The Positive-Existential Leader

Yannick Jacob,
MA Existential Coach
MSc Positive Psychologist
FMR Programme Leader MSc Coaching Psychology

"The future is open and little is certain. The stakes are enormous"

Peter Goldmark
Fmr Chairman & CEO, International Herald Tribune
Leading with confidence in a VUCA World

- Volatile, uncertain, complex, ambiguous
- Globalisation & diversity
- Exponential development
- Generational conflict
- Political divide
- Social justice
- Artificial Intelligence

Overview

- The hidden challenges of leadership
- Philosophy & the Existential Leader
- Psychology & the Positive Leader
- The “PEARL” and how they “NARVEGATE”
“The challenges for leaders in the twenty-first century are not just behavioural, but psychological and philosophical.”

“Corporate executives, like the rest of us, are not always rational beings; they may be driven by emotions, aspirations or fantasies that influence the way they run their companies on a day-to-day basis.”

Monica Hanaway
Author of The Existential Leader

The Hidden Challenges for the Individual

- Feeling connected – “It’s lonely at the top”
- Carrying responsibility in the face of uncertainty
- Having to make impossible choices
- Knowing too much & too little
- Expected to be super(wo)man, and to be cheerful and optimistic in dire circumstances
- Creating meaning in absurd circumstances
- Remaining authentic when faced with conflicting needs
- Our need to feel seen, heard, valued and respected
- Our need to live, love, learn and leave a legacy (Covey, 2004)
For Managers

“Organizations suffer considerable human and financial costs when a person who has been promoted because of strong individual performance and qualifications fails to adjust successfully to management responsibilities. […] The shelves are lined with books describing effective and successful leaders. But very few address the challenges of learning to lead.”

Linda Hill
Harvard Business School

For Leaders

“The best way to overcome the inevitable loneliness of life at the top may be to connect and mindfully attend to the process that’s already underway – the unconscious sharing that undergirds every relationship.”

“The only answer, the only balm against the inevitable existential pain of becoming the leader we were born to be is to see the lessons implicit in the practice of becoming. […] Develop a philosophy of management and live it.”

Jerry Colonna
JP Morgan Chase Private Equity
"I have no idea what I am doing, and I can’t say anything to anyone because they think I have the answers."

Someone in a position of responsibility at your organisation

Universal Leadership Principles

Whether you’re the Head of

Head of

Or Head of

Every human being is in a position of responsibility
The Existential Philosophy

- Freedom
- Isolation
- Meaninglessness
- Death

Existential Leadership Challenges

Yalom, 1980

The Existential Leader

- **Protects** us from our existential concerns of freedom, responsibility, uncertainty, death, meaning & isolation.
- **Invites** us to follow them towards a shared vision.
- **Provides** a meaningful project.
- **Guards** against anxiety, dread and emptiness.
- **Offers** a set of values to believe in.
- **Bridges** uncertainty and doubt.
- **Asks** deeper and more profound questions.
Existential Leadership Dimensions

The Positive Leader

- Fostering a positive climate
- Developing positive relationships
- Engaging in positive communication
- Reinforcing positive meanings

Cameron, 2008
The Positive Psychology

- Autonomy
- Competence & Environmental Mastery
- Relationships
- Meaning
- (Self-)Acceptance
- Growth (Personal & Professional)
- Engagement
- Positive Emotions
- Courage & Strengths
- Hope & Optimism
- Authenticity & Integrity
- Mindset
- Resilience
- Safety
- Health
- Awareness
- Innovation

Ryff & Keyes, 1995
Seligman, 2011
Deci & Ryan, 2000
Dweck, 2006
Tedeshi & Calhoun, 1996
Franklin, 2016
Seligman & Peterson, 2004
Hill, Truelove & Lineback, 2014

The Gyro Model: A set of skills and A way of being
Keep it spinning...

Notice Accept Relate Value Embrace Grow Achieve Trust & Choose Enjoy and engage
NARVEGATE

- **Notice** the themes that impact on performance & wellbeing.
- **Accept** their existence. Don’t fight the inevitable.
- **Relate** experiences to your individual context, environment & worldview, and become aware of patterns & dominant themes.
- **Value** the anxiety/discomfort that accompanies them → growth mindset.
- **Embrace** anxiety as a teacher and springboard into authentic leadership. Explore possible roots in the existential leadership dimensions.
- **Grow** with the experience. Anticipate growth pains → existential resilience.
- **Achieve** – Greatness is a continuous process, not a one-off result.
- **Trust** your instincts – Trust the process. **Choose** to embrace the difficult decisions.
- **Enjoy & engage.** PEARLs have a positive relationship with the hidden challenges of leadership. They derive a sense of embodied aliveness from the courageous engagement with their existential condition. As a result they are more positively and authentically engaged in their work & life, which creates trust and inspires their people, clients and culture.

A Positive Existential Authentic Resilient Leader for a VUCA world

- Quiet & charismatic
- Creative & collaborative
- Optimistic & hopeful
- Reflective & responsible
- Courageous & passionate
- Open & confident
- Adaptive & resilient
- Embodied & compassionate
- Emotionally Intelligent
- Keeps calm
- Keeps listening
- Keeps it real
Positive Existential Leadership
Fertile ground for integration

Stay in touch
This is meant to be the start of a conversation

bit.ly/YannicksNuggets
42@existential.coach
www.existential.coach