At the Heart of Leadership

Choose:

My short-term goal was an open dialogue, so stopped myself from reacting right away. When I considered my feelings more closely I realized that my hurt was a signal that we were touching on something important to me, and I had a lot of options including: be defensive, back off, challenge my own assumptions, experiment, express my concern, or treat this as an adventure.

Give:

When I considered the other people's feelings, I realized they were concerned about the organization and there was no personal attack. Then I thought about our shared purpose and realized that the new idea would get us much further and I jumped on board.

In the rest of the book I will give illustrations showing how the three pursuits and eight competencies work in different aspects of leadership. But before you read more, I'd like you to test out the model and prove to yourself that this approach can really make a difference.

Exercise for Putting it in Practice

Think of a decision you have to make, or a situation you are facing right now in your work or life. Something where you could really use your full wisdom. Perhaps you have a challenge with a colleague, a new initiative you are developing, a major organizational or life change, or a similar significant opportunity? This
exercise works with any decision, so it does not need to be monumental— in fact, it may be easier to start practicing with an important-but-not-critical situation.

In 30 seconds, note down the situation in a few bullet points.

Now apply the model.

1. **Know Yourself: What are you feeling?**

You always have more than one feeling, but it can be hard to identify. It may help you to focus on the situation, then notice your own body’s reaction— where are you tense? How does your stomach feel, etc. Now write down some feelings. To help you, on the next page there is a list of basic emotions and some of the less and more extreme feelings that go with the emotion.

What are your feelings about the situation? (It is helpful to identify 2–3; sometimes feelings are paradoxical).
Each emotion has a wide range of variation / intensity:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emotion</th>
<th>Low Intensity</th>
<th>High Intensity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anger</td>
<td>annoyance</td>
<td>rage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anticipation</td>
<td>interest</td>
<td>vigilance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joy</td>
<td>serenity</td>
<td>ecstasy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>acceptance</td>
<td>adoration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear</td>
<td>concern</td>
<td>terror</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surprise</td>
<td>distraction</td>
<td>amazement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sadness</td>
<td>pensiveness</td>
<td>grief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disgust</td>
<td>boredom</td>
<td>loathing</td>
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</table>

There are many different theories about emotions and lists of the “basic” emotions. This model comes from a researcher named Robert Plutchik who focused on the physiological aspects of emotion (how they work in the body). More detail on his model and emotions is in chapter five.
2. Choose Yourself: What are your options?

It can be very difficult to find options when you are in reaction (for example, when you are fighting or distressed). Using your skills at Consequential Thinking, Navigating Emotions, Intrinsic Motivation, and Optimism, you can identify three or more choices of what you could think, feel, and do. Consider what you want to achieve in the short term, decide what results you’d like to get right now.

If you find it challenging to identify multiple options, try changing your mood by watching a funny television show, talking to a good friend, or having a walk. Often we get stuck in “this is the only way” when we’re stressed, frustrated, afraid, hurt, etc. Breaking the cycle of escalation (see chapter six) lets you step out of reaction and innovate.

Get out of reaction and then identify three or more options:
3. **Give Yourself: What is the empathic and principled choice?**

Empathy is an emotional response to others’ emotions. What are the other people involved thinking and feeling? If you let yourself be open and a little vulnerable, what do you feel in response? Empathy is basically non-analytical, it’s an openness to another’s experience and perspective. Being empathic does not mean your choice should make everything feel nice for others, it just means that you are experiencing the feelings and are taking those into account. The reason empathy is part of “Give Yourself” is that it is only when you really put yourself in a kind of Servant Leader mode – when you give of yourself – that you can open yourself to another’s feelings. In so doing, you gain tremendous insight and influence – but if you do it for selfish reasons, you don’t get the benefit. If you accept that person is doing the best they can, and set your intention to support her or him, and you truly give yourself to the person, you will gain deep understanding.

Now, reflect on your own abiding sense of purpose. Why are you in this world? What is your legacy? We will explore this more in chapter seven, and you will see why this is the hallmark of an exceptional leader. Which of your options sustains your Noble Goal and supports the other people in the situation to be and do their best as well?
Which option is most empathic and aligned with your purpose?

What conclusion did you come to?

Did reflecting on the situation through these three steps help you find clarity?

Now that you’ve gone through these steps, can you better communicate your decision with strength and compassion?

End of Excerpt
Joseph Bower and Lynn Paine examine the agency-based model’s foundations and flaws and its implications for companies before proposing an alternative model that would have at its core the health of the enterprise rather than near-term returns to its shareholders. Their model would refocus companies’ attention to innovation, strategic renewal, and investment in the future.

Abstract. Agency theory, a new model of governance promulgated by academic economists in the 1970s, is behind the idea that corporate managers should make shareholder value their primary concern and that boards should ensure they do. The theory regards