Adaptive Leadership for Administrators

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What is Adaptive Leadership?

“Adaptive leadership is the practice of mobilizing people to tackle tough challenges and thrive” (p. 14).

Why Talk about Adaptive Leadership at SIDLIT?

Image from http://blogs.jccc.edu/c2c/sidlit/

Adaptive leadership is not an app, but it can be *applied* to the challenges you face!
Objectives

Upon completion of this session, you will be able to:

• Summarize the basic concepts of adaptive leadership
• Recognize adaptive challenges that arise in your work
• Begin to use adaptive leadership to bring about positive change
## What is an Adaptive Challenge?

### Technical
- Solution is known—has been used before
- Can be solved by a knowledgeable expert
- Head

### Adaptive
- Solution requires a change in people’s priorities, beliefs, habits
- Solutions must come from the people involved in the problem
- Heart

### Important notes:
- “Yesterday’s adaptations are today’s routines” (p. 49).
- “One way you know there is an adaptive challenge facing your organization or community is that the problem persists even after a series of attempted technical fixes” (p. 70).
What is an Adaptive Challenge?

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UwWyIIUlvmo
You See an Adaptive Challenge. Now What?

• Will you intervene?
• “Our work begins with the assumption that there is no reason to exercise leadership...unless you care about something deeply” (p. 3).
• Exercising leadership 5% more often would make a major difference in your professional life (p. 43).
• Practicing adaptive leadership is risky!
What are the Risks?

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NcRk8RBFeY
Reflection: Weighing the Risks

- In your professional role, what do you care deeply about?
- Think of an adaptive challenge you see in your role or organization.
- “What outcome would make the effort and the risk worthwhile?” (p. 3).
- Consider this: “If you want to exercise adaptive leadership more often than you have in the past, you will have to make some different choices from those you have made before” (p. 46). What might those choices be?
Diagnosis

“The single most important skill and most undervalued capacity for exercising adaptive leadership” (p. 7).

Observe
- Identify stakeholders
- Looking for larger patterns
- Consider company culture

Get on the balcony
Diagnosis

- Data collection
- Who among your stakeholders needs to do this work, and who needs to provide input as work progresses?
- Desired outcomes among stakeholders
- Develop comfort with ambiguity
- Develop multiple hypotheses
- Question the preferred interpretation
- Make your interpretation public
Recognize Losses

• “What people resist is not change, per se, but loss” (p. 22).
• Find out the kinds of losses at stake: jobs, relationships, status, relevance, loyalty, beliefs, money....others?
• What is essential to preserve?
• How will you put loss in context?
Action

• Experimental mindset
• A series of interventions—try something, assess, try something else
• Change along with the situation
• Accept your own losses—you cannot control the outcome!
• Stay in the productive zone
• Help people tolerate discomfort
• Keep the work front and center
Applying adaptive leadership to successful change initiatives in academia

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Activity Time!
References and Suggested Reading


Adaptive vs. Technical: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UwWyIlUlvmo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UwWyIlUlvmo)

Risky Leadership: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NcRk8RBFeY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NcRk8RBFeY)

TEDxStCharles - Marty Linsky - Adaptive Leadership-Leading Change: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=af-cSvnEExM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=af-cSvnEExM)