

Growing Effective Leaders

Session Nine

Online 2020-21



 Rocky Mountain Synod, ELCA

Courageous, resilient, and faithful leaders for the sake of the world

Growing Effective Leaders

Session Nine Participant Outcomes:

1. Articulate shifts in leadership conceptions present in their faith community.
2. Develop a strategy to address an obstacle in managing community relationships present in their area of ministry.
3. Describe where a group in their faith community is in their development and devise a strategy to help the group perform better.

Preparation for this Session:

- Read this section of the manual and bring it with you.
- Meet with your ministry team to prepare insights you wish to share with the group about your summer project.
- Optional: Read *Dare to Lead* by Brené Brown.

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Leading Through the Fields

Leading God's Transformational Path

In this course, we have utilized Otto Scharmer's path of transformation outlined in his book *Theory U*. Scharmer describes this life-giving process as moving through four emotional/social fields to the place of Presence — the place of transformation. It is here that we discern God's emerging future for us. Leading through these fields is challenging and requires application of self-differentiation, self-awareness, adaptive leadership, vulnerability, and spiritual practice.

Negotiating the Fields of Perception

Field 1, Download

In the first field of perspective, leaders and members see the congregation as something that simply is. They each see their place in the congregation from an unexamined and unquestioned perspective. Everything appears just fine. They all conform to what has been, the way they've always done it, seen it, and been it. When a challenge or problem arises, they just download what they've done before to address it. Leaders in this field follow a set agenda, look to the same experts and authorities to solve problems, conform to tradition, and are outwardly polite to one another. Seeing the congregation from this perspective assures very little change or transformation will take place.

[Leading a move from Field 1 to Field 2](#) is almost developmental and comes when one begins to critically think about participation in a group rather than unselfconsciously being in the group. Within congregational life, the move may happen when a congregation member is asked to take on a leadership role such as joining the Council. The role of Council is to think about the life and functioning of the community. Making decisions requires critical thinking and analysis which changes the perspective from simply being surrounded by and participating in the community to viewing the community from the edge. From this new perspective one begins to ask questions about authority, power, and purpose. Asking people to think strategically invites them to shift their perspective from their place in the pew up to the balcony where one can metaphorically see the whole community. Using the adaptive process of observing what is really going on, honest interpretation of the data, and taking doable steps to make appropriate changes supports this shift.

Field 2, Debate

The second field of perspective requires that we let go of the way we have always seen the community. If one grew up in the congregation or the community provided safety and comfort during difficult personal times, this shift may be emotionally arduous. The shift happens by opening minds to real data, facts and information about the congregation. Field 2 requires really seeing what is going on, which requires letting go of assumptions and loyalty to the way it has always been done. This choice to see the

system more objectively often leads to questioning, debate, and sometimes confrontation. Seeing the organization from Field 2 necessitates a new, more objective set of eyes.

[Leading a move from Field 2 to Field 3](#) is a significant self-awareness shift for any individual and/or community. This shift requires seeing from twin perspectives: clearly seeing both the community and one's place in the community. In making this shift, one must be able to live in disequilibrium as old patterns fall away and new ones have not yet emerged. It means a re-orientation of notions of leadership and becoming more and more self-differentiated. Describing the move into Field 3, Scharmer writes, "This shift bends the beam of observation back onto the observer." Instead of blaming and pointing fingers at 'those people,' we begin to own our complicity in creating and maintaining the system as it currently exists.

Field 3, Dialogue

Seeing from this field happens when the personal perspective shifts to seeing the self as an agent within the system, as someone who can bring about change and has responsibility for the way things are. Dialogue with differing perspectives inside and outside the congregation opens not just the mind, but also the heart. This spiritual shift calls for vulnerability, empathy, and compassion. This shift requires members to suspend their voices of cynicism, shame, prejudice, and polarities (liberal/conservative, high/low, grace/law, faith budget/balanced budget, etc.)

"Dialogue...is not merely a strategy, but it is a practice that is congruent with our deepest nature, made as we are in the image of a dialogic God."

Walter Brueggemann,
Mandate to Difference: An Invitation
to the Contemporary Church

[Leading a move from Field 3 to Field 4](#) calls a community deeper still - to that transformational New Creation of God in meeting the opportunity/challenge before them. This shift requires great self-awareness and openness to future possibilities we cannot yet see. God and God's dream for us must guide us into Field 4. Letting go of our old perspectives, our old assumptions, our old reasons for being, we now have the capacity to sit in God's creative silence and begin to imagine God's way forward. Letting go requires significant trust and vulnerability from leaders.

"My simple thesis is that the church – summoned, formed, and empowered by the God of all dialogue – has in our anxiety-driven society an opportunity to be deeply dialogical about the most important issues, dialogical in a way that keeps our judgments penultimate before the holy throne of God."

Walter Brueggemann, Mandate to Difference: An Invitation
to the Contemporary Church



Field 4, Presence

Seeing from the fourth field means connecting with the creative Spirit within and beyond the community, to possibilities which capture the imagination and reflect God's imagination. In this field, members open not just their minds and hearts, but their wills in alignment with God's will for them. This future facing shift is risky business and it means facing fears. God's ways are not our ways. God could be calling the community of faith to be Church in a totally different way. Practicing contemplation, talking about God's track record within the group, building faith and trust are all spiritual practices that open us up and invite us to live more bravely in this God-drenched field. When leaders function in this field, they experience discernment of God's leading, a collective creativity which sparks energy and creates space for a community to live in faith, hope, and love.

Challenges in Community Relationship Management

Intervention Model

Theories of organizational development (OD), the study of successful organizational change and performance, have changed since the 1930's, when psychologists began systematically considering organizational structures and processes that influence behavior and motivation. Today, key concepts in OD theory include:

- Organization climate – the personality of an organization which includes attitudes and beliefs that influence the members collective behavior.
- Organizational culture – the deeply seated norms, values, and behaviors that members share.
- Organizational strategies – how an organization identifies problems, plans action, negotiates change, and evaluates progress.¹

Within EiL, we believe that this body of work has much to teach faith communities to become the people God is creating them to be. Chris Argyris wrote about a theory of planned change, the Intervention Model, back in the 1970's. It is still a strong model for how to think about facilitating change within our communities.

This model for intervention in groups begins with gathering and presenting valid and useful information, requires creating space for free choice, and then encouraging internal commitment to the new direction.



¹ Argyris, C. & Schon, D., *Organizational Learning: A Theory of Action Perspective*, 1978.

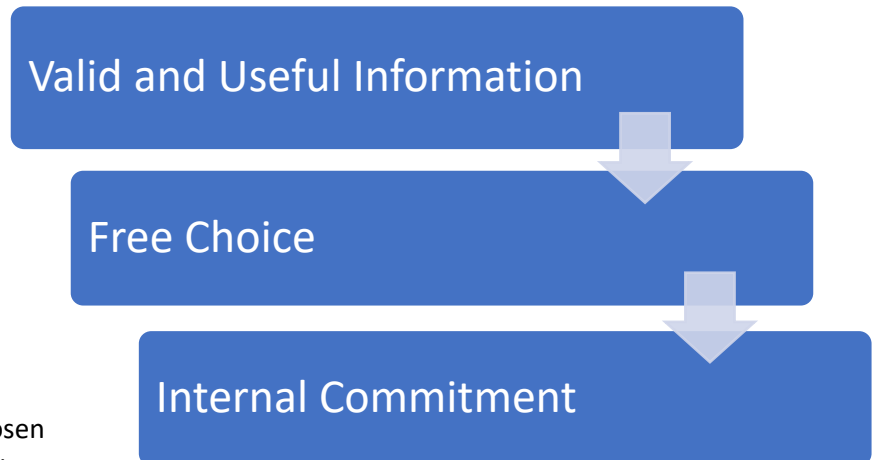
Valid and Useful Information can be publically verified, tested with a broad range of people, and can be gathered openly and discussed in the group. It also needs to be relevant to effect the change desired.

Free Choice creates space for people to make a choice toward the change leaders are recommending.

Giving people free choice takes time and requires significant opportunities for discussion. The group will need to own the data gathered, explore options, and choose proactive responses to move the group toward the desired outcome.

Internal Commitment means as many people as possible achieve a high level of commitment to the chosen path toward the desired outcome. The group, motivated by their internal decisions, needs to take responsibility for planning and taking steps toward the change.

The theory assumes that one element builds on the other. The more information is valid and useful, the more likely the free choice. The more there is truly a free choice, the more likely there will be internal commitment.



Applying the Intervention Model to Common Group Challenges

Within the recommended reading for this program, we rely on two contemporary OD thinkers, Ron Heifetz and Otto Scharmer. Their work on adaptive and transformational leadership builds on and expands the earlier work of Argyris and others.

Also, in the recommended reading, the work of Ed Friedman and Brené Brown helps us think about the characteristics and qualities needed by healthy leaders in today's world. When a leadership team is contemplating planned change, they need to simultaneously consider their community, the health and dysfunction inherent in the group AND they need to reflect on their own motivation, behavior, and where they may be getting hooked.



As we think about using the Intervention Model, let's review Friedman's emotional regression tendencies.

Friedman's Emotional Regression²

- **Reactivity –**

Conflict	VERSES	Self-regulation
Triangulation		Self-control
Over/under functioning		Self-expression
Withdrawal		Assertiveness
Cutoff		Independence

- **Herding –**

- Grouping with like-minded people around an issue against others
- Undifferentiated togetherness falling into immaturity

VERSES

- Adaptation to strength
- Choosing to be differentiated, mature, and finding resources to solve an issue

- **Blaming –**

- Blaming a leader or another group for problems

VERSES

- Growth producing response to challenge
- Taking responsibility for our part of the problem and working for change

- **Quick fix –**

- Fixing the symptoms of the issue and not the issue to relieve current anxiety

VERSES

- Allowing time for the issue to mature
- Gathering more data and using an adaptive process to better understand the issue

- **Lack of differentiated leadership –**

- Leaders who do not stay objective or take a stand
- Leaders who withdraw or fuse with followers

VERSES

- Leaders who stay within their own integrity and maintain their individuality
- Leaders who stay grounded in their self-awareness, values, boundaries, and direction

² Friedman, Edwin, *A Failure of Nerve*, pp. 61-90.



When using the Intervention Model outline to explore building healthy dynamics within a leadership community, consider these possibilities:

Valid and Useful Information

- Groups need to be made aware of destructive behaviors and the consequences of such behaviors.
- Demonstrating and discussing healthier ways to self-regulate and regulate one another in the group.
- Naming the dysfunctional behaviors and their consequences when they occur helps to test the reality faced by a group.
- Stories of successful change, video clips of unhealthy and healthy responses, and role play are possible ways to help a group grow in awareness and see the need for change.

Free Choice

- Group members need space to learn and practice new behaviors.
- Posters or mottos, or some clever reminders to help re-focus the group on healthy ways of functioning sometimes help.
- Stopping the group when an old behavior emerges and calling attention to it; then reflecting together on how to better function also helps people learn and choose new behaviors.

Internal Commitment

- The group may need coaching for a while to suspend judgment, fear, and shame for falling back into old patterns, until the new patterns take hold.
- Some patterns are deeply rooted in the culture of the system and may need deeper work over a period of time.
- In times of high stress, the old default patterns may emerge. Self-compassion and beginning again are good ways to move forward.

Heifetz's Four Adaptive Changes³

Ron Heifetz, in his book *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership*, outlines four adaptive challenge patterns which are common in groups and organizations. These patterns keep a group from moving to a place of thriving and may need to be addressed in order for the group to be able to progress.

³ Heifetz, Ronald, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership*, pp. 77-86.



Gap between espoused values and behavior – what a group says they believe and what they do are two different things

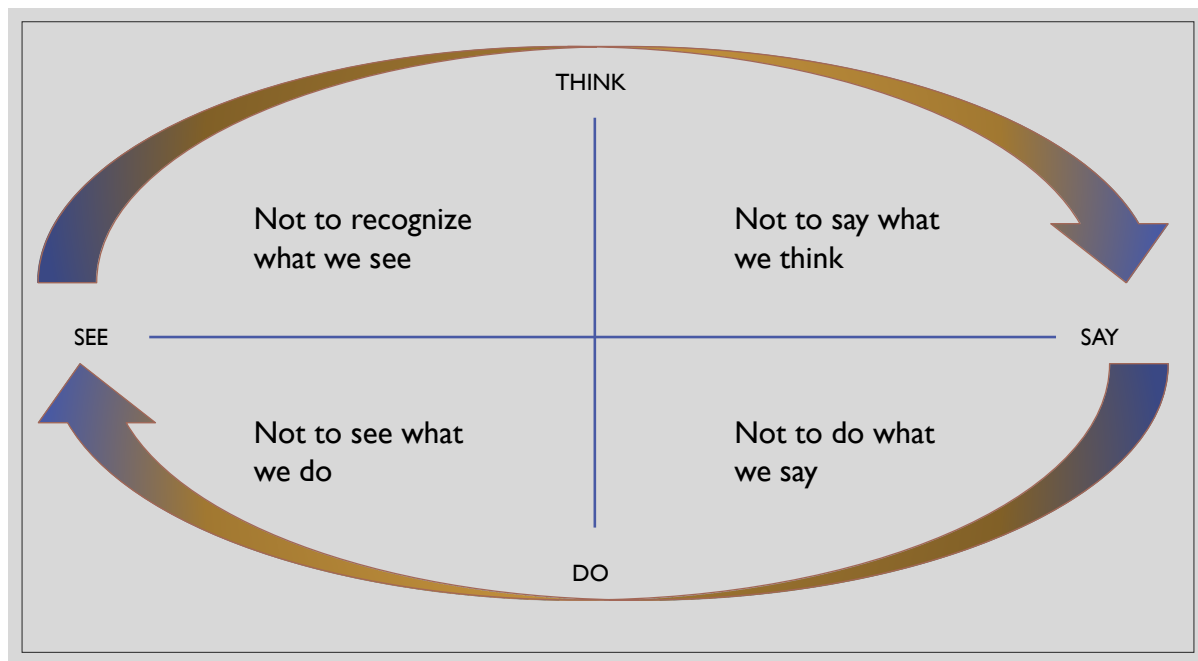
Competing commitments can distract the group from facing the real challenge and compromise may not serve any constituency well

Unwillingness to speak the unspeakable – inability to integrate internal and external dialogue, choosing to not name the elephants, not sharing internal dialogue, not willing to risk re-framing

Work avoidance – diverting attention to technical or quick fixes because the emotional work is too painful

Scharmer's Barriers to Organizational Learning and Change⁴

Likewise, Otto Scharmer, in his book *Theory U*, names four behaviors of leaders and groups which keep communities from moving into creative, generative space.



⁴ Scharmer, Otto, *Theory U: Leading from the Future as It Emerges*, pp. 126-128.

Using Argyris' intervention model can help move the group back to the creative conversation, space, and culture.

Valid and Useful Information

- Calling groups to attend to these common roadblocks to group development and the consequences through discussion, stories/parables, video clips, etc. will raise the awareness of the group to their own favorite or default pitfalls and/or dysfunction.
- Naming the gaps, blind spots, the commitments, lack of follow through, the lack of safety to speak, and work avoidance habits helps the group and/or leader see what needs to change.
- Teaching alternate ways to function, committing to creating a healthier culture⁵ and facing challenges together can give a group/leader the support they need for change.

Free Choice

The challenge is to create space in meetings to call out and reflect on these patterns when they arise and have the group brainstorm ways to move beyond these patterns. It means temporarily suspending the agenda and also some self-compassion to learn new behaviors.

Internal Commitment

This happens when group members recognize these common challenges and choose to respond in ways which will help them continue to be a learning community, meeting adaptive challenges, and remaining in and developing a co-creative space.

Group Development

When a group of people are first formed into a team, their roles and interactions are not established. Some individuals may merely act as observers while they try to determine what is expected from them while others may engage the process immediately. Group development models suggest that the process occurs in five predictable stages. Each stage is characteristically different and builds on the preceding one. All teams develop through this predetermined sequence if they are to be fully functioning teams.

Five Stages of Group Development

Stage 1: *Forming*

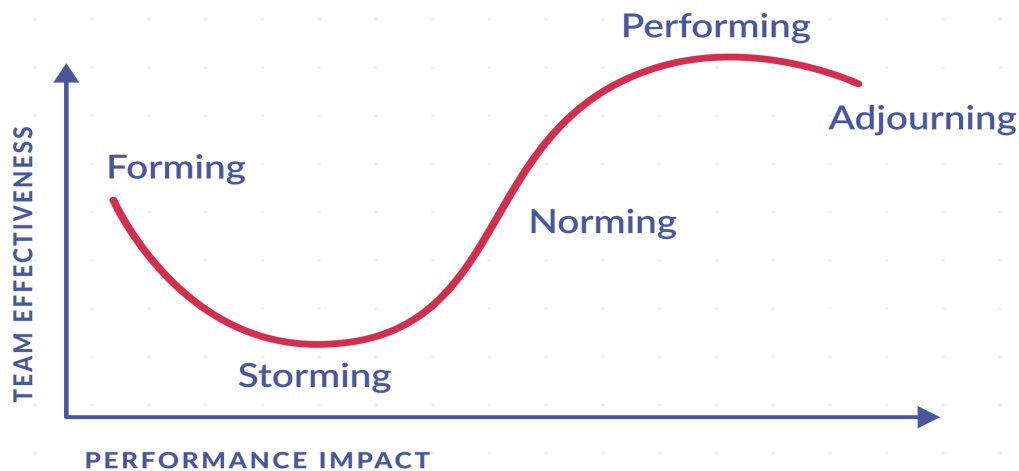
Stage 2: *Storming*

Stage 3: *Norming*

Stage 4: *Performing*

Stage 5: *Adjourning*

⁵ Session 6, "Differentiated, Daring Leadership," pp. 7-9.



Stage 1: Forming

The forming stage of group development is an exploration period. Members are often cautious and guarded in their interactions, not really knowing what to expect from other group members. In this stage, each individual explores the boundaries of acceptable behavior. Behaviors expressed in this early stage are generally noncommittal and will evolve throughout the existence of the group.

Some questions raised during this stage of development are:

- ◆ Do I want to be part of this team?
- ◆ Will I be accepted as a member?
- ◆ Who is the spoken and unspoken leader? Who holds real or imposed authority?
- ◆ Is the leader competent?

Conversational pattern:

- ◆ Downloading patterns from past experience with other groups or assumptions about the type of organizations
- ◆ Polite and cautious conversation
- ◆ The members look to the leader to set conversational norms

Stage 2: Storming

The storming stage of development is characterized by competition, posturing, and strained relationships among team members. Groups will experience varying degrees of conflict, but basically the storming stage deals with issues of formal and informal power, leadership, and the process of decision making. This stage is critical for establishing healthy and direct ways to disagree and will determine the groups capacity to trust one another and the group as a whole.

Some questions raised during this stage of development are:

- ◆ How will I seek my autonomy and find my voice?
- ◆ How much control and influence will I have over others?
- ◆ Who do I support and who supports me?
- ◆ Will conflict in this group be disruptive or add to our community building?

Conversational Pattern:

- ◆ Debate – exchange divergent views
- ◆ I am my point of view
- ◆ Rule-confronting
- ◆ Listening from the outside

Stage 3: Norming

The norming stage of team development is characterized by cohesiveness among group members. After working through the storming stage, group members discover that they in fact do have common interests with each other and are able to commit to a shared vision. Group members learn to appreciate their differences and find ways to work better together. Having gone through the storming stage, members are now better able to problem solve together.

Some questions raised during this stage of development are:

- ◆ What kind of relationships can we develop and expect?
- ◆ Will we be an effective and successful group/team/committee?
- ◆ How do we measure up to other working teams?
- ◆ What is my relationship to the group leader?

Conversational Pattern:

- ◆ Dialogue – inquiry into viewpoints
- ◆ I can change my view
- ◆ Listen from within

Stage 4: Performing

The performing stage of group development is the result of working through the first three stages. By this time, group members have learned how to work together as a cohesive team. They can define tasks and work out their relationships with more confidence. They can manage their conflicts and work together to accomplish their mission.



Conversational Pattern:

- ◆ Individuals connect to collective whole
- ◆ Individuals are able to voice concerns and differences openly and honestly
- ◆ Conversation enhances the collective mission

Stage 5: Adjourning

The adjourning stage takes place at the end of the group's tenure. The team members need to have an experience of closure to allow them to accomplish their leave taking well. Some tasks might include:

- ◆ Termination of team roles, gratitude for individuals in particular roles
- ◆ Personal good-byes, letting go
- ◆ Celebrating accomplishments
- ◆ Planned closure event or ritual

References for this Session

Argyris, Chris, *Intervention Theory and Method: A Behavioral Science View*, Addison-Wesley, 1973.

Brown, Brené, *Dare to Lead*, Random House, 2018.

Friedman, Edwin, *A Failure of Nerve*, Seabury Books, 2007.

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