

Organizational Health Reflective Essay

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Reading Reflections

I found the book *Endurance* (Lansing, 2002) to be an amazing story that was suspenseful, gut wrenching, and empowering all in one. At first I wasn't convinced that this was going to be a great read, but in fact it turned out to be a wonderful adventure. In this tale I found the main character to exhibit a passion and drive that was truly engaging. Sir Ernest Shackleton was a leader with a vision to conquer Antarctica at any cost. Key qualities he possessed were his uncanny instinct to make difficult decisions with ease, as well as his charisma, which helped to engage and empower his crew. This resulted with his crew respecting him, even in the dire situations they encountered, and more importantly trusting his decisions. One example of this trust was when he had to leave at least half of his crew on an island, while he navigated back to civilization for help. There was no questioning when he made this decision. The crew just accepted it.

Shackleton's reliance on instinct was the characteristic that probably saved their lives, and ultimately brought his crew home alive. An example that stood out to me in the book was how he chose his crew. "Shackleton's methods would appear to have been almost capricious. If he liked the look of a man, he was accepted. If he didn't, the matter was closed. And these decisions were made with lightning speed. There is no record of any interview that Shackleton conducted with a perspective expedition member lasting much more than five minutes." (Lansing, 2002, p. 17) In *Endurance* (Lansing, 2002), Shackleton made decisions that were quick, that I wouldn't consider being foolhardy, or knee-jerk decisions. Some may state that his ability to make decisions using only his gut would be foolish, but his instinct was a lifesaver. The ability to make quick decisions and listen to instinct is a concept that transcends all three books that we read for this course.

In both *Presence* (Senge, 2005) and *Living Deeply* (Schlitz, 2007) there is an underlying theme of connecting through a common knowledge, or understanding, and coming to a decision or idea. In *Presence* (Senge, 2005) this understanding is achieved through the “U Movement”, which relies more on a collective process, taking time to stop and smell the roses, re-focus your thoughts, and letting change come to you; ultimately moving collectively to a new idea.

Whereas in the text *Living Deeply* (Schlitz, 2007) you come to a new idea through a transformation, but it is more individual, and is evoked through a moving experience. This could be influenced by something traumatic; such as an illness, loss of a loved one, a paranormal, or hallucinogenic experience. In the book it is referred to as an “aha” moment. Both examples of healthy change presented in the texts are intriguing, but I feel more connected to the concepts presented in the book *Living Deeply* (Schlitz, 2007). Personally, I felt that the concept of personal transformation through events in life is something I have experienced in many different ways. There are events that I can reflect upon that definitely moved me to a new awareness, or transformed me. They are defining moments.

There are two approaches that resonate with me in *The Change Handbook* (Holman, 2007). The first is the Appreciative Inquiry method, and the other is the JazzLab. The Appreciative Inquiry method connects with my personality type. I am a positive person and feel that when you approach an issue positively it enriches the conversation, thereby diminishing negativity. When conducting interviews it is easy to ask the negative questions, such as ‘What could we do better?’ or ‘What do you not like about ABC organization?’ Using this method, the idea is to turn it around. Examples could be ‘What do we do well?’ or ‘What do you like about ABC organization?’ These questions promote a relaxed setting, as opposed to a hostile experience, but removing the negativity.

The JazzLab is another interesting method that helps elicit positive dialogue, by breaking down barriers among and creating a supportive environment through collaborative activities. In my experience as a musician this group activity promotes learning to work together, enhancing their active listening skills. This shared experience also helps to develop an individuals confidence by learning to rely and trust each other in the group exercise.

In the book *Presence*, (Senge, 2005) they discuss that “there are many types of understanding” where it goes deeper than a knee-jerk decision. “This inner knowing comes from here (the heart)”. “Every one of us has experienced this in different ways, consciously or unconsciously.” (Ibid, p. 85) This type of innate decision-making resonates in the text, as well as with me. It really opened my mind to the idea that there is a power deep inside of us that is more organic, even spiritual. This realization was surprising to me. I don’t consider myself to be overly spiritual, but I am more inclined to think openly about the questions of faith since reading these books and reflecting on them.

References

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