Neuroscience of Leadership

13th National Allied Health Conference

8th August, 2019

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Our Brain’s Organising Principle

1. to conserve energy

2. to minimise threat/displeasure and maximise reward/pleasure

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Thinking
- Understand
- Planning
- Analysing
- Reasoning
- Recall
- Inhibition
- Goal setting

Feeling
- Processing of emotions
- Memories of emotions
- "Gut feelings"
- Procedural memory
- Habits
- Motivation

Subconscious
- Amygdala
- FFF response

Instinct
- HR, Breathing
- Compulsivity
- Inherently selfish

Conscious / Logical

Brain Structures and Functions

Threat (stress) decreases cognitions

THREAT AWAY
- Decreased Perception
- Decreased cognition
- Decreased creativity/insight
- Decreased collaboration
- Increased stress hormones

REWARD TOWARD
- Increased Perception
- Improved cognition/working memory
- Increased creativity / insight
- More inclined for collaboration
- Increased Dopamine

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Minimise Threat, Maximise Reward

5 times / second

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ACCESS Social Triggers

Away

Threat

Toward

Autonomy
Certainty
Connection
Equality
Status
Safety
**Autonomy**
- exerting control over one’s environment; the sensation of having the freedom of choice

**Certainty**
- brain is a pattern-recognition machine
- Any deviation from what we expect can trigger threat
Connection

- feeling of being “in” or “out” of a social group = belonging
- high importance on relating to others

Equality

- feeling that a situation is fair; that all parties are receiving what they deserve or are entitled to
Status

- relative importance, ‘pecking order’ and seniority
- also about recognition of work done, and expertise

Autonomy: exerting control over one’s environment; the sensation of having the freedom of choice

Certainty: brain is a pattern-recognition machine constantly trying to predict the near future. Any deviation from what we expect triggers threat

Connection: the feeling of whether we are “in” or “out” of a social group; belonging; high importance on being able to relate

Equality: the feeling that a situation is fair; that all parties are receiving what they deserve or are entitled to

Status: is about relative importance, ‘pecking order’ and seniority. It’s also about recognition of work done, and expertise

Safety: trumps all other motivators when life in danger

What are your motivators?

Rank them 1 - 5 for yourself (leave out Safety)
Homework: Think about your team

Think about your team and rank their top 2 motivators

"Emotional Intelligence – the ability to understand the needs and strengths of the team – is the quality that will truly differentiate great leaders in the future"
**EQ and Leadership**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recognition</th>
<th>Regulation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self</strong></td>
<td><strong>Self Management</strong>: controlling one's emotions and impulses and adapting to changing circumstances, initiative, and commitment</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Self Awareness</strong>: the ability to read one's emotions and recognise their impact while using gut feelings to guide decisions, sense of confidence</td>
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<td><strong>Social Awareness</strong>: the ability to sense, understand and react to other's emotions, empathy, customer orientation</td>
<td><strong>Relationship Management</strong>: the ability to inspire, influence and develop others while managing conflict, communication, collaboration and teamwork</td>
</tr>
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Source: Emotional Intelligence, Daniel Goleman (1995)

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**Multitasking work culture**

**Smoking Marijuana**: 5 points
**Losing a nights sleep**: 10 points
**Switching**: Men 15; Women 5  
(Bergman, 2010)

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Emotions are Contagious

1. Emotions come first non-consciously
2. Emotions are contagious non-consciously
3. Regulating emotions is a key skill
Emotional Regulation

**Maintain cognitive control to:**
- Be present and deliberate
- Be open to new information
- Not jump to conclusions
- Regulate responses
- Notice the behaviour of others
- Notice changes in the environment

**BLR: When you’re about to lose it**

30 second circuit breaker!

1. Breathe
2. Label
3. Reappraise
Label your state

Activates PFC

Calms limbic system

- aggressive
- envious
- negative
- excited
- optimistic
- activated
- exhausted
- paranoid
- alienated
- fearful
- peaceful
- conquered
- annoyed
- frustrated
- puzzled
- aggressive
- excited
- exhausted
- paranoid
- alienated
- fearful
- peaceful
- conquered
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Reappraise the Situation

- How can I see the positive in this?
- What can I learn from this?
- What will I gain from this?
- What can I appreciate from this?
- How can I put this into perspective?
- What can I share to help others?
Manage your Cognitive Load

**Avoid Switching**

- Set time for emails
- Make priority list before opening email
- Eliminate distractions
- Chunk “like” activities

Manage your Cognitive load

Take regular **brain breaks**
(no back to back meetings)

Do you override your natural need for brain-breaks with stimulants, sugar and stress hormones?
Mindfulness

Mind Full, or Mindful?

Top 3 Mindfulness Apps

The Mindfulness App

Headspace

Calm
Managing Stress

Active
- Energise
  - Lean proteins
  - Exercise
  - Complex carbohydrates
  - Play

Energise
- Take regular breaks
- Meditating
- Sleep/napping
- Vacation
- Recharge

Less Healthy
- Alcohol
- Over eating
- Pain killers
- Sleeping pills
- Numb

More Healthy
- Spike
- Caffeine
- Sugar
- Simple carbohydrates
- Stimulants drugs

Passive
- Play
- Exercise
- Complex carbohydrates
- Lean proteins

Healthy
- Active
- Direct and Open Communication

Less Healthy
- Passive
- Less Healthy

Direct and Open Communication

AND THAT IS WHY WE LIFT ON THREE...

COMMUNICATION

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Choose your level of conversation

VISION: focusing on what we want to move towards.
What is our vision or goal overall?
What is our goal for the conversation?

PLANNING: Planning is a high-level conversation—from a bird’s eye view.

DETAIL: At times we do go into detail in a conversation
if we go into detail too soon or stay too long = overly complex

PROBLEM: It can be quite useful to identify the gaps
However, a pure problem focus limits new ideas.

DRAMA: Is when we are in full ‘limbic mode’. Our focus is on the emotion.
Can result in catastrophising

Change is really hard

FORGOT REUSABLE GROCERY BAGS...

AGAIN!

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Neuroplasticity: the agent for change

“A mind once stretched by a new idea, never regains it’s original dimensions”

Oliver Wendell Holmes

Create new pathways for change
The Art of Being Deliberate

Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom.

— Viktor E. Frankl —

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