

ASSIGNMENTS:

1 Write a main Discussion question

Week 5: Online Discussion

After reading the chapters assigned, discuss the following:

Dye, 2017, end of Chapter 8

Case 8.2

Case Discussion Assignments (25%): Active learning is essential. Students will participate via *Blackboard* in all posted discussion topics. For each case scenario, students are required to post at least 3 times each week, once by Tuesday of each week stating their initial views and at least 2 more times, by Friday of the week, with a thoughtful reflection commentary after reading the views of classmates. NOTE: Cite the textbook or any references to support your discussions (minimum 2 references APA format). Weekly lessons, assigned readings, and your own literature searching each week will be the source of the discussion topics. *Blackboard* participation will be graded for quality of contribution to the topic and professionalism of the response. The professor will not comment on each posting, but may comment to provide direction to the discussion as postings accumulate.

Case 8.2

Rosemary Brezinski, a veteran chief nursing officer, is the new president of a rapidly growing system hospital. Most of her impressive career has been spent in large tertiary organizations known for research and medical innovations. Her new position is a significant promotion. She is now responsible for leading the hospital's response to its recent 10 percent growth in patient volume; improving morale and collaboration among managers, staff, and physicians; and planning and implementing the move of the system's teaching program to the hospital campus, something that only the senior management knows thus far.

In the first three weeks on the job, Rosemary has held several meetings with her senior management team and leadership groups in the hospital. She has distributed to these leaders a detailed, 80-item list of priorities that will serve as the team's agenda for the next 18 months. She has informed them that she will assign each priority to an individual or a group. Her message to everyone has been consistent since the beginning of her tenure at the hospital: "I have never failed in the past. I expect that we will make these changes happen on time and on budget." She has not spoken to the medical staff or the frontline employees.

Case 8.2 Questions

1. What interpersonal connection mistakes has Rosemary made so far?
2. How do you think the staff (including the physicians and managers) feel about

her style?

3. Will her mandates for change work?

2 After finishing the main discussion question, you have to give 2 short responses to two of my classmate's discussions

a. First classmate discussion

The interpersonal connection in general is the association, connection, or social affiliation made by people who work together. Communication must be effective and carry out in the ideal standard. Some interpersonal connection mistakes Rosemary has made are that since she is the president of the company and occupies a leadership position, she has not had any meetings with these employees who are doctors and front-line workers. These are the most important elements of the company in addition to management since they are in direct contact with consumers and their quality of service is what drives the rapid growth of hospitals. The next mistake Rosemary made was that she gave out a plan for the next eighteen months however she did not explain what strategy she had to prioritize and assign tasks to individuals and groups of the employees. Based off of these interpersonal connection mistakes her staff must feel a disconnection coming from Rosemary. She isn't in contact with her staff and everyone working under her. There is a disconnection with her employees there isn't genuine communication, strong communication is what allows a good effective leader to implement their ideas (Loving, 2016). She dismantles and implements her own plans which none of her staff are connected to. Her implemented mandates will not change, employees generally would tend to follow and implement the change or the task assigned by their supervisor in the group or individually, if they know the exact schedule behind and the basis of the distribution of tasks, since they were also part of this planning (Dye, 2017). But there is so connection nor communication between Rosemary and the employees. In conclusion her implemented mandates will not change.

References

Dye, C. (2017). *Leadership in Healthcare: Essential Values and Skills*, Third Edition (3rd Edition). Health Administration Press.
<https://bookshelf.vitalsource.com/books/9781567938470>

Loving, C. (2016, October 26). *What kinds of leadership would foster a successful relationship with staff?* Small Business - Chron.com. Retrieved September 28, 2021, from <https://smallbusiness.chron.com/kinds-leadership-would-foster-successful-relationship-staff-34595.html>.

- Example of one short response for this discussion

RE: Week 5

Hi Maryam!

Great post! I definitely agree that Rosemary's lack of communication creates a devastating disconnect between her, the leader, and her subordinates. This can make it very difficult to run and manage a hospital. In addition to this, you touch upon the idea that having good communication allows a good leader to implement their ideas effectively. A strong leader not only has strong management skills, but they also have strong communication skills that allow them and their subordinates to further succeed within the company. "Good executives do not take their staff's loyalty for granted, so they strive to get to know these individuals" (Dye, 2017, p. 47). With this lack of communication, there comes a lack of connection between leader and employees. I agree that, in conclusion, her goals will not be implemented.

Thanks!

Dye, C. (2017). *The Leadership Imperative*. In T. Rothschild (Ed.), *Leadership in Healthcare: Essential Values and Skills*. Health Administration Press. (3rd ed.).

b. Second classmate discussion

Week 5 Discussion

Case 8.2, tells the story of Rosemary Brezinski rising within her company. She has spent lots of her time working with research and medical innovations. In these types of work, there is very little interaction with others and few opportunities to grow as a leader. This makes Rosemary inexperienced in the field of leadership and interpersonal communication.

In Rosemary's new job as a president of a rapidly growing system hospital, she is responsible for implementing the teaching program into the hospital. Since this is something only the senior staff know about, the rest of the frontline employees are simply in the dark.

Rosemary's lack of communication has set a shaky foundation with the most important members of her team, the frontline workers. They are the individuals that pull together all of the goals and tasks of the senior leaders. In healthcare, it is very important to have good relationships and good communication with members of the frontline. This will further encourage them to engage in their work. As explained by Dye, "managers can encourage employee engagement by improving manager-employee communication and creating an environment where employees feel valued" (Dye, 2017, p. 48). Having better relationships between the senior leaders and frontline workers can heighten productivity and efficiency.

Rosemary has a hands-off leadership style where she is accustomed to giving orders and not having a lot of interaction with others. This approach to leadership is going to cause Rosemary to clash with the views of others and lead to decreased productivity and efficiency. Dye elaborates on this idea as "good executives do not take their staff's loyalty for granted, so they strive to get to know these individuals" (Dye, 2017, p. 47).

With this approach, her goals will most likely not be achieved due to her poor communication skills and her inability to make connections with her peers and her subordinates.

Dye, C. (2017). The Leadership Imperative. In T. Rothschild (Ed.), *Leadership in Healthcare: Essential Values and Skills*. Health Administration Press. (3rd ed.).

3. Essay questions

Essay Questions-Week 5

Answer the following Essay Questions: Format by repeating the question, followed by a clear and concise answer (2-3 paragraphs per question/answer), and be sure to cite and reference textbooks or other readings to justify your answers.

1. How can a college student be a servant leader? Provide examples
2. Can servant leadership be taught in college? Provide examples
3. Discuss the importance of ethics and integrity as college student and as future healthcare professionals.

Essay Questions Homework (25%): Students will submit essay answers to assigned questions via BlackBoard. **NOTE: Cite the textbook or any reference to support your essay answers (minimum 2 references per answer in APA format).** UPLOAD a Microsoft Word document OR save your document as a PDF and upload.

Book Pages

CHAPTER 8

Interpersonal Connection

Bad leaders perpetrate terrible misery on those subject to their domain.

—Robert Hogan and Robert B. Kaiser (2005)

ARTHUR ONLY HAD a reputation for being a great IT (information technology) manager at his health system. He was on many task forces and assigned the lead on the critical electronic health record (EHR) conversion. Arthur, who has an MBA and a PhD in information technology, applied for the chief information officer (CIO) position when its incumbent retired. He got the job, beating other equally qualified but more experienced candidates. This promotion to CIO pleased many people at the organization, but it was surprising given that Arthur was a middle manager—not necessarily next in line for the job. Among employees, the situation has become a favorite topic of discussion.

EMPLOYEE A. How did Arthur do it, landing a big CIO job so fast? He never managed budgets or led a department. He never worked directly with senior management. Granted, he was heavily involved in the EHR conversion, but I can say the same for a lot of managers here, and they're not moving up the ladder.

EMPLOYEE B. My cousin runs a large IT outsourcing firm. The turnover in those companies is very high. People frequently leave for more money, and worker loyalty is nonexistent. Somehow, though, at my cousin's firm the turnover is low, although the employees could get so much more money if they worked somewhere else.

EMPLOYEE A. Those people must be crazy!

EMPLOYEE B. Maybe so, but my cousin is an ideal boss. He sets aside time during the day to visit his employees to listen to their concerns and input. He asks about their families, and he encourages them to take classes or go back to school to advance their careers. He respects their work, and he personally thanks them for their contributions. His employees feel welcomed in his office, and they know he

puts people before numbers, so they are not afraid to approach him. He is humble, supportive, and helpful. Doesn't my cousin sound like Arthur? Don't you think people would prefer to work for someone like him over someone whose main focus is always money and business?

THE HEALTHCARE SYSTEM is the true industry of the people. No other field witnesses human afflictions, from diseases of the body to ailments of the spirit; hosts the most basic human need (interaction at the most inopportune moments); and serves as the most common human thread (everyone needs healthcare). Because of these truths, people—patients, employees, physicians, volunteers, contractors, communities—are the critical factor in organizational success.

The irony is that, though leading healthcare organizations find that improving relationships with their employees and patients is the key to excellence, most still focus on financial factors to measure success. Every organization has an annual financial audit, but only a few conduct annual human resources audits or even define what these human resources audits might be. Almost every board of trustees has a finance committee, but not all have human resources committees. Most organizations have balanced scorecards, but the financial portion of these scorecards receives the most time and attention.

In his well-known book *Good to Great*, Jim Collins (2001, 36) writes about the Level 5 leader. This person “builds enduring greatness through a paradoxical blend of personal humility and professional will.” This type of leader puts people first (i.e., “gets the right people on the bus”) and vision and strategy second. Financial success then follows this principle.

This chapter reiterates the significance of having people skills—a value so subtle that it can be easily undermined but so powerful that it can make or break an organization.

Leadership is a reciprocal relationship between those who choose to lead and those who decide to follow. Any discussion of leadership must attend to the dynamics of this relationship.

—James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner (1993)

PEOPLE SKILLS

Leaders who have people skills are marked by a profound respect for the

character of others and a deep faith in their potential, which is why they enjoy being with people and interact well with them. Often, the primary deciding factor in an executive search is the candidate's "chemistry" or ability to "blend" well with others, as illustrated in the vignette. Although almost all organizations place good people skills at the top of their recruitment requirement lists, they do not emphasize the importance of this attribute to their existing employees and do not provide appropriate tools for measuring it. [Exhibit 8.1](#) lists definitions of "good people skills," as noted by healthcare leaders.

Exhibit 8.1 Definitions of "Good People Skills"

- "Practices active listening, and internalizes what others say so that she can reflect on it"
 - "Is comfortable with his own humanity and readily admits mistakes and apologizes when necessary"
 - "Is clear about her stance on an issue but respects others' perspectives"
 - "Exhibits warmth, caring, and concern"
 - "Has an air of genuineness and trustworthiness"
 - "Gets along well with others"
 - "Is open, is approachable, and cares about developing and sustaining strong relationships"
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The backbone of people skills is reciprocity, because without it no interaction or relationship occurs. Every healthy relationship—personal or professional—is marked by a mutual exchange, a quid pro quo of sorts. This exchange strengthens the bond and encourages its duration. Nonresponsive, uninvolved rank-and-file employees can discourage even the most interactive leader.

THE CONCEPT IN PRACTICE

The following are ways to enhance interpersonal connections.

Listen

Many leaders are leaders because they are the ones in the know. For example, subject matter experts are designated to lead an initiative because of their knowledge and experience, not because of their ability to guide a group. Unfortunately, most of these leaders do too much talking, especially with subordinates, but not enough listening.

Hearing is easy because it is merely mechanical. Barring physical problems, we can all hear without exerting much effort. Listening, on the other hand, is a process that demands not only patience, time, energy, and respect but also an emotional and intellectual response. That is, listening is not (or should not be) a passive activity. In healthcare, many concerns are not articulated, if verbalized at all. Leaders must then listen more carefully to discover the root of a problem, and they must never assume the incorrect cliché "no news is good news."

Although listening is one of the most difficult tasks to master, especially in a high-stress, fast-paced environment, it is a critical skill. [Exhibit 8.2](#) presents some techniques for improving listening.

Exhibit 8.2 How to Enhance Listening Skills

Ask a lot of questions. Be aware that the tone of your voice and the content of your questions can reveal your personal bias or opinion.

Ask clarifying questions. Do not assume the answers.

Restate the answers. Prevent misunderstanding by repeating or rephrasing in front of the person what he said.

Be open-minded. People will tell you less if they feel you are judgmental.

Be receptive to bad news. Leaders who cannot take negative news are intimidating for the wrong reasons. "Don't kill the messenger" may sound trite, but it is wise advice for every executive.

Minimize interruptions. Talking over people, acting distracted, taking phone calls, answering e-mails, and checking or posting on social media or websites are antithetical to good listening. Schedule a time for the discussion, and focus while it is happening.

Seek suggestions. Doing so sends a signal of respect and often encourages others to provide you more information.

Involve others in the conversation. Ask those who are quiet for their thoughts; their perspectives often get lost in the discussion.

Show Respect

In *Lions Don't Need to Roar*, author D. A. Benton (1992, 12) suggests that "sincerity and positive regard are two things that just can't be faked, and you need both to deal with people effectively." When asked what bothers them most about senior management, many employees state that leaders do not appreciate what they do "in the trenches." Often, this sort of observation means that executives do not make an effort to visit the units in which services are delivered; hence, they do not understand the stresses and challenges that frontline staff face on a regular basis. When leaders are absent, they cannot even thank, let alone become familiar with, those who do the work.

Strong leaders have great respect for others. They solicit ideas, share pertinent information, encourage participation in organizational initiatives and activities, show regard for others' well-being, and recognize their hard

work, among many other actions. As discussed in [chapter 6](#), "Respect is the value that multiplies the desire of both the leader and follower to work harder and deliver consistently excellent performance."

Of course, we do not live alone on islands.... We are born into families; we grow up into societies.... Once into our professions, we find that our jobs require us to interact frequently and effectively with others. If we fail to learn and apply the principles of interpersonal effectiveness, we can expect our progress to slow or stop.

—Stephen R. Covey (1992)

Save Time for Staff

The workday of an average healthcare executive is hectic, leaving him little time for unscheduled interactions with his direct supervisees and other staff. As a result, he can be viewed as unapproachable—someone who is too important to mingle with the rank and file.

Scheduled employee events (e.g., staff meetings, picnics, organizational socials, award luncheons, retreats, holiday parties) are ideal for a busy executive to attend. They give the leader an opportunity to connect with many people, including staff, physicians, community members, and even patients and their families.

Manage Perceptions

Perception is more important than reality because people will believe what they imagine to be true, even if it is not the actual truth. Otara (2011, 21) writes, "What people often observe or assess as your ability to be a leader and your effectiveness becomes their perception, which in turn becomes reality." Lee and I feel that managing perception is so important that we dedicate an entire chapter to it in our book *The Healthcare Leader's Guide to Actions, Awareness, and Perception* (Dye and Lee 2016).

For example, the firing of a popular manager can set off a thousand impressions, most of which would be incorrect. Specifically, it could create irrational fears or breed gossip, which could harm the culture. In this scenario, ignoring the reaction is not an option. Giving the pat "it's a confidential issue" statement is not an option either.

What leaders could do, instead, is offer the most plausible explanation to minimize the perception that someone is hiding something. In this age of more transparent leadership, employees do not tolerate secrecy and lies. The more they perceive a cover-up or wrongdoing (true or not), the more they develop a distrust for their leaders.

Leaders also have to manage perceptions about their jobs. Expensive lunches, dedicated parking spots, and other privileges send the message that leaders are more valued by the organization. Although such perks do get offered in healthcare and other industries, they are not common. When leaders receive (and accept) these perks, they must avoid the perception of any conflict of interest, which is something they expect employees to do as well.

No matter how ambitious, capable, clear-thinking, competent...and witty you are, if you don't relate well to other people, you won't make it. No matter how professionally competent, financially adept, and physically solid you are, without an understanding of human nature, a genuine interest in the people around you, and the ability to establish personal bonds with them, you are severely limited in what you can achieve.

—D. A. Benton (1992)

Recognize Others

Some leaders try to promote their own accomplishments by suggesting that they, rather than the people who report to them, have done the good work. People-oriented leaders behave in the opposite manner—they highlight the skills and achievements of others, particularly their own staff members. They understand that leaders are measured by the successes of their teams or followers. Therefore, the more recognition the team members receive, the higher the leader is elevated and the greater the rewards to the team as a whole.

Manage and Channel Emotions Appropriately

Many leaders create problems for themselves by losing their temper and showing the negative side of their personality. Although everyone needs to vent, leaders must be careful not to lose control because uncontrolled

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because they are curt or do not smile. Zig Ziglar, a very successful sales trainer and author, is well known for teaching and coaching executives about the power of a smile.

Visual, nonverbal cues communicate a leader's comfort with other people. For example, steady eye contact (without glaring or leering), smiling, and a relaxed posture send the message that a person is warm, caring, and friendly. These leaders create an atmosphere of trust and respect, where staff can state their opinions and not fear the repercussions.

Focus on the Needs of Followers

"Take care of them and they will take of you" is a phrase that echoes the most basic way a leader can develop and maintain strong interpersonal connections with followers. Good executives do not take their staff's loyalty for granted, so they strive to get to know these individuals. They understand the significance of being fair, providing worthwhile or meaningful work in a safe environment, and learning what matters most to people's professional and personal lives.

The enormous changes in healthcare—from the shift to pay for value to the increased complexities of managing larger and more intricate organizations—have taken a toll on workers and caused the public to be concerned about the cost, coverage, and quality of healthcare. On top of these challenges, workers have endured large-scale downsizing and displacement, service cuts, and reorganization. At times such as these, employees must feel and know that their leaders are representing their best interest, and doing so well.

Show Compassion

A basic understanding of life's challenges and empathy for people's experiences underlies compassionate leadership. Northouse (2016, 200) indicates that compassion "refers to being sensitive to the plight of others, opening one's self to others, and being willing to help them."

For example, many Catholic hospitals have maintained high employee morale and commitment. While the number of nuns serving in hospitals has greatly contracted, those who have worked in these organizations will attest to the influence of the nuns in instilling compassion and concern for people.

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emotions render them unprofessional, ineffective, helpless, and feared—qualities that impede genuine, equal interactions.

Moods—whether positive or negative—must be managed. Moodiness is usually seen as a symptom of poor mental health. If given a choice, I suspect most people would choose a constantly angry leader over a moody one because no guesswork is involved with the former.

Leaders who are in control of their emotions have good people skills. They remain calm in tense situations and focused in chaotic times. As a result, they are approachable to everyone. [Exhibit 8.3](#) presents tips on managing emotions.

Exhibit 8.3 How to Manage Emotions

Listen first, react second. By listening attentively to what is being said (e.g., suggestion, feedback, criticism, praise), you are delaying your natural impulse to react. True listening demands concentration, so it deflects attention and slows reaction time.

Change your mind-set and attitude. The workplace is not a battleground, regardless of the many "bullets" you must dodge in the course of the day. Therefore, do not prepare for any kind of battle, as doing so encourages negative and survivalist thinking.

Count to ten. If listening and having a positive attitude do not work, simply count to ten. This passing of time may dull the edges of your emotional response.

Cut off your anger as quickly as possible. Anger can be the biggest obstruction to reducing the charged nature of tense interpersonal situations.

Separate feelings from facts. Base discussions (or even arguments) on facts, not emotions or biases.

Be aware of your feelings' influence on your behavior. Realize that they can harm your judgment and abilities.

Smile and Be Courteous

Many leaders may deem this suggestion silly; however, stories abound in executive search circles about executives who seem unapproachable

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Eliminate Childish, Unprofessional Behavior

Yelling, slamming doors, constantly complaining, gossiping, ignoring and then insulting others, bragging, and showing off are just some of the inappropriate behaviors that dishearten even the most patient peer or subordinate. Leaders who are secure with themselves and their position, status, and influence do not commit acts that disparage, belittle, or discredit others. Such behaviors breed intolerance, fear, low morale, poor productivity, secrecy, high turnover, and a dysfunctional culture.

Be Optimistic

Optimism or hope, while difficult to define, can be a powerful motivator of good behavior. Leaders who have great interpersonal skills are eternal optimists. They inspire and encourage people to do their best. They rally projects that are languishing or behind schedule. They reinvigorate interest in smart but forgotten suggestions or decisions. They support innovation, action, and teamwork. Northouse (2016, 204) describes optimism as the "cognitive process of viewing situations from a positive light and having favorable expectations about the future." In many leadership situations, optimism is what gets staff focused and energized. Garman and I write that leaders "have more of an effect on staff motivation than they may realize; it is therefore an area that separates high-performing leaders from average performers" (Dye and Garman 2015, 114).

Dr. Stephen Mansfield, FACHE (2016), president and CEO of Methodist Health System in Dallas, opines,

One of the most powerful emotions leaders can instill within their organization and among their organizational followers is hope. Hope, in an organizational context, is the dynamic intersection of optimism (individual and organizational willpower) and determination or persistence in the face of adversity (individual or organizational way-power). As a measurable construct, it has been demonstrated in the literature that higher-hope organizations also have workforces that exhibit higher employee satisfaction and retention likelihood, as well as many other positive attributes, versus their lower-hope organizational counterparts.

Being optimistic or hopeful can be learned, and it can become an imperative for leaders during a difficult time, such as a financial downturn; reorganization because of a merger, an acquisition, or budget cuts; mass layoff; unionization; and staff shortage. Of course, optimism and hope are

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not enough to stem the tide of workplace change or to fix the problem itself. However, it can do a lot to improve attitudes and mind-set.

Practice the Golden Rule

In the wildly popular book *All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten*, author Robert Fulghum (1988) repeated simple lessons from childhood that resonated with people from all walks of life: Share everything. Play fair. Don't hit people. Put things back where you found them. Clean up your own mess. Don't take things that aren't yours. Say you're sorry when you hurt somebody. And so on.

The genesis of this book was Fulghum's experience with writing a personal credo (see [chapter 7](#) for a discussion on creating a personal code of ethics). In an increasingly cynical world, these "golden rules" may be deemed corny or unimaginative, but consider this: Healthcare fraud, including highly reported white-collar crime by health system chiefs, is almost always committed by those who have never understood the meaning of "don't take things that aren't yours." The same can be said of hospital leaders who opted not to apologize to victims when a medical error caused harm or death. Studies indicate that simple apologies could prevent a costly malpractice suit. On the other hand, no leader who has "played fair" (i.e., was accountable, transparent) can be accused of wrongdoing.

For the past ten years, I have used an adaptation of Fulghum's lessons, which I share in [exhibit 8.4](#).

Exhibit 8.4 My Take on Fulghum's Kindergarten Lessons

1. Keep your organization simple—its mission, its rules, its bureaucracy, its structure. Be sure that everyone knows why the organization is in existence—and what their roles and goals are.
 2. Ensure that authority is clearly understood in the organization.
 3. Make sure that everyone knows her job and gets it done.
 4. Take time occasionally to recognize the fact that the job did get done (celebrate, celebrate).
 5. Treat everyone with respect, dignity, and fairness.
 6. Have a reason for what you do.
 7. Do not be afraid to say "no," but give a reason behind the "no."
 8. Communicate effectively—and then communicate some more. Share information.
 9. Hire right. Make hiring a top priority.
 10. Be honest; be ethical.
 11. Practice servant leadership.
 12. Set clear expectations, give feedback more than once per year, and listen when you give feedback.
 13. Listen some more.
 14. Work together in teams—people really prefer it that way.
 15. Be kind to your teammates.
 16. Admit mistakes.
 17. Understand and appreciate the fact that when you are in a leadership position, you have a lot of benefits and perks that the rank and file do not.
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Foster Employee Engagement

Since the second edition of this book, the concept of employee engagement has garnered a large following. At the time of this revision, a Google search for "employee engagement" returned more than 23 million results. However, Gallup (2016) reports that 87 percent of employees are not engaged at work and argues that the scale of the problem constitutes a crisis with long-term implications for the global economy. Some observers may believe that employee engagement in healthcare is higher than in other industries because of the service-oriented nature of healthcare work. Nonetheless, even if the percentage of disengaged people was half that of general industry, there is concern for healthcare leaders.

Moreover, Hogan and Kaiser (2005, 175) report that “estimates of the base rate for managerial incompetence in corporate life range from 30% to 75%; a recent review reported the average estimate to be 50%.” This finding led to their now-famous proclamation: “Bad leaders perpetrate terrible misery on those subject to their domain” (169). Could it be more evident that much of this misery is caused by poor interpersonal skills? Gruman and Saks (2011, 125) comment that “managers can encourage employee engagement by improving manager-employee communication and creating an environment where employees feel valued.” Clearly, this outcome requires strong interpersonal skills.

CONCLUSION

Leadership is about building and maintaining relationships. The effectiveness of managing personal interactions is tied to how much leaders care about being and working with others. Many years ago, the chair of a health administration graduate program warned me: “If you want to thrive in this business, you really have to love working with and around people. If you don’t have a passion for that, go into another field.” I cannot say it better.

Self-Evaluation Questions

- ☐ What does “people are our greatest asset” mean to me?
- ☐ Have I ever put other people down?
- ☐ Has anyone ever described me as a people person? Was this a source of pride for me?
- ☐ Has anyone ever described me as a good listener?

Cases

Case 8.1

James White has just finished a meeting with Tina Garr, his vice president, when he runs into Mary Briones, a peer departmental manager, in the hallway.

MARY. You’re frowning. What’s wrong?
JAMES. Nothing. I’m fine.

MARY. You look stressed. You don’t seem like the regular enthusiastic James I know. Do you want to come into my office to talk about it?
JAMES. Keep this between us, but Tina is impossible to read. Sometimes she’s warm and approachable. Other times, she acts as if I’m a stranger. I just tried to discuss with her my desire to take on more responsibility, because I just earned a master’s degree and I’ve worked here for four years. I wanted her advice on what I could do to get promoted.
MARY. Those are valid questions. What did she say?
JAMES. She said, “You have too many projects right now. You shouldn’t even be thinking of moving up.” No explanation, no sugar coating. Then she said she had to go to another meeting. That’s when I left.
MARY. No wonder you look dejected. Is there anything I can do to help?

Case 8.1 Questions

- 1. How could Tina have better handled the situation?
- 2. Is Mary displaying the interpersonal skills of a strong leader? How will these skills help James?

Case 8.2

Rosemary Brezinski, a veteran chief nursing officer, is the new president of a rapidly growing system hospital. Most of her impressive career has been spent in large tertiary organizations known for research and medical innovations. Her new position is a significant promotion. She is now responsible for leading the hospital’s response to its recent 10 percent growth in patient volume; improving morale and collaboration among managers, staff, and physicians; and planning and implementing the move of the system’s teaching program to the hospital campus, something that only the senior management knows thus far.
In the first three weeks on the job, Rosemary has held several meetings with her senior management team and leadership groups in the hospital. She has distributed to these leaders a detailed, 80-item list of priorities that will serve as the team’s agenda for the next 18 months. She has informed them that she will assign each priority to an individual or a group. Her message to everyone has been consistent since the beginning of her tenure at the hospital: “I have never failed in the past. I expect that we will make these changes happen on time and on budget.” She has not spoken to the medical staff or the frontline employees.

Case 8.2 Questions

- 1. What interpersonal connection mistakes has Rosemary made so far?
- 2. How do you think the staff (including the physicians and managers) feel about

her style?
3. Will her mandates for change work?

REFERENCES

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Exhibit 8.2 How to Enhance Listening Skills

Ask a lot of questions. Be aware that the tone of your voice and the content of your questions can reveal your personal bias or opinion.

Ask clarifying questions. Do not assume the answers.

Restate the answers. Prevent misunderstanding by repeating or rephrasing in front of the person what he said.

Be open-minded. People will tell you less if they feel you are judgmental.

Be receptive to bad news. Leaders who cannot take negative news are intimidating for the wrong reasons. "Don't kill the messenger" may sound trite, but it is wise advice for every executive.

Minimize interruptions. Talking over people, acting distracted, taking phone calls, answering e-mails, and checking or posting on social media or websites are antithetical to good listening. Schedule a time for the discussion, and focus while it is happening.

Seek suggestions. Doing so sends a signal of respect and often encourages others to provide you more information.

Involve others in the conversation. Ask those who are quiet for their thoughts; their perspectives often get lost in the discussion.

Show Respect

In *Lions Don't Need to Roar*, author D. A. Benton (1992, 12) suggests that "sincerity and positive regard are two things that just can't be faked, and you need both to deal with people effectively." When asked what bothers them most about senior management, many employees state that leaders do not appreciate what they do "in the trenches." Often, this sort of observation means that executives do not make an effort to visit the units in which services are delivered; hence, they do not understand the stresses and challenges that frontline staff face on a regular basis. When leaders are absent, they cannot even thank, let alone become familiar with, those who do the work.

Strong leaders have great respect for others. They solicit ideas, share pertinent information, encourage participation in organizational initiatives and activities, show regard for others' well-being, and recognize their hard

work, among many other actions. As discussed in [chapter 6](#), "Respect is the value that multiplies the desire of both the leader and follower to work harder and deliver consistently excellent performance."

Of course, we do not live alone on islands.... We are born into families; we grow up into societies.... Once into our professions, we find that our jobs require us to interact frequently and effectively with others. If we fail to learn and apply the principles of interpersonal effectiveness, we can expect our progress to slow or stop.

—Stephen R. Covey (1992)

Save Time for Staff

The workday of an average healthcare executive is hectic, leaving him little time for unscheduled interactions with his direct supervisees and other staff. As a result, he can be viewed as unapproachable—someone who is too important to mingle with the rank and file.

Scheduled employee events (e.g., staff meetings, picnics, organizational socials, award luncheons, retreats, holiday parties) are ideal for a busy executive to attend. They give the leader an opportunity to connect with many people, including staff, physicians, community members, and even patients and their families.

Manage Perceptions

Perception is more important than reality because people will believe what they imagine to be true, even if it is not the actual truth. Otara (2011, 21) writes, "What people often observe or assess as your ability to be a leader and your effectiveness becomes their perception, which in turn becomes reality." Lee and I feel that managing perception is so important that we dedicate an entire chapter to it in our book *The Healthcare Leader's Guide to Actions, Awareness, and Perception* (Dye and Lee 2016).

For example, the firing of a popular manager can set off a thousand impressions, most of which would be incorrect. Specifically, it could create irrational fears or breed gossip, which could harm the culture. In this scenario, ignoring the reaction is not an option. Giving the pat "it's a confidential issue" statement is not an option either.