfulness: The Way Back to True Self

Mindfulness helps us to:
- Improve focus, concentration, and precision.
- Enhance the quality of communications and relationships.
- Heighten the clarity of our thinking and intentions.
- Improve efficiency and safety.
- Master stress.
- Deepen insight and intuitive wisdom.
- Awaken more authenticity, heart, soul, and caring in our lives and work.
- Increase resilience to change.
- Strengthen faith and self-confidence.

Relevant Books – Authentic Leadership

Authentic Leadership: Rediscovering the Secrets to Creating Lasting Value by Bill George
True North: Discover Your Authentic Leadership: by Bill George
Building an Authentic Leadership Image by Center for Creative Leadership (CCL)
Authentic Leadership: A Primer for Professionals and Small Business Owners by Dave Nibouar
Other Side of the Card: Where Your Authentic Leadership Story Begins by Mike Morrison
Authentic Managerial Leadership by Robert A. Orr
Authentic Leadership: Courage in Action by Robert W. Terry

Relevant Writings – Emotional Intelligence

Emotional Intelligence and Stress
Huang, X., Chan, S. C., Lam, W., & Nan, X. (2010). The joint effect of leader-member exchange and emotional intelligence on burnout and work performance in call centers in china. The International Journal of Human...
Resource Management, 21(7), 1124-1144.


**Emotional Intelligence and Organizational Change**


**Emotional Intelligence and Job Performance**


Criminal intelligence, and the big five personality dimensions as predictors of criminal investigator performance.


Advances in Developing Human Resources, 11(6), 747-772.

Emotional Intelligence and Leadership


**Emotional Intelligence and Neuroscience**


