BEING AUTHENTIC
The Second of the Four Factors that Constitute the Foundation for Leader and Leadership

• Being a Person of Integrity

• Being Authentic
Being and acting consistent with who you hold yourself out to be for others, and who you hold yourself to be for yourself

• Being Given Being and Action By Something Bigger than Oneself

• Being Cause in the Matter
A Word About Values, and Why in this Course We Care About Authenticity

This course is about being a leader and exercising leadership effectively. It is not about what is good or bad, or right or wrong, and it is not a discussion of ethics or morality, that is to say, it is not an examination of anything normative.

We are not concerned in this course with authenticity being right or good, or with inauthenticity being wrong or bad. In this course we are only concerned with the fact that being authentic is required for being a leader, and being able to exercise leadership effectively.

It is for that reason we deal with authenticity in this course on being a leader.
What it Means to Be Authentic

Being authentic is being and acting consistent with who you hold yourself out to be for others (including who you allow others to hold you to be), and who you hold yourself to be for yourself.

While this is fairly obvious, what is very much less obvious is the path to authenticity. The path to authenticity is being authentic about your inauthenticities.

One of the conditions for you to experience being a leader from your participation in this course is to be willing to discover and confront your inauthenticities. And, be willing to be authentic about your inauthenticities.
Are You Being Authentic?

Most of us think of ourselves as being authentic; however, each of us in certain situations, and each of us in certain ways, is consistently inauthentic. And, because we avoid at all costs confronting our inauthenticities, we are consistently inauthentic about being inauthentic – not only with others, but with ourselves as well. The point is, you are inauthentic and don’t know that you are inauthentic – that’s called fooling yourself about fooling yourself, and that’s truly foolish.

On the subject of our inauthenticity, the late Harvard Professor, Chris Argyris (1991), after 40 years of studying us human beings, says:

“Put simply, people consistently act inconsistently, unaware of the contradiction between their espoused theory and their theory-in-use, between the way they think they are acting, and the way they really act.”
EXERCISE

Share with a partner:

Can you NOW see somewhere you have been inauthentic where previously you didn’t know or realize you were inauthentic?
Examples of Our Inauthenticities

We all want to be admired, and almost none of us is willing to confront just how much we want to be admired, and how readily we will fudge on being straightforward and completely honest in a situation where we perceive doing so threatens us with a loss of admiration.

Admiration is the highest coin in the realm. We will do anything to be admired and the loss of authenticity seems a small price to pay, especially when you don’t even notice that you are being inauthentic and even if you did, are unaware that being inauthentic costs you being whole and complete as a person.
Examples of Our Inauthenticities

We also all want to be seen by our colleagues as being **loyal**, protesting that loyalty is a virtue even in situations where the truth is that we are acting “loyal” solely to avoid the loss of admiration. And, in such situations, how ready we are to sacrifice our authenticity to maintain the pretense of being loyal, when the truth is that we are “being loyal” only because we fear losing the admiration of our colleagues.
Examples of Our Inauthenticities

In addition, most of us have a pathetic need for **looking good**, and almost none of us is willing to confront just how much we care about looking good – even to the extent of the silliness of pretending to have followed and understood something when we haven’t. And by the way, looking good does not look good.

Just the threat of looking bad (wrong, stupid, irrational, naïve, silly, etc.), for most of us destroys even the possibility of being authentic. The need to avoid the embarrassment or humiliation we imagine to be the result of looking bad leaves us defensive, posturing, or petulant (childishly sulking or bad-tempered). And by the way, being defensive, posturing, or petulant does not look good.
Examples of Our Inauthenticities

This being inauthentic about being wrong, etc., like any inauthenticity, costs us the power required to be a leader and to exercise leadership effectively. If you’re going to be a leader, you need the courage to be straight (direct and honest) when you’re wrong, stupid, irrational, naïve, silly, etc. – and you will be.
Each of Us is Inauthentic in Certain Ways

While this may sound like a description of this or that person you know, it actually describes each person in this room, including your instructors. We are all guilty of being small in these ways – it comes with being human. Great leaders are noteworthy in having come to grips with these foibles of being human – not eliminating them, but being the master of these weaknesses when they are leading.

If you don’t recognize being inauthentic when you are and if you are not willing to confront that you are being inauthentic, you have no chance of being authentic.

Quoting former Medtronic CEO and now Harvard Business School Professor of Leadership, Bill George (2003, p. 11):

“After years of studying leaders and their traits, I believe that leadership begins and ends with authenticity.”
EXERCISE

Share with a partner:

How do you think a great leader “masters their weaknesses” when they are leading?
Being authentic is critical to being a leader.

Inauthenticity is one of the barriers to being a leader and to the effective exercise of leadership.

However, attempting to be authentic on top of your inauthenticities is like putting cake frosting on cow dung, thinking that that will make the cow dung go down well.

In this course, you will have the opportunity to recognize your inauthenticities. While you won’t like seeing them, by distinguishing these weaknesses in yourself, you will give yourself a powerful opportunity to be authentic about your inauthenticities – the pathway to authenticity.
Each of Us is Inauthentic in Certain Ways

Right in this classroom you may catch yourself being limited in your ability to perform, or even just plain stuck, out of:

- the fear of the loss of admiration,
- the fear of being accused of being disloyal, or
- the fear of looking bad.

Such fear may result in the stuckness of something as silly as stopping you from raising your hand to be called on.

Welcome such insights. You will benefit from them.
BREAK ASSIGNMENT
Break Assignment

Authenticity

1. Name at least one area in your life where your being and acting are inconsistent with who you hold yourself out to be for others.

2. Name at least one area of your life where your being and acting are inconsistent with who you hold yourself out to be for yourself.

3. Where could you bring authenticity to your Life?