
Leading through Connections

Motivating your Team through Genuine
Relationships
Liz Richards, M.S.

What do I know about connections?



Intro

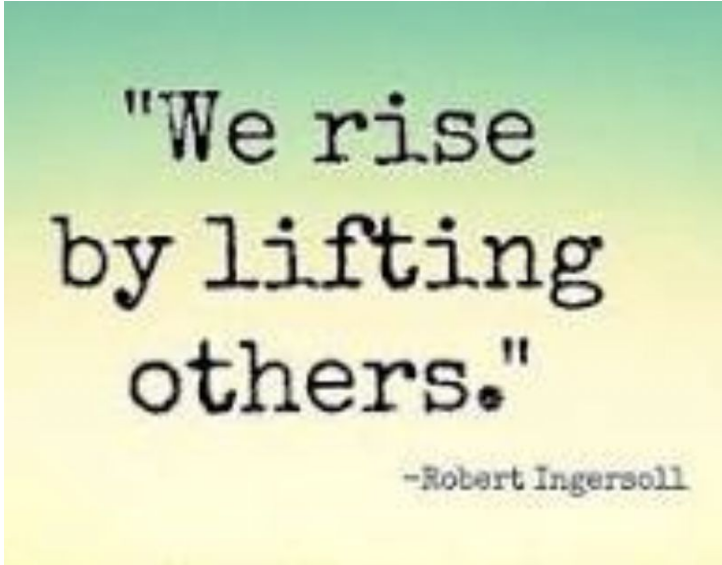
It took me way too long to realize we are all just people. Anxiety would get the best of me and I would think, “Am I worthy of leading?” I had to learn we are all just human.

Professionally, I have a Master’s degree in Family and Consumer Sciences and have been a lab Infant/Toddler Teacher, Preschool Teacher, Director of a VCP Ministry and currently Director of Ole Miss Preschool, a NAEYC accredited program. I served as past East Central Chapter INAEYC President, past Co-facilitator of the Grant County Early Childhood Coalition- Personally I’m a Mom and wife of a blended family of 6 children who are between the ages of 6 and 16 Years old!



This presentation will discuss...

- What motivates your staff and how to build connection genuinely
- How to have difficult conversations
- Diversity among staff and equity building in your program
- Enneagram and personality differences- when to not take things personally
- Organization of Onboarding- habits created from consistency
- We will break out into small groups throughout this presentation with a team building exercises to show the importance of communication

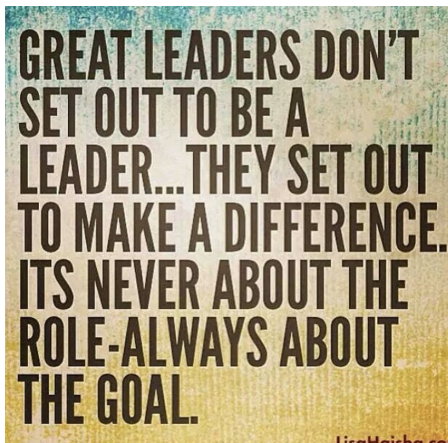
A quote by Robert Ingersoll: "We rise by lifting others." The text is centered on a background that transitions from light green at the top to light yellow at the bottom. The quote is written in a black, typewriter-style font.

"We rise
by lifting
others."

-Robert Ingersoll

Lead without Judgement

How do we do that? **Empathy** is key *We all started somewhere...*



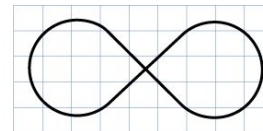
GREAT LEADERS DON'T SET OUT TO BE A LEADER... THEY SET OUT TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE. ITS NEVER ABOUT THE ROLE- ALWAYS ABOUT THE GOAL.

LisaHeisha.com

Empathy- Putting yourself in their place

First: Be Clear with Expectations- Ensure your onboarding system is smooth- Connect with staff from the beginning- when the mundane things are easy, connections are more likely.

Directions like: Draw a **Lemniscate** would be really confusing to most, but if we said, draw an infinity symbol or horizontal figure eight, you would know exactly what I was talking about. The same goes with our profession and mentoring the new generation of educators.



Pick a partner!

Get your partner!

Get ready for one person to be the artist and the other to communicate what they see **WITHOUT SAYING:**

What the picture is... You can only describe to the artist using shapes and numbers

Ok artists... turn around... no peeking!!



Let's see your art!

How did that go? Was it challenging? What if you were able to have a more clear guideline or visual?

The point of this exercise is to know we all think differently and have specific needs. Communicating as a leader looks like this diagram. Sometimes we have to self-reflect on how we communicate with our team.

Habit Stacking- Atomic Habits- taking it one thing at a time

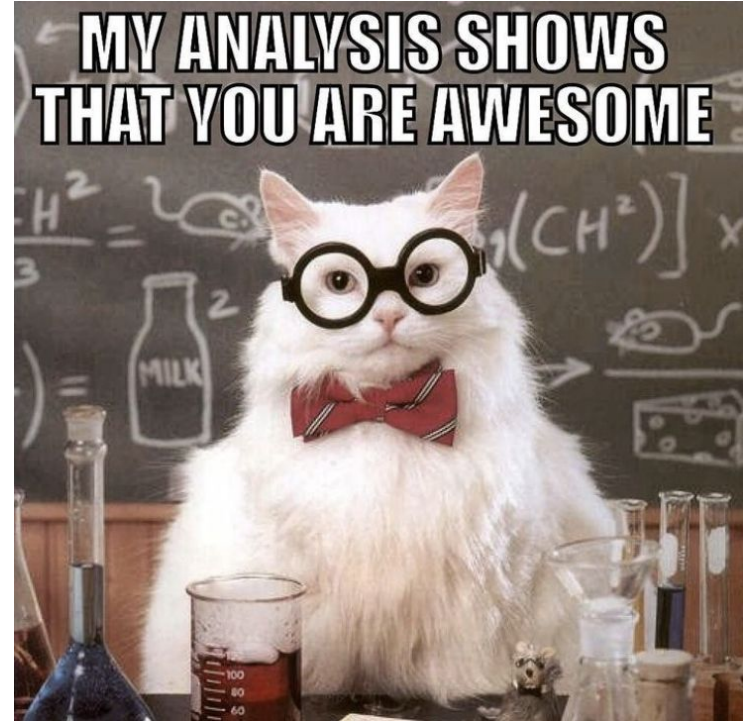


Connecting to Motivate

Food! I'll go to a meeting if there is food! Show appreciation with notes!

Feeling connected to the staff- Visit them in their classroom. MAKE TIME-

Block out time like you would with a meeting with a stakeholder. These are your most important stakeholders.



The Power of...

Take some time to ask this question:

“I **WONDER** what motivates my staff?”

Our principal plays games with all of our staff to bring connection

How can the power of “I **WONDER**” motivate us to dive deeper?

I **WONDER** if I gave my staff a survey to find out what they like or may be dissatisfied with?

Vulnerability means being honest- If your staff are dissatisfied with the amount of prep they receive or compensation, how can you rectify this with the staff and hours you have available?

Just because we see an area of growth needed in ourselves, doesn't mean we are forever that way. The power of **YET**

Westview Elementary School ...
Posted by Kerri Burchette Wortinger
Dec 21, 2023 · 🌐

Today our staff had a blast playing, “ Do you have a Santa Hat in your pocket?” Here are the lucky winners! Congratulations! ❤️🎅

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Give Stars to Westview Elementary School. [Edit](#)

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Vulnerability

Get in their rooms- Give them Feedback- if you don't know an answer, TELL THEM. Let them know you will get back with more information- research and be resourceful. Be a human.

Connecting your team by complimenting their strengths, especially if it highlights your weaknesses is a sign of strength

They will hear you when they do slip up if you have modeled for them how to receive criticism.

“We’re often afraid of being vulnerable, but vulnerability creates genuine connection.”

GABBY BERNSTEIN

Leading Difficult Conversations

1. Think of the hardest conversation you could have...
2. Ok, now you have to have it tomorrow

Feeling nervous yet? Conflict-debt can take a toll...but this is what you can do:

Leading Difficult Conversations

1. Putting it on the Calendar- gives everyone equal ground- not the heat of the moment (unless safety is concerned)
2. Ask questions during the conversation- write them down to understand where they were coming from- would they work better with a different schedule, are they going through a hard time? Do they need more accountability?
3. Listen- The conflict starts to dissolve. Maybe you will not resolve the conversation.

Leading Difficult Conversations

"I am trying to understand where you're coming from, can you tell me more about how your feeling about _____"

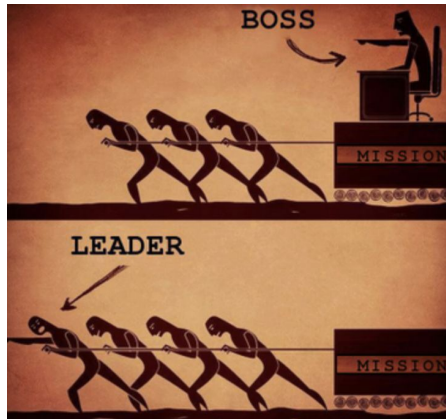
Then you have about a 25 minute window- If the conversation continues then stop to say, *"I want to pause here and thank you for allowing me to better understand you."* "Now, would you like to hear what I need to discuss?"

4. Silence: Conflict loves speed... embrace the silence. Remain calm- You may be surprised with the outcome

"People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel." -Maya Angelo

Knowledge is Power

Equip your staff with the skills necessary to perform
Have an orientation that can be easily edited (PowerPoint/Google Slides) and be specific to your program. This has been edited several times and staff have had many contributions over the years. Staff Surveys and Discussions have helped me modify my onboarding system. I look for this to continue. The mindset of growth is an open mind. Check out my preschool orientation slides from the QR code:



Building Equity while in Leadership

- Engage your staff in diversity training from outside resources (*Larksong*)
- Find out your own unconscious biases to have awareness (Leading is a big responsibility)
- Create a sense of belonging- all staff are heard- How do we ensure we are not just deferring to the majority for decision making?
- This is an area where many are vulnerable



Diversity in Leadership

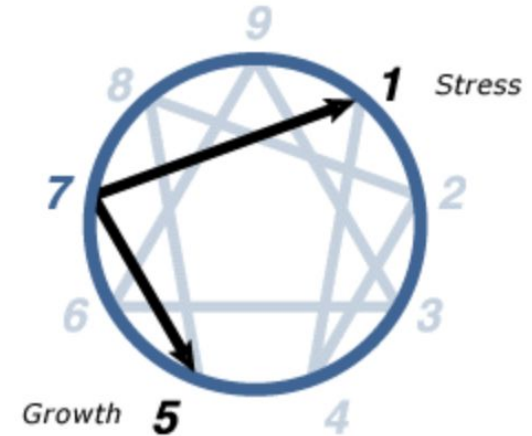
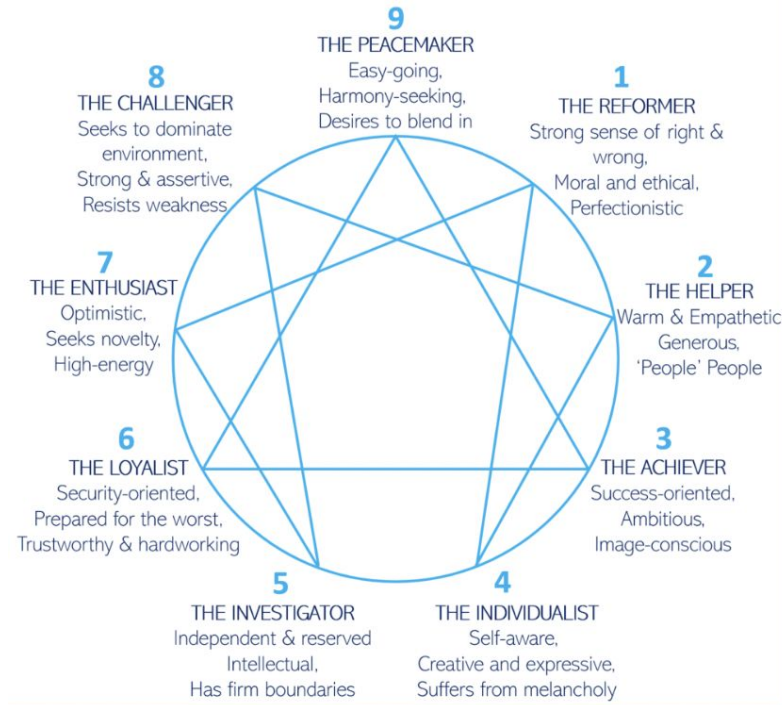
How can we use our differences to be stronger and have more quality?

- Consider the full scope of diversity
- This was profound in my Larksong training: *Close your eyes and imagine with me...*

Who did you see? How did you feel?

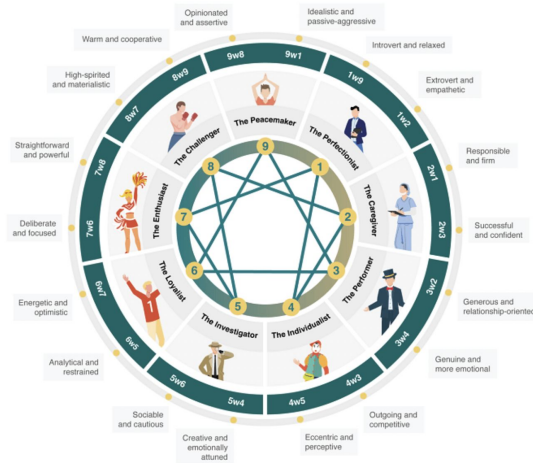
Enneagram to get to know your staff!

<https://www.truity.com/test/enneagram-personality-test>



Enneagram Continued

Knowing others helps you to not take things so personally and problem solve through the challenge. [Check this link out!](#)



We are all human and
deserve kindness

What questions can I help you with?

Any situations we can problem-solve or work through together?



Resources

Brown, B. (Year). *Dare to Lead: Brave Work. Tough Conversations. Whole Hearts*. Random House.

Clear, J. (Year). *Atomic Habits: An Easy & Proven Way to Build Good Habits & Break Bad Ones*. Publisher.

Cohen, A. *How to Lead a Difficult Conversation*.

Truity. (n.d.). Enneagram Personality Test. Truity.

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REL Consultants. (2021, September 17). Which Enneagram Types Get Along? REL Consultants.

<https://www.relconsultants.com/blog/2021/9/17/which-enneagram-types-get-along>

