Reading Reflection

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Great leaders know how to motivate people towards goals that seem impossible. They drive innovation and spark curiosity in the minds of people around them. Through this program, I want to understand how my brain functions to increase my effectiveness in leading change.

I thoroughly enjoyed reading Rock’s work. The ideas presented in the text have direct application to my day-to-day activities and help me understand why I find myself frustrated from time to time.

Our brain has a limited amount of space to process information at any given time. If I want to lead change in an organization, then I must realize that mental attention is required for that to happen as Rock discusses in the later chapters of the book. It is unrealistic for me to think I can change the actions of another person without their attention. At the same time, I cannot obtain attention if the people I am trying to lead are focused on core item in their life that are more important. This concept and its application is revolutionary to how I interact with people daily.

Part of the fight for mental attention is led by uncertainty that causes additional stress in the brain. When faced with unknown circumstances, our brain requires additional focus to complete tasks. I want to learn how to better channel change in groups by addressing these items.

In Scene 12, Rock discussed how we continually posture with others to define our own area of superiority. This is a great insight with the work I find myself doing (Rock, 2009). I have recognized the times in my life I was happiest were also times when I was at high levels of status. Sometimes the status was connected to power, while other times it was merely the perceived level of importance.

People will go to great lengths to protect or increase their status (Rock, 2009). Personal growth feeds the status needs of our body because we are competing with our former self to achieve a higher level of importance, knowledge, or insight. Additionally, the SCARF model provides a framework to work through some challenges I have seen repeatedly come up as part of my meta-story.

Our internal narrative is directly impacted by the way we learned to talk to ourselves. Typically this was from our parents. It gives us the framework with which we see the world. “The story we tell ourselves may be limiting them in the present and may also be causing them to pass down to their children the same painful legacy that marred their own early days” (Siegel, p. 171). This statement by Siegel made me think back to early memories in my life that displayed how my parents choose to teach me how to write my story.

I like the quote from Siegel, "Memory retrieval is a memory modifier" (Siegel, p. 162). When you increase your awareness of your memories, you allow yourself to rewrite the story you tell yourself. I see this statement in my life. I have a hard time dealing with my episodic memory. I can be hard on myself for an entire period of time and not as rewarding in others (Siegel, 2010).

Part of dealing with your brain is understanding how memories are stored and retrieved. The best place to start is the present and modify how your brain is writing current events in your mind.

Whyte’s description of the three marriages provided me with a different way of viewing my life. As I listened to Whyte’s description of marriage, I constantly found myself thinking about my wife and the love we share. We are a great compliment to each other’s strengths and weaknesses. We are mentally connected on many levels. I realize that over time, we must maintain a constant focus on our relationship to protect it against other items that can take our focus off each other. Our long term blending of hearts, minds and goals provides a solid foundation for a life-long marriage. I know that I have grown as a person since I got married. I feel more complete internally which helps me have a greater sense of self.

The third marriage of self is one that I feel that I have grown closer to the most over recent years. I am an avid reader and traveler. I enjoy seeing cultures through different lenses. This has been one of the greatest ways for me to test my own ways of thinking and see why my brain operates the way it does.

The second marriage of work is one I have noticed more change in over the past few years. Part of falling in love with work is enjoying the down times and more challenging times as a way to grow. Progressing through the different stages of work is a challenge. Like any relationship, there are times I wish things were better and I consider looking for other opportunities, then I have days where I absolutely love the work I am doing and the people I am surrounded by. I honestly feel like I am doing the work I was meant to do.

Part of what I enjoy about my work is the opportunity to help people. From Schein’s work, I realized that my natural tendency is diagnostic inquiry. I want to dig down the root of the issue. Many times the issues that are at the forefront of the persons mind are only the symptoms of much larger issues. I want to see what those items are by asking questions and using examples of related situations or symbolisms (Schein, 2011, p. 71).

Two of the other methods caught my attention as well. Pure inquiry is a challenge for me. I have to make a conscious effort to pause my words and allow the person to say everything they need to say in the moment (Schein, 2011, p. 68). I find myself using the confrontational approach more than I should. When I should be using the pure inquiry approach, I default to confrontational. (Schein, 2011, p. 75)

Quinn presented an example of Kevin in “A New View of Leadership” that resonated with me (Quinn, 2004, p. 77). He was responsible for instituting change within an organization that desperately needed it but was resistant to accepting it.

In a previous job, I experienced a similar scenario. I was overseeing an international team that needed direction and processes to increase efficiencies. What I realized over time was they did not want processes. They viewed them as burdensome and restraining, even if it would be healthier for the organization as a whole. I became extremely frustrated because it did not matter what needed to be done or what should be done, the organization refused to move. To this day, they still struggle month to month to meet their financial obligations. I do not see that changing until the attitude and culture changes.

Unlike the example, I do not expect to see fruit from the seeds I planted in the organization. It is a frustrating feeling to see a group of people with so much potential refuse to act when given the opportunity.

Through this program, I hope to better equip myself to be prepared when a situation like this arises again. I want to know how to help change organizations like Rock talked about when the natural response is resistance and change. I want to know how to motivate large-scale change with groups that are steeped in traditional practices. Showing them facts may not work because their long-term goal is comfort. Anyone that shakes the boat is seen as the enemy that must be silenced. My issue is I am often times that person willing to step out there and start the change process. I want to learn how to make it stick when needed, and how to discern appropriate timing.

I am most interested in learning how to control my mental thoughts in such a way that my effectiveness and mental capacity is increased. I want to understand what actions and habits I need in my life in order to achieve my goals.

The unanswered questions are how to make this happen. I sense myself getting frustrated knowing that there are skills I can use to be an effective change leader, but I need the patience to wait to learn how to make that happen. I am very interested in learning how to blend all of these concepts into a cohesive unit for change. The concepts sounds great, but I am trying to grasp how they all come together into a habitual pattern of mindful thinking that increase my effectiveness as a change agent.

# References

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