The Adaptive Challenge
Understanding the Role of Leadership in Times of Change and Transformation

GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY
WHO WANTS CHANGE?

WHO WANTS TO CHANGE?
Learning Objectives

• Differentiate between technical and adaptive challenges
• Recognize the need for the “collective intelligence”
• Describe the foundational mindset of adaptive leadership
• Describe the foundational skill sets of adaptive leadership
• Understand the importance of reset
• Identify needed shifts in values, attitudes and behaviors in your own leadership challenges
What are you trying to accomplish
What is challenging you?

Revisit the issue which you are in the midst of addressing; a change which may be easier to tackle with improved leadership skills. The change can be with an individual, your team, your organization or cross agency.
Problems and Challenges

• Simple
• Complicated
• Complex

Why Leadership? Why Now?

• Time of unprecedented challenges and turbulence
• Engaged in an increasingly diverse and complex community
• Challenges do not have simple solutions and require creative, inclusive and strategic responses
• Each of you is in a role where you can have significant impact on the future
System Resistance to Change
Face to Face with the Second Step.
Resistance is a characteristic of any major organizational change effort and a major reason why organizational change efforts fail. (Prochaska, Prochaska and Levesque, 2001).

Resistance should be expected in different stages of multicultural organizational change because the topics of prejudice, discrimination, oppression, and power are controversial and emotionally charged. (Brantley, Frost and Razak, 1996).

The Transtheoretical Model of Change suggests that it is counterproductive to forge ahead with action without addressing issues such as resistance, that stand in the way of individual and organizational readiness for change.

Data Source:
Prochaska’s Stages of Change

Pre-contemplation
- no intention to take action in the foreseeable future; unaware or under-aware of the need for change

Contemplation
- aware that problem exists and seriously thinking about overcoming it; but not has not yet made a commitment

Preparation
- combines intention and behavioral criteria; initiation of ‘baby steps’

Action
- modification of behavior, experiences, and environment; short-term changes in place and planning for long-term change

Maintenance
- consolidates the gains attained during the action phase and works to prevent relapse


Slide Source: National Center for Cultural Competence, 2011
Personal Resistance to Change
Leadership and Change

“The changes required will be not only in our organizations but in ourselves as well.

...Only by changing how we think can we change deeply embedded policies and practices.

Only by changing how we interact can shared vision, shared understandings, and new capacities for coordinated action be established.”

Leadership Today

Deeply held beliefs about leadership are challenged

Values that made us successful become less relevant

Skills that made us successful become less relevant or must be re-framed or re-tooled

Adapted from Heifetz, Ron, Leadership without Easy Answers, 1996
Let’s Revisit
Technical Work

Perspectives are aligned

Definition of the problem is clear

Solution and implementation of the problem is clear

Primary locus of responsibility for organizing the work is the formal leader

Adapted from Heifetz, Ron, *Leadership without Easy Answers*, 1996
Adaptive Work

Legitimate, yet competing, perspectives emerge

Definition of the problem is unclear

Solution and implementation is unclear and requires learning

Primary locus of responsibility is not with the formal leader to create the change

Adapted from Heifetz, Ron, *Leadership without Easy Answers*, 1996
The Collective Intelligence

It is in the collective intelligence of people at all levels, who need to use one another as resources, often across boundaries and learn their way to new solutions.

Key Question

To differentiate between Adaptive and Technical Work ask...

Does making progress on this problem require changes in people’s values, attitudes and/or habits of behavior?
Examples

The Work of the Leader

Adaptive

Youth/Family engagement—building real relationships

Sharing real values and uncovering how we show and receive RESPECT

Cultural competence—having staff across the system see culture as the foundation for the system

Building relationships with supervisor

Technical

Put a Youth/Family on a committee

Slap the word RESPECT on the wall

CLC Brochure. Translation.

Send off to training

RESET

• Whose values, beliefs, attitudes or behaviors must change in order to move forward?
• What shifts in priorities, resources and power are necessary?
• What sacrifices would have to be made and by whom?
Now that you understand the difference between adaptive and technical work, discuss when you have either experienced when technical solutions have been used to solve adaptive challenges or when you have put a technical solution to an adaptive challenge.
Relationship between Technical and Adaptive Work

• Process flow between technical and adaptive work
• Using technical work strategically to gain short term wins and move a change process forward
• How does this framework impact the way you think about the implementation of systems of care/Recovery?
• Do not put a technical solution to an adaptive challenge!
The Work of the Leader

Adaptive
Facilitation
Shared Vision
Collaborative Decision Making

Technical
Coordination
Expert Advice
Procedures

STRESS

• Would expert advice and technical adjustments within basic routines suffice, or would people throughout the system have to learn new ways of doing business, develop new competencies and begin to work collectively?

• How might T/TA be useful in order to help define the adaptive or technical challenge and facilitate adaptive and technical work?
Leadership Journey Reflection Question

In a leadership role, where are you most comfortable...in an adaptive or technical challenge? Why do think that is?
New Role and Skills for Leadership in Adaptive Work
Leadership can be seen as the process of envisioning and initiating change that increases one's social influence and results in mobilizing others to learn together to alter the status quo, in response to an urgent challenge or a compelling opportunity.

How do you understand this definition now?
Achieving System Reform Goals

- Work together
- Emphasize shared values
- Engage key stakeholders
- Learn from differences
- Commit to creating a “new truth”
Role of Leadership in Adaptive Work

Create a context for learning and support so that “the change” or new effort can be learned...... generated, understood, absorbed and ultimately acted upon by all.

Source: Ellen B. Kagen, Georgetown University, 2018
“Reset requires figuring out what, of all that you say you value, is really important and must be preserved... and what, of all that you value, you must leave behind in order to adapt to a fundamental new reality.”

Stages of Change: Where are you?

Precontemplation

Contemplation

Preparation

Action

Maintenance

Addressing the Adaptive Challenge

New Skills for Leaders in Adaptive Work
The Work of Leadership: Key Skills

- Get on the Balcony
- Identify the Adaptive Challenge
- Regulate Distress
- Maintain Disciplined Attention
- Give the Work Back to the People
- Protect All Voices

Key Skill: Get on the Balcony

Leaders need to see a context for change

• Identify lack of alignment between values and behavior
• Identify struggles over values and power
• Recognize patterns of work avoidance and potential for conflict
• Watch for unproductive reactions to change
Key Skill: Identify the Adaptive Challenge

- Putting the unspoken on the table
- Recognize changes in values, practices, and relationships.
- Recognize the need to call for a collective sense of responsibility utilizing our diversity.
- Recognize the requirements for:
  - Learning new ways and competencies
  - Working collectively to connect ideas
  - Identify where our diversity intersects
Reset means deciding what to keep

what other values do I have that will support me
To reset, ask

**Which** values, beliefs, attitudes, or behaviors need to change?

**Whose** values, beliefs, attitudes, or behaviors must change?

**What** changes in priorities, resources and power are necessary?

**What** must be let go and **who** must let go?
Application of the Framework to the Work of Leading Transformation

**Reset**: What needs to shift for the change to happen?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Me as a Leader</th>
<th>My Organization</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Values and Attitudes</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Relationships</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Behaviors and Practices (habits)</strong></td>
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Regulate Distress

• Create a “**Holding Environment**” ... a place where:
  – Difficult adaptive challenges can be discussed
  – Diversity of opinion is welcome
  – Experiences, values, and assumptions are challenged (Challenge conventional wisdom)
  – Stress is expected and tolerated

• The leader must use presence and composure to defer personal emotional response in order to regulate distress, tolerate uncertainty and frustration, and facilitate the learning process
Skills to Create a Holding Environment for Safety (presence, listening and inquiry)

“People do not assimilate new ways of doing things, unless they make emotional space in their current paradigm.”

Henry Gregory, Progressive Life Center
Communicating for Impact (http://executivecoachingconcepts.com/category/communicating-for-impact/)

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Center for Child and Human Development, Georgetown University
How to Regulate Distress in a Holding Environment

Raise the Temperature

• Draw attention to the tough issues
• Give people more responsibility than they are comfortable with
• Bring conflicts to the surface
• Don’t let people explain away the problem
How to Regulate Distress in a Holding Environment

Lower the Temperature

• Address technical aspects of the problem
• Establish a structure for the problem solving process by breaking the problem into parts and creating time frames, decision making rules and clear role assignments
• Temporarily reclaim responsibility for the tough issues
Maintain Disciplined Attention

• Do not avoid disturbing issues through work avoidance maneuvers such as:
  – Scapegoating
  – Denial
  – Focusing on technical issues
  – Focusing on individuals

• Leaders must expose conflict and use it as a source of creativity.

• Leaders must identify distractions immediately and move to regain focus.
Give the Work Back to the People

• Get the people to take greater responsibility for the work of change.
• Get the people to take the initiative to define and solve the problems.
• Support the people rather than control them.
• Instill confidence in the people so that they will take risks, and back them up if they make mistakes.
Protect All Voices and Seek Feedback

• Leaders must rely on others to identify the lack of alignment between values and behaviors and raise questions about an impending adaptive challenge.

• Leaders must provide cover for employees who identify internal conflicts in the organization.

• Seek honest feedback on your own leadership effectiveness. Ask “how am I doing” with no retribution.

• Leaders must avoid the urge to silence unexpected leadership voices and be open to them even when they are different from their own perspectives.
APPLICATION EXERCISE

THE APPLICATION OF THE SKILLS of
the
ADAPTIVE CHALLENGE
FRAMEWORK TO MY
CHANGE INITIATIVE
# Adaptive Leadership Framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Diagnosis</th>
<th>Action</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organization</strong></td>
<td>Adaptive or Technical</td>
<td>Authority or Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Individual</strong></td>
<td>Personalize the adaptive challenge</td>
<td>Competing values and risk taking</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Source: Cambridge Leadership Associates, Cambridge, MA

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# The Paradigm Shift: Responsibilities for Leadership

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<th>Technical</th>
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<th>Skill Example</th>
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<td><strong>Direction</strong></td>
<td>Define problems or provide solutions</td>
<td>Identify the adaptive challenge and frame key questions and issues</td>
<td>Ask open-ended, diagnostic, sometimes tough provocative questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Protection</strong></td>
<td>Shield the organization from external threats</td>
<td>Let the organization feel pressures within a range it can stand</td>
<td>Resist the urge to shield people from tension and uncertainty. Let the pinch of reality stimulate adaptation. Create a Holding Environment. Manage the rate of change.</td>
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The Paradigm Shift: Responsibilities for Leadership

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<td><strong>Orientation</strong></td>
<td>Clarify roles and responsibilities, orient new staff</td>
<td>Challenge current roles and resist pressure to define new roles quickly</td>
<td>Recognize opportunities to re-orient staff so that new relationships can develop where they can learn from each other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Managing Conflict</strong></td>
<td>Restore order, quell conflict</td>
<td>Expose conflict or let it emerge</td>
<td>Draw the issues out, encourage debate and differences and facilitate differences as a source of creative energy</td>
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## The Paradigm Shift: Responsibilities for Leadership

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<td><strong>Shaping Norms</strong></td>
<td>Maintain norms</td>
<td>Challenge norms that are not productive</td>
<td>Challenge conventional wisdom. Don’t be a prisoner of your experience. Give up obsolete practices.</td>
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Leadership Journey Reflection Question

How does this conceptual framework of leadership make me think about my role as a leader now?
“The measure of success is not that we have difficult problems to face, just that it’s not the same problem we had last year.”

John Foster Dulles