

The Intentional Leader

Module 2: Leading Self

Learning Objectives

1. Understand how and why the way we experience and show up in the present is influenced by our past.
2. Learn how self-reflection can help to define your future.
3. Identify your own barriers to learning and how you can overcome them.
4. Gain familiarity with the brain and how to avoid emotional “short-circuits.”
5. Learn strategies for resilience and how mindset influences your outcomes.

Present-Day You

We all arrive at our collective thought processes through our DNA and lived experiences, creating momentum and normality. If we don't challenge ourselves by expanding and diversifying our experiences, we'll continue to look at things the same way.

Positive Intelligence



Shirzad Chamine of Stanford University introduced a concept called Positive Intelligence.

Shirzad says that we develop “guardians” (saboteurs) early in life to help us survive the real and imagined threats to our physical and emotional survival as children. Patterns of thinking, feeling, and reacting (our “guardians”) become soft-coded in our brain through neural pathways (our “beliefs”), which, as adults, cause us to get “hijacked” by unhelpful thought patterns. These guardians later become “saboteurs” (e.g., previous hypervigilance becomes persistent distrust of others later in life).

For example, suppose you grew up receiving praise and acknowledgments for your achievements from people close to you. In

that case, you may have become attuned to this pattern and become dependent on validation from external sources. This pattern can become hardwired and show up as a “stickler, hyper achiever, or perfectionistic attitude.”

We can train ourselves to recognize these triggers and redirect our brains to engage in more positive patterns of thinking (sages). The first and most important step in doing so is simply awareness. Because with awareness we can then choose how to react (or not). We can choose to look at the current reality versus living by the old stories that may no longer serve.

Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence skills are critical for building relationships and teams, resolving conflict, solving problems, leading effectively, and building resilience.

The good news about EQ is that it is not static...we can build on our strengths and mitigate our weaknesses.

The Role Bias Plays

While bias is something that happens naturally for humans and serves a purpose, having an awareness of your own biases will make you less likely to unintentionally incorporate them into your leadership. **“Check your bias to wreck your bias.”** Examples of different types of biases include:

1. **Unconscious/Implicit Bias:** The brain looks for patterns and associations. To our brain, **different = unsafe**, and we assign prejudice or favor compared with another. Ex. Fear of different races.

2. **Affinity Bias:** Positive association when you meet someone and find **things in common**. Ex. Hiring manager leans toward a candidate they have something in common with.
3. **Halo Bias:** Due to group affiliation, we **assign good intent**. Ex. Boy Scouts = upstanding members of society; Ted Bundy was a Boy Scout.
4. **Perception Bias:** Where you have a **preconceived judgment** about certain groups and then attach that judgment to anyone in that group. Ex. Gene Simmons of KISS speaks five languages, doesn't use drugs or alcohol, and is active in charitable work.
5. **Confirmation Bias:** Seeking evidence **confirming our initial perceptions**, ignoring contrary information. Ex. Red-headed people are more fiery; left-handed people are more creative.

Common Learning Enemies:

- A "That's just the way I am" mindset.
- The fear of being wrong.
- The expectation to be perfect.
- The inability to say, "I don't know."
- Holding onto self-limiting beliefs.
- Inability to slow down and reflect.
- Lack of self-compassion (inability to laugh at oneself).
- The "shoulds."

Growth Mindset vs Fixed Mindset

You may be familiar with **Carol Dweck's work on Growth and Fixed Mindsets**



We can navigate life with a growth or fixed mindset. Having a growth mindset is essential for success. The growth mindset is the belief that your qualities are cultivated through your efforts. The fixed mindset is believing your qualities are unchangeable. The growth mindset creates a powerful passion for learning. "Why waste time proving over and over how great you are," Dweck writes, "when you could be getting better?"

The Short Route vs. the Long Route

We have the prefrontal cortex (cerebral cortex), which is a part of our brain that involves complex thinking that results in tighter control over our thoughts, emotions, and actions, aka executive functioning.



Then there is the Amygdala, located in the temporal lobe, primarily associated with rapid emotional (as opposed to analytical) responses. Referred to as the "lizard brain", it's the oldest part of our brain from an evolutionary standpoint. When activated by an emotional stimulus, it triggers bodily responses, including the release of adrenalin, which prepares us for action. Most of the time, when we are triggered, it's the long route that will serve us better.

Strategies to avoid the "short route" in our responses:

- Name it to tame it
- Practice mindfulness
 - Give full attention to the present
 - Practice gratitude
- Reframe the situation:
 - What else is possible here?
 - What is the opportunity in the situation?
 - What really matters right now?
 - What could I learn in this moment?
 - Meditate
 - Engage the senses
 - What does my heart say? My gut?
 - What is the most desirable outcome?
 - What is a more useful approach?
 - What is my goal/bigger picture here?

"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." -Victor Frankl