



CHAPTER 8

Reactive Leadership An Insufficient Triumph of Development

As we look at the Universal Model of Leadership, The Reactive is represented in the bottom half of the circle. Conversations around The Reactive are some of the most subtle and elusive, yet the research is clear that this is how humans operate, and the effectiveness of your leadership and the performance of your business are tied to these factors.

Research (Kegan) shows that 80 % of us are in one of the early stages of personal development. These stages are consistent with the Reactive state of mind. The earlier stages are the ones that allows us to move from adolescences and to fit in participating as post-adolescents in our society - to fit-in a socially sustainable way. But, when we just fit in, at the Reactive consciousness, we are not the subject in our story.

The authors describe the inner pattern of the Reactive mind. In that structure, the Reactive mind holds a purpose of re-establishing safety and stability. It is an effective structure for this purpose, but that purpose has limitations for leadership and high performance in today's complex organizations.

Build common understanding of the chapter terms

- The authors speak to the Reactive Mind as being well suited for the transition from adolescence to adulthood. Describe what this means.
- Discuss the relationship between Reactive Leadership and Business Performance, as correlated on page 156 (Figure 8.1).
- Discuss what the authors mean by identities being configured from the outside-in, to the inside-out.
- Discuss the concept of, there is no safe way to be great, and no great way to be safe. Provide examples, either personal, or from clients, where this concept has resonated.
- Discuss the intentions of each of the Reactive Tendencies (Table 8.1, page 178).

Explore the implications of the chapter concepts for leaders and organizations

- What are the adaptive challenges of the Reactive mind as it relates to an organization that aspires to be more agile, innovative or engaging?
- Discuss the “polarity” between purpose and safety. What are the implications for leaders?
- What is needed to approach a situation with a “Play to Win” mindset, versus a “Playing Not to Lose” mindset?
- The authors cite many reasons why the reactive mind is designed to return to normal. Discuss several of these reasons and the implications for leaders you serve.



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What is new for you? What does this change for you?

- Leadership is defined as the act of creating outcomes that matter most. When have you really focused on leadership with this purpose?
- Find another Taking Stock question to discuss with the group.
- Discuss the graphic on Page 175 (figure 8.8). Discuss examples that provide evidence to this thinking that Reactive Structure seeks equilibrium.
- From the Taking Stock questions on Page 182, discuss scenarios where you have been motivated by love vs. fear.

Take-away Round Robin

- What is your key take-away from today? What action/change can you make?
- What are the key insights in this chapter as it relates to the leaders you support?