

Leadership Bites: Personal Success

LEADERSHIP LEARNING IN 20 MINUTES

NHS

Leadership Academy

South East

Introduction

Feeling personally successful is energising, satisfying and a core source of wellbeing. It is that feeling when you are in the moment, in control and in the flow – so who doesn't want a little more of that?

Occasionally we get 'tested'. Our wellbeing reserves get drawn upon, doubts about the future cause uncertainty, and we sometimes find ourselves acting out of character or falling on old unwanted habits.

Personal success and effectiveness can be thought of as spending more time in the **thriving** zone, rather than **surviving**. In this guide we will look at what can be done to recapture and rekindle a positive state of mind.



"It's not whether you get knocked down, it's whether you get up again that matters"

Vincent Lombardi

Surviving vs. Thriving

Interestingly the shift from feeling in control, comfortable and as though we are thriving, to a state of discomfort, low energy and as though we need to survive relates to a tipping point we can all experience.



Often in times of concentrated distress, or prolonged stress, we start to perceive possible events in the future as threats. We judge these predictions of the future by how likely we think it is to happen, and the impact it might have should it actually become true. This represents one side of the balance.

Acting as a counterweight is our perception of a successful or happy outcome, and we judge this by how estimating our ability to cope with the perceived threat, and the level of support available to us, which can be either emotional or physical.

However, research shows us that in times of survival people are hardwired to fear threats with more conviction than the possible up-side, which triggers our evolutionary fight or flight response. It is also known that in these moments people can vastly overestimate the size and shape of a threat and underestimate their own ability to deal with it, which tips the balance in favour of the threat.

What does this mean

When people experience the opposite of psychological safety and feel threatened it can cause unwanted, ineffective, or uncharacterised behaviours to be shown in the workplace and at home. Unless a person is aware of their state, and able to manage it, it can cause internal tensions and opposing behaviour.

To counteract the skewed perspective that can arise in survival mode it can be useful for an individual to develop techniques to test the reality and perception of the threat, specifically how likely it is to happen, and the impact of the event.

While practicing techniques that boost self-belief, especially our ability to cope with the event, and accessing support available to us, can help alleviate the perceived threat.

In managing a team, it is important to remember the basics of line management. Being watchful of uncharacteristic or unusual behaviour in a person, looking for signs of fatigue, making sure people are taking regular breaks in the day, and taking holiday across the year. These are often clues that can indicate how a person is feeling and what they are experiencing.

Applicable for both individuals and the team leaders: 121 meetings are a useful opportunity to discuss non-task topics such as wellbeing, and to agree any changes that can be made, even if only temporary.



Give it a go

Here are some effective activities that can help rebalance the scale in favour of thriving rather than surviving, which are useful for individuals and for team leaders when supporting a team member.

- **Know the triggers** – strong emotions are often caused when a situation challenges our beliefs or values and cause us to react rather than respond in a managed way. This lowering of emotional intelligence can cause unwanted or regretful behaviour to be shown.

By knowing the triggers, a person is more aware and better able to anticipate and manage challenging situations and people.

- **Engage the rational brain** – when emotionally charged the primal brain takes control and shortcuts rational thinking, which can cause people to say and do things that seem irrational or out of control. An effective way to reengage rational thinking is to ask questions. Even simple questions like: what am I thinking, and about to do right now? What are the possible consequences of this? How are emotions driving my behaviour? What is the best way to achieve what I want? It can slow down the emotional hijack in progress.
- **Control the controllables** – excessively focusing on what can not be controlled or influenced causes feelings of frustration, low empowerment, and dissatisfaction, which fuel the size of a perceived threat. Channelling effort into what can be affected, even if it is small, can neutralise perceived helplessness.
- **Talk it through we someone** – sometimes called the ‘therapy effect’, talking with other people provides an opportunity to voice concerns and feel understood, even if the problem is not resolved there’s value in knowing support is available. Another benefit of talk with someone is that it allows a person to say aloud what they are thinking. Often this can be a catalyst in itself as a person realises any irrational thoughts they may have been telling themselves.

Suggested Reading

The Miracle Morning: 6 Habits by Hal Elrod, 2016

The Art of Being Brilliant by Andy Cope, 2012

Emotional Intelligence: Success at Work by Brandon Goleman, 2019

Further learning ...

For further information and learning, as well as suggested activities, feel free to visit the [People.NHS.uk](https://www.People.NHS.uk) website or our [South East Leadership Academy site](#).



Time to reflect...



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Take some time to note down your thoughts on what you have learned.

What resonated?

What has made you curious?

What small changes could you make to start having an impact differently and quickly?

What might you need to share with your team, and commit to 'testing and learning' together?

A large, empty rounded rectangular box with a thin blue border, intended for the user to write their reflections on the questions above.