

STRENGTH UNDER PRESSURE

Leading people and organizations through trauma, resilience development, and building cultures of positive mental health

THE ROLE OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE



LEADERSHIP SETS THE
TONE



ORGANIZATIONAL
CULTURE FLOWS FROM
LEADERSHIP



BALANCING OPERATIONAL
DEMANDS WITH
WELLNESS



RESPONSIBILITY TO BOTH
PEOPLE AND COMMUNITY

WHY UNDERSTANDING IS IMPORTANT

- Cumulative exposure: not *if*, but *when*
- Types of trauma:
 - Critical incidents (shootings, accidents, child abuse cases, DV)
 - Personal life challenges
 - ****Organizational stress** (internal investigations, staffing shortages)

**WHY
UNDERSTANDING
IS IMPORTANT**

Employee wellness stats (retention, turnover, substance use, burnout)

Impacts on the organization and services; decision making by our people

The ripple effect within families and organizations

Retention impacts = What is it costing you in dollars?

HOW WE MAKE PROGRESS



Changing the narrative
around mental health



Model what we expect
(behaviors and
language)



It's strength, not
weakness, to ask for
help



Leaders must go first

HOW WE MAKE PROGRESS



Incorporating wellness into policy:

Mandatory check-ins
Critical incident protocols
Family inclusion



Continuous, relevant training



Language matters: Brains under stress do not react well to more stress

Leadership in Social Sectors: A Primer

Transformational Leadership

- Pros: Improved culture; Higher levels of motivation/engagement; sustainability
- Cons: Early reliance on focal leader; difficulty in balance; its slow

Servant Leadership

- Pros: Enhanced trust; improved ethical responsibility; improved engagement
- Cons: Cultural resistance to change; perception of passiveness; burnout of focal leader

Leadership in Social Sectors: A Primer

Situational Leadership

- Pros: flexibility of style; employee development; communication/feedback loop
- Cons: Requires strong assessment; narrowly focused; potential for incorrect style

Contingency Leadership

- Pros: Responsiveness; easy to practice; flexibility to situation
- Cons: Lack of standardization; leaders required to adapt; can overlook individuals

"OPERATIONAL DURABILITY" (AKA RESILIENCY...)

- Resiliency is complex
 - Acquired and/or learned
 - Genetics
- Core pillars:
 - Connection
 - Purpose
 - Flexibility
 - Self-care routines
- Peer support and wellness programs

RED FLAGS (PRECURSORS TO A BREAKDOWN)

Unexplained
absenteeism

Decreased
productivity/increased
error rates

Increased conflict in
workplace

Use of force issues (for
public safety)

Performance
complaints from public

Deteriorating
relationships in and
out of workplace

Observable risky
behaviors

*This is not an
exhaustive list*

WHAT TO DO FOR YOURSELF (BEHAVIORS TO MODEL)

Nutrition: “eat less food, drink more water”

Exercise: sit less – walk more

Cognition: scroll less – read more

Attitude: complain less – reframe more

Emotion: suffer less – grow more

WHAT TO DO FOR YOUR PEOPLE

Peer Support Teams

Department psychologist or EAP

Wellness apps and technology

Community partnerships

WHAT TO DO FOR YOUR PEOPLE

Transparent communication

Encouraging use of services

Making holistic wellness an organizational priority

WHAT'S NEXT?

Mental wellness =
operational
readiness



Resilient people =
safer communities
& better service



We owe it to our
people



Investing in mental
health = investing
in leadership

FINAL THOUGHTS...

Every person has a unique story

Let's make sure the story ends well

Take care of your **people** and your people will take care of the **mission**

SUGGESTED READINGS

From the leadership perspective:

- *Extreme Ownership and Dichotomy of Leadership* (both by Jocko Wilink & Leif Babin)
- *Leaders Eat Last* (Simon Sinek*)
- *Up the Organization* (Robert Townsend)
- *Good to Great* (Jim Collins – with the appendix for social sectors)

From the mental health perspective:

- *The Body Keeps the Score* (Bessel Van der Kolk)
- *The Developing Mind* (Daniel J. Siegel)
- *Why Zebras Don't Get Ulcers* (Robert Sapolsky)
- The original Adverse Childhood Experiences study results (Centers for Disease Control, 1998)

FIND ME ON LINKED IN!

-OR-

WAYNE HANDLEY, PHD, LPC
WAYNE@BLUEOAKWELLNESS.NET
BLUEOAKWELLNESS.NET

