

If you keep on doing what you've done, you'll keep on getting what you've got: a time for courageous leadership in early years education

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“A leader is a dealer in hope”

Napoleon Bonaparte



## If only we could re-think leadership

When times are tough, leaders get positive.

Positive leadership can be known as authentic leadership.



## Unpacking leadership

- It can be argued that there is a paucity in research related to positive psychology and leadership.
- It has further been argued that despite thousands of empirical studies into leadership, there remains no common operational definition of leadership amongst scholars (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2003).
- For others, there is no doubt that leadership is a real phenomenon and indeed an important one worthy of further investigation given the perceived impact leadership may have on organisations and the people within them.



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It's time for some authenticity

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## The history of authenticity

- Greek philosophy – “To thine own self be true”
- 20<sup>th</sup> Century modernism – self-direction, trustworthiness, consistency
- Postmodernism – can authenticity ever exist in the current era of multiple selves
- Positive construct – genuine, reliable, trustworthy, real and veritable



Luthans and Avolio (2003) suggest that “positive psychologists conceive this authenticity as both owning one’s personal experiences (thoughts, emotions or beliefs – the real me inside) and acting in accord with the true self (behaving and expressing what you really think and believe).



## Positive leadership

Positive leadership is required in times, where the environment is dramatically changing, where the rules that have guided how we operate no longer work, and where the best leaders will be transparent with their intentions, having a seamless link between their espoused values, actions and behaviours.

Mischel (1973) referred to this as “weak context” since there are no clear set of guidelines, rules, or directions for action.



## Weak contexts

In weak contexts new rules are created to address the ambiguities and lack of clarity confronting a work unit, organisation, community or entire society.

In weak contexts, people are more vulnerable, as they are unsure what direction to pursue, and it is in these situations that the most profoundly positive and unfortunately negative leadership takes root (Conger, 1990, Luthans, Peterson and Ibrayeva, 1998).



## Authentic leadership and weak contexts

Without authentic leadership the rules that are created, by what Howell (1992) referred to as personalised charismatic leaders in weak situations, run the risk of being self-centered and destructive to the group and to others who may have benefited.

In fact history and until today, inauthentic leaders have taken advantage of crises for their own self gain e.g. Hitler, Stalin, Pol Pot, Saddam Hussein.

Get off the dance floor and onto the balcony





## Defining authentic leadership

“a process that draws from both positive psychological capacities and highly developed organisational contexts, which results in both greater self awareness and self regulated positive behaviours on the part of the leaders and associates, fostering positive self-development”.  
(Luthans and Aviola, p.243, 2003)



## Defining authentic leadership

Authentic leadership has been defined as being self-aware, genuine, optimistic, balanced in terms of decision making, and transparent in enacting leadership that energizes people, builds trust, and reinforces and develops the leaders' and followers' strengths and self-awareness (Avolio and Luthans)

More specifically Avolio and Luthans define authentic leaders as those “who are deeply aware of how they think and behave and are perceived by others as begin aware of their own and others values/moral perspective, knowledge and strengths”

## Authentic leaders are:

- Confident
- Hopeful
- Optimistic
- Resilient
- Transparent
- Courageous
- Moral/ethical
- Future orientated
- Gives priority to developing leadership in others.



Authentic leaders in all organisations must rise to the challenge to address unprecedented changes around them.

Instead of a negative, doom-and-gloom perspective of today's situation, authentic leaders must exhibit resiliency and be transparent and beyond reproach in their moral/ethical conduct and decision making.

You must “be the change you want to see” (Gandhi).



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## Lessons learnt from positive psychology

Positive psychology has recently emerged as a reaction to the preoccupation with what is wrong with people and their weaknesses instead of what is right with people and building on their strengths.



Historically human beings have been seen as ‘flawed and fragile, causalities of a cruel environment or bad genetics, and if not in denial at best in recovery.’ (Peterson and Seligman 2003)

There has been a cost to this emphasis including neglecting what could go right with people and often research and practice has little more to say about the good life.



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## Point in Fact

A recent search over the past thirty years found approximately 50,000 articles on depression but only 400 on joy (Meyer, 2000)



## Are We In Denial?

Hope and optimism have been dismissed as wishful thinking if not outright delusions

Ostensible altruism has been viewed as another strategy for personal gain

Courage has been reinterpreted as deficiencies in those parts of the nervous system responsible for fear



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Seligman suggests that positive psychology 'attempts to correct this imbalance and to challenge the pervasive assumptions about the disease model' (2003)



Positive psychology call for us to:

- Focus on strengths as much as weaknesses
- Have an interest in building the best things in life as much as in repairing the worst
- Attend to fulfilling the lives of healthy people as to healing the wounds of the distressed (Csikzentmihayli 2000).

This is not to deny the history of psychology as much as to say that psychology of the past 60 years is incomplete.



## Positive Psychology

Those of us interested in promoting human potential need to start with different assumptions and to pose different questions from our peers who assume a disease model.

The most basic assumption is that is that human goodness and excellence are as authentic as disease, disorder and distress.



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“it is about identifying and nurturing their strongest qualities, what they own and are best at, and helping them find niches in which they can best live out these strengths” (Seligmann and Csikszentmihayli).



## Application Into Practice

Positive psychology can be applied into three categories:

1. Positive subjective experiences (happiness, pleasure, gratification, fulfillment, well-being)
2. The study of individual traits (character, talents, interests, values)
3. The study of positive institutions



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# What Is Positive Organisational Scholarship

Positive organisational scholarship seeks to understand the dynamics within organisations that produce extraordinary outcomes both for organisations and for their individual members.

Positive organisational scholarship represents a new approach to understanding human dynamics and leadership.

Its aim and energy come from envisioning how organisations and the individuals within them function at their very best.

Is asks:

- How can organisations better foster the development of human strengths and virtues like resilience, integrity and compassion?
- How, in turn, can the enactment of these and other strengths and virtues change the nature of organisations for the better? (Fredrickson, 2003)



We all love a list – so here we go

## Authentic leaders:

1. Are guided by a set of end-values that represent an orientation toward doing what's right for the constituency. Central to this is the belief that everyone has something of value to contribute to their group. One of the challenges for authentic leaders is to identify these strengths and direct and build them ([viacharacter.org](http://viacharacter.org)).



We all love a list – so here we go

2. Try to operate with no gap between values and values in use/action. This requires a deepened understanding of core values, enabling leaders to project them with consistency to their followers or broader community.



We all love a list – so here we go

3. Remain cognizant of their own vulnerabilities and openly discuss them with associates, so the leader can be questioned to ensure that the direction he or she is heading in is the 'right' direction.



## We all love a list – so here we go

4. Lead from the front, going in advance of others when there is a risk in doing so. They model confidence, hope, optimism and resiliency, which inspire others to action. Such “walking the talk” has been shown to be much more effective in influencing others than coercing or persuading (Quinn, Spreitzer and Brown 2000).



We all love a list – so here we go

5. When asked about their role in leadership, authentic leaders view tasks being accomplished as having equal importance as developing leadership in others.



## We all love a list – so here we go

5. Have developed the moral capacity to judge issues and dilemmas that are characterized by “shades of grey”. They have the creditability to explore such dilemmas from all angles, and to seek alternative ways of approaching them without being perceived as disingenuous or shifting with popular opinions. They can shift their minds and be seen as acting with consistency with their end-values and therefore authentic.



## Confidence – a trait of authentic leadership

Confidence is defined as having self efficacy required to take on a challenge

Confidence is defined as “one’s belief about his or her ability to mobilize the motivation, cognitive resources and courses of action necessary to execute a specific task within a given context”



Bring on the hyphen

Working the hyphen

Work it baby work it

# Insecurity

# In-security



Bandura (1986) has been clearly been able to demonstrate that the more efficacious the individual

- The more likely the choice will be made to really get into the task and welcome the challenge
- The more effort and motivation will be given to successful accomplish the task
- The more persistence they will be when obstacles are encountered.



No more nasty Nancy's



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"Your beliefs become your thoughts. Your thoughts become your words. Your words become your actions. Your actions become your habits. Your habits become your values. Your values become your destiny".

(Mahatma Gandhi)



## Fear of failure

Most of us are prone to negative beliefs about ourselves at some time during our lives.

If we can identify them, then we have a greater chance of turning them into positive thoughts.

If we can change our thoughts and our beliefs then we can change our behaviour.



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In western society, we tend to treat our feelings as though they represent reality.

Feelings are real, but they are not reality.

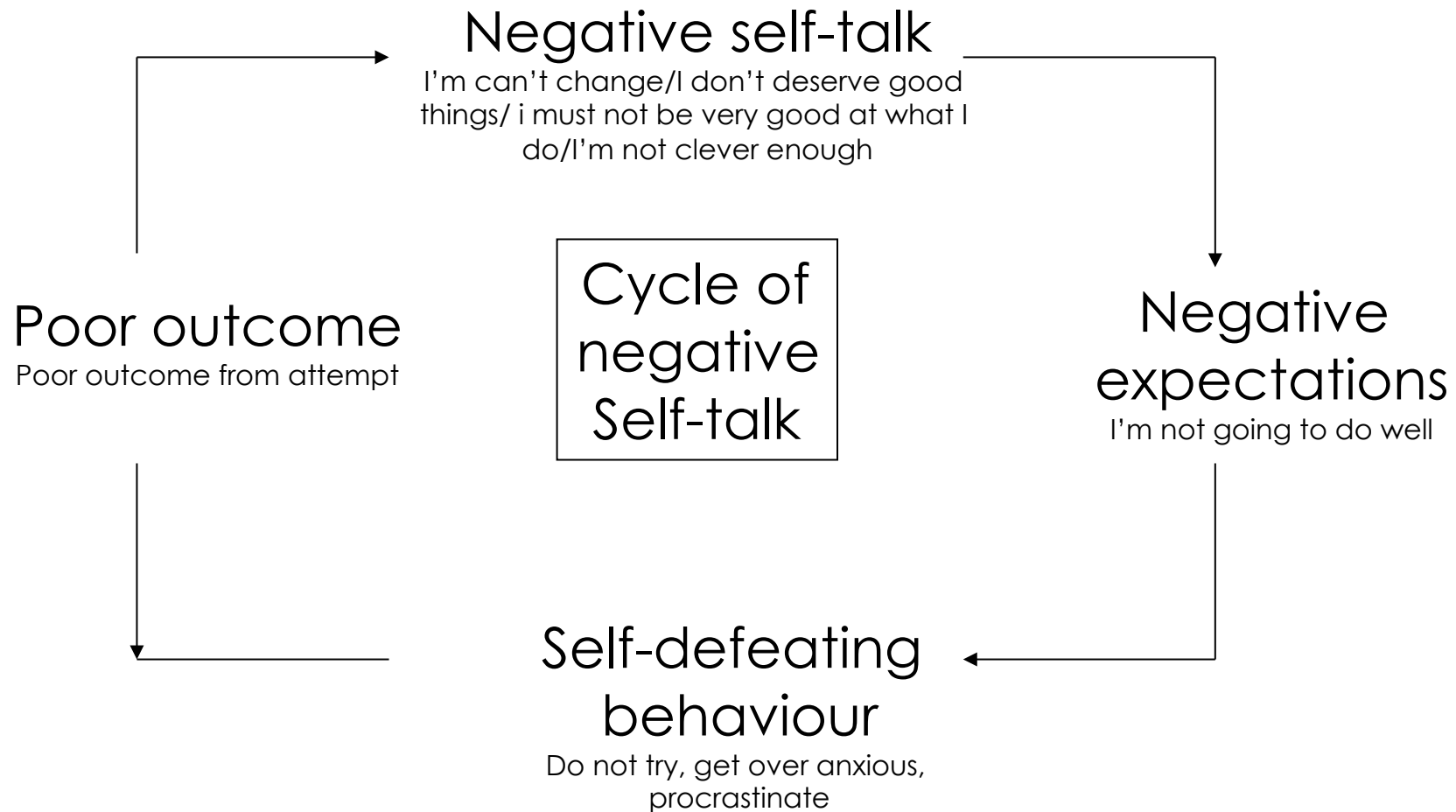
People may feel nervous about long journey. This does not mean that they shouldn't go, it just means they are feeling nervous.

There are powerful interactions between our thoughts, feelings and behaviours.

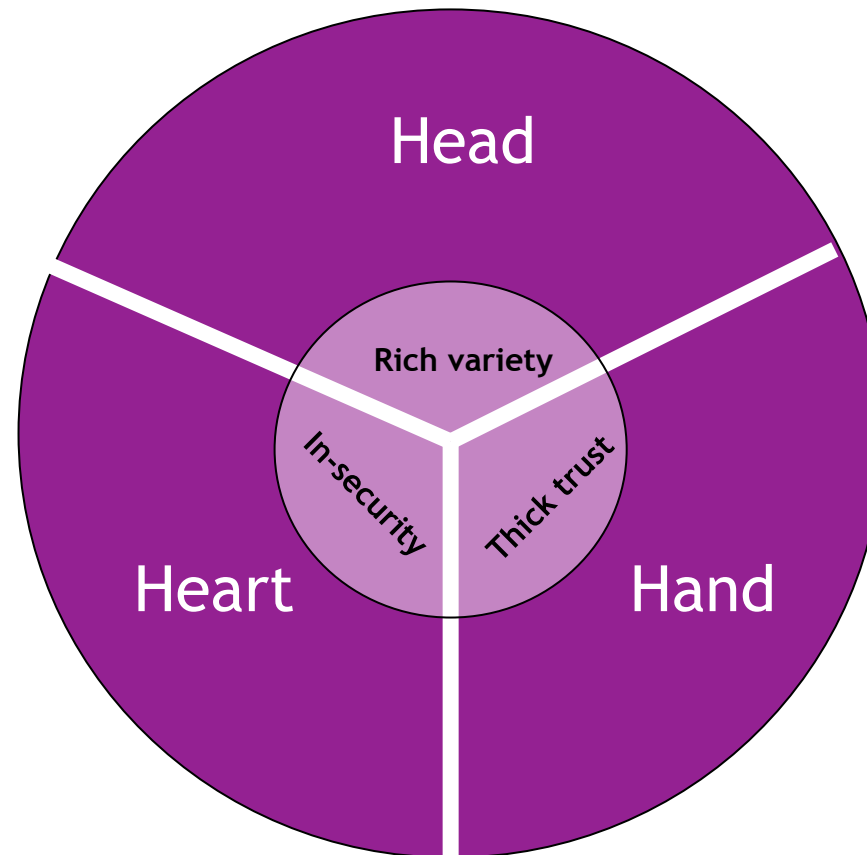


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# Barrier to change



# The head, heart and hand dimension



Cope, M (2003)



## The heart

This is the emotional epicenter that provides the inner strength and compass for leaders regulating the **desire** and **ability** to make choices about important things in our lives and giving us direction.

When both these aspects are effective, we can make tough choices with a clear sense of purpose.



## The head

This dimension provides wisdom and clarity of purpose that can regulate the excesses of an emotional heart.

The head function remains above our emotional needs and helps us formulate plans and make decisions relating to how we can lead ourselves and others.



## The hand

Once the heart has set the direction and the head has decided how to move forward, then we take action.

Effective leaders exhibit two core behaviours. (1) they are able to step out of the world they operate and (2) they can operate into the world of the people they want to lead.



# Personal leadership decisions

Once we understand the three drivers and their corresponding dimensions, we can make decisions on how to move forward productively.

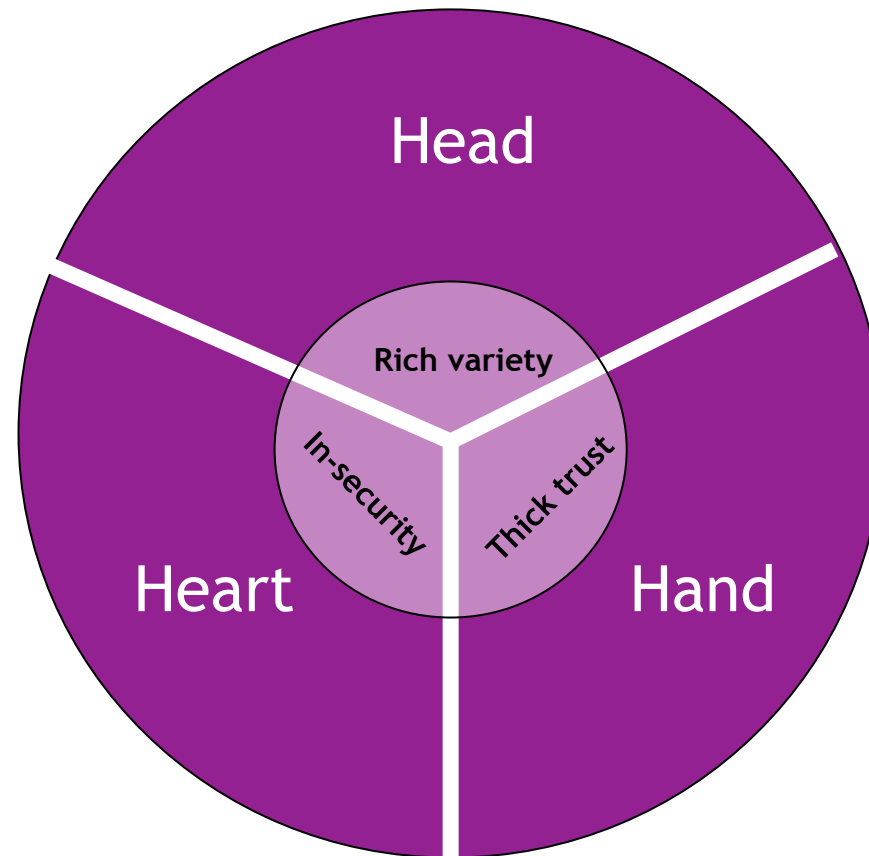
There are 6 core choices that can influence how we lead ourselves and others

1. Choose your choice (heart)
2. Know where you're going (heart)
3. Map your map (head)
4. Change how you change (head)
5. Step inside out (hand)
6. Share success (hand)



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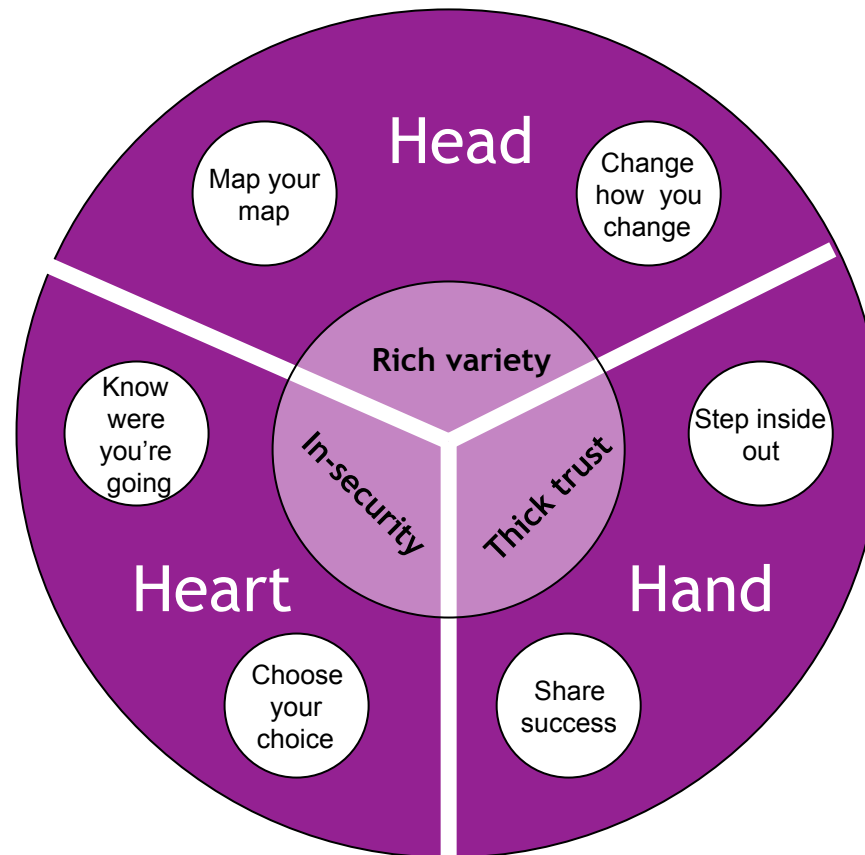
# The head, heart and hand dimension





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# The head, heart and hand dimension





Drivers	Dimensions	Decisions
<b>In-security</b> - ignore self - limiting inner voice	<b>Heart</b> - drives your direction and purpose	<b>Choose your choice</b> - before someone else does it for you  <b>Know where you're going</b> - so you can make the right decisions today
<b>Rich variety</b> - choose to see the world with more clarity and richness	<b>Head</b> - guides your journey and how you make it	<b>Map your map</b> - so you understand all the choices you're free to make  <b>Change how you change</b> - or you'll get what you always got
<b>Thick trust</b> - building long term sustainable relationships based on confidence, conviction and choice	<b>Hand</b> - helps you work in partnership with others	<b>Step inside out</b> - and see the world the way others see it  <b>Share success</b> - so it becomes sustainable: the only kind worth having



# Hope

Hope is defined as “a positive motivational state that is based on an interactivity derived sense of success (1) agency (goal-directed energy) and (2) pathways (planning to meet goals) (Snyder, Irving and Anderson 1991)

Hope remains an understudied area of research which can have a positive impact on authentic leadership. Think Nelson Mandela, Joan of Arc.



# Optimism

Optimism draws from attribution theory in defining optimism as a cognitive process involving positive outcome expectancies and casual attributions that are external, stable and global for good and positive outcomes. (Seligman 1998).

Optimists are easily motivated to work harder, are more satisfied, have higher morale, persevere in the face of obstacles and difficulties, analyze personal failures and setback temporarily and view them as a one time unique circumstance.

## Turning ANT's into PET's

ANT's – Automatic negative thoughts

PET's – Performance enhancing thoughts



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# Resiliency

Resiliency is defined as the ability or capacity to rebound or bounce back from adversity, uncertainty, conflict, failure or even positive change, progress and increased responsibility (Huey and Weisz, 1997)

At first resiliency was portrayed as a rare gift that only a few people possessed, similarly to the way charisma was isolated to the leadership literature.

Resiliency is recognized to come from what Masten (2001) calls “the everyday magic of ordinary, normative human resources”.



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## Resiliency and leadership

- A deep belief, often out buttressed by strongly held values, that life is meaningful
- An uncanny ability to improvise and adapt to significant change
- A staunch acceptance of reality (Coutu, 2002)



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# Courage

“Courage.

What makes a King out of a slave? Courage

What makes the flag on the mast to wave? Courage

What makes the elephant charge his tusk in the misty mist or the dusky dusk?

What makes the muskrat guard his musk? Courage

What makes the Sphinx the 7th Wonder? Courage

What makes the dawn come up like thunger? Courage

What makes the Hottentot so hot?

What puts the "ape" in ape-ricot?

Whatta they got that I ain't got?

Dorothy & Friends: Courage!

Cowardly Lion: You can say that again.” (Fleming, 1940)



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Courage, Brown (2007) argues is evidenced when individuals act in the face of adversity, take a stand when confronted with disapproval and make sacrifices that are noble and worthwhile.

It is acts of courage which Gordon Brown believes dignifies all humanity, as individuals through their actions express strength of character and strength in belief.



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“If the test of tolerance is when you are in the majority,  
the test of courage is when you are in the minority” -  
Dietrich Bonhoeffer,



Daniel Putman (1997) suggests that courage as a virtue exhibits different forms in life and as such two types of courage can be broadly differentiated: first, courage as an act of facing one's fears, and second, courage as a vehicle of goal attainment.

Courage as a virtue of human existence is also evident in the positive psychology literature (Seligman, 2002). As a virtue, the positive psychology movement suggests that courage can be exhibited through a number of signature strengths including bravery, persistence, integrity and vitality.



Research would also point to the fact that the act of courage does not exist only in adult life. In fact, Szagun (1992) found that children as young as 5 years could equate courage with object task difficulty and demonstrate courage through the act of being fearless.

For example, 5-year-old children demonstrated the belief that physical risks such as climbing a piece of play equipment that is deemed to be more difficult and requiring skills beyond their current capability as being courageous.



In most communities, courage is often linked with acts of civic bravery; for example, the actions of an individual who risks their own life to save the life of a child from a house fire.

Likewise, courage is often constructed through a lens of warfare; for example, soldiers fighting in the battlefields.

What does courageous leadership in early years education look like?



Courage is typically associated with danger. Individuals are usually described as being courageous following an act of bravery, by overcoming danger or fear. In this sense, conceptualising courage in early childhood settings is both easy and difficult.

Given that early childhood work involves young children, protecting children from harm is an essential taken for granted aspect of our work as early childhood educators. This is the easy bit – fighting to ensure children’s safety. However, the extent to which working with children is considered ‘dangerous’ is highly contestable, and is worthy of a fuller discussion.



The challenges of defining ourselves as teachers of young children are both complex and contextual.

Rockel (2009) for instance, reflects on the importance of reconceptualising early childhood professional identities within an educational framework that embraces a pedagogy of care.

- What skills do early childhood leaders require in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century?
- What does courage look like in early childhood contexts?
- Can courage be learnt or is one born with it?
- What are the greatest challenges facing early childhood leaders and can an act of courage assist in resolving these issues? (Semann & Waniganayake, 2010)



## The role of wishing

In the recent positive psychology daily Sean Doyle wrote

'Wishes touch on so many aspects of positive psychology. They play a role in appreciative inquiry, hope, resilience, savoring, purpose and goal setting just to name a few. That is because wishes tell us something about what it means to be human. They frame for us our vision of what is important – both those things that are “big I” Important that give us meaning and purpose, as well as the little pleasures and comforts that ease and aide us in our enjoyment of life. Wishes help us define a vision of what is possible and show us what life could be.'



While they are not the same thing as hope, our wishes have a hand in the motivation, passion and clear goals that make our hopes possible. When times are hard, sometimes wishes offer the comfort we need.

Of course, we are not always good at guessing what we want, or what will make us happy. As a result, sometimes we wish for the “wrong” things. But this too says something about who we are, and what it means to be human as we go about stammering and stumbling through life. Ultimately our wishes connect us to one another. No matter where you are from, or where you are going, when we hear the wishes of others, so often we realize that we are not alone in our dreams.'



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On April 12, 2007, I asked 63 first graders at JY Joyner Elementary in Raleigh, NC, if they had one wish for the world, their families, or themselves, what would it be?

This is what they said.



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# Transforming Organisations and People

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