

Contemporary Perspectives on Leadership: Focus and Meaning for Ambiguous Times

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Leadership development

by
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Introduction

Almost every large organisation offers some programs or activities that are intended to facilitate leadership development—formal training, business simulations, multi-source feedback, mentoring, executive coaching, action learning or assessment centres (Yukl 2006). Indeed, in the United States alone, leadership development represents a multibillion dollar industry (Fulmer & Vicere 1996). These programs are intended to cultivate the inclinations that epitomise exemplary leaders—namely,

- the tendency to act ethically, cooperatively and consistently (e.g. Avolio & Gardner 2005; Barbuto Jr & Wheeler 2006; Brown & Treviño, 2006),
- the capacity to persuade and to inspire followers (Bass & Avolio 1994),
- the ability to remain composed during stressful and dynamic conditions and
- the capability to uncover creative solutions and to reach effective decisions (Jaussi & Dionne 2003).

This chapter, however, demonstrates that many leadership development programs fail to cultivate these qualities. Although many studies have established the efficacy of these initiatives, a variety of issues (such as biases in the selection of participants) might compromise the legitimacy of this research. Instead, this chapter shows that many of the properties that characterise leadership development programs—the communication of explicit principles, the appeal to develop resilience, the tendency of participants to monitor or justify their behaviour, and the provision of critical feedback—all conspire to impede, not foster, the development of desirable leadership qualities.

Extension memory

After highlighting this complication, the chapter introduces a suite of practices that can circumvent the various impediments to development. In particular, it shows that activation of *extension memory*—a circuit in the right hemisphere that underpins a network of schemas—is likely to expedite and optimise leadership development. This circuit is more frequently activated in individuals who can regulate their affective states

effortlessly and expeditiously. A variety of exercises, practices and tactics can facilitate this capacity to regulate affect, ultimately cultivating the skills and qualities that epitomise excellent leaders.

Limitations of past studies on leadership development

Despite the ubiquity of leadership development programs, their efficacy remains controversial. Certainly, many studies have underscored the benefits of development activities such as

- formal training programs (e.g. Bass 1990),
- behavioural role modelling (e.g. Latham 1989),
- business games (e.g. Keys & Wolfe 1990),
- developmental assignments (e.g. Valerio 1990) and
- executive coaching (Olivero, Bane & Kopelman 1990).

Nevertheless, several factors limit the import of these observations.

Transient benefits

In particular, the benefits of some leadership development activities might be transient. Outdoor challenge programs, for instance, in which participants engage in challenging physical activities such as climbing a pole and then jumping to a trapeze, are designed to foster trust and personal growth (e.g. Conger 1992). Participants are usually cognizant of this explicit objective and, as a consequence, might suppress any feelings of distrust or suspicion they experience. Suppressed thoughts tend to be inhibited initially, thus promoting trust, but re-emerge subsequently (e.g. Wegner 1989, 1994). Consistent with this premise, Baldwin, Wagner & Roland (1991; cited in Yukl 2006) showed that participants were not significantly more trusting three months after an outdoor challenge program than individuals who did not engage in the activity.

Selection biases

Furthermore, the putative benefits of leadership development activities can, at least in some contexts, be ascribed to selection biases. For example, studies indicate that individuals who have engaged in developmental activities (such as job rotations) demonstrate more advanced levels of managerial acumen (e.g. Campion, Cheraskin & Stevens 1994). Nevertheless, in practice, usually only the individuals who have already acquired some of these managerial skills are encouraged to participate in these programs (Yukl 2006). This selection bias, rather than the program itself, might explain the putative benefits of these activities.

Organisational context, culture and climate

Likewise, the context, culture, and climate of the organisation partly determine both the accessibility of developmental activities (such as mentoring) and the behaviour of managers. A thriving, supportive and progressive organisation, for example, might facilitate the formation of mentoring relationships as well as expedite the acquisition of leadership skills (*cf.* Chan & Drasgow 2001; Peel 2006). Any observed association between

the prevalence of mentoring relationships and leadership capability could, therefore, be ascribed to variations in workplace culture across organisations.

Mechanisms not defined

Finally, the mechanisms that explain the benefits of developmental activities (e.g. formal training, mentoring and executive coaching) have not been characterised or assessed definitively (Yukl 2006). Some activities, for example, might merely clarify the overt behaviours or attitudes that are perceived as exemplary, enabling leaders to emulate these actions without necessarily improving key outcomes.

Qualities that characterise the consummate leader

Consensus has yet to be reached on the traits, behaviours and practices that epitomise the exemplary leader. Nevertheless, a few core principles permeate the vast majority of extant theories on leadership.

- First, the behaviours and practices of consummate leaders tend to align with their core values—a set of priorities that endure across time rather than fluctuate erratically (e.g. Avolio & Gardner 2005; Bono & Judge 2003; Brown & Treviño 2006).
- Second, these values tend to encourage pro-social behaviour, in which exemplary leaders experience a compelling and authentic motivation to assist other individuals and to act cooperatively (Barbutto Jr. & Wheeler 2006; Greenleaf 1996).
- Third, these leaders can inspire other individuals, including subordinates, peers and even superiors, to enact behaviours that reflect these values (Bass & Avolio 1994; Yukl & Falbe 1990).
- Fourth, consummate leaders are resilient, remaining composed when obstacles to the pursuit of these values transpire. They are able to shield followers from the stress of these demands (Conger & Kanungo 1987).
- Fifth, the finest leaders formulate, promulgate and implement creative solutions to circumvent, redress or accommodate these obstacles (Bass & Avolio 1994; Jaussi & Dionne 2003).
- Finally, exemplary leaders can reach suitable decisions (see Vroom & Yetton 1973). They can decide which courses of action will most likely achieve personal and collective goals.

Developing leadership qualities

Impediments

Many complications arise, however, when coaches, mentors, instructors, supervisors or colleagues encourage leaders to cultivate these inclinations. In particular, some leaders enact behaviours that violate their core values (see Avolio & Gardner 2005). Two factors tend to amplify the incidence of these behaviours.

Anxiety and the demands of others

First, when leaders feel anxious or agitated rather than calm and composed, the immediate demands of other individuals (such as executives, customers or peers) tend to dictate their behaviour (Baumann & Kuhl, 2005a). As self determination theory implies, these leaders do not feel an urge to comply with their core, intrinsic values (Deci & Ryan 1985, 1995).

Self esteem and deviation from core values

Second, when leaders feel dejected and resigned rather than cheerful or confident, cognitive systems that are designed to formulate future plans and intentions are activated (Goschke & Kuhl 1993; Kuhl 2000). These systems tend to inhibit the intuitive inclinations of individuals—inclinations that tend to manifest intrinsic values (Kuhl 2000). As a consequence, when dejected, the behaviour of individuals often diverges from their core priorities.

Attempts to redress this shortfall can amplify rather than ameliorate the tendency of some leaders to deviate from their core values. Indeed, six prevalent practices magnify this issue. First, if leaders do not comply with their core values, directives from coaches, mentors, instructors or anyone else to redress this tendency can underscore the discrepancy. They become more cognizant of their conflicting motivations—the need to fulfil immediate demands and the urge to pursue their values—and this conflict, when salient, can magnify their anxiety (Deci & Ryan 1985, 1995; Higgins, 1987, 1999). They become more aware that they have not fulfilled their aspirations, and the salience of this discrepancy merely amplifies dejection (Higgins, 1987). The ensuing anxiety and dejection may further reduce the likelihood that these individuals will pursue their core values (Kuhl 2000).

Second, many leaders do not behave pro-socially or act cooperatively, refusing to sacrifice their own immediate interests to assist or support other individuals (e.g. Choi & Mair-Dalton 1998). If their coaches, mentors or instructors underscore this failure to act cooperatively, these leaders tend to experience anxiety and agitation. In particular, the feedback implies that the individuals have not fulfilled the norms and standards of their organisation (Tajfel 1982). As a consequence, their sense of identity with the organisation dissipates, provoking feelings of insecurity and eliciting defence mechanisms such as a tendency to inflate their self esteem in order to compensate (Hart, Shaver & Goldenberg 2005).

When individuals attempt to boost their self esteem they often overrate the importance of their roles and activities. As a consequence, they feel that more resources should be devoted to these roles or functions (Jetten, Spears & Manstead 1997). Because they withhold resources from other functions, departments or individuals, their behaviour is perceived as egocentric, rather than altruistic.

Inability to inspire others

Third, some leaders cannot readily inspire anyone else to espouse their values. Again, coaching, training or developmental programs that are intended to redress this deficiency often exacerbate rather than solve this inability. Coaches and instructors often impart rules and principles they feel that leaders should follow, rules like 'Always summarise

your arguments at the end’, to become more persuasive and inspirational. When individuals follow rules rather than invoke their intuition they become less flexible (Hayes, Brownstein, Zettle, Rosenfarb & Korn 1986). They cannot readily adjust their behaviour, either sensitively or appropriately, to accommodate the unique needs, concerns and preferences of other individuals (Hayes, Strosahl & Wilson 1999). Because the unique characteristics of other individuals are, in effect, disregarded, these leaders are not perceived as compelling or influential.

Curbing fragility and cultivating resilience

Fourth, some leaders are fragile, irritable or volatile, unable to remain composed when demands rise or problems arise (Kernis, Greenier, Herlocker, Whisenhunt & Abend 1997). If leaders are encouraged to curb this fragility and to cultivate resilience, they often become more agitated, sensitive and vulnerable. That is, to curb fragility and irritability, individuals become more vigilant, continually monitoring their affective and cognitive states to detect and then eradicate unpleasant emotions (Wegner 1994). This vigilance, however, tends to amplify the salience of these undesirable affective states (Wegner & Erber 1992). Once individuals are distracted, their capacity to eradicate unpleasant emotions dissipates and these affective states become more likely to penetrate consciousness (Wegner 1994).

The imperative to demonstrate creativity

Fifth, some leaders seldom, if ever, propose novel, fresh or creative solutions to resolve ongoing, intractable problems. Their suggestions tend to be banal and conventional rather than original and effective. The imperative to demonstrate creativity and facilitate innovation, however, tends to stifle originality. Individuals become more inclined to monitor and evaluate their thoughts. This self-conscious state, coupled with feelings of accountability (Shalley, Gilson, & Blum 2000), tends to thwart originality, increasing the likelihood that individuals merely apply schemas they have practised extensively to solve imminent difficulties (Silvia & Phillips 2004).

Justifying decisions

Finally, many leaders reach unsuitable decisions—decisions that do not initiate the intended consequences but evoke regret and disappointment. When these limitations are highlighted, perhaps during the process of a multi-source feedback process (e.g. London & Smither 1995), many of these leaders will feel the urge to demonstrate improvement in the future. They are, as a consequence, likely to become especially inclined to justify each of their decisions, highlighting the rationale, logic and considerations that underpinned their final judgment. Because of the impending need to justify their decisions, logically rationally and systematically, individuals will become reticent to invoke their intuition. That is, they will tend to reflect on observable, logical and rational considerations to reach decisions, disregarding intuitive feelings or global evaluations (*cf.* Van den Berga, Mansteda van der Pligta & Wigboldus 2006).

Paradoxically, however, these intuitive feelings or global evaluations can optimise decisions, at least in specific contexts (Dijksterhuis 2004). In particular, when the decision is complex—and the alternative courses of action vary on many undefined or unpredictable attributes—this reliance on intuition tends to optimise satisfaction and

performance (Dijksterhuis & Nordgren 2006). A systematic analysis of the alternatives, in which the merits and complications of each option are considered in sequence, neglects the extensive network of insight and experience that intuition affords (Dijksterhuis & Nordgren 2006). Many key implications are disregarded and the issues that are considered are not weighted optimally.

Opportunities

Attempts to cultivate key leadership qualities such as

- the inclination or capacity to fulfil their values,
- act cooperatively,
- demonstrate flexibility,
- withstand difficulties,
- propose creative solutions, and
- reach suitable decisions

can often impair rather than enhance these attributes.

Extension memory

Recently, extensions to traditional models (e.g. Kuhl 2000), such as cognitive-experiential theory (Epstein, 1990) and self determination theory (Deci & Ryan 1985, 1995), have uncovered psychological states, neural circuits and cognitive systems that underpin these attributes. Intriguingly, all these leadership qualities seem to reflect the same extensive cognitive system – a system that is sometimes referred to as *extension memory* (Baumann & Kuhl 2003; Kuhl 2000). Activation of this cognitive system, therefore, should confer in individuals many of the attributes of exemplary leaders.

According to personality system interaction theory (Kuhl 2000), extension memory is activated when individuals experience positive affective states: composure, happiness and confidence rather than anxiety, dejection or doubt (Baumann & Kuhl 2002). This cognitive system entails a vast network of schemas, each representing a set of physical features and psychological states that tend to coincide with each other, corresponding to a recurring context such as greeting a friend (Bartlett 1932). That is, over time, in each context, individuals learn the behaviours that optimise wellbeing or progress both now and in the future. The schema activates the inclination to engage in these behaviours (see Kazen, Baumann & Kuhl 2003).

Fulfilment of core values

When extension memory is activated, a weighted amalgam of these schemas governs the decisions and thus the behaviour of individuals (Baumann & Kuhl 2003). The weights depend on the relevance of each schema to the immediate context (for possible mechanisms, see Rumelhart, McClelland & the PDP Research Group 1986). The amalgam of these schemas, therefore, represents the behaviours that individuals tend to enact in related contexts, thereby effectively representing their prevailing inclinations or core values (Kuhl 2000). This system, when activated, thus motivates individuals to enact

behaviours that align with their core values—a key attribute of exemplary leaders (Baumann, Kuhl, & Kazén 2005).

Acting cooperatively

Second, extension memory should incite cooperative behaviour. To demonstrate, feelings of agitation or anxiety imply that some threat or hazard is imminent (Sanna, Meier & Wegner 2001). These affective states inhibit extension memory and instead activate another cognitive system, called *object recognition*, which comprises a subset of schemas, all intended to overcome, evade, or thwart these impending difficulties (Baumann & Kuhl 2005a). In contrast to the schemas that underpin extension memory, the schemas that underpin object recognition merely direct attention to urgent concerns, often inciting behaviours that redress immediate shortfalls, sometimes to the detriment of future goals (Baumann & Kuhl 2005a). Therefore, events that curb anxiety and activate extension memory should encourage individuals to engage in some acts that attract benefits only in the future—acts such as cooperation (*cf.* Krebs & Denton 2005). Extension memory, therefore, should foster cooperative rather than competitive behaviour.

Demonstrating flexibility

Third, extension memory should promote flexibility, enabling leaders to decipher and accommodate the shifting and subtle needs of other individuals. Specifically, when individuals feel dejected, extension memory is inhibited and another system, which formulated plans and intentions, is activated instead (Kuhl 2000). This system, called *intention memory*, formulates plans that are applicable even if unexpected contingencies transpire (Goschke & Kuhl 1993). As a consequence, these intentions do not include specific sensory or perceptual features but instead entail abstract concepts such as logical operations or verbal codes (Kuhl 2000). These intentions, in essence, represent a series of abstract rules such as ‘If a person is angry, act politely’, which govern behaviour. Because abstract codes exclude subtle sensory or perceptual information, behaviour that is governed by rules tends to be inflexible and insensitive to subtle variations in the environment. In contrast, these variations affect the activation of schemas that underpin extension memory. This system is therefore more attuned to these variations.

Withstanding difficulties

Fourth, access to extension memory has been shown to foster resilience (see Koole & Coenen 2008). That is, according to the self relaxation hypothesis, activities or events that activate extension memory will also alleviate anxiety and agitation (Kuhl 2000). That is, the schemas that underpin extension memory tend to be associated with a sense of agency, autonomy and control, which curbs negative affective states (Koole & Coenen 2008).

Proposing creative solutions

Fifth, several studies have confirmed that extension memory also enhances the capacity to identify remote associates—concepts that are only oblique to a specific thought or issue—and this capacity underpins creativity (Baumann & Kuhl 2002). For example, factors that putatively facilitate access to extension memory, such as positive mood states (Baumann & Kuhl 2005b), enhance performance on the remote associative task in which individuals need to decide intuitively whether or not a triplet of words all relate to a common term.

Optimising decision making

Sixth, extension memory should optimise decisions, at least when the alternative courses of action vary on many undefined or unpredictable factors. When extension memory is activated, intuitive, global impressions rather than systematic, analytical processes govern the decisions that individuals reach (Bolte, Goschke, & Kuhl 2003). A plethora of studies have shown that such intuitive processes are more likely than rational operations to optimise decisions, ultimately improving satisfaction, when the issue is sufficiently complex (e.g. Dijksterhuis & van Olden 2006).

Regulation of negative affect

Personal agency

In short, to cultivate many of the qualities that epitomise exemplary leaders, individuals need to develop their capacity to access their extension memory—a vast reservoir of schemas that guide behaviour intuitively. Many studies have shown the capacity to alleviate negative affective states such as fear and anxiety—sometimes called *disengagement* or *action orientation* (Kuhl 1981; Kuhl & Goschke 1994)—underpins this capacity. That is, in some individuals, these negative affective states dissipate rapidly, often without conscious intervention (Jostmann, Koole van der Wulp & Fockenberg 2006). As a consequence, even when some threat is imminent, feelings of anxiety or agitation subside almost immediately, enabling individuals to access their extension memory (Kuhl 2000).

Self esteem

Leaders must, therefore, acquire the skills, accumulate the resources, undertake the activities, form the beliefs and cultivate the conditions that foster the capacity to regulate these negative affective states. The tripartite model expounded by Hart *et al.* (2005) characterises three systems or mechanisms that afford a sense of security and thus ameliorate anxiety and agitation, often effortlessly and unconsciously. The first mechanism, designated as the self esteem system, represents a sense of personal agency. That is, if this mechanism is activated, individuals will feel composed and robust rather than vulnerable or exposed if they believe or intuit that they can resolve any threats or hazards that transpire.

Stability v instability of self esteem

Hart *et al.* (2005) did not demarcate this concept of personal agency definitively or precisely. Nevertheless, one key facet of the concept—the stability of coherence of personal agency—is, arguably, one of the key determinants of emotional regulation. Specifically, in some individuals, self esteem, which reflects both a personal sense of agency as well as the belief or intuition that they are liked and trusted (e.g. Kirkpatrick, Waugh, Valencia & Webster 2002; Leary, Cottrell & Phillips 2001), wavers erratically and appreciably over time (Kernis 2005). In other individuals, self esteem remains relatively uniform (Kernis, Paradise, Whitaker, Wheatman & Goldman 2000). When self esteem in general, or personal agency in particular, remains stable, individuals seem more resilient

to threats, and negative affective states tend to abate rapidly (e.g. Greenier, Kernis, Whisenhunt, Waschull, Berry, Herlocker & Abend 1999).

Stable self esteem

According to Zeigler-Hill and Showers (2007), self esteem and mood are typically stable rather than volatile when cognitive representations of personal characteristics, attributes and limitations are integrated rather than fragmented. That is, some individuals experience moderate feelings of agency, competence and power coupled with modest levels of doubt, ineptitude or fragility in virtually all domains—their family, romantic, vocational, recreational, spiritual and community lives (Showers, 1992). Their perceived strengths and limitations are essentially integrated, corresponding to the same contexts or domains (Lutz & Ross 2003).

In these individuals, negative affective states will tend to dissipate almost immediately. For example, anxiety tends to surface when the limitations of individuals—traits or characteristics that do not fulfil the standards or obligations of their society—are salient (Higgins, 1987, 1997, 1999). Because their strengths and limitations, in essence, are integrated, the heightened awareness of these deficiencies concomitantly augments the salience of key qualities and attributes, ultimately curbing anxiety and improving mood (Zeigler-Hill & Showers 2007).

Unstable self esteem

In contrast, when the self esteem or mood of individuals is unstable, their strengths and limitations are often compartmentalised (Zeigler-Hill & Showers 2007), corresponding to separate contexts and thus embedded within distinct rather than overlapping schemas (Lutz & Ross 2003). These individuals might perceive themselves as entirely competent, powerful and autonomous in some domains, perhaps their vocation, but utterly inept, helpless and vulnerable in other contexts (*cf.* Rhodewalt, Madrian & Cheney 1998). An awareness of specific limitations manifested as agitation or anxiety (Higgins 1999) is less likely to augment the salience of auspicious qualities and attributes, and hence these affective states will tend to persist (e.g. Riketta & Ziegler 2007; Showers & Kling 1996).

Facilitating integration of strengths and limitations

As enumerated in Table 13.1, coordinators of leadership development programs can introduce a variety of protocols or practices that facilitate the integration of strengths and limitations and, ultimately, facilitate access to extension memory.

For example, when leaders feel composed and confident, and their strengths are thus more accessible, they should be encouraged, perhaps by their mentors or coaches, to express their limitations, deficiencies and flaws. The concurrent activation of strengths and limitations is more likely to facilitate the integration of these representations (*cf.* Zeigler-Hill & Showers 2007).

In addition, after leaders receive feedback from multiple sources—e.g. subordinates, peers, customers and supervisors (London & Smither 1995)—they should attempt to identify some of the qualities or tendencies that might explain both the criticisms and compliments they receive. For example, the condemnation from supervisors that sometimes they breach company policies, as well as the compliment from subordinates

that usually they embrace creative suggestions might reflect both their inclination to challenge traditional practices and welcome adaptive changes.

Similarly, according to the model of intuitive affect regulation (Koole and Coenen 2008), negative affective states subside more rapidly in individuals who often experience a sense of agency, autonomy or control during events that provoke anxiety, agitation or fear. That is, some individuals, over their life, might have been granted opportunities to express their core values and pursue their preferred course of action moments after they experience states of anxiety or trepidation (Kuhl 2000). Ultimately, they begin to associate these negative emotional states with a sense of autonomy and agency (Koole & Jostmann 2004)—a sense that they can express their intuitive inclinations that emanate from an amalgam of weighted schemas.

Associating negative emotional states and autonomy

Table 13.1 also specifies some of the practices that could facilitate this association between negative emotional states and autonomy or choice. All of these could be embedded within leadership training and development programs. In particular, the association could be cultivated during training programs that utilise behavioural role modelling in which instructors demonstrate exemplary behaviours and then instruct participants to practice these acts (e.g. Goldstein & Sorcher 1974).

Specifically, instructors could show how individuals can express their core values during events that provoke anxiety or fear, such as strident criticisms, interpersonal conflicts or impending retrenchments. In response to a distressing, upsetting or threatening event, individuals should learn to suppress their immediate impulse—perhaps their instinct to yell or plead—and then briefly reflect on one of their core values, especially a state or aspiration they would like to achieve in the distant future. They could then reaffirm this value (for evidentiary support, see Koole, Smeets, van Knippenberg & Dijksterhuis 2006), with declarations such as ‘The need to save energy in the future is very important to me, so I hope I can pursue this need despite your concerns’.

Table 13.1 Practices in leadership development programs that facilitate a personal sense of agency

Objective	Practice
Integrating strengths and limitations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Encourage leaders to express limitations when feeling confident, perhaps during mentoring or coaching sessions. ▪ Invite leaders to identify some characteristics or tendencies that explain both criticisms and compliments during multi-source feedback programs.
Association between negative states and core values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Request that leaders identify their core values—aspirations they would like to achieve in various domains in their life—during mentoring or coaching sessions. ▪ Show leaders how to inhibit immediate instincts, but express their core values during stressful or upsetting events.

Attachment style

The tripartite model presupposes that individuals often invoke another defence mechanism, called the *attachment system* (Bowlby 1980, 1982), to confer a sense of security if personal agency wanes (Hart *et al.*, 2005).

Expectations of support

As infants, individuals learn to anticipate the extent to which they will receive adequate and consistent support from key figures in their life (e.g. parents or teachers) when difficulties arise (Mikulincer, Birnbaum, Woddis & Nachmias 2000). These expectations consolidate to form internal working models which govern the degree to which individuals attempt to form relationships and seek assistance when they are stressed or distressed (Bowlby 1988). These models also bias attention towards events that confirm their expectations and, accordingly, tend to remain relatively stable throughout life (see Mikulincer 1995; Waters, Merrick, Treboux, Crowell & Albersheim 2000). Nevertheless, relationships that are especially abusive, erratic, negligent or supportive can modify these expectations, both profoundly and enduringly (Pearson, Cohn, Cowan & Cowan 1994; Rothbard & Shaver 1994).

Secure attachment style

Some individuals develop a *secure* attachment style in which they anticipate the provision of assistance whenever they experience anxiety or distress (Bowlby 1988). This expectation typically evolves if the individuals had received unwavering and constructive support from parents or other attachment figures earlier in life when threats were imminent (e.g. Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters & Wall 1978). Because they expect to receive support, the anticipation of some threat and the concomitant feelings of anxiety or fear tend to subside rapidly (Mikulincer 1998).

Anxious attachment style

In contrast, other individuals develop an *anxious* attachment style, recognising that support from attachment figures is unpredictable and capricious (Brennan, Clark, & Shaver 1998). Throughout their lives, these individuals had likely enjoyed the benefits of constructive support as well as endured the pain of neglect (see Ainsworth *et al.* 1978; Pearson *et al.* 1994). As a consequence, they strive to form trusting relationships but incessantly feel concerned they might be rejected or abandoned (Bowlby 1973). When problems transpire or threats are imminent they are not certain they will receive support and their anxiety or agitation tends to persist (Bowlby 1988).

Avoidant attachment style

Finally, some individuals presuppose that assistance will not be forthcoming when problems transpire. Called an *avoidant* attachment style (Brennan *et al.* 1998) this style often reflects recurring instances of neglect from parents, teachers or other key figures in their lives (see Ainsworth *et al.* 1978; Wearden, Peters, Berry, Barrowclough & Liversidge 2008). These individuals attempt to curtail their reliance on relationships, recoiling from intimacy and striving to foster a sense of personal agency. To cultivate this agency, however, they often suppress their doubts, flaws and deficiencies (Mikulincer & Horesh 1999). This suppression of doubts and deficiencies, however, merely amplifies their

sensitivity to these concerns (e.g. Wegner, Broome & Blumberg 1997) and might preclude any attempts to integrate the cognitive representations of their strengths and limitations (see Borton, Markovitz & Dieterich 2005). As a consequence, events that underscore their shortfalls (manifested as anxiety and agitation) will not activate an awareness of their strengths and qualities, and these negative affective states will tend to endure.

Cultivating a secure attachment style

Fortunately, a diversity of experiences and events can impinge on the internal working models of individuals (Baldwin, Keelan, Fehr, Enns & Koh-Rangarajoo 1996; Pearson *et al.* 1994). After individuals with an anxious attachment style form a mental image of a supportive, trusting friend or relative, they become more likely to manifest a secure attachment style, at least momentarily (McGowen 2002). Their anxiety, for example, abates rapidly after they are informed they will soon need to present a speech (McGowen 2002). More enduring shifts from insecure attachment to secure attachment unfold if individuals can form relationships with anyone who is particularly supportive, predictably and unconditionally (Pearson *et al.* 1994).

Coordinators of leadership development programs can introduce an array of provisions to cultivate a secure attachment style, thus improving the capacity of individuals to regulate negative affective states and maintain access to extension memory (Koole & Jostmann 2004; Kuhl 2000). These practices can bias memory towards episodes in which individuals received support, perhaps resolving previous traumas with attachment figures. Other practices might encourage leaders to shift their attention towards cues that reflect support, instilling a sense of trust rather than wariness (see also Collins & Feeny 2004). Finally, some practices can enhance the capacity of individuals to form solid, trusting relationships in the future.

Personal growth workshops

For example, during personal growth programs, leaders can be granted the opportunity to reconcile traumatic or distressing memories—memories in which they were neglected consistently or abandoned unexpectedly—ultimately modifying their internal working models. During personal growth workshops (which emanated from the humanist psychology movement during the 1960s) individuals complete a coordinated series of psychological exercises, activities, and evaluations, primarily to facilitate self awareness and to circumvent impediments to progress. An opportunity to write about traumatic events, especially episodes that provoked feelings of abandonment or rejection, or to describe these experiences systematically and coherently, has been shown to diminish the salience of these memories, curbing the intensity of emotions (see Smyth 1998).

Similarly, during these sessions leaders can be invited to retrieve, and essentially relive, episodes in which they felt a sense of connection or understanding with a key figure (such as their partner) in their lives. Recollections of occasions in which they laughed together with their partner, for example, have been shown to foster a powerful sense of trust (Bazzini, Stack, Martincin & Davis 2007). Unsystematic ruminations about these events rather than methodical analyses are especially likely to amplify these feelings (Lyubomirsky, Sousa & Dickerhoof 2005).

Directed attention

Alternatively, leaders can develop the tendency to direct their attention towards cues that coincide with support and assistance rather than neglect or hostility. Indeed, the direction of attention underpins many of the manifestations of anxious and avoidant attachment styles. Individuals who report an avoidant attachment, for example, tend to shift their attention away from any words, objects or cues they associate with relationships (Edelstein & Gillath 2008). Factors that impinge on the distribution of attention, particularly during social interactions, are thus likely to shape the attachment patterns of individuals.

For example, during mentoring or coaching sessions, leaders are often encouraged to extend their social networks. They might be advised to converse with other individuals before or after social events like meetings, conferences, trade shows and seminars or to participate in more committees, clubs, task forces or advisory boards (Kanter 1983). During these networking opportunities, they should be encouraged to identify the one or two individuals who seem most supportive, congenial and content. This exercise has been shown to curb social anxiety and confer a secure attachment style because attention is more frequently directed towards cues that reflect support (Dandeneau, Baldwin, Baccus, Sakellaropoulo, & Pruessner 2007). Furthermore, this exercise, somewhat fortuitously, increases the likelihood that leaders develop associations with supportive rather than competitive individuals—a key determinant of secure attachment (see Pearson *et al.* 1994).

Some individuals adopt motivations that inadvertently, and indeed effortlessly, direct attention towards these supportive cues. In particular, when individuals are instructed to highlight their most desirable qualities rather than conceal their most salient flaws they become more inclined to enjoy the conversation (Srachman & Gable 2006). This orientation, referred to as *social approach*, seems to direct attention to cues—such as gestures and mannerisms as well as facial and verbal expressions—that reflect opportunities rather than complications (Srachman & Gable 2006).

Accentuating attributes rather than deficiencies

Accordingly, consistent with the cornerstone of positive psychology, development programs should underscore the attributes rather than the deficiencies of leaders. For example, development assessment centres, in which leaders complete a series of tasks—e.g. interviews, personality inventories, ability tests, simulations, and essays (Goodge 1991), should be instituted primarily to uncover these qualities. The report that emanates from this process should be biased towards the strengths rather than the limitations of participants. Recommendations should relate to opportunities these leaders could pursue to exhibit, to apply and to extend these attributes.

Enacting style

Finally, individuals can plan to engage, or actually enact, behaviours that coincide with a secure attachment style. That is, motor behaviours tend to bias the perception and attention of individuals (e.g. Dijksterhuis & van Knippenberg 1998). Motor behaviours that usually correspond to a specific affect will tend to elicit these emotions or moods (see Meier & Robinson 2004). Motor behaviours that tend to signal perseverance—e.g. arm crossing, tend to amplify persistence (e.g. Friedman & Elliot 2008).

To illustrate, individuals are more likely to act cooperatively, sacrificing their immediate needs to assist another person, when they experience a secure attachment (Mikulincer, Shaver, Gillath, Nitzberg 2005). Cooperative, altruistic acts, therefore, should activate secure attachment patterns, enhancing the capacity of individuals to regulate negative affective states and facilitating access to extension memory. Mentors and coaches could assist leaders in their endeavours to identify opportunities to support and assist colleagues, subordinates, customers and other stakeholders. Table 13.2 summarises these considerations, delineating opportunities to cultivate a secure attachment style, either transiently or more enduringly.

Table 13.2 Practices in leadership development programs that facilitate a secure attachment style

Objective	Practice
Biasing social memories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ During personal growth programs leaders should be instructed (sensitively), to write about traumatic events, especially episodes that relate to abandonment or neglect. ▪ Alternatively, they could present a coherent account of these events. ▪ Finally, during these programs, they could be asked to ruminate over occasions in which they shared laughter with a partner or friend (Bazzini <i>et al.</i> 2007).
Bias attention while networking and socialising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Coaches and mentors should encourage leaders to identify the person who seems most supportive during networking events. ▪ The desirable attributes of leaders, especially qualities that relate to social settings, should be uncovered during developmental assessment centres. ▪ The reports that emerge from these centres should provide advice on how leaders should exhibit these attributes, rather than conceal their limitations.
Acts that correspond to a secure attachment style	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Coaches and mentors should help leaders identify opportunities to assist colleagues.

Connections to collectives

In addition to personal agency or secure attachment patterns, the tripartite model of security implies that another mechanism, delineated by proponents of terror management theory (Greenberg, Pyszczynski, Solomon, Rosenblatt, Veeder, Kirkland & Lyon 1990), could ameliorate anxiety when a threat is imminent (Hart *et al.* 2005).

Terror management theory

Specifically, individuals often strive to conceptualise themselves as a member of an extensive, enduring collective—perhaps a business unit, occupational category, sporting club, ethnic minority, community group or the broader society (Stapel & Van der Zee 2006). This connection to an enduring collective ameliorates the anxiety that threats or difficulties provoke (see Greenberg, Pyszczynski, Solomon, Pinel, Simon & Jordan 1993).

According to terror management theory, this collective, which is relatively impervious to threats, affords these individuals a sense of immortality (Greenberg *et al.* 1990).

The self salience model

Other scholars have proposed divergent but overlapping accounts to explain the emotional benefits that ensue when individuals conceptualise themselves as members of a collective (e.g. Brewer & Gardner 1996). According to the self salience model (Stapel & Van der Zee 2006), the motivation of individuals depends on their self control. If individuals construe themselves as independent, detached from any collective, their principal motivation is to maintain a sense of agency or power. If individuals construe themselves as one constituent of a broader entity, their principal motivation is to ensure they comply with the norms and characteristics that exemplify this collective (Mandel 2003). In this state, many threats (e.g. criticisms) which challenge their sense of agency do not thwart these motivations and thus do not elicit anxiety or agitation.

Understanding the norms of the collective

The benefits of this sense of connection diminish if individuals feel they might have violated the norms and expectations of this collective, provoking the possibility they might be rejected or excluded (Greenberg, Solomon, Pyszczynski, Rosenblatt, Burling, Lyon & Simon 1992). Even the potential to violate these norms could elicit anxiety. To minimise the likelihood of this possibility, leaders need to understand, clarify and elucidate these norms and expectations (*cf.* Tajfel 1982; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher & Wetherell 1987). One developmental assignment that might be especially germane to this objective is to manage a project in which they must ascertain, and then promulgate, the strategic direction of a business unit. This project enables leaders to convene meetings in which they discuss the interests, values and priorities that characterise a team or department (e.g. Clark & Lyness 1991).

Conflicting values and collective norms

Occasionally, however, leaders might feel that their values, motivations or behaviours do not align with the priorities, objectives and norms of their collective, provoking anxiety and curbing resilience. Attempts to suppress these thoughts or inclinations will tend to amplify rather than diminish the salience of this divergence, at least after some delay (Wegner & Erber 1992). Instead, perhaps through behavioural role modelling (e.g. Goldstein & Sorcher 1974), leaders need to learn how to recognise and underscore any convergence between their own perspective and the culture that pervades the collective. That is, some leaders can readily integrate their goals and behaviours to the values and norms that underpin the culture. They might, for example, refer to rituals, artefacts, anecdotes, policies and other symbols that exemplify the culture to present these arguments (e.g. Ravasi & Schultz 2006).

Openness to diversity

One particular value they should attempt to instil is openness towards diversity. Specifically, some collectives embrace perspectives, opinions, recommendations and behaviours that diverge from their traditions (see Swann Jr, Kwan, Polzer & Milton 2003). Leaders who champion initiatives or values that depart from conventions, therefore, align with the norms of the collective rather than violate them. Thus individuals might feel

more secure—unperturbed by the possibility that they might breach the norms and standards of their collective. To inculcate this value, leaders need to show that diversity aligns with the norms and values of the collective. For example, if innovation has been designated as a key value, leaders could highlight the impact of diversity on creative and complex thinking (Swann Jr. *et al.* 2003). Table 13.3 outlines practices that could foster a stable connection with an enduring collective—often the organisation.

Table 13.3 Practices in leadership development programs that facilitate a stable connection with an enduring collective

Objective	Practice
Clarify norms	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Leaders could explicitly ask colleagues to share their values, priorities, interests and beliefs, perhaps in the context of a developmental assignment.▪ Mentors could assist leaders in their attempts to converse with key stakeholders—individuals who understand the norms and expectations that must be fulfilled.
Promote personal values	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Through behavioural role modelling, leaders need to learn how to relate their own perspective to the symbols that exemplify the culture of their organisation.▪ Leaders need to highlight the benefits of diversity, encouraging colleagues to embrace unique perspectives, with reference to these symbols.

Regulation of positive affect

Spontaneity

A sense of personal agency, a secure attachment style and a feeling of identification with some enduring collective should foster disengagement (Hart *et al.* 2005)—i.e., the capacity to ameliorate anxiety, rapidly, intuitively, and effortlessly—which facilitates access to extension memory and thus affords many of the hallmarks that characterise exemplary leaders.

Initiative

This capacity to override anxiety, however, does not guarantee access to extension memory or the concomitant benefits of this system. Instead, to enable relatively unimpeded, rather than intermittent access to extension memory, leaders should ideally cultivate another tendency—namely, *initiative* (see Kuhl 1981; Kuhl & Goschke 1994). Individuals who demonstrate this trait can readily override dejection and elicit enthusiasm. They tend to operate spontaneously, intuitively and cheerfully rather than too warily, analytically or resignedly. In contrast, cautious, analytical decisions or dejected, unconfident feelings tend to activate *intention memory* (Kazen & Kuhl 2005)—the cognitive system that evolved to formulate, modify, evaluate and store intentions (Kuhl & Kazen 1999)—which inhibits extension memory (Kuhl 2000).

Inhibiting intention memory – the locomotion mode

Leaders can engage in three sets of practices to inhibit intention memory, ultimately exhibiting the behaviours that reflect initiative. First, they can strive to become spontaneous rather than cautious, implementing their intentions even before all the possible courses of action have been evaluated systematically or considered carefully (Higgins, Kruglanski & Pierro 2003). The execution of these intentions activates another cognitive system (called intuitive behavioural control) which initiates a coordinated series of motor actions and inhibits intention memory (Kuhl & Kazen 1999).

This spontaneous orientation (which should inhibit intention memory and ultimately facilitate access to extension memory) overlaps with a psychological state called a *locomotion mode* (Higgins *et al.* 2003). A locomotion mode corresponds to the inclination to enact goals and plans spontaneously and actively rather than to evaluate or to consider other options carefully and systematically (Pierro, Kruglanski & Higgins 2006). This mode, therefore, promotes the sense of spontaneity that should inhibit intention memory. Consistent with this proposition, a locomotion mode is inversely correlated with dejection and depression (Kruglanski, Thompson, Higgins, Atash, Pierro, Shah & Spiegel 2000) – the affective manifestations of intention memory.

Evoking the locomotion mode

Research reveals that a locomotion mode can, indeed, be evoked (Avnet & Higgins 2003). Individuals who are instructed to recall occasions in which they acted spontaneously and confidently, without undue deliberation or evaluation, subsequently demonstrate the manifestations of a locomotion mode (Benjamin & Flynn 2006; Kruglanski, Pierro & Higgins 2007). Thus, somehow, leaders need to be afforded the opportunities and conditions to operate spontaneously, uninhibited by the possible complications or shortfalls that might arise.

As highlighted in Table 13.4, business games and simulations might encourage this locomotion mode. Leaders participate in projects in which they receive contrived information about some issue – perhaps a threat to the organisation or an investment scheme (e.g. Keys & Wolfe 1990). They must analyse the details, reach decisions, persuade colleagues and enact other activities, all intended to simulate bona fide conditions (Kaplan, Lombardo & Maxique 1985).

Simulations are sometimes dispersed over several weeks or even months. Although the decisions and behaviours of leaders might affect their performance and reputation during these simulations, the consequences do not impinge upon their role outside the simulation (Van Velsor Ruderman & Philliphs 1989). Because the consequences of their decisions are limited, leaders might be more willing to act spontaneously and without careful consideration.

Likewise, coaches and mentors can also instil a locomotion mode. References to phases that represent this mode (such as ‘let’s get on with it’, ‘let’s do it’, and ‘let’s make it happen’) incite this spontaneity as do memories of occasions that such phrases evoke (e.g. Pierro, Leder, Mannetti, Higgins, Kruglanski & Aiello 2008).

Table 13.4 Practices in leadership development programs that facilitate a spontaneous mode of operation

Objective	Practice
Spontaneous behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ During business games or simulations, leaders should be encouraged to act spontaneously rather than to consider all the issues carefully and systematically. ▪ Practitioners should highlight any triumphs rather than emphasise faults, to reinforce this spontaneity.
Spontaneous mode	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Coaches and mentors should encourage a spontaneous mode with references to phrases such as ‘let’s get on with it’, ‘let’s do it’, and ‘let’s make it happen’. ▪ During personal growth programs participants should recall instances in which they acted spontaneously.

Intuition

When extension memory is activated, individuals are intuitively inclined to engage in behaviours that align with their core values (Kuhl 2000). These intuitive inclinations represent a manifestation of extension memory. Thus, when individuals derive decisions from intuitive, global impressions rather than logical or rational considerations, extension memory is likely to be activated and intention memory inhibited.

Intuition activates extension memory

Previous research verifies the proposition that intuition activates extension memory. In particular, when individuals eschew a systematic evaluation of alternatives and rely on their intuition instead, they tend to be more satisfied with their decisions. That is, reliance on intuition tends to ensure the decisions of individuals align with core, enduring values diminishing the likelihood of regret.

In one study (Dijksterhuis and van Olden 2006) participants were asked to decide which of five abstract paintings they should purchase. Some participants were instructed to delineate the merits and drawbacks, systematically and thoroughly, of each painting in sequence. Other participants were instructed to observe the paintings briefly and decide intuitively and immediately rather than methodically and carefully. Finally, some participants observed the paintings briefly but then completed a distracting task for several minutes before reaching an intuitive decision. The individuals who observed the paintings only briefly, completed a distracting task and then reached an intuitive decision were the ones most satisfied with their purchases several weeks later. The benefits of intuitive decisions, at least when the alternatives differ on many indefinite or unpredictable dimensions, has been replicated in many studies (see Dijksterhuis 2004; Dijksterhuis, Bos, Nordgren & Van Baaren 2006).

Developing reliance on intuition

Several provisions in leadership development programs could encourage a reliance on intuition, at least when decisions are complex. First, many leaders feel compelled to justify their decisions, rationally and logically. As a consequence, these individuals are

more inclined to select courses of action that logically, rather than intuitively, seem preferable (see Van den Berga *et al.* 2006). Accordingly, these leaders will tend to eschew their intuitive preferences; compromising their decisions and obstructing access to extension memory (see Epstein, Pacini, Denes-Raj & Heier 1996).

Diminishing logical argument

To override this tendency, individuals need to acquire practices that diminish the obligation to justify their decisions with reference to logical arguments. Through behavioural role modelling (e.g. Goldstein & Sorcher 1974), for example, leaders could observe interactions in which individuals allude to experiential insights rather than using stark logic to justify their decisions. They could express sentiments such as ‘Nobody can definitely weigh all the conflicting benefits and drawbacks of each option. Therefore, I need to rely on my intuition and experience to guide me here’.

Diminishing symbolic codes

Second, leaders should be granted developmental assignments in which precision is neither encouraged nor warranted. Logical rules and symbolic codes (e.g. numbers) facilitate precision. Hence, any conditions that demand precision will foster a reliance on symbolic codes (see Dijksterhuis & Nordgren 2006) – a reliance that will activate intention memory rather than extension memory (Kuhl 2000).

Instead, potential leaders should be granted developmental assignments that demand abstract and intangible reflection rather than concrete, detailed or precise considerations. They could, for example, be assigned roles in which they need to reach strategic decisions characterising the broad values and future objectives that business units should pursue (e.g. Clark & Lyness 1991). When they communicate these strategies, these individuals do not need stipulate precise timelines, budgets, locations or activities (Trope & Liberman 2003), curbing their reliance on symbolic codes and potentially inhibiting extension memory.

Experiential knowledge v formal rules

Finally, during formal training programs, leaders should be granted opportunities to reflect upon complex case studies – e.g. events in other organisations that lasted many years, broaching broad issues such as business strategy and branding (e.g. Yukl 2006). Exposure to complex, intricate and difficult case studies uncovers insights that can seldom be reduced to explicit rules and logical principles (Dijksterhuis 2004). Accordingly, leaders acquire experiential knowledge rather prescriptive directives (Hayes *et al.* 1999). To apply this knowledge, they must utilise their intuition rather than follow formal rules, ultimately inhibiting intention memory. Table 13.5 presents some of the developmental opportunities that reinforce the use of intuition.

Table 13.5 Practices in leadership development programs that facilitate reliance on intuition

Objective	Practice
Avoid rational justification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Through behavioural role modelling leaders can learn how to justify their reliance on intuition.
Avoid precision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Leaders can be encouraged to eschew the need to reach precise judgments, perhaps through developmental assignments that focus on strategic decisions.
Experiential knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Through case studies, formal training should facilitate the acquisition of complex, experiential knowledge, rather than explicit rules.

Refinement of schemas

Incremental malleability

The capacity to regulate mood, unconsciously and effortlessly, facilitates access to extension memory (Jostmann *et al.* 2006). This cognitive system underpins many key leadership skills. The merits of extension memory, however, partly depend on the sensitivity of individuals to novel or unexpected information.

Novel information

Novel information, such as stimuli that individuals do not recognise or criticisms they reject by definition, does not conform to any of their extant schemas and thus violates their expectations (e.g. Kelly 1955). Conceivably, information that does not align with a schema can represent a threat or hazard. As a consequence, novel information will tend to provoke fear or anxiety (see Elliot & Devine 1994; Plaks, Grant & Dweck 2005).

Individuals who exhibit disengagement, however, can ameliorate this anxiety almost immediately, activating extension memory (Jostmann *et al.* 2006). Accordingly, these individuals can invoke an extant schema to accommodate the threat. This schema, which evolves from a concatenation of previous responses in related contexts, is thus refined. That is, the inclinations that emanate from this schema are contingent upon a broader range of stimuli and properties which optimise decisions and behaviour (Koole & Kuhl 2003).

Some individuals, however, attempt to preclude the anxiety that novel information can elicit. To achieve this objective, they tend to neglect any information, feedback, advice or stimuli that violate their expectations. They might, for example, undermine the source of this information, challenging the credibility of anyone who expresses unexpected criticisms (Rudawsky, Lungren & Grasha 1999). Alternatively, they might question the pertinence or significance of the information (e.g. Funderburg & Levy 1997). Novel information is not integrated with extant schemas which therefore remain crude and unrefined.

To ensure that leaders are receptive to novel information rather than dismissive of it, they need to become cognizant of the benefits that such feedback, advice or stimuli can afford

(Maurer, Mitchell, & Barbeite, 2002). Individuals will be more inclined to recognise the benefits of novel information if they feel they can apply these insights. That is, they need to feel that this feedback or advice can modify their behaviours, promote inclinations and cultivate traits that expedite progress, ultimately improving their wellbeing and performance (Rudawsky *et al.* 1999).

Entity theory of malleability

Some individuals, however, do not feel that any information, regardless of the veracity or pertinence of this feedback, can change their fundamental traits and inclinations. That is, these individuals adopt an entity theory of malleability—the implicit assumption that character, morality and competence are, in essence, immutable rather than malleable (Dweck, Chui, & Hong 1995). Because of this assumption, these individuals strive to demonstrate rather than cultivate their competence and expertise (*cf.* Dweck & Elliott 1983), attempting to exceed prescribed standards and outperform their peers (El-Alayli 2006). Individuals who demonstrate this tendency often neglect novel information such as criticism (VandeWalle & Cummings 1997).

Research has, somewhat paradoxically, shown that this assumption is indeed malleable. That is, individuals can develop an incremental theory of malleability—the assumption that character and competence is flexible rather than fixed (Poon & Koehler 2006). In particular, information that verifies the mutability of individuals will tend to foster an incremental theory (e.g. Aronson, Fried & Good 2002; McConnell 2001) whereas attributions to enduring traits will tend to reinforce an entity theory (Chiu, Hong & Dweck 1997).

Fostering an incremental theory of malleability

Coordinators of leadership development programs can introduce several measures to reinforce or foster an incremental theory of malleability. For example, during formal training programs, individuals can be informed that even extraversion and emotional stability—two personality traits that even scholars had assumed were relatively enduring—tend to increase when individuals enjoy their job (Scollon & Diener 2006). Similarly, during these training programs, individuals can study case studies of leaders who changed and grew fundamentally in the aftermath of specific experiences.

Even the selection of leaders into these development programs might instil an incremental theory of malleability. In some programs, only individuals who demonstrate the qualities that characterise typical leaders (e.g. a robust, independent, confident and extraverted demeanour) are permitted to participate. Instead, perhaps individuals who have demonstrated a capacity to change in the last year or so—a capacity to develop the skills and qualities that underpin leadership—should be selected. This criterion implies that individuals are not immutable, activating beliefs that coincide with an incremental theory of malleability. Table 13.6 summarises some opportunities to instil an incremental theory of malleability.

An incremental theory of malleability can expedite the refinement and differentiation of schemas provided that individuals are exposed to a variety of perspectives and experiences. Consistent with this proposition, many development programs seem to be most effective when participants receive alternative perspectives on a single issue (Yukl

2006). For example, leaders can be encouraged to manage a cross-functional team in which a diversity of opinions and philosophies tend to surface. Also to facilitate a diversity of perspectives, the composition of discussion groups in which teams of individuals reflect upon key events in their company or other organisations can be made to vary over time.

Table 13.6 Practices in leadership development programs that facilitate an incremental theory of malleability

Objective	Practice
Highlight the capacity of individuals to change	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ During formal training programs, the malleability of traits needs to be substantiated, together with case studies of individuals who have changed.
Reduce the relevance of traits	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ The selection of participants into leadership programs should not be restricted to individuals with specific traits.▪ The capacity to develop could be deemed to be a selection criterion.

Limitations and conclusion

Scholars often characterise the traits and behaviours that epitomise the optimal leader (e.g. Bass 1990). Leadership development programs are usually constructed to instil these traits. Instead, development programs should enhance the capacity of leaders to regulate their affective states. In addition, these initiatives should encourage leaders to direct their attention towards a diverse array of stimuli and perspectives. As a consequence, extension memory is more likely to govern the decisions, judgments and behaviours of individuals, ultimately facilitating the integrity, flexibility, resilience, creativity and intuition of these leaders.

The activation of extension memory, however, might not cultivate all the hallmarks of the exemplary leader. For example, over the last few decades, many scholars have championed the merits of charismatic leaders—leaders who tend to be confident and attractive, often articulating a clear and inspiring vision of the future as well as specifying how these objectives could be achieved (Conger & Kanungo 1987). Extension memory might ignite some, but not all of the constituents of charisma. Nevertheless, charisma seems to be effective primarily during specific circumstances, such as during the aftermath or anticipation of an intense threat (Gordijn & Stapel 2008). Charismatic leaders, therefore, need to modify their style and behaviour to accommodate the needs and demands of various contexts—and extension memory most likely facilitates this flexibility.

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