CHAPTER **4**

Leadership at the Personal Level

- Discover the five essentials of successful leadership.
- Investigate how the arts can improve leadership performance.
- Show ability to write a personal leadership philosophy.
- Understand personal risks.
- Describe the dimensions of leadership presence.
- Develop a leadership learning contract.
- Begin journaling.

If we were to try to look at all the literature on leadership and distill all the literature down to the five essentials of being a successful public health leader, what might we expect these essentials to be? Here is one possible list:

1. Knowledge with the intelligence to use it. Leaders are bombarded with new information on a daily basis from new health statistics, new public health technical reports, new funding opportunities, and new demands for service based on emerging threats or the need for new programmatic directions. All the new information has to be translated into the context of public health and the governing paradigms of core functions and essential services that drive public health action and practice.

2. Empathy and motivation of others. Leaders have learned that the technological expertise that brought them into public health careers has become secondary to their relationships with colleagues and external partners. Leaders struggle to develop the social skills necessary to be effective and able to collaborate with others with ease. This set of basic skills has come to be called emotional intelligence.

3. Risk taking with action and follow-through. Leaders need not only to be visionary and creative, they need to be able to take risks and to get their ideas translated into action with well-defined projected outcomes. Every new vision or creative idea has a potential risk associated with it. Many people including colleagues are fearful of change. Risk taking is the attempt to change the status quo in spite of much resistance in order to move their agencies in new directions.

4. Ability to communicate at many different levels. Leaders have to communicate both verbally and in writing in both traditional ways or through the use of social media. Social networks may become critical to their work. They need to listen to others carefully. They may also have to communicate cross-culturally or to others who speak in another language. Most leaders are excellent at using real life events to demonstrate how their theories work. They also become skilled as storytellers.

5. Systems thinkers with an understanding of how complexity affects their work. Leaders understand that most of their work relates to the big picture of their communities. They also look at their agencies as whole organizations with interacting parts. They see their organization within the context of the whole community. They understand that most of their work is about change and upsetting the status quo. Leaders tend to support a social justice philosophy with a belief in improving the health of all people in their respective communities. They also realize that the best plans may also have unanticipated consequences.

It is clear that leadership is a complex process. The leader needs to develop himself or herself at the personal level and incorporate all types of leadership tools to guide the personal growth process. The leader also needs to develop a leadership mindset or mental model that incorporates leadership and lifelong learning into what it means to be a leader. Because leadership is interactive and also oriented to change, the personal skills related to relationship-building and change management become an important set of tools for the leader to master at the personal level. The leadership mindset involves the importance of realizing that the community context is critical in public health for addressing adaptive challenges.

As leaders or future leaders, we need to commit ourselves to lifelong learning at all six levels of leadership—personal, team, organizational, community, professional, and global. Each leadership level requires a portfolio of learning activities to enhance our leadership. This chapter addresses our personal development as leaders. A personal leadership portfolio contains all the results of various leadership instruments that a leader uses to learn more about his or her leadership strengths and skills. I would recommend that you start this process with *Strengths Finder 2.0*.[1] The portfolio also documents key leadership decisions made in different settings. Part of lifelong learning is to continue learning as much about yourself as a person as possible.

To be a successful lifelong learner, learning to be a leader should not be limited only to leadership. Leaders need to be well rounded. We need to go beyond the academic specialty in which we were originally trained. If you are a leader originally trained as a physician, now you need to learn about management, leadership, and behavioral sciences such as economics, sociology, and psychology, political science, biostatistics, epidemiology, community engagement, and so on. It is the multidisciplinary perspective that broadens our view of the context in which we work.

Most of our education involved the development of a linear thinking approach to problem solving in our agency or other unit within it. We need to develop tools that help us to organize a systems thinking perspective. Senge[2] has provided us with a number of systems tools called archetypes to help us in this endeavor. With mastery at this level, we are able to see the chaos that must be addressed in our community work. It becomes imperative that leaders develop a complexity perspective that uses tools to bring order out of the chaos that we see. The composition of the group that is doing the problem solving is clearly affected by the individuals in the room. If the group changes its composition over time, the problem solving will change with the new members. With complexity then, unanticipated happenings are common.

Leaders love to read and read widely. They read books in many fields and even learn to use fiction to help them understand the world better. I give you two books a month to add to your leadership learning in my leadership blog book club.[3] Another way to add to your knowledge is to visit a local bookstore or to explore new books and literature. There is also the excitement of visiting a good library as well as many Internet sites that give you many interesting articles to read.

Exploring the arts also enriches us at many levels. Movies, concerts, museums, opera, classical music, theater, art exhibits, sports events, travel, and new restaurants teach us much about our culture and other cultures. Not only do these events give us much to talk about, they help us view the world from many perspectives. I find that I begin to understand our country better after a trip to another country. Travel also gives me the chance to see us from a number of different perspectives. The arts also provide us with many tools that are also useful in our leadership work. Here are a few examples of how the arts can help us in our work:

1. Use of the tools of the arts will strengthen the mental models of the culture in which leaders work.
2. Theater arts allow leaders the opportunity to test leadership principles and practices in our social lives.
3. Music provides the chance to see how leaders function with music in the background and how music affects leadership performance.
4. Communication strategies and techniques can be improved by the arts.
5. The arts provide innovative approaches to conflict resolution strategies, problem solving, decision making, and team building.
6. Theater games will be useful in emergency preparedness and response practices.
7. Coaching opportunities are possible in theater arts scenarios.

It is important for leaders to explore their creativity by doing different things as well as stepping back from a conflict situation in order to experiment with innovative and nontraditional approaches to addressing adaptive challenges that have been presented. We can use new group process strategies like six thinking hats,[4] open space technology,[5] and the world café[6] that employ creative approaches to solving challenges of many kinds. Another technique I have used in workshops is the employment of theater games to experiment with different leadership strategies. In the area of conflict resolution, for example, two people are arguing about closing a window. One person wants to close the window and the other person does not. Who will win the argument?

Leaders need to know that it is important to maintain a balance between their personal lives and their work lives. Leaders sometimes let their work lives overpower their personal lives. Because we have only so many hours of awake time, the important issue is how we will use those hours each day. The choices we make can affect our lives over the long run. Because leaders are embedded in their home communities, it is important that leaders strengthen their personal connections both within our household and also within the community at work and play.

John Gardner[7] believed that leaders needed to set time apart for personal reflection. Time needs to be set aside on a regular basis for this self-renewal process. Retreats at a remote site are another mechanism for leaders to collaborate with their work colleagues or external partners to review, evaluate activities, or plan for the future. Retreat participants can use creativity exercises and strategies to develop new programmatic directions or to explore and develop their personal leadership knowledge and skills.

Leaders often learn from their action-based activities. If a leader goes out into the community to be actively involved in the health promotion activities of the community, leaders and their partners should learn new strategies from their activities. Experiential learning will also enhance leadership and give leaders the opportunity to apply leadership knowledge, skills,

PUBLIC HEALTH HEROES AND VILLIANS 4-1 Paul Farmer, Humanitarian and Hero[8]

Paul Farmer was born in Massachusetts in 1959. As he was growing up in Florida, his family picked citrus fruit with Haitian migrant workers. He and his family lived in a houseboat on the Gulf, bathed in a creek, and brought water in jugs from a creek. Despite these unusual family circumstances, Farmer did exceptionally well in school. He won a scholarship to Duke University where he studied medical anthropology. He spent 6 months in Paris where he attended classes of Claude Lévi-Strauss, a world-renowned anthropologist. Farmer returned to Duke speaking fluent French. He became interested in the poor farm workers, some of whom were Haitians living not far from Duke. He became interested in Haitian culture and learned Creole during this period. Farmer graduated from Duke *summa cum laude* and went to the University of Pittsburgh where he completed a postgraduate fellowship.

Farmer next went to Harvard where he completed a joint degree program in medicine and medical anthropology in 1990. He also became interested in public health. During this time, he travelled to Haiti with the intention of working in a public health clinic. He was able to secure funding from Project Bread to open a bakery in Cange, Haiti to supply bread to a community with a high percentage of people with chronic malnutrition. Next, Farmer founded Zanmi Lasante, a community-based health project. In 1985, Farmer and a colleague opened Clinique Bon Saveur in Cange. Cases of acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) were discovered.

In 1987 Farmer and his friends founded the organization Partners in Health in Boston. This organization's mission is to change the way we work to help people on a global level. Patients are to be helped in their homes and local communities. Health workers will develop partnerships with local government officials and medical and academic institutions around the world. Through these partnerships, medical and public health service capacity will be built in order to strengthen health systems. In this work, the priority will be to help the poor.

Through the 1990s, in Haiti, Farmer helped the Zanmi Lasante clinic grow into a hospital. Farmer's work was recognized by the MacArthur Foundation in 1993 and he received a MacArthur genius grant. By the end of the 1990s, Zanmi Lasante had built homes for the poor, schools, improved sanitation, and water facilities. On the disease front, outbreaks of drug-resistant typhoid decrease in the incidence of tuberculosis.

Over the last 2 decades, Farmer has written a number of books and articles. He has continued his work in Cange as well as work with the Partners in Health organization. He travels all over the world to help the poor improve their health and was named the United Nations deputy envoy to Haiti by the Special Envoy Bill Clinton in 2009. He is now the department head of global health and social medicine at Harvard Medical School. Paul Farmer is clearly a leader with passion for his work in Haiti and elsewhere. He lives his life for the improvement of the health of the poor around the world. He is one of our major public health heroes.

See http://www.achievement.org. Accessed February 15, 2016.

and tools in real time. Leaders become expert in applying all of these learning strategies to adaptive leadership challenges synergistically. Each leader puts all these tools and skills to work in innovative and creative ways. Paul Farmer is one such person. He is a true public health leadership hero.

From several decades of leadership in both the public and private sectors, Robert M. Gates, former Secretary of Defense in the administrations of both Presidents George Bush and Barack Obama has clearly learned some facts about being a successful leader.[9] Gates states that most leaders are concerned with change. Leaders also need to be careful not to let their egos interfere with the work that needs to be done. Paul Farmer was extremely careful to do this although he was clearly passionate about helping the poor. Gates believes that leaders need to be trustworthy and have integrity, both within the public and private sectors. Paul Farmer was able to work with both sectors with great success. He was seen as trustworthy by both sectors as well as the people of Haiti and other poor nations. Gates also points out that leaders need to be self-disciplined. Collaboration requires self-discipline. A leader needs to be able to listen to others and not always dominate the proceedings. This is another characteristic of Farmer. Gates also points to the need to be humble and not give the impression of being the smartest person in the room. Farmer seems to excel here as well. Gates argues that leaders need to have courage, work with others for change, know and understand that compromise is important, follow their principles, and finally realize when their work is done. Dr. Farmer excels here as well. Most of Gates' principles of successful leadership fit our heroes including Dr. Farmer. Gates also advocates the importance of humor. This characteristic is harder to ascertain for our heroes.

Heroes and leaders need to be reality based. There are at least three competencies that a leader must address.[10] Dr. Farmer also seems to have mastered these three competencies. First, leaders must be able to address heath crises. Because leaders are working in an environment of constant change, they should be prepared for any contingency. Second, leaders need to be oriented toward success. Third, leaders need to have the willingness to resolve conflict as quickly as possible.

One thing that leaders can do to improve their leadership skills is to develop a personal leadership philosophy. At this point, your philosophy statement should be no more than one page. The statement should include your approach to leadership at home and at work. It should also include your approach to lifelong learning. **Exercise 4-1** is an opportunity to develop a philosophy statement.

EXERCISE 4-1 My Leadership Philosophy

Purpose: to develop a personal leadership philosophy statement

Key Concepts: personal leadership, philosophy statement, reality based

Procedure: Write a one-page personal leadership philosophy statement for your future work in public health. You should include the issue of work and family in your statement. You should also address your approach to your lifelong learning agenda. Present your statement to your class and get recommendations for improving your statement. Revise statement and use it in your work going forward.

A BRIEF NOTE ON RISK

In a complex world such as ours, leaders find the rules of the leadership game involve change that becomes a reality in which to work. This is especially true in public health and the other health services areas. We seem to have multiple stakeholders watching whatever we do. These stakeholders are elected officials, governing boards, community residents, religious leaders, and business leaders. With all these stakeholders watching us, leaders often need to take personal risk in addressing community health-related concerns. Personal risks often become entangled with health risks of many kinds. There are several personal risks that are involved.[11]

First, we do not always have the option to select the people with whom we work. Respect between leaders and their staff is important if we are to accomplish our goals. Personal risk taking to improve these relationships may or may not be successful. Second. risk taking becomes complicated if we work for an organization where our personal values and ethics are not similar to the values and ethics built into the agency culture. Third, the leader needs to be concerned about the risk of compromise where the critical part of a solution is lost as a result of the compromise. Fourth, there is a risk of making a decision that a leader does not care about. A leader needs to be committed to the decisions that are made. Next is the related concern of a decision that goes against a leader's belief system. Finally, there is the important risk of working in a field such as public health when you really wanted to go to medical school.

Risk taking should be strategic.[12] Even at a personal leadership level, risk taking has consequences at the team, organization, and community levels. All risks need to serve the mission of our agencies. All risk-taking activities by a public health leader have the possibility of leading to failure. A failure needs to be seen as a learning experience. Before the leader takes a personal risk, he or she needs to be aware that taking the risk is a choice. The leader weighs all the factors that affect the risk-taking choice because risk taking may have financial effects as well as social and psychological costs. Risk taking may not have immediate effects. Change takes time to show results.

LEADERSHIP PRESENCE

In recent years, leaders have become concerned about how they are viewed by others. If you give a talk before others, do you do any personal things to enhance your performance? How do you want to be seen by others? Presence provides added features beyond the leader's behavior. Glasshammer, which is a career consulting firm for women, provides a number of tips for helping leaders increase their presence.[14] Most of the tips would be useful to men as well:

1. A positive attitude enhances the relationship with others.
2. Listening to others is a sign of respect.
3. You need to be outgoing and friendly to others.
4. The 80/20 rule applies. You need to listen 80 percent of the time and speak only 20 percent of the time and not about yourself.
5. Empower others to solve problems.
6. Your appearance is important.
7. Try to be early to events.
8. Be as clear as possible in what you say. Avoid jargon.
9. Be open to criticism.
10. Be able to share credit with others.
11. Show empathy and give feedback where appropriate.
12. Be careful about losing your temper. Your composure is important in maintaining the balance in a given situation.
13. Have individual conversations with others and especially with coworkers and community stakeholders.
14. If conflicts arise, deal with them quickly and fairly.

Leadership presence involves the integration of public, private, and personal leadership.[15] Public and private leadership involves what leaders need to do at a behavioral level with individuals and groups. Public leadership relates to the actions and behaviors that we do with two or more people in creating a vision, empowering others, planning, agenda setting, problem solving, decision making, and implementing our decisions. Private leadership is a leader's work with one individual on purpose and individual performance on tasks and helping a direct report to build skills. At the personal leadership level, we are addressing our needs for knowledge and skills to carry out our leadership activities. We need to make sure our personal attitudes are in agreement with others both inside and outside our organizations. The complicated concerns related to psychological self-mastery are also critical here.

In summary, the integration of public leadership, private leadership, and personal leadership leads to the way our authentic self is seen by others. This affects our leadership presence. For each unique leader, Scouller[16] points out that there are seven qualities related to presence:

1. Personal power
2. High self-esteem
3. Desire to learn more
4. High service orientation and respect for others
5. Intuition
6. Living in the present
7. Inner peace of mind

LEADERSHIP LEARNING CONTRACT

Leaders need to be open to new tools and perspectives. Flexibility and resilience are important. Personal leadership development is an evolving process. Because of this, leaders should take time for personal reflection. As a leader, we need time to grow. No one approach to leadership will work in the long run although the ecological approach does have the flexibility to expand and include new techniques and tools. Adaptive challenges will always present themselves. A culture of health will also allow leaders to approach community health concerns with flexibility as new health challenges and health breakthroughs occur. In addition, the way Leader A did the leadership work in his or her agency is not the way Leader B does leadership work in his or her agency because the demands of each agency are different. One size does not fit every situation.

Leaders tend to look for ways to develop and expand their leadership skills throughout their work lives. In fact, many public health leaders tend to continue their leadership into their retirement years. The leadership learning contract is a tool that many leaders use. The contract has the leader prepare a yearly learning plan to guide his or her personal learning each year. As these plans are developed, the leader

may have to decide if an executive or life coach is needed to help prepare the plan and evaluate progress in meeting the goals of the plan. The leadership learning plan needs to be seen as a contract in which the leader views the plan as a set of obligations that guide the leader in ways to become more effective.

Some of the questions that the plan needs to address are:

1. What are the key learning objectives for the year?
2. What is my reading agenda and conference agenda for the next year?
3. What are my objectives for my agency over the next year?
4. Are there new internal and external collaborations that I want to initiate over the next year?
5. Which two or three employees can I mentor next year?

It is the actual writing of the plan that is critical. The tendency to write a plan and put it in a file or in your bottom desk drawer is not the purpose of this exercise. This plan, if implemented correctly, can be merged with a leadership journal over the next year that documents your progress toward meeting your personal goals. Regular meetings with an executive coach might also be helpful. **Exercise 4-2** involves your writing a leadership learning contract.

JOURNALING

Over 25 years ago, I made my first visit to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and noticed that most CDC public health professionals that I met were carrying a green book. Throughout the meeting, each CDC person opened the green book to take notes or write comments on the proceedings. These green books were journals. Since that time, I have noticed that many public health leaders and other professionals carry these journals with many multicolor covers. Today, many of these leaders carry a laptop computer, a tablet, or a phone in which they now write their commentaries. I started carrying a journal 25 years ago and entered the 21st century carrying a computer tablet on which I continue to jot down my thoughts and ideas. In the public health leadership institute that I ran for over 20 years, we gave all participants journals in recent years. This one tool has become essential for many managers and leaders.

Our lives are so busy with all sorts of activities including work, school, home, and social lives. Ideas seem to come at breakneck speed. As leaders, we need to keep our eyes and ears focused on many things and issues in the course of a working day. Our journals prevent us from losing many of these high-speed ideas. One use of our journals is going back at the end of each week with a new entry that prioritizes the ideas of last week. This priority list allows us to determine which ideas need further development. Give each idea a score from 1 to 3 with 1 being an idea to continue to develop and 3 being an idea that is interesting but not of high priority at the present time. Write a few lines on the issue ranked 1 and what might be the next steps in developing the idea. Each month, look back at the high-scoring ideas and determine the progress in addressing these ideas. You can now answer the question whether some of these ideas should be dropped because a dead end has been reached.

A few other things that you can include in your journal are:

1. Book and article summaries
2. Meeting notes and your assignments
3. Summary of presentations at meetings
4. Progress notes related to work assignments
5. People to meet with and a brief personal background of these people

A leadership journal needs to be a living document. You can share your ideas or book and article recommendations with other leaders. This will allow idea generation and sharing to be a collaborative activity. **Exercise 4-3** allows you to start your leadership journal. You can use a book or start a journal on your laptop or other electronic device. Journaling is the process of writing in your journal.

EXERCISE 4-2 My Personal Leadership Learning Contract

Purpose: to develop a personal learning contract for the next year

Key Concepts: leadership learning contract, executive or life coach, personal goals

Procedure: Using the five contract questions in this section of the chapter, prepare your plan. Are there other questions you want to add? Discuss your contract in a personal meeting with your instructor playing the role of coach.

> ## EXERCISE 4-3 Leadership Journal
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> **Purpose:** to begin and develop a leadership journal to guide your leadership journey and to document your leadership ideas
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> **Key Concepts:** leadership journal, journaling
>
> **Procedure:** You will develop a leadership journal either On the first entry, decide the topics that your journal will cover. The format of your journal might be a hardcover book or a computer-based one. It is also possible for you to develop your journal using a blog format.

> ## EXERCISE 4-4 Development of a Checklist
>
> **Purpose:** to develop a checklist
>
> **Key Concepts:** public health checklist
>
> **Procedure:** You have a term paper due in 3 weeks. Develop a checklist to help you meet the deadline. Share your checklists in class

PUBLIC HEALTH CHECKLISTS

Another important personal leadership tool is the leader's checklist. A checklist includes a set of steps for carrying out a defined task or activity. The checklist can be used for many activities such as preparing for a vacation, remodeling a kitchen or bathroom, carrying out a case management strategy, responding to a crisis event, or the procedures to follow during brain surgery. Gawande has explored the checklist in detail in his book on the use of the checklist in medicine.[17]

In public health, the checklist can become an important tool for managers and leaders. It is specifically useful when multidisciplinary teams deal with a problem or adaptive challenge. The checklist allows leaders and their teams to outline the process of activities to be items in order, an entire program or activity can be defined. This is important when activity one has to be performed by an intake nurse and has to come before an activity by another health professional. A checklist may help a leader carry out activities in a learning contract. An interesting exception involves the possibility that leadership checklists may be more abstract and involve a number of leadership events that might occur simultaneously. **Exercise 4-4** allows you to experiment with the development of a checklist.

SUMMARY

This chapter introduces us to the first of six leadership levels. Personal leadership development is critical to what happens at all other levels. Certain characteristics seem to apply to most public health leaders. These five characteristics are reviewed in this chapter. Leaders gain knowledge that helps them become more effective leaders. This life-long learning process comes not only from reality-based experience and increasing knowledge of public health information; it also comes from the arts and books from many different fields. Leaders also have to become aware of the way they are seen by others. Presence is very important for leaders. Finally, there are a number of leadership tools presented to help leaders to become more effective and efficient including the development of a personal leadership philosophy, learning contract, leadership journal, and public health checklist.

Discussion Questions

1. Why is personal leadership development important?

2. What are the five essential characteristics of a successful leader? Do you agree with the list?

3. What types of risks do leaders take? Do they have a choice?

4. How do you integrate data from the several leadership tools presented in this chapter?

5. What are five things you can do to improve your personal presence?

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