

Following the reading of a case study, propose to Maria what you see as significant variables of her challenge so that she is better equipped to lead the changes facing the unit. For each concept, explain why you think it is important, describe what difference it makes to Maria's leadership of herself, her team and management.

Major themes: Neuroscience, Heuristics, Appreciative Inquiry, Anxiety, Mindfulness, Complexity Theory, Modernistic v. Post Modernistic

Sub themes: Continuous Learning, Emergent Change, Transformative Learning, Systems, Flow, Knowing v. Thinking, Manager v Leader, Thinking Styles

“Not knowing when the dawn will come, I open every door,”

~Emily Dickenson.

Maria,

As leaders we all face similar complex challenges when faced with new roles and in new environments. We don't know the people, we don't know the history, we don't know what we don't know, so we tend to gravitate to the simplest solution. We dig into our past experiences that worked and that we enjoyed, and try to apply them to the current situation, even though we haven't yet defined the current situation. Boy, do we make our jobs harder don't we? I'd like to introduce you to a few constructs from Organizational Behavior and Positive Psychology that could be useful as you navigate how to communicate with your staff and managers and rebuild the culture.

I first want to talk to you about Neuroscience and Heuristics and introduce a methodology called Appreciative Inquiry.

Everyone has their own coping system and their individual neuroscience controls them. This includes involuntary brain science such as the always faster-to-respond amygdala and slower but more intelligent neocortex. It also includes the pesky habits we have accumulated through positive and negative experiences. Our middle-brain, our subconsciousness, gravitates toward what feels easy and comfortable, even if it is not the best response, behavior, or solution. I find that when I am being a jerk, it is because I am trying to be right. Why do we need to feel so right and all knowing? Resentment builds among those we want relationships with when we are trying to be smarter than they are. This is an important construct to understand because in the GSU, these team members appear to resent each other. Some for being in the way, some for not giving attention, some for being less trained, some for lack of recognition, some for being burned out. Understanding that you have no control over each individuals' neuroscience is significant when approaching a culture change. It is possible to influence their behavior through various approaches.

“The ability to learn from experience in the present – from moments, not models – is what is needed when the past has become a hindrance and the future is unclear,” (Petriglieri 2020).

As leaders we are responsible for guiding teams through the confusing abyss of change methodologies and philosophies. Successful change requires iterative, emergent, and continuous attention or it is in danger of becoming just another status quo. This means that as the leader in this unit at GSU, you must pursue a culture change and lay the groundwork for continuous learning and emergent change.

Long term success of any change is dependent on the ability of the organization and its individual contributors to execute-as-learning (Edmondson, 2008). We are accountable for engaging teams in a way that opens their minds while also keeping our own mind free of disabling heuristics. As the facilitator, Maria, you are challenged to ensure you have your own neuroscience in check, are exploring new ideas versus doing what others did in the past (i.e. Betty’s approach), and helping your team explore their stories in a safe space. I will talk more about how to create this safe space, and you are on the right track.

Are you familiar with heuristics – our brain’s decision-making shortcuts? We set ourselves into patterns that help us cope with current situations. Unfreezing those patterns requires voluntary participation in exercises that open one’s mind to different stories, different frames, and there must be a safe space to show emotion and experience anxiety and conflict. It is important for you to understand these patterns and how to see them at play so that you are able to pause and demonstrate mindfulness as a role model, while also demonstrating vulnerability and not being seen as the one with the answers.

When heuristics are in effect, one responds in an unmindful, fear-induced habit or routine. Fear of not knowing the solution cripples the learning process, (Edmondson, 2008). Especially in complex change, a key prerequisite to breaking down or unfreezing a habit is psychological safety. As leaders we are enabled to provide and teach others to provide a safe space for learning in a conversational practice, using such approaches like Appreciative Inquiry skills, artfully customized and combined with various other conversation approaches including World Café, Circle, Open Space and Future Search, (Lewis, 2016). I recommend reading about these conversational practices before we next meet. But in a nutshell, these approaches help participants feel safe and surrounded by others sharing an equal experience, incites deeper storytelling, sharing, innovation and ultimately more open learning will occur. When we demonstrate courage to learn in these spaces, it gives us even more courage to lead these spaces. It sounds like Betty may have had training in this practice and I recommend that we get together and practice before you meet with the whole team again. There is a whole process in AI and 5 principals we can discuss further when we get together: Define, Discover, Dream, Design, Destiny. These stages involve the whole team and sets the stage for learning from each other.

A common trap for leaders is to go in with the answer, fabricated stories, or expect to come out with a grand solution. It seems you are already on the right path by embracing elements of a post modernistic leadership style which encourages conversation and storytelling. When you first met with the team you used your positive past experiences to guide you. This is great – be sure to keep the dialogue positive and open and set a common goal for the team – or better yet let them

set the goal for themselves. It's easy for groups to get stuck on the negative stories and with an introduction to AI techniques we can change how they are talking to each other.

There are various thinking styles that impact our heuristics. I took a test and found out I am an analyst style. We each, of course, have a unique blend of pragmatist, realist, analyst, synthesist, and idealist. As a leader in this challenge, you must be the synthesist and challenge the current story and views while respecting their history, their styles and even their heuristics. Be sure to assess your own heuristics and judgement traps and identify them quickly so that you can better acknowledge them in the moment and can be mindful of how to respond to someone's emotional complaint or approach to the problem they see. Many of your staff will experience an anchoring trap, set themselves on a mindset based on experience. It's quite a large group of people and you will want to interview them one at a time to learn what kind of thinking styles they bring to table and what their heuristics are.

We must guide teams to look to the future and dream together, to develop that common goal. All of this is significant because by understanding the neuroscience and psychology, and given the state of conflict in this group, you are going to have to baby step your way into the type of conversational practice exercises like AI.

Through Appreciative Inquiry you will learn to lead with stories of your own. Part of the exercise could be asking everyone to pair up and tell a story of their favorite thing about being in healthcare, discuss in small groups what could be done differently, what would the unit would look like if everything was better, perfect, performing at its best? (Lewis 2016).

Through this approach and understanding you will build credibility in your new role and gain trust from the staff, and even more importantly you will help them build trust with each other.

Next, I want to talk about anxiety and the role it plays in transformative learning, post modernistic leadership style, and I will also introduce mindfulness and complexity theory.

A general surgery unit is going to face unique challenges that creates anxiety and reveals routine behaviors from its staff. The environment requires that specific safety protocols be followed or there could be a life/death situation. When placed in these controlled environments, we lose our sense of autonomy quickly, subjected to the rules, regulations, and chains of command. When too many rules are in place, we lose the ability to learn and innovate. The stressful experiences in this environment compounds an individual's anxiety. Although, some anxiety is necessary for learning (Shein, 2002), this group is spun up into a level of unproductive tension and conflict.

Conflict has a neurological effect on our brains causing a fear-driven emotional response, (Goleman, 2006). So, even our top performing team members could behave in unexpected, unmindful ways.

An underlying cause for conflict in an organization's culture could simply be resistance to change. This unit has been experiencing the change of tighter budgets, reduced staff, less skilled staff, and previous management styles that did not move the team forward.

As mentioned before, it is crucial to interview each member of the team to gain mindful insight to fears, motivations, and personal goals so that the groundwork can be laid for positive conversations and bridges you can build which would facilitate innovation, (Ancona, 2020).

Mindfulness, a presence of listening and learning, is required to manage competing commitments such as wanting to help patients but also wanting to help each other but not feeling like there is space, time and resources to do both, (Mindfulness Lecture: 4/21/20).

All this anxiety is preventing any learning from each other and they start off guarded to your approach. Do they have the mindfulness required to hear each other and seek out approaches to change the culture?

Due to the history of the unit, it is probable that there were toxic leaders in place prior to your placement, and there could even still be a toxic senior staffer adding to the issue. Ancona talks about how toxic tendencies are contagious and whole teams can take on the behavior due to one. When the team members begin treating each other with similar contempt, trust erodes. Modernistic management is still popular today and in that approach of planning and process design, some managers believe that workers must be trained, that direction comes from the top – down, that facts come from history, that standards must be created, evaluated and that efficiencies and performance should be measured. In a human-centric management organization, living system, and also referred to as post modernistic perspective, you will see more attention placed on collaboration, communication, group projects, and rewards. You will hear stories being shared that help drive self-motivated direction based on common group purpose. You are entering as a postmodern leader into a modernistically-led team. It's important to note this for yourself since the team will experience a management style change right out of the gate.

How do we make sense of the situation mindfully and address conflict without drudging up *the why* folks don't trust each other? It's a modernistic management approach to deconstruct the past and cause of tension, to seek the solution, to get the team from A to B quickly, (Professor Harold Lecture). And it sounds like your manager would welcome a quick solution and you would be rewarded for fixing the system?

However, what already seems natural to you, you could reframe this challenge for a larger gain with a post modernistic leadership style allowing solutions to evolve. Let us reframe the challenge: What stories are we telling ourselves? What stories have others told about us? What purpose does the team have together collectively? What is working today? What pieces are missing to meet their goals?

Good leaders, in these changing times, must construct organizations in which teams are tackling challenges together. Through collective movement, they will grow more resilient to pressures and anxiety, working as one toward a common goal. As we learned through Appreciative Inquiry, "We should talk less about the problem, and more about the dream," (Lewis 2016, Pg. 160).

I like that you are pulling the people together, and right now you are in discovery mode, which is an important step, but consider a missing ingredient - setting the stage for fun. Through AI

exercises the outcome would include a common goal(s) for the team to pursue together. It might be something like “As Caregivers, we meet the needs of the staff and patients with mindfulness every day,” or “As Caregivers, we are working to improve how resources are used.” By establishing common purpose, empathy and trust grows, anxiety declines.

To build a mindful culture, the organization requires a change to how they are learning from each other and how to present change as a positive motivator. The hospital is facing changes both from an economic perspective and overall human relationship perspective. Their resources are being reduced and limited and when you must make business decisions that impact the people, it is more effective if you present those changes as positive challenges.

Coutu in 2002 said we do not know how to systematically intervene in the organizational culture to create transformational learning, but we do know there is an effective transformational process by which the general surgery unit could experiment with. In *Breaking the Code for Change*, we are exposed to a successful process: Rationalization > Revitalization > Regeneration. Through rationalization, we find ways to instill discipline and support, creating a culture of encouragement. Through revitalization, we build an environment of inclusion which builds trust. We also create stretch assignments that pull teams together for a common goal, but clearly communicates each individual’s purpose. And finally, through regeneration, we balance the discipline, support, trust and stretch to ensure continuous learning. (Beer 2000), You cannot do this alone. You are going to require stakeholder buy in from your leadership team and active participation from the staff.

To create that environment of encouragement and support, transformative learning is best amplified by creating a playground where participants are encouraged to share ideas, challenge the status quo, and try out different directions, (Petriglieri, 2020). This involves changing the actual environment to allow for playfulness through positive emotions. Through this mindfulness can be demonstrated and learned.

To create the environment of inclusion and mindfulness, it is important for leaders like yourself to encourage positive emotions to build resourcefulness, create resilience, and create connections between people and this can be accomplished through demonstration of exceptional kindness, emotional intelligence, and role modeling, (Lewis 2016). To build trust we must manage our language thoughtfully. For example instead of telling staff there is a hiring freeze, which is very common words right now during this Covid pandemic, instead you tell them we are looking to our current staff to exercise their expertise in a time when hiring and onboarding new staff would be very challenging for this company. There are other ways to say there is a hiring freeze. And that language, that story, has to come from the top. If leaders are lackadayzilly telling their managers there is a hiring freeze and that message is being told in meetings to senior staff there is a hiring freeze, then it is probable that senior staff is telling their younger and less experienced colleagues at lunch that there is a hiring freeze. They are using those same words. Executive leadership has a responsibility to frame the story, and use language that promotes positivity, resulting in safe space for inquiry. Telling people there is a hiring freeze ends the conversation. “Yikes, there is a freeze. There is nothing I can do about it.” But, by framing the situation as, “gosh it would be a pretty big challenge for us to onboard anyone new right and our current staff

is working really hard and we are going to leverage that right now and try to keep our heads above water,” it leaves the conversation open and people feel safe to ask questions.

To enable regeneration, leaders manage the balance and an additional key to that transformation is decentralization, (Beer, 2000). Through the exercises and approaches you will empower the team to work through their issues together versus seeking answers from you.

In complex systems we cannot address challenges linearly. Human relationships have an intricate interconnectivity that creates a continuous flow of energy, emotions, interactions, judgements, and behaviors. There is no way to know a solution when there are so many relationship interdependencies.

Sargut discusses three properties of an environment that determine complexity: multiplicity, interdependence, and diversity. Multiplicity refers to the number of interactions. Interdependence is defined by how much those interactions are connected. Diversity refers to how different those interactive elements are from each other. Managers can navigate these difficulties by making fundamental changes to how they approach addressing diversity of thought, (Sargut 2012).

Maria, you have not entered a stable system – this group is shoulder deep in chaos and have learned to cope with multiplicity, interdependence, and diversity. They are coping with their individual needs not being met by way of counter-productive behavior. In the best interest of the system, new pathways can be explored and by leadership (you) letting go of needing to know any answers. The environment at GSU calls for savvy leadership skills to trigger respectful interaction, (Beer 2000). Using conflict as a source of creative energy, leaders must allow emotions to flow naturally.

Your leadership challenge is to resist fixing the dysfunction (*A to B approach, scientific management approach, knowing approach, modernistic approach*), remaining aware of what is happening (mindfulness) and experience whatever that entails by remaining mindful (*A to B to C to A approach, living system, leadership approach, thinking approach, postmodern approach*),” (Professor Harold, 4/28/20). By allowing space for teams to explore their emotions, stories will unfold, understanding will be gained, and new goals can be set.

Innovation comes from the journey of Chaos to Complex to Complicated/Simple (Cynefin Model Lecture and Sargut 2012); therefore, the cycle must be fed and repeated. To avoid equilibrium (boring status quo, complacency), dynamic imbalance is required for continuous learning and innovation. The answer is not to repair the dysfunction but to move folks through it. The tricky part is to nurture an environment of continuous change that feels normal. The process should feel inspiring so that intrinsic motivation can be tapped into. This is the phenomenon we are all focusing on – you are not alone. Expect to fail and do it fast, experiment and allow your staff to experiment. Show them that failure and success have an equally positive impact.

The Impossible is Possible Together: Leading Through Change

We are taught to learn what has been done and to learn how to do it. We learn it that way so that we can realize success. Few of us receive any formal education around “what could you do differently?” And even fewer of us receive education in an environment that is ungraded and where failure is an acceptable option and perceived as its own success.

Kevin Kelly challenges our way of perceiving what is possible and asks us to look at things with the impossible-is-possible lens. What is possible today that you thought impossible only 10 years ago? What do you view as impossible tomorrow that requires a shift in expectation today? For example, today it is impossible to go to Mars and live there. But, 10 years from now, this may not be impossible.

During this Covid Pandemic, it is more important now than ever to create spaces where we can share our stories with each other to drive personal creativity and increase the potential for innovation. I have seen dozens of neighbors creating masks, some for money and some for donation and I have watched kids in the neighborhood offer to mow lawns and pull weeds. It is small innovation, but it is visible innovation, and impacts our small community in ways we may not realize for years to come. Enterprise companies are shifting from collaborating in enormous spaces to collaborating remotely. Children of all ages are learning through online portals, having to manage their schedules independently, in effect teaching them life-skills they would never have learned this soon otherwise. Parents are learning how to share spaces in their homes, juggling in-home offices, pets, aging grandparents, kids home all day, exponential cleaning, and cooking, shopping online. These stretch skills, although may not seem significant today, will prove to have a great impact on their work, career, and relationships forever.

“Organizations are built on collective power, and it is that collective ambition (Ready 2011) that creates common purpose that drives individual motivation sparking the once impossible innovation. We must be the leaders in questioning and demonstrate an unwavering curiosity,” (Kelly, 2016, pp. 279).

Maria, in collaboration with your managers and staff, you all can build a renewed purpose for each individual and a collective ambition that would drive the team’s desire to continually improve.

SUMMARY:

In summary, Neuroscience and Heuristics are important to your leadership because if you truly understand that your team member’s brains (physiology and chemistry and heuristics) are controlling their emotions and there is little you can do about it, the more easily you will be able to notice when you should allow those emotions to flow and relationships to emerge. Rebuilding a culture is not for the faint of heart and you too will experience your own shortcuts to stories you fabricated. By noticing that quickly and moving yourself and them to positive language and positive goals, you will change the culture through each individual wanting to change.

It is imperative to your success that you understand that complex problems should not be solved simply. And that it is healthy to sit in some anxiety of not knowing the answer. The team should not be looking to you for an answer, instead create that safe space for them to positively interact.

Be mindful that the team is coming from a modernistically led style and that you are immediately introducing your post modernistic approach. By facilitating conversational practice like AI and demonstrating mindfulness in how you approach the staff and the issues, you will build credibility with your team which helps build trust. With each positive interaction between them, they are building their renewed culture and will experience transformative learning together.

Role modeling is impactful not just on staff, but also on peers and managers. Your managers and your colleagues will witness your team's transformation and the entire organization benefits from positivity. It is contagious. As you learn how to facilitate AI and practice mindfulness, and teach others about complexity, anxiety, heuristics, and neuroscience, you will find yourself in a broader success. The success of GSU will permeate throughout the company.

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