Session 4: March 30, 2014, Self differentiated leadership as a key to healthy relationships

**Self-differentiated leadership as a key to healthy relationships**

**Five characteristics of effective leaders learned from explorers of the New World** (pages 188 -189)

* **A capacity to get outside the emotional climate of the day.**

The ability to see things differently and the effect of the ability on one’s functioning is an emotional phenomenon. It is having some sense of where you begin and end, and where others in your life end.

* **A willingness to be exposed and vulnerable.**

The fear of standing out is one of the major limitations of imagination’s fruits. It is the anxiety of being alone, of being in a position where one can rely little on others, a position that puts one’s own resources to the test, a position where one will have to take total responsibility for one’s own response to the environment. Leaders must not be afraid of that position; they must come to love it.

* **Persistence in the face of resistance and downright rejection.**

To succeed at a new venture requires a kind of relentless drive that seems obsessive. But no one has ever gone from slavery to freedom with the slaveholders cheering them on, nor contributed significantly to the evolution of our species by working a forty-hour week, nor achieved any significant accomplishment by taking refuge in the forty-hour work week.

* **Stamina in the face of sabotage along the way**

A major difficulty in sustaining one’s mission is that others who start out with the same enthusiasm will come to lose their nerve. Mutiny and sabotage came not from enemies who opposed the initial idea but rather from colleagues whose will was sapped by unexpected hardships along the way.

* **Being “headstrong” and “ruthless” in the eyes of others**

The explorers chose to stick with their goals over “team-building”, consensus and camaraderie.

Leaders need to function well when the world about them is disoriented and stuck in a certain way of thinking.

For both families and institutions, if not our nation itself, our chronically anxious civilization inhibits well-differentiated leaders from emerging and wears down those who do. Among our reigning “Old World” superstitions are the following notions:

* Leaders influence their follows by the model they establish for identification or emulation.
* The key to successful leadership is in understanding the needs of their followers.
* Communication depends on one’s choice of words and how one articulates them.
* Consensus is best achieved by striving for consensus.
* Stress is due to hard work.
* Hierarchy is about power.

A “New World” orientation to relationships will produce a view of leadership that says the following:

* A leader’s major effect on his or her followers has to do with the way his or her presence (emotional being) affects the emotional processes in the relationship system.
* A leader’s major job is to understand his or her self.
* Communication depends on emotional variables such as direction, distance and anxiety.
* Stress is due to becoming responsible for the relationships of others.
* Hierarchy is a natural system phenomenon rooted in in the nature of protoplasm. (page 194)

The innovation of the paradigm shift made by family systems theory: (page 195)

* Was to shift the unity of observation from a person to a network, and to focus on the network principles that were universal rather than specific to culture.

**Systems Thinking** (pages 196-198)

The term **emotional system** (page 197)

* Refers to any group of people who have developed interdependencies to the point where the resulting system through which they are connected (administratively, physically, or emotionally) has evolved its own principles of organization.
* The resulting “field” or structure therefore tends to influence the functioning of the various members more than any of the components tend to influence the functioning of the system.
* A family emotional system included the members’ thoughts, feelings, emotions, fantasies, and associations, their past connections individually and together.
* It includes their physical makeup, genetic heritage, and current metabolic states.
* It involves their sibling positions and their parents’ sibling positions.
* The essential characteristic of systems thinking is that the functioning of and part of the network is due to its position in the network, rather than to its own nature.
* Nature may determine the range of possible functioning and response, but not what specifically it will express.

**An emotional system is a field** (page 197)

* A field is an environment of force (for example, gravitational or magnetic) that, upon achieving homeostasis (stability and therefore identity), functions to maintain that balance through inner adjusting compensations.
* A field can only come into existence when matter gets close to matter, once it does it has more power to determine the functioning of the constituent parts than any of those parts individually, even though their presence is necessarily though their presence is necessary for maintaining the field.

**The Nature of Institutions** (pages 198 – 200)

Most thinking about institutions in our society is psycho-dynamically oriented: relationships take their character from the personalities or backgrounds of the people involved rather than from their adaptation to an overall system.

* Friedman believe that individuals function not out of their own personalities or past, but express that part of their nature that is regulated by the emotional processes in the present system, specifically (1) their position with relational triangles and (2) the forces that have been transmitted from successive generations.

Friedman’s models differ from traditional social science assumptions in three major ways:

* His models view families and institutions in terms of emotional processes that are **self-organizing and multi-generational** rather than forces that can be reduced to the conventions of psychology or the categories of sociology and anthropology.
* Relationships are not simply the product of the personalities involved, but **are constantly evolving structures** that **take shape from the adaptation of each member to the adaptations others make to them in response.**
* Individuals do not function simply according to their own personality makeup or background, but according to their position within an institution’s multi-generational field.
* Leadership begins with freedom from a given institution’s emotional field; leaders neither react to it nor withdraw from it.
* These new models differ from traditional social science models in that they view **the past a continuous process** that goes well beyond the impact of the previous generation.
* The influence of the past is seen in terms of its presence rather than what has “gone by.”
* A metaphor for this kind of thinking would be a collapsing telescope in which each cylinder overlaps, and, to some extent, continually formats the shape of the next.
* The nature of relationships in the present has more to do with emotional processes that have been successively reinforced for many generations than with the logic of their contemporary connection.
* Institutions tend to institutionalize the pathology, or the genius, of the founding families, and only a certain kind of leadership can alter the inevitability of this “persistence of form.”
* These new models differ by **emphasizing the unity of life’s processes** rather than the distinctions made by the social sciences.
* The focus is on what is similar rather than on what is different, and has two consequences for leadership.
* Emphasizing similarity means the principles of leadership extend across the board to all forms of contemporary institutional life. The laws which these emotional processes follow apply equally to all forms of human colonization.
* This means that leaders can improve by gaining a better understanding of how their position in their own extended family’s emotional field affects their functioning, and how the past affects them now.
* It establishes new criteria for what information is important for leaders to understand.

**Principles related to leadership** (page 203)

* Mature leadership begins with the leader’s capacity to take responsibility for his or her own emotional being and destiny.
* Clearly defined, non-anxious leadership promotes healthy differentiation throughout a system, while reactive, peace-at-all costs, anxious leadership does the opposite.
* Differentiation in a leader will inevitably trigger sabotage from the least well-differentiated others in the system.
* Followers cannot rise above the maturity level of their mentors no matter what their mentor’s skill and knowledge-base.
* The unmotivated are notoriously invulnerable to insight.
* Madness cannot be judged from people’s ideas or their values, but rather from (1) the extent to which they interfere in other people’s relationships; (2) the degree to which they constantly try to will others to change; and (3) their inability to continue a relationship with people who disagree with them.
* People cannot hear you unless they are moving toward you, which means that as long as you are in a pursuing or rescuing position, your message will never catch up, no matter how eloquently or repeatedly you articulate your ideas.
* The children who work through the natural difficulties of growing up with the least amount of difficulty are those who parents made them least important to their own salvation.

**A key to effective leadership** (page 229)

* Experienced boaters know that all efforts to try to overcome wind and current by simply trying harder generally do not work, and that it is more effective to position oneself so the wind and current will in their own natural way aid rather than frustrate them. (It is best not to fight Mother Nature).
* Experienced physician knows that attempting to overcome disease by trying to eradicate the pathogen head-on is generally a losing battle. The physician will always have more success if he or she can promote the organism’s immune system to win the day along with the will to survive.
* However, most leaders (parents, managers, mentors, teachers, therapists and consultants) have not learned this lesson, and believe they can teach, motivate and inculcate values by exerting enough will, without considering the natural forces that work against such well-meaning efforts, and use the natural forces of the individual’s own capacity to win and will to survive.
* The techniques designed to change the natural forces of life generally are ineffective and often burn out the “technician,”

**A common characteristic of deeply disturbed, if not disintegrating relationship systems is a conflict of will.** (page 230)

* The conflict of will is sometimes blatantly contentious
* The conflict of will is sometimes subtly masked by charm or passive obstinacy

**How do leaders go with the flow and still take the lead?** (pages 230-231)

* By positioning oneself in such a way that the natural forces of emotional life carry one in the right direction.
* Positioning is done by the leader’s own self-differentiation, or his or her own capacity to be a non-anxious presence, a challenging presence, a well-defined presence, and a paradoxical presence.
* Leaders function as the immune systems of the institutions they lead, because they supply the ingredients for the system’s integrity.

**Summary of well-differentiated leadership** (page 231)

* Focuses on strength
* Is concerned for one’s own growth
* Works with motivated people
* Matures the system
* Seeks enduring change
* Is concerned to define self (take stands)
* Is fed up with the treadmill
* Looks at one’s own stuckness
* Is challenged by difficult situations
* Recognized that reactivity and sabotage are evidence of one’s effectiveness
* Has a universal perspective
* Sees problems as the focus of pre-existing anxiety
* Adapts towards strength
* Has a challenging attitude that encourages responsibility
* Is more likely to create intimate relationships
* Functions like a catalyst for positive change (page 232)