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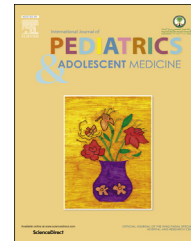


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Encouraging the heart



Raidah S. al-Baradie*

Department of Pediatric Neurology, Neuroscience Center, King Fahd Specialist Hospital-Dammam, Saudi Arabia

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Abstract Because leaders influence others, a leader's sincerity is essential to his ability to influence. Leaders can augment their influence through five leadership practices, including modeling the way, inspiring a shared vision, enabling others to act, challenging the process, and encouraging the heart. Leaders have a tremendous opportunity to expand dignity, respect, and value and legitimately make the world a better place.

Encouraging the heart challenges leaders to care about their people while focusing on the team's final goal: results. Truly caring about your people means setting lucid values and anticipating the best. Encouraging the heart challenges leaders to pay attention, personalize recognition, relate stories about success and values, celebrate together, and be an example for others to follow.

We need to feel linked to others and, in turn, they to us because greatness is never obtained completely by ourselves, all alone. Encouraging the heart is the leadership practice that connects us with one another. It documents that we are in "this" together-whatever the project, course, congregation, division, and so on, may be. When leaders praise their followers for achieving the values or goals of the group, the leaders are giving them courage and inspiring them to practice their own skills to deliver-even when under stress. When we recognize people for their participation, we increase their awareness of their value to the organization and to their co-workers, and thereby impart a sense of connectedness that, being social animals, all humans seek. While we may all be linked, leaders have the responsibility to ensure that we are in touch.

We strongly suggest encouraging the heart for leaders who want to enhance their care of people and for those who know that supporting others is not their strongest skill. Some people are born encouragers – if you are not one of them, this article is for you!

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* Tel.: +966 138442222; fax: +966 138150315.

E-mail address: raidah_albaradie@hotmail.com.

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1. Introduction

Kouzes and Posner conducted a study in 1995 and found that performance was higher when people were led by individuals who offered encouragement. Only 40% of workers reported that they received recognition for a job well done, while another 40% claimed that they never received recognition. On the other hand, approximately 50% of managers reported that they give recognition for high performance [1].

The impact of encouraging the heart on the team is enormous. For example, results include increased productivity, decreased absenteeism, greater initiative, increased cooperation, stronger bonds among co-workers, better communication among team members, fewer conflicts in the work environment, and even reduced job complications. Many factors contribute to successful leadership. The Center for Creative Leadership found that the number one success factor for leaders is their relationships with subordinates. High performing managers exhibited greater warmth and fondness toward others than did managers in the bottom 25%. They not only expressed affection towards others, but they also wanted affection. Furthermore, they were more inclined to share their thoughts and to develop closer relationships with their subordinates. In other words, they care about their employees and that their employees did.

As a member of a team, I think of the attributes that make-up a motivating environment. For example, in a stimulating and motivating environment, I know what is expected of me; in the last seven days, I have received recognition or praise for doing good work; my supervisor or someone at work cares about me as a person; someone at work encourages my development; in the last six months, someone at work has talked to me about my progress; my opinion at work is respected; and my company makes me feel that my job, what I do, is important. A Gallup Workplace Audit found that if a work group has these attributes, they are 50% more likely to achieve customer loyalty, 40% more profitable, and have 10% less employee turnover [2].

An example of an individual who did extremely successful in encouraging the heart is Steve Harris who, as an advocate for improving the lives of people with HIV, helped people throughout the world fight Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS). Harris team members admired and respected him and were inspired by his leadership. During the 10 years that Harris served on the Board of Directors of the Ontario AIDS Network, he welcomed many people from all over Ontario who were HIV positive, and they quickly became his friends. When you knew Steve, you knew a man who cared deeply. He always encouraged people to become involved. While their work was not always easy, Steve was determined and he never gave up. He was someone who could be relied on to be there in good times and in bad times, and he could be depended on to share a laugh or a tear, or best of all, a joke. Steve was thoughtful and he was determined. He also had courage. He was not afraid to ask the tough questions or to defend an unpopular or conflicting point of view. He was also a mediator who was able to help his team find its way to higher ground. He was a role model

and a man who led by example. He encouraged the heart, appreciated everyone, developed potential, enabled and empowered his team, responded with dignity, sought opportunities, listened to others, inspired a shared vision, and promoted inclusiveness [3].

Leadership development in the public health sector must include multiple factors to create consistent increases in exemplary leadership practices. A study that focused on the leadership development process itself, the Regional Institute for Health and Environmental Leadership (RIHEL) training, was reported as having an overall positive, significant impact on leadership development of the participants. There is a need for studies to further test the leadership development influence model as it is critical that public health training programs identify the specific training that will improve leadership development in the public health sector [4].

1.1. Encouragement increases productivity

Corporate kindness positively impacts profits. There are six characteristics of kind managers: compassion, integrity, gratitude, authenticity, humility, and humor. Managers who offer encouragement to their employees attract better quality candidates and increase employee retention. The 100 best companies to work for America are all led by leaders who recognize the value and importance of their people to their success and thus the success of the company. Researchers have found that employees who are treated by their managers with kindness, respect, and fairness perform better in the workplace [5,6].

In another example, a nurse unit manager and her senior nursing team introduce action learning sets (ALSs) to the nursing staff of an inpatient medical unit. During the process, a creative visioning exercise was also presented. A key finding of the exercise was that the process enabled others to act while challenging the process and encouraging the heart. In other words, effective leadership by the senior nursing team enabled the staff to be engaged in the process thus promoting growth among the entire nursing staff [7].

There are seven essential components to the encouraging the heart practice that increase productivity among the team:

1. Set clear standards.
2. Expect the best.
3. Pay attention.
4. Personalize recognition.
5. Tell the story.
6. Celebrate together.
7. Be an example.

1.1.1. Set clear standards

This can be achieved by creating clear goals and allowing employees to provide input with respect to their goals, and by giving consistent feedback that allows employees to know if they are meeting their goals and that guides them to correct their course. Encouragement is feedback. Successful managers help their employees understand how

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