

CAREER HEALTH

3 Core Leadership Strategies

By Sylvia Lafair

Did you ever learn to play chess? Not the most popular game for this century when we move at the speed of light. However, it is a vital game for anyone who runs a business.

Whether you formally know where to position a knight or a pawn on a board, you do this with employees and customers all the time.

What are the key elements of working to win? Interestingly, they model the personal development model of success. No surprise, we take ourselves with us wherever we go. The more we know about our behavior, the better we are in strategic design. Here are the 3 key elements to consider in the chess game of work and the even bigger chess game of life:

Physical Strategy: You are an instrument that fits into a larger orchestra group. So, position yourself to be heard in the most appropriate way. In meetings don't just plop yourself in a vacant chair; get there early and wait until you see the best seat at the table and then sit there. It may be caddy corner from the boss or facilitator, or perhaps next to a champion of your work, or maybe next to your seeming "enemy". Remember the old saying "Keep your friends close and your enemies closer!"

Emotional Strategy: Careful what you say. Even more important is when you say it. Back to the orchestra metaphor: the best conductors are super respected because of their sensitive and perfect timing. So pay attention to when you speak up or when you choose to remain silent. The power of the spoken word and the power of silence are a major part of strategic intent.

Mental Strategy: Keep the end in sight even when the end is no where in sight. Ask yourself over and over what you want

as an outcome. See it, hear it, feel it, and keep it in the forefront of your thoughts as you go where you want to go. However, and this is a big however, do not be attached to the outcome. Know that the way to the moon was not in a straight line, adjustments were continuously made with the end point as the win.

It is critical for you to know that all strategy is about people. As human beings we filter information through our senses and our senses are tied to our emotions. There is no other way. Charts and statistics can only take you so far. Without understanding the rest of the strategy you will never be able to have the satisfaction of saying "check mate" to show your strong ability to win and win big.

One of the best gifts I was given as a teenager was a book that was required reading titled, *How to Lie with Statistics*. It was then I truly knew that no matter how much I wanted to believe in a safe, clear, secure, and bottom line world of numbers that don't lie I realized that was naive. So, early I learned that the ones putting the numbers down on the paper are human beings who all see things through their own filters. In my leadership development I realized that the scary, confusing, complex world of emotions would always be a major factor in making strategy work.

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A Novel Way to Improve Memory

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interruption. The novel experience that the scientists used to interrupt the training session was simply treating the rat to an excursion to new cage. This, in contrast to the life of confinement in its home cage, was a thrilling expedition.

That novel experience had nothing to do with the skill the rat was learning in its training sessions, so why did the novel stimulus improve the rat's performance in the maze? Studying the molecular changes in neural circuits storing memories, the researchers discovered that the molecular machinery known to store long-term memories had been switched on by the novel experience. The long-term memory mechanisms were activated by the surge in dopamine activity coding the experience as novel. That rat will never forget its stimulating exploration of the new environment. But, these changes inside the neurons that started the molecular machinery working were not yet idled by the time the rat was subjected to the next round of training in the maze. Thus, along with all the novel and unforgettable sights and smells and experiences of the novel outing, where the food was hidden in the maze was also permanently embossed in its long-term memory. The researchers found that the long-term memory storage mechanisms simply take a few hours to cool down.

The scientists found that the novel experience increased the rat's memory of the maze even if it followed the training session, simply because the rat's short-term memories from the training session were still being held in the brain temporarily while the animal was in the novel environment, so they too got stored permanently with all the other short-term memories before they faded.

This could explain how "useless" scraps of information in your mind might have gotten stuck there. They could have been surrounded by some truly novel experience that had nothing at all to do with the memory. But this new finding can also be put to advantage. While the ancient methods of repetition and punishment to drum information into a schoolkid's mind can be effective, so too should breaking up the doldrums of a lesson with a fascinating new experience that is completely unrelated to the lesson. The student union might be as important to long-term learning as the campus library.

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-Bruce Barton

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PHYSICAL HEALTH

A Novel Way to Improve Memory

By Dr. Douglas Fields

The most amazing thing about memory is how precisely we forget. Our brain retains only what it predicts will be important in the future and forgets the rest. There is no point in remembering where you parked your car at Wal-Mart last February -- unless it was stolen. That would be unforgettable. Scientists have long known how the brain predicts which experiences to retain in long-term memory and which ones to let fade away. But now they have made a new discovery: why we often remember useless stuff.

The first rule of learning is repetition. Repeating something over and over, as you did to learn your multiplication tables, moves memory from temporary short-term storage into permanent long-term memory. This is because the brain views something that is encountered repeatedly as more likely to be important to the person (or animal) in the future.

The second way events get seared permanently into memory is if they are associated with extremely strong emotional reactions, as would happen if, upon emerging from Wal-Mart with your shopping goodies, you were to find your car gone. This is because, in evolutionary terms, an organism shouldn't risk repeating a stressful, potentially life-threatening experience to remember it.

In the last 15 years, neuroscientists have determined the cellular and molecular mechanisms for how these two kinds of experiences are moved from short-term memory into long-term memory. But memory researcher Richard Morris of the University of Edinburgh

noticed something about memory that is not explained by these well-accepted rules and molecular mechanisms of memory. Our minds are filled with scraps of completely irrelevant information. This includes snippets of experiences that were neither repeated nor associated with a traumatic event. Indeed, they are useless and would be better forgotten, but they persist nevertheless. How these remnants of trivial memories are retained cannot be explained by the detailed molecular mechanisms that have been carefully worked out in studies of memory in laboratory animals.

The answer is found in another factor that helps the brain predict whether or not an experience should be saved in long-term memory: novelty. When our daily routine is suddenly disrupted by an experience that is truly novel, the mind "perks up." It makes good sense to activate the long-term memory mechanism in this case, because a new experience is likely to provide important new information that will be useful to an individual in the future, and so the experience should be added to the long-term memory store. In the brain, novelty is signaled by neurons that use the neurotransmitter dopamine. Dopamine circuits do not code sensory perceptions; instead they rev up the level of activity broadly across neural networks in the brain.

In their experiments the researchers found that if they used an exciting, novel experience to disrupt a rat's training to find a food reward, the rats remembered where the food was hidden, and this memory did not fade away as it did in other rats that had gone through the same rigorous training routine but without the novel

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RELATIONSHIP HEALTH

5 Tips for Getting Past Anger & Misunderstandings

By Susie and Otto Collins

Okay, we admit it...The two of us really miss-communicated over the weekend about something that left us feeling angry and distant from each other.

The situation was filled with misunderstanding, assumptions, unspoken meanings, and habitual responses that were more about the past than about that situation.

We're telling you about what happened to us for two reasons...

First, to show you that it's "normal" to not communicate at your best from time to time:

(we were both very tired that evening); and, there are easy ways to either avoid those disconnections that truly strain your relationship or reconnect more quickly when they happen.

What happens when YOU get triggered by your partner? Do you get defensive and critical of him or her? Do you get silent and withdraw? Do you get sarcastic and angry?

We all have certain automatic responses that happen when we get triggered.

Relationship researcher and psychologist John Gottman says that an early warning sign of a marriage in trouble is one where there's constant, harsh criticism.

According to Gottman, in a healthy relationship, both people feel like they can voice complaints but the danger comes when those complaints are voiced in anger and become consistent attacks on the partner's character.

He goes on to say that criticism laden with contempt (usually expressed in the tone of voice and angry expression) is particularly destructive to the relationship.

In order to create better communication

and a happier relationship, the challenge is to become aware of your habitual response when you're triggered--and then choose a better one.

When you make the choice to step out of your usual way of being, you can also choose words that help both of you become open to new possibilities instead of staying stuck in the same old path.

Here are some suggestions about how to move out of your old communication patterns and make other, healthier choices for your relationship...

"Assumptions are the termites of relationships."

-Henry Winkler

1. Get in touch with what you are feeling.

In our situation, because Susie was tired, she just blurted out something that felt like a command to Otto (which is something he doesn't appreciate from anyone).

Susie wasn't able, in that instant, to tune into what she was feeling, but later, she was.

Later, when we were discussing what happened, we each tuned into our feelings so that we could express what was really going on inside.

Whether you tune into your feelings as soon as you get that twinge in your gut or tightening in your chest (and that's something to work toward) or you tune in later--make sure that you don't skip the next step.

2. Find the words that will pave the way to a better understanding and connection between you and your partner.

You might say something like this:

"I'd like to talk about what happened and I'd like to share what I felt at the time. Would you listen to me and then I'll listen to how you felt?"

3. Take responsibility for how you may have contributed to the situation.

What the two of us most wanted was to be understood, and you probably would also want this when mis-understandings happen.

When you take responsibility, you can see why the other person may have reacted the

way he or she did, especially if you understand each other's habitual responses.

For example; "I can see how you could have interpreted my response as a command which is really not how I intended it to be."

4. Be willing to learn some ways to let go of your habitual responses that no longer bring you what you want.

5. Always be willing to go back to your intentions for your relationship and your commitments both with each other and in your relationship.

One of our commitments to each other is to always be willing NOT to run away and to work through any challenges we may have--even if it seems difficult to do in the heat of the moment.

Our wish for you is that you find ways to create more ease and happiness in your relationships; and part of that is creating new ways of communicating, even when it's tough.

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INNER HEALTH

6 Rules for Creating a Balanced Life in a Topsy-Turvy World

By Shannon L. Lee

"Be aware of wonder. Live a balanced life - learn some and think some and draw and paint and sing and dance and play and work every day some."

- Robert Fulghum

Juggling our professional responsibilities, our personal lives, our individual needs, our passions and our goals can be confusing, exhausting, and often down-right crazy! Here are a few simple rules for creating balance in your life:

Rule 1 - Recognize and Honor Your Needs

Listen to your body, your heart, and that "still, soft voice" of intuition and spiritual connection. If your needs aren't being met, and you are ignoring your inner wisdom's attempts to speak to you, chances are that it will start screaming at you through physical symptoms, illnesses and 'dis'-ease. How can you possibly be effective in your job, with your spouse and kids, in your daily activities, if you are not taking care of yourself first and foremost?

Rule 2 - Get Your Priorities Straight

Do you really know what is most important to you? How much of the stuff on your to-do list would you immediately erase if you knew you only had a month to live? Make a list of your most important relationships, values and goals and keep it in front of you as you plan your day. Ask yourself, "Is this task/goal/activity in alignment with my priority list?" If the answer is no, consider letting it go.

Rule 3 - Learn to Say "NO"

Many of us have learned to become people-pleasers; we are trained like Pavlov's dogs to jump at the first sign of a request for our help, our time or our talent. It's now time to re-train yourself to check in with your own needs first, then match the request up with your priority list and see if it makes energetic and emotional sense to say yes. If "No" is your truth, people will either respect that and ask elsewhere, or try to manipulate you into giving in - and guess where the latter types of people fall on your priority list? The bottom!

Rule 4 - Make Time to Breathe

"Life isn't about finding yourself. Life is about creating yourself."

-George Bernard Shaw

Sometimes just taking a moment to take a good deep breath (or three) gives you enough of a refresher to re-focus yourself and release stress. Self-care doesn't have to be complicated!

Rule 5 - Take a Holistic Approach

Honor the various aspects of your personality by paying attention to all areas of your life. Is your drive for financial independence damaging your family life? Are you postponing your creative dreams until the kids go off to college? Take an honest look at your life and notice if there are any areas of strong focus that may be eclipsing others, and explore how you can create a more harmonious lifestyle.

Rule 6 - Build Bridges for Support

Sorry, Simon and Garfunkel - no man is an island! Studies have shown that the greater the number of friends, pets and community connections a person has, the greater their health and longevity. Make time for your friends, your family, your spiritual community, your neighbors, your pets. These are the solid foundations that support you the most and bring greater balance to your life.

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