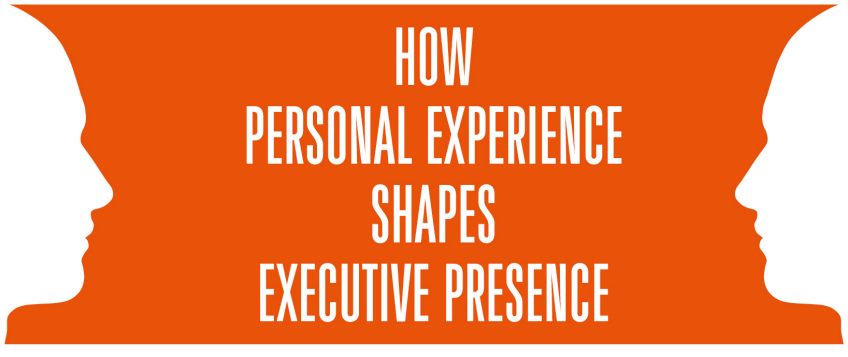
LEADERSHIP MATERIAL



'Leadership is about people, experience and relationships. Diana's book captures the simplicity of that well.'
Steve Tew, CEO, New Zealand Rugby

DIANA JONES

'A tour de force for building and sustaining personal impact!'
Alan Weiss, PhD author, *Million Dollar Consulting*, *Million Dollar Maverick*, and over 60 other books

Leadership Material

How Personal Experience Shapes Executive Presence

Diana Jones

Chapter 1

The Demise of the Rational Leader

This chapter debunks the myth of the rational leader. The belief that being logical and rational is the only route to leadership has steered leaders' development in the wrong direction. It's time to redress the balance.

The long-held belief that successful leaders are rational is not true. What is true is most leaders are capable of being rational when appropriate. If rational decisions always worked, we would have solved the enduring world problems of poverty, violence, and sustainable living long ago. Leaders who only focus on technical skills will discover that these won't help them have essential conversations or manage difficult situations. Such tools and techniques don't cut the mustard in leading people; they are only part of the picture.

How do you become influential? What do people want from you at the leadership table? What are the qualities that ensure people are drawn to you? And how do you develop these?

People like the idea of a rational leader. The assumption that rationality is better than any other way of working devalues leaders' personal experiences. Why on earth would we do that? The rational leader values thinking, reasoning, and facts over all else. They believe feelings are soft and fluffy—immaterial at best and irritating at worst. By valorizing rational leaders, we fail to acknowledge that leaders are people, and leaders need people to get things done.

After working with hundreds of different teams, both high-performing teams and ones facing difficulties, I discovered many leaders have a blind spot. Astutely aware of their strengths, they were unaware of how they negatively impact others. I identified three distinct types of leaders:

1. Those who understand how they are perceived, both positively and negatively. These leaders possess the quality of executive presence. They are confident, influential, and know how to work effectively with others.
2. Those who focus on how they are perceived negatively. Leaders in this group, while competent, lack confidence and are often stressed. These leaders may be perceived positively by their staff and peers, yet they are too hard on themselves and ultimately lack presence. They downplay their good reputations and ruminate on their own feelings. They lose their focus on how they assist those around them.
3. Those who do not care how they are perceived. They have their way of doing things, which seems to work—for them at least. These leaders are perceived as technically able and hard on people.

People's perceptions of their leaders matter. You know you're on the right track when people come to you for help or seek your counsel and advice.

Executive presence ensures you stand out from the crowd. With executive presence, people are drawn to you and want to be influenced by you.

From my coaching practice, I have learned that

1. Navigating the soft side and people dilemmas are a leader's most time-consuming problems.

2. The experience people have of working with you is just as impor- tant as the results you produce—and largely determines the results.
3. Leaders gain confidence when they accept their fears and anxieties.

Executive presence encompasses at least five essential leadership qualities. These invisible qualities

- Define your identity as a leader.
- Determine your credibility.
- Establish your reputation.
- Shape the relationships you have.
- Reflect your authenticity.

Each one helps you produce highly visible results. As we will soon see in detail, if you

- Gain insight into what creates influence,
- Identify sticking points in your way,
- Discover the source of any ineffective behaviors,
- Develop the capacity to change your behavior,
- Are perceived and sought after as a leader,

your capacity to inspire and influence and have greater presence increases dramatically.

Emotions Matter

Have you ever been in a dysfunctional meeting? Have you met leaders who argue, shout, grandstand, sulk, and withdraw? How on earth could this be? Leaders in dysfunctional teams act as if they were kids back in the sandpit, tossing their toys and stalking away in anger or withdrawing hurt

and bewildered. Once the meeting ends, cliques form, and you are either in or out. Established ground rules are forgotten or ignored.

I decided that the "toys in the sandpit" analogy was worth pursuing. After much exploration, I discovered a significant relationship between earlier life events and current leadership behavior.

Case study: Kelly

Kelly, an international company representative, was constantly in meetings with large numbers of people she had not met before and might not ever meet again. Whether it was in Beijing, Geneva, seoul, or Paris, she hated it. this was an essential part of her job, yet she froze and felt wooden. Her thoughts after the meeting outshone her capacity to contribute in the moment. When Kelly said one of her goals for execu- tive presence was *to improve her effectiveness in interactions with others through receiving direct/straight/honest feedback on how she was perceived*, I was puzzled. I don't work with leaders who *don't know* how they are perceived. With years of performance feedback and 360-degree assess- ments, being senior leaders and not knowing how they are perceived would be unwise at best and impossible at worst. Kelly recounted that she had asked several of her managers what she might do to improve her interactions, and each one had said, "you are doing well. there is nothing extra you need to develop." she didn't believe them, and had enrolled in the executive Presence program I offered. Knowing the lack of reality in such feedback, and the angst at being brushed off by your boss, I decided to work with Kelly.

entering the boardroom to meet Kelly, I was taken aback to see an impeccably presented executive, drumming her fingers on the table in apparent impatience. My immediate perception was that that behavior would put anyone off. I remained friendly.

as we talked in this initial meeting, I asked Kelly what her experience was when she was in groups. I noticed she looked down, went pale,

and was silent. Her eyes filled with tears. I was aware of a shift in Kelly.

I noticed a shift from her talking thoughtfully with me, describing her situation, to being still, not moving, and tears welling up. I sensed she was recalling a specific moment. I was curious and decided to inquire. I wanted to inquire in a way that made her free to respond at a level of intimacy she chose. "Where are you right now?" I asked. Kelly remained still and silent. I guessed Kelly was recalling an incident. I continued speaking softly so Kelly would know I was alongside her. "How old are you right now? What are you remembering?" Kelly looked at me and began her story. she reached down and showed me how small she was. "about four," she said. she told me that her family had immigrated when she was a toddler. In her first year of school, she stood out. she was oddly dressed and had a funny accent. some girls at her school were members of the "in crowd." Kelly stood on the fringes of groups and was not invited in. While years of elocution had helped her speak clearly, feelings of exclusion remained and dominated her interactions in meetings. Kelly admitted that she never truly felt entitled to join groups, a belief that was in direct conflict with her professional role. Kelly had a goal for herself: "for others to perceive me as open, approachable, and at ease and include me in conversations."

Our work together over several months in the executive Presence program included in-the-moment responses from trusted group members; role training,[1] including identifying her *harsh self-critic*, and seeing herself from others perspectives.

Kelly reordered her self-perceptions. she reported that: "It is not that I'm doing anything differently; I just feel different doing it. Instead of wishing the situation to be different, I now initiate, introduce myself, and get involved.

[1] Role training is a learning technology with four phases: contracting, scene setting, enactment, and integration. Its conceptual underpinning is role theory, originated by Jacob Moreno in the 1940s. Dr. Max Clayton further developed and taught the method throughout Australia and New Zealand starting in 1972. Both Lynette Clay- ton and Dr. Max Clayton refined and applied Karen Horney's (1885–1952) three subsets of coping behavior, enabling in-situ assessments to be made. In this book the words *role* and *behavior* are used synonymously.

"the basic elements are still the same. there is me, there is the group, and there is the encounter. What has changed now is my attitude and frame of mind. Rather than measuring my success or feeling excluded, I have a different frame on meetings. I keep going. I smile. I am entitled to be there. I say something personal about what I bring to the group, I ask questions, and interact. I know I am entitled to be there and I no longer freeze. By altering a few things in the mosaic, the result is a completely different picture."

Kelly discovered that the positive responses to her new behaviors reinforced her new approach. Her manager commented that her "generosity of including others is infectious." Kelly helped set the agenda rather than sitting in meetings realizing she had missed the moment.

Understanding *why* people behave in certain ways is unimportant; the main thing is how you respond. With this in mind, there are three keys to influencing successful business outcomes:

- Be aware of your own response to others' behaviors.
- Know where your response originates.
- Understand your current impact on others.

Leaders with presence are aware of the likely emotional responses that others have to their actions and decisions. Their communication and interactions reflect this.

Having a capacity to be rational is important. By being rational, you can

- Distance yourself rather than being immersed in details.
- Remove yourself from the swirl of emotions.
- Make assessments and see options objectively.

Rationality enables you to weigh things up and accurately consider different options. However, it is only one part of the puzzle.

Without thoughtfulness and people engagement, action generated from being rational is likely to produce ineffective solutions.

Behavior has at least three components: thinking, feeling, and action. Generated from our relationships with others, feelings are the physiological litmus test of our experience and inform our thinking. But acting from our feelings alone leads to impulsivity. When our thinking informs the actions we take, we are more likely to respond appropriately. The third component, irrevocably intertwined with the other two, is the action we take in response to our thinking and feeling.

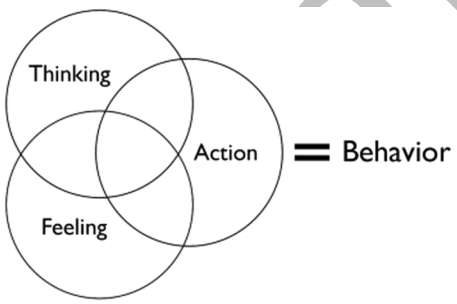


Figure 1.1 the three Components of Behavior

Herein lies the problem. There are frequently two common misunderstandings made when praising rational leadership. The first is that considering the opposite of rational as "irrational," or "emotional," has diverted the discussion to discount some essential leadership capacities.

The second misleading element is that while some leadership theorists[2] identified emotions as significant, they may have misunderstood their function.

Rational leaders may well have the capacity to think analytically so that objectivity and logic come to the fore. But discounting feelings

[2] Weber, Freud.

and acting solely from rational thinking can result in others regarding them as cold and impersonal. Only a portion of their capacities are utilized. Their intuition, insight and foresight, and life experience have been excluded. I have found when leaders integrate their thinking, feeling, and action, people are affirmed, relationships are strengthened, and work progresses.

Champions of rational leadership emerged as management theorists of the 1920s. Henri Fayol (France) and Frederick Taylor (United States) saw authority vested in positions, not in personalities. In the same period, Max Weber (Germany) described three types of legitimate authority, one of which included the leader's personal qualities:

> **Traditional authority:** arising from tradition and custom
> **Charismatic authority:** where acceptance arises from loyalty to, and confidence in, the personal qualities of the ruler
> **Rational-legal authority:** arising from the position of the person in authority and bounded by the rules and procedures of the organization

These theorists saw leaders within structured settings with prescribed roles. Results were achieved through leaders influencing the efforts of others with their ascribed authority. Emphasis was on structure, and lead- ers focused on what was "good for the firm."

Champions of rational leaders had at least two blind spots. They believed:

1. People follow orders. Stanley Milgram's famous experiment proved this while also revealing the anxieties, concerns, and fears of people who follow cruel directions.[3]
2. Organizational structures help people work together.

But this is not the full story. People are drawn to leaders with whom they want to

[3] Milgram, *Obedience to Authority.*

- Discuss problems.
- Share their thoughts and responses.
- Share how they feel about what is going on.

People want a sense of belonging and being valued; they want to influence what is happening whenever they are with others. Most organizational structures fail to account for this softer side of life, but leaders who can harness it can achieve profound results.

Good working relationships are essential for establishing executive presence. People with presence build positive mutual relationships, including with others they don't know well. These relationships are essential for producing results. Leaders do not need to have all the answers; what they do need is the capacity to adapt to shifting contexts and to keep relating to people around them.

Executive presence is not a skill or technique. Leaders with executive presence seamlessly blend personal experience with their professional identity. This enables them to respond relevantly to the myriad of people and events they encounter each day.

The Earth Is Flat—The Rational Leader Is Obsolete

All is not what it seems. Just as people once thought the earth was flat, many leaders still think that leaders' technical qualifications, objectivity, and rational decision making are the keys to producing results. I have another view—that qualifications, skills, and abilities are just one part of the puzzle.

That emotions have been part of organization life was reinforced by Max Weber, Sigmund Freud, and more recently Gianpiero Petriglieri,[4]

[4] Petriglieri, "Why We Pick Leaders with Deceptively Simple Answers." *Harvard Business Review*, May 9, 2016.

who said, "To distressed people in troubled times, the least rational leaders make the most sense." Eyal Winter[5] has shown that although "emotions are thought to be at odds with rationality, they are a key factor in rational decision making."

I agree that leaders' emotions are central to their functioning. And I bring another perspective: I have found that emotions are reflected in at least two factors that greatly influence leaders' capacities for presence and inspiration. These are:

1. How they work with people to get things done
2. How people around them experience working with them

Over the past three decades, much of my work with highly skilled and able leaders has focused on developing their capacities to integrate thinking, feeling, and action to create working teams and inspire others to action. They have done this through how they relate to others, rather than treating them as automatons who follow orders and do what they are told. Their work is to be "with" staff. They reject the notion of their staff "following"; rather they encourage staff to participate.

Two examples come to mind. One was in a federal bank where the leaders were all economists. The leaders directed the technical work; they used logic, reason, and numbers to make decisions and ignored leading people. Highly skilled and experienced staff, many also economists, were underutilized, bored, and frustrated.

The second example arose when I was contracted to advise on implementing a restructure in a city council.

Case study: From Ratlonal to Relational In a City Council Leadership Team

a group of ten leaders had re-formed, three from the original group and seven newly appointed. Four of these were from within the council and

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[5] Winter, "Feeling Smart: Why Our Emotions Are More Rational than We Think." *Public Affairs,* 2014.

three from outside. While they barely know one another, their task was to lead a large department to manage the upcoming elections. earlier events had caused staff to regard the leadership team as out-of-touch and irrelevant. How might this team develop their relationships rapidly to lead their department and deliver to the business? I decided to focus the first leadership meeting on developing connections. What became apparent was that there were many differences among group members; from the range of countries where they were born to their ages, their professional backgrounds, and their team functions. What worked well with this group was to build connections via what was important to them as leaders, their attitudes to risk, and their personal stories of life's turning points.

they decided *how* to work together by focusing on their staff. they rejected a wordy purpose statement and accepted "staff feel inspired and supported to be the best in the department they love to be part of," and they made four commitments to one another:

- Make each department meeting meaningful, relevant, and enjoyable for all.
- Be open and transparent and ensure everybody has the information they need.
- Be a strong team, where we support each other and hold each other to account.
- Collectively commit to our individual leadership development.

each leader chose two or three accountability buddies from within the group to review their progress. they held one another to account. they reported that their accountability meetings became professional highlights. the trust among the leaders and with their leader deepened. their business meetings became personable and frank and moved the business forward. they made every staff interaction a positive and personal interaction.

the problems identified, including performance problems, had shared ownership and were rapidly resolved. Within three months, staff reported that the department meetings were popular, affirming, and creative. the leaders engaged with one another with their purpose,

and their staff engaged with them. they were logical and rational. their monthly reporting of results engaged the other council departments.

Rather than being reserved and objective with one another, and sticking to their disparate functions, they committed to get to know one another and to emotionally engage. In doing so, their thinking, feeling, and action integrated, resulting in them working well together, and yes, the results they produced were "good for the firm."

Positive working experiences are essential for achieving results. Leaders may have all the technical and professional skills in the world, but if they rub their peers or staff the wrong way, this results in people mov- ing away from them. They may even refuse to work with that leader. The leader's capacity to be effective grinds to a halt. Then the time-consuming and expensive work of repairing working relationships begins.

The rational approach to leadership led us to believe that our professional identity—such as leader, nurse, or worker—was the complete picture. But it is wrong to assume that professional identity alone is enough to compel people to listen to you. Would you respect the leader who dis- regards you, the nurse who is unable to listen, or the community worker who acts as if they are the boss and know exactly how things should be done every time?

If you favor the rational approach, you might be shocked to discover the leader has fudged the numbers, the nurse is highly anxious and makes mistakes with medication, and the community worker is out of their depth. Rational behavior is not synonymous with unethical behavior, but looking at personal qualities beyond the job title is essential to getting an accurate picture.

You can learn much about a leader by studying how they enact their professional identity. Enacting your professional identity generates five significant responses:

- How others perceive you
- The impact you have on others
- Your capacity to influence

- Your effectiveness in producing results
- The willingness of others to work with you

We know now from the demise of Enron, the global banking cri- sis, and many recent political downfalls that many revered, rational, and highly successful leaders snort cocaine, use company money for their personal lives, and lie to support their success. The rational approach fails to account for people's relationships and human frailties. We can learn from others that it is everyday interpersonal and group behavior that is central to leaders' producing results.

Houston, We Have a Problem . . .

On the one hand, we are independent, resourceful practitioners in special- ized fields. On the other, we are embedded in social systems—whether we like it or not. We are leading people, not "things." Being a leader means you are likely to have many progressive behaviors; otherwise, you would not have attained your leadership role. Progressive behaviors are behav- iors that

- Build relationships.
- Get work done.
- Produce enduring solutions to complex problems.
- Generate flexible, creative, original, and relevant solutions.
- Produce vitality in those involved in and affected by

decisions. Leaders' capabilities can be divided into two main

categories:

1. Skills and abilities, such as financial management, project plan- ning, strategic thinking, business analysis, and decision making
2. Qualities and capacities, such as listening; reliability; inclusive- ness; and being forthright, fair, empathetic, and thoughtful

Experience and focused learning allows us to develop our skills and abilities as well as our personal qualities. This combination of capabilities is what creates trust. However, to achieve results we must be aware of our impact on those around us and maintain trusting relationships.

Our behavior—our responses to people and events—emerges from our experiences. The trial and error of life. As you progress in your career, you continue to encounter new experiences and new contexts. Some of your behaviors inevitably show up as problematic. These can become habitual. You may be aware of them or not, but they become apparent to others and affect the quality of your results. Your peers may sense you have more to offer.

Have you ever had the experience of coming out of a meeting thinking, Now that didn't go well? You might have had such anxiety over your per- formance that you lost sleep. If so, you have uncovered a default behavior.

Case studies

- annie literally shakes with fear before going into the senior leadership team meeting. she rarely makes a comment unless invited.
- Ken smiles each time one of his executives disagrees with him or one another. He looks down and says nothing. Inside he freezes. He hates running meetings.
- "I don't like seeing that. Get it handled." Jeremy loses sleep over this comment his boss has made. He feels he has failed, again.
- Kirsty is the last to arrive in a meeting and apologizes profusely to everyone for being late. the meeting has yet to begin.
- each time Rose comes to the C-suite meeting, she is argumentative and defensive. usually collaborative and fun, here she feels she has to fight to be heard.

Everyone has certain behaviors they default to when they are under pressure. They become our way of coping with stressful situations. As

we progress in our careers, work contexts change. When specific default behaviors become overdeveloped, problems occur. We might cut people out by letting our reactive thoughts, feelings, or actions dominate our responses.

Overdeveloped Behaviors Are Inflexible

Overdeveloped behaviors are obvious to others and frequently become roadblocks to our effectiveness. You *feel* you have no choice in how you respond, even if it is unhelpful, and others will notice that something isn't quite working. Generating choices at these moments is central to any leader who wants to develop executive presence.

Default behaviors often result from unresolved early family events where our survival was at risk. As children, we had few resources to handle the complex situations life threw at us. We did our best at the time, making different assessments and decisions depending on the circumstances—for example, "People in authority are stupid"; "No one is doing anything here, so I had better take charge"; or "The best thing right now is to become invisible." However, there is fallout. If those around you failed to discuss your experiences or comfort you, your childhood ways of thinking, feel- ing, and acting become entrenched.

We may have coped through such actions as going silent, taking control, giving up, or simply enduring. Feelings of shock, anger, or fright become entwined with our way of thinking and acting. Old memories and their associated feelings can be triggered by events and relationships in the present day.

It's as if you had returned to the original event, and you act as if you were in two places at the same time: then and now.

The Neuroscience of Behavior

Neuroscience gives us a way of understanding how the conscious and unconscious brain function, particularly with respect to our impulses and choices in organization life. The brain's limbic system is responsible for positive emotions, including tele[6] and empathy, and their linkage to memo- ries of sounds, smells, and feelings. (We will return to this in chapter 3.) The amygdala manages survival impulses and our ability to move toward, be still, or move away from people with our flight, fight, and freeze responses. In contrast, the neocortex manages our curiosity to investigate different groups and to consciously choose to move toward or away from them.

Default responses governed by the limbic system come to the fore where people feel under threat. Leaders with weak connections between their self-awareness and self-management act as if they were back in the original pattern of events. Daniel Goleman coined the term *amygdala hijack* to describe situations when we behave inappropriately.[7] Amygdala hijack is a reflection of overdeveloped default behavior. Inappropriate responses are out of kilter and fail to progress the situation.

Leaders fall out of their leadership role and act as if they are somewhere else. They overreact as default behaviors kick in. There is nothing inherently wrong with this. Problems occurs when

- Your default behavior becomes your everyday response.
- The stress induced by your behavior interferes with your capacity to work well with others and produce results.
- You are unaware of how people are responding to you.

Recognizing similar patterns of behavior in early life can lead to insightful moments of self-discovery. For some, recognizing a connection is enough for them to break the link. Others require more work and must tap deeper into the personal dimension of professional development.

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[6] 'Tele is the flow of feeling between people reflecting their emotional connection.'
[7] Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence*.

Behavioral change stimulates physiological changes and vice versa. Neurobiologists proved that attention to one's interpersonal world is directly connected to spiritual, emotional, and physical well-being.[8] We can shift from being stressed and reactive to being calm and responsive. The amygdala and the unconscious brain cede control to the conscious brain, and the neocortex takes the lead in managing our behavior. When thinking, feeling, and action are all aligned, there is a shift from flight, fright, or freeze to fascination and curiosity. Capacities for interpersonal engagement expand.

Originating events for default behaviors are diverse, but two themes are particularly common. One relates to the nature of structural or power relationships in organizations. The second relates to leaders' behavior within those relationships—being disinterested, absent, invasive, aggressive, or critical. People acting from default behaviors are typically unaware they are causing harm, and most would be horrified to know that was the case. One implication of this dynamic is that self-awareness and self- management are crucial for leaders.

Leaders with overdeveloped default behaviors often fall into traps such as

- Taking feedback as a personal attack.
- Responding aggressively, blaming, accusing, and being defensive.
- Losing confidence, having low self-esteem, and self-doubting.

They fall out of their peer relationships and act either superior or inferior to their colleagues. They create distance between themselves and those around them. People move away from leaders who are defensive, verbally abusive, or prone to blaming. Some leaders erect defensive barriers through excessive describing, explaining, or analyzing. Others effectively remove themselves by acquiescing and remaining silent on important mat- ters. Leaders with self-doubt and low self-esteem rarely offer themselves for difficult and rewarding work. When events within the organization

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[8] Seigal, *An Interpersonal Neurobiolgoy Approach to Psychotherapy*, 2006. Cited in Hale, *Three Cyclical Models Which Enhance Consciousness of Interpersonal Con- nections*, 2012.

mirror earlier experiences, leaders respond as if they were children back in early life.

There are four likely triggers for default behavior:

- The demeanor of one or more of the players
- The emotional tone of the setting, group, or meeting
- The experience of being hurt, ignored, or applauded
- A change in the structural relationship with staff, peers, authority figures, and siblings.

As triggers persist, default behaviors become overdeveloped. The situation may change, yet old default responses remain. Our capacity to choose how to respond has vanished. If leaders realize that a given habitual response no longer works well, they will have uncovered one of their overdeveloped default behaviors. They may fear that their manag- ers, peers, and staff will doubt their abilities—a stressful thought. On top of this, they may doubt themselves and worry others will avoid working with them unless they have to.

Overdeveloped default behaviors are inflexible and unfit for the purpose of leadership. When leaders give power to their overdeveloped default behaviors, the same problems resurface over and over again. The relation- ships among their thinking, feeling and actions are out of sync.

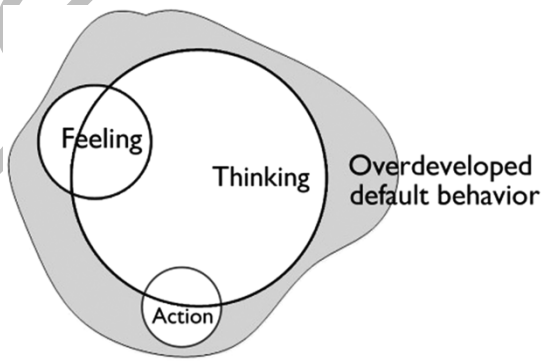

Figure 1.2 When thinking dominates Behavior

When leaders' thinking dominates their feeling and action, they might be perceived as conceptually or technically brilliant while lacking empathy or failing to produce results.

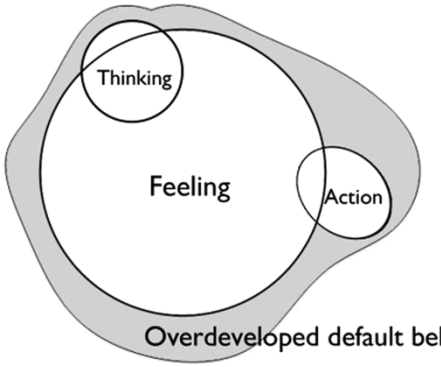

Figure 1.3 When Feelings dominate Behavior

When feelings dominate leaders' interactions, decisions lack thought and are caught up in an emotional churn. They may be perceived as a poor "fit" with the work culture.

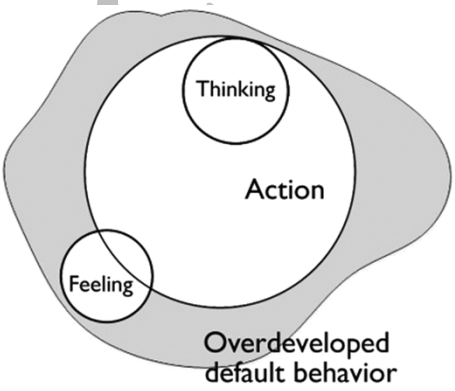

Figure 1.4 When action dominates Behavior

When actions dominate, leaders may be perceived as impulsive and unstrategic, jumping to solutions without foresight.

Progressive Behavior

With executive presence, leaders' thinking, feeling, and actions are integrated. Their behavior is progressive, meaning that they build relationships quickly and their contributions produce obvious value. Results are evident.

Progressive behavior is fit-for-purpose. This is evident in leadership teams where interactions are purposeful and engaging and business moves forward. Those around leaders who act from progressive behaviors recognize their vitality, flexibility, originality, and creativity. Leaders themselves discover that new responses are possible for what were previously triggering situations. They generate effective responses in new situations.

And now the complexity begins. An organization's purpose, structures, and defined roles all make good sense in a rational world. But organizations are made up of people in relationships with one another. Either they want to work together or they do not. An organization might have a great mission statement and a well-defined organization chart, with clear roles and responsibilities, but unless specific people are willing to work together, and work well together, the outcomes are likely to be dismal.

Case study:

Morrie's job was on the line. He was a seasoned adviser to senior execu- tives. While he was technically brilliant, several executives complained to his boss he was rude and didn't listen. two refused to work with him. Where did this come from? From the time he was seven, Morrie grew up in foster homes. He'd learned to survive by fighting for himself and for his companions. Whenever a senior leader made demands or disagreed with his advice, Morrie would speak loudly and authoritatively, not paus- ing for breath. Routinely, he would interject, "you are wrong."

Leaders with overdeveloped default behaviors are inflexible. Their behaviors are not fit for purpose. They create emotional churn around them. People might find them intellectually stunning but dislike working with them.

The Leader's Dilemma

How do you let people know their behavior is unacceptable? Alerting peers and staff of this is one of the most anxiety-inducing tasks for any leader. Whether you are performance managing or coaching, opening a conversation about the impact of someone's behavior requires courage. Everyone is aware that "something is not right here," that there is an elephant in the room. Whose job is it to raise the issue, and how do you describe what is happening? You awkwardly feel as if you *should* say something, yet pause, fearing you might break some invisible taboo. Once it is out there, some people are relieved, but others are shocked. Ideally, a conversation ensues.

Bringing development discussions into a relationship with a colleague or direct report is similar. If a colleague breaks team confidentiality or a staff member shouts when she is upset, raising the subject is not easy, but if leaders don't act, the tension will only escalate. If you find yourself worrying how to have this conversation, you have several options:

- Leave it and hope it will go away. Assume you are not the "right" person to raise it. *This only works if you know that it is not your mandate to intervene. Wasting emotional time and energy fretting is unhelpful. Trust your relationships, judgment, and intuition. Focus on what you can control.*
- Find a person who has a good working relationship with the problem boss or coworker. *Find out their perspective and share yours. Stand beside them psychologically as they take action. Contribute to forward movement.*
- Have the conversation. *If your heart isn't beating rapidly, then it's a good time to have the conversation. Share your observations, listen, then communicate what you expect. Arrive at a mutual understanding.*

Some leaders analyze "why" an employee behaves in a particular way, then they become concerned they are in the domain of therapy. They're not, but analyzing "why" won't help a leader to act. It takes them in wrong

direction. Making an assessment of the impact of such behavior on results is the leader's terrain. Addressing unproductive behavior is definitely the leader's mandate as it is the quality of the leader-employee relationships that shapes the work culture.

Counterproductive behavior most likely stems from the earlier lives of executives, but the details of these matters are private. To have presence as a leader, it is wise to identify your own overdeveloped default behaviors. Establishing the connection between them and their historical origin is necessary, and applying these insights to your current context is essential. Having a vision for your refreshed personal qualities, aligned with your professional identity, is integral to your capacity for presence.

Shifting Default Behaviors

As a child, make no mistake, you did your best. You did not have the capacities—physically, socially, or emotionally—to respond to events as an adult would. You coped. Typically, those caring for you were unavail- able or didn't assist you in the right way. Being isolated during significant traumatic childhood moments is the main source of current behavioral glitches. What was missing then was knowing that someone saw and knew what occurred, that someone cared for and *took care of* you. This can be as simple as physical comforting and mirroring: "You've been hurt" or "I'm here now. You thought we had forgotten you." The reality is that often this did not occur, which led to the development of self-protective survival behaviors.

Once default behaviors become apparent in our work, there are a wide range of people who can help. Trusted intimate friends, bosses, col- leagues, and mentors can be a great source of understanding. For others, counseling or therapy are helpful to review and come to terms with the effects of originating events. Both approaches create a sense of freedom, of a weight being lifted. Your current responses become *in the moment*.

The key thing with a default response is that you are deprived of your ability to think. Realizing that this relates to the originating events, rather

than your current situation, begins the process of repair. This sounds really serious, and for many, it is. It is also the stuff of everyday life. While others may be at "fault," taking responsibility for your work behavior begins with you. Know that you now have people alongside you who do care—about you personally and about all you have to offer; colleagues, partners, and friends.

I have discovered that leaders expand their executive presence by tapping into their own early life experiences. By doing so, they discover three things:

- The likely source of their overdeveloped defaults and coping responses
- Clues for fresh responses and progressive behaviors
- Greater capacities to maintain companionable relationships under stressful conditions

Leadership development can have therapeutic effects in at least three ways:

1. Executives realize other leaders share default behaviors, self-doubt, and poor confidence. They realize they are not alone.
2. The experience of trusted companions alongside looking into their situation without judgment gives confidence for acceptance and fresh possibilities.
3. Positive, functional, and progressive meetings where participants are heard and understood and where decisions are made that move the business forward and facilitate trust.

Who you undertake your professional development with is your choice. My best advice is to choose a trusted coach, trainer, counselor, mentor, friend, colleague, or boss who understands human behavior and has your best interests at heart. Choosing trusted confidants is essential to every leader's psychological well-being. (More details are found in chapter 2.)

Diving into the Wreck

I grew up in a war zone. My parents fought constantly. Both were the eldest of four. Dad was an engineer, funny, intelligent, and moody. Mum was an economist, gregarious, smart, and busy. Not wanting to be caught in the constant crossfire, I kept quiet during their fights. I made myself invisible and became silently critical of my parents. I dreamed of a bet- ter family life. We never discussed what was happening. My picture of a happy family didn't match my experience.

My parents' fighting had an unusual impact on me. Wherever I went, I saw possibilities. Outside of home, I spoke out. I was perceptive and articulate. Being chosen as a leader became second nature to me; I was captain of our school netball team, started my own PE class at college, and led a regional group of teachers discussing education reform as a first-year teacher. I sensed I had things to offer and shared my ideas. I gave status updates to those in authority. I continued to be given formal and informal leadership roles as someone who had vision. I would get a job and change things dramatically for the better. My reputation was one of being innovative and producing results. After several falling-outs with bosses and peers, I realized they didn't like working with me. I had become critical, task oriented, and unappreciative. The context had changed. My behavior and relationships were no longer fit-for-purpose. "I" had become invisible. I was behaving as if I was still in the war zone and didn't trust anyone around me. I decided to review my approach to leading others.

Discovering Early Influencers

When I work with leaders and their development, I first say, "Tell me a bit about your background." Many begin with some of the work roles they have had. Then they let me know about some of their family cir- cumstances. Some say, "Do you mean personal or work?" I respond, "You decide." Most clients are willing to talk about their family background and encapsulate what they want to say in a few words.

Case study:

- Viv routinely takes on too much and is exhausted. I ask where she learned to do this. "My mother had depression, so my job was to look after my nine brothers and sisters."
- Gerry is overloaded from taking on too much. He complains about his manager not being interested in him. I ask him when he first became aware of this pattern. "From the time I was two, I lived in an orphanage.
  I hated it. the other kids really liked me, so I was a leader from early on. I was the one who saw what needed to happen."
- Harry drones on in leadership meetings and can't shift gears quickly enough. I ask where he learned to talk like this. He immediately responds, "I was the eldest of four. My dad died when I was twelve, and suddenly I was the family spokesperson."

When diving into any wreck, it is reassuring and helpful to have a mutually trusted companion. Solo journeys are possible, but personal resilience is essential.

By diving deep, you are searching for your genuine self.

When I work this way, clients appreciate I have a sense of the practicality of their current situation. I don't need to know the details of the originating experience, but they sense I am aware of its profound impacts. I use all my senses and remain aware of how their eye movements, breathing, and facial expressions might relate to their behavior. My background as a physical educator helps me assess physiology, movement, and posture. As a sociometrist, I am alert to behaviors that either isolate people or create connections. I apply all my knowledge, experience, and intuition to my working relationships. A client sharing a moment of insight, recognition, and acceptance is deeply personal to them and a professional privilege for me.

Diving into the wreck is not about finding the key, opening up boxes, and rummaging around. What works is identifying the particular earlier events linked to current unworkable default responses.

Recognition and acceptance, rather than denial and retreat, gives you freedom to choose. You have arrived at a moment of choice; you can either continue as usual or open yourself to other possibilities.

Choosing your response in stressful situations results in a clear flow of feeling between you and others. Interruptions in relationships and communication cease. The genuine you is present and you can connect easily with others. People are drawn to you and want to be influenced by you.

Practice Session 1.1

Rate yourself on a 1–10 scale for each of these criteria for executive pres- ence, 0 being not at all, 10 being fit-for-purpose.

- You anticipate resolving people problems and maintaining good relationships.
- People look to you for context, decision making, and direction.
- You know what is going on in your organization.
- You contribute relevantly in groups.
- You are sought after for advice and counsel.
- You have a personal network of trusted advisers.
- You are calm in crises.
- You can disagree with others and maintain good relationships.
- You are less than perfect, and people accept you.
- You look forward to being with people.
- You can transact business rapidly.
- You are perceived as accessible, relevant, insightful, and results oriented.

Practice Session 1.2

What and who have been the four most powerful influences on you as a leader?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

What did you learn from each one, and specifically what have they helped you do?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Practice Session 1.3

What are three overdeveloped default behaviors you currently have?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Where did each of these come from?

Summary

- Develop executive presence by blending your personal experience with your professional identity.
- You don't need all the answers; what you do need is the capacity to relate relevantly to shifting contexts and to those around you.
- When you discover an overdeveloped default behavior, tap into your own early life experiences to uncover the likely source.
- The changes in behavior you might make are small; for example, you may speak more quietly or look people in the eye, yet they have significant impacts on results.
- Be aware that this professional development approach entails making significant emotional and psychological shifts.
- Hit the refresh button and update your responses to be appropriate to the settings you find yourself in.
- Rationality is a valuable characteristic for leaders with presence. Equally valuable is the ability to navigate the soft side of organizational life: people, relationships, and behavior.
- Your emotional responses are central to your capacities to lead and engage relevantly.
- Executive presence is deeply personal

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