

## **Leadership from a Hope Paradigm**

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Leadership in this new millennium beckons us to examine new paradigms. The focus of this presentation is on how leadership from a hope perspective enables individuals to lead with authenticity, courage, and purpose. There are hundreds of books written on the critical role of leaders in this new era; however, only recently has there been any exploration of a potential connection between leadership and hope (Helland & Winston, 2005). My interest and research in the area of hope began from a very clinical perspective that then evolved into my recent work focused on leadership from a center of hope. In this presentation, the tenets of leading from a Hope Paradigm are examined and specific skills are delineated. Both seasoned and emerging leaders will be given a road map with which to navigate the challenges of leading effectively during this time of rapid change. Group exercises and specific examples will be interspersed throughout the presentation which will facilitate understanding of the dimensions and dynamics of hope and the hoping process and its relevance and application to leadership.

This is a time of extraordinary challenges and opportunities related to changing demographics, increasing diversity, rapid advances in scientific research and technology, increasing globalization, and changing workforce needs and challenges. Educational leaders must prepare students and faculty for interdisciplinary, collaborative, evidence based practice, telecomputing, virtual and personal learning, and building partnerships between communities throughout the world. Leaders must unite education and practice through the tripartite function of care, teaching, and research; this work requires a blending of translational scholarship with excellence in practice. Leaders must define and clearly articulate a shared vision, enhance the learning and working environment, celebrate diversity, build relationships, and expand the regional, national, and international reputation and visibility of their college and/or school/department. In order to survive and thrive in the environment of today leadership must occur at all levels, not just at the top, and it must be hope centered.

Leadership from a Hope Paradigm builds on an understanding of hope and recognizes that leadership is about influencing and making decisions, taking appropriate actions at the right times, and projecting ourselves and those around us into a future that is better. Hope encourages reaching out into the future and celebrating the small steps along the way. Effective leaders have been described as those who influence, teach and serve as role models (Depree, 1989) and teach more through being than through doing (Cashman, 1999). Leadership has been clearly identified as a skill, not a role (Byram, 2000). Warren Bennis (1999) voiced that effective leaders put words to the formless longings and deeply felt needs of others. Research based studies suggest that all leaders share certain characteristics; that is, the ability to guide, to direct others toward a goal, the ability to influence others to make a difference, and the ability to work effectively with and through others ( Bennis, 1999; Peterson & Luthans, 2003) . From my research studies and professional experiences I have found that leaders need to have a spirit lifting presence and emulate hope as suggested by Fry (2003), be open to the diversity of gifts from others, and be strong enough to abandon themselves to the strengths of others. In addition, leaders must encourage their organizations to dance to forms of music yet to be heard, and must understand their sphere of control, their sphere of influence, and those

areas or things over which they have no control. Luthans and Avolio (2003) acknowledge that throughout history the effectiveness of a leader has been attributed to the leader's ability to generate hope. Yet despite this acknowledgement, little attention has been paid to hope within leadership studies due to both its nebulousness and complexity. It is only now that hope is being included in emerging concepts and models of leadership (Adams, et al., 2002; Snyder et al., 2000). This pioneering work, including my own work, suggests that leaders must be a hope agent, a catalyst, a master of change, a pathfinder, an innovator, a developer of people; possess curiosity and daring, be aware of their limitations and listen to others, have a guiding vision and love what they do. The most critical attributes of a leader are hope and hardiness according to Veninga & Tebbitt, (1991). They described hope as the active expectation of a better tomorrow and hardiness as the flexibility and adaptability to survive the changing environment. Peterson and Luthans (2003) identified a significant relationship between hopeful leaders, unit financial performance and human resource outcomes, and Luthans (2005) found that hopeful leaders positively influenced the resiliency of employees and organizations. These findings suggest hope is contagious and a leader's hopeful thinking does indeed impact important organizational outcomes.

Leaders need to create a vision of hope and lead from a Hope Paradigm (mind, body, heart, and soul of hope). In order to lead from a Hope Paradigm the leader must understand hope and know how to engender and maintain hope in others. It is important, as a leader, to understand the multiple definitions of hope, as well as its critical attributes and tenets to lead from a Hope Paradigm. Through examining the theoretical and empirical literature it is evident that attempts have been made to define and understand hope since the 1960's. One of the early conceptualizations of hope, which has since served as the basis for numerous studies and the development of several instruments to measure hope, was formulated by Dufault and Martocchio (1985). Hope was defined by these researchers as "a multidimensional life force characterized by a confident yet certain expectation of achieving good which to the hoping person is realistically possible and personally significant." Evidence since then has shown that every time life asks us to give up a desire, to change our direction, or redefine our goals, we are invited to widen our perspective and to touch the deeper current of hope. It is believed that hope and discouragement are intertwined and have their roots in despair. Hope has been described as 'a present alive with possibilities'. It is the feeling you have that the feeling you have isn't permanent, it is a motivating factor, and without hope it is difficult to explain existence and impossible to imagine a future. In the 1980's and 1990's, studies were conducted to define hope in specific groups (Farran, Herth, & Popovich, 1995; Elliott, 2005). Based on these studies the following definitions of hope were derived from individuals across the health and illness and age continuums:

- (a). Hope is a confident expectation of significant future outcome (healthy young adults).
- (b) Hope is an expectation that goes beyond visible facts (chronically ill)
- (c ) Hope is an expectation of a brighter moment, day, or eternal future, a transcendence of the present situation (older adult)
- (d) Hope is an inner power that facilitates transcendence of the present situation and movement toward new awareness and enrichment of being (terminally ill).

These various definitions suggest that hope is a complex, multidimensional, and dynamic, cognitive process that is observable across numerous contexts and has potential applicability to leadership within an organization.

Researchers (Farran, Herth, & Popovich, 1995) have identified the critical attributes of hope as affective (feeling of expectancy), cognitive (goal setting/vision, and affiliative (relationships/team building). These attributes have direct applicability to leadership as leaders are engaged in developing a feeling of expectancy (possibilities) within their team, in goal setting based on a shared vision, and in building strong and positive relationships between team members. Clinically based research (Elliott, 2005; Farran, Herth, & Popovich, 1995; Herth, 2001) has suggested that the following strategies engender or maintain hope within healthy and ill individuals: interconnectedness with self/others/world, uplifting memories, cognitive strategies, spiritual belief and practice, refocused time, purposeful activities, hope objects, and lightheartedness; in contrast depleted energy, hopelessness in others, uncontrollable pain and suffering, concurrent losses, and devaluation of personhood have been identified as hope inhibitors. Critical to leading from a center of hope is an understanding of both the strategies that engender or maintain hope, as well as the hope inhibitors.

Leaders need to understand the relationship between hope and coping. Research shows us that hope and coping are inexplicably intertwined. Hope, according to Farran, Herth, and Popovich (1995) may influence how the individual perceives the threat to self or goals (hope as an antecedent of coping), it may enable the individual to appraise the situation as challenging as opposed to threatening (hope as a coping strategy), and it may help the person to use adaptive tasks and coping strategies that facilitate expanded functioning (hope as an outcome). It would appear that leaders have the ability to enhance and raise the hopes of their followers and that hopeful thinking on the part of leaders generates hopeful thinking in followers (Luthans, 2005). Hope is about having a fluid spirit, it swings open the door to possibilities and functions as a healing power of the human spirit. Helland and Winston (2005), based on review of the research literature on hope, concluded that “high hope individuals are better able to cope with ambiguity and uncertainty, and, indeed, are energized by the challenge of journeying into an undefined future without having all the answers, yet knowing that in time that answers will be revealed. It is this enlarged capacity to remain open to possibilities, to envision a positive future in the face of uncertainty and to creatively construct pathways that can be embraced as people collectively seek to turn possibilities into reality that links hope with the enactment of leadership” (p. 45). Hope is paradoxical; it is neither passive waiting nor unrealistic forcing of circumstances that cannot occur. There are many situations, as a leader, where you must help individuals to cope and be open to possibilities.

Leadership from a hope paradigm involves three components: strengthening the hoping self, minimizing hope inhibitors, and creating a vision of hope in others. Strengthening the hoping self, whether we are talking about the leader or those whom they are leading, involves the strategies discussed earlier, namely increasing interconnectedness with self/others/world, enhancing uplifting memories, reflecting on priorities in life and shaping plans for the future, learning to pause and reflect, using cognitive strategies to transform perceptions into a positive frame, developing short and long range goals, engaging in purposeful activities that provide meaning and purpose in life, and employing prosperity thinking. In addition, strengthening the hoping self

involves the use of lightheartedness (mirthful spirit) in order to gain a sense of perspective and to develop the fluidity and flexibility needed to survive in environments of rapid change and difficulty and to achieve a sense of balance (Huntley & Thayer, 2007). Leaders, operating from a center of hope, need to focus on both contextual and content goals. Contextual goals are the ongoing issues that must be met if an institution is to thrive and content goals represent the heart and soul of what leaders are seeking to accomplish, their legacy (McNally, 1994). Clearly defining one's legacy, namely those accomplishments for which they want to be remembered long after the organizations operational issues are solved, and acting upon them is critical to the hoping self.

Leadership from a hope paradigm involves minimizing hope inhibitors in self and others including those things that drain and deplete energy and those that engender a feeling of hopelessness and an inability to make a difference. Other hope inhibitors include experiencing numerous losses concurrently, as well as feeling that one's personhood is devalued. The leader must lessen energy sappers, empower their people through coaching, teaching, mentoring, assisting others to recognize the riches that are deep inside, and create an environment of hope which emphasizes potential rather than limitations.

Leadership from a hope paradigm requires creating a hope vision in others. Creating this hope vision requires hearing the narrative (story), the voice of others through active listening and a realization that leadership is primarily about relationships and a trusting reciprocal process occurring between people. It also requires creating an environment that fosters expression and ventilation of fears, questions, and expectation, along with fostering a sense of belonging. Leadership from a center of hope makes space for others to act and thus grow; these leaders empower and inspire their people. A most crucial quality of a leader, who is operating from a Hope Paradigm, is openness, openness to new possibilities, openness to new approaches and strategies, openness to relationships, to new ways of doing things, and to letting people express their ideas. Cushman (1999) suggests that we should stop calling people "leaders" and rename them "openers". Creating a vision of hope in others requires leaders to have a vision and to enroll others in the vision and to develop a sense of the possible in others.

Hope encourages an individual or group to develop short and long range goals, to try alternatives, and to celebrate small steps along the way to achieving success. It is important to remember that a good leader is a person who people revere, and the great leader is the person who people say "we did it ourselves." Creating a vision of hope in others requires nurturing a team spirit which enables people to sustain continued effort and maintain energy and momentum. It must be recognized that hope is a contagious reality and needs to be shared. In a hope paradigm leaders serve as role models of hope and build hope bridges. Research has shown that hope is experienced in the present, but it is also linked to the past and the future. Therefore, leaders stand in contact with the past and present simultaneously so the present becomes clearer and the future is possible. Critical to creating a vision of hope in others is an attitude of lightheartedness as it enhances receptivity and reduces resistance.

The work has only just begun examining the connection between leadership and hope and there are many unanswered questions regarding the "process by which leaders influence hope in their followers" (Avolio et al, 2004, p.808). There is a need for qualitative and quantitative translational research to be conducted in applied settings that

tests theoretical assumptions and measures the impact of hope within leaders and organizations in diverse and cross-cultural settings. It is critical that we use the findings from research to determine ways and means for developing hopeful thinking in both leaders and followers and to confirm and validate their effectiveness.

Leadership from a Hope Paradigm means leading from a center of hope. The leader, to be effective, must strengthen the hoping self, minimize hope inhibitors and create a vision of hope in others. This new millennium has extraordinary challenges and untapped opportunities, and it is those who are leading from a center of hope who will be able to meet these challenges, lead effectively with authenticity, courage, and purpose, and move their team and organization forward to achieve heights greater than ever imagined.

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