

Leadership Styles – Medicine Wheel Model¹

The ideas and beliefs behind the Leadership Wheel have stood the test of time for over 5,000 years. Indigenous peoples from all over the world have surprisingly similar beliefs and archetypes to explain how we humans “walk in this world.” The model provided is based on the wisdom of one of these indigenous peoples, the North American Lakota Sioux and their Medicine Wheel. They teach that we are each born into one primary direction on the Wheel and spend our lives “walking the wheel” to gain the wisdom and understanding of all the directions.

As you read and use the Leadership Wheel, remember:

- All directions can be leadership directions
- Every direction brings wisdom to the table
- Every direction has challenges when over-used
- We ALL have access to ALL the directions

The LEADERSHIP WHEEL: © Highland Consulting Group, Inc.

“The most exciting breakthrough of the 21st century will occur not because of technology, but because of an expanding concept of what it means to be human.”

John Naisbitt

Leadership Compass²

Read the following statements. Put a check next to the statements that strongly resonate with you. Be honest! There are not wrong answers! When you are done, gage your scores with the key on the next page.

- 1. I make space for everyone to be heard and to be engaged in the work
- 2. I am a good listener and have strong facilitation skills
- 3. I avoid conflicts
- 4. I pay attention to the values of a group
- 5. I focus on process instead of goals
- 6. I am sensitive to people’s individual feelings
- 7. I don’t like to take risks
- 8. I have excellent planning and documentation skills
- 9. I am very detail oriented
- 10. I have a tendency to overanalyze
- 11. I am sometimes insensitive to people’s passions
- 12. I high standards for work products
- 13. I sometimes have a hard time making decisions when faced with many options
- 14. I like challenges
- 15. I persevere through obstacles
- 16. I sometimes overlook process
- 17. I am decisive
- 18. I am good at organizing and motivating people for action
- 19. I am often argumentative
- 20. I am often impatient
- 21. I am good at seeing the big picture
- 22. I sometimes lose sight of process and details
- 23. I am innovative
- 24. I like problems solving
- 25. I have difficulty sustaining passion after initial enthusiasm dies down
- 26. I am willing to experiment
- 27. I struggle to follow through

¹ The LEADERSHIP WHEEL: © Highland Consulting Group, Inc.

² Everyday Democracy- Ideas and Tools for Community Change

Nurturer (numbers 1-7) Your Number: _____

- Makes space for everyone to be heard and engaged in the work
- Good listening and facilitation skills
- Avoids conflicts
- Observant of group values
- Focuses on process instead of goals
- Doesn't like to take risks
- Sensitive to people's individual feelings

Mobilizer (numbers 14-20) Your Number: _____

- Likes challenges
- Perseveres through obstacles
- May overlook process
- Decisive
- Good at organizing and motivating people for action
- May be argumentative
- May be impatient

Teacher (numbers 7-13) Your Number: _____

- Excellent planning and documentation skills
- May be averse to risk
- Very detail oriented
- Tendency to overanalyze
- Maybe insensitive to people's passions
- High standards for work product
- May have a hard time making decisions when faced with many options

Visionary (numbers 21-27) Your Number: _____

- Good at seeing the big picture
- May lose sight of process and details
- Innovative
- Likes problems solving
- Has difficulty sustaining passion after initial enthusiasm wanes away
- Willing to experiment
- Struggles to follow through

For Reflection:

1. What are the gifts and challenges of each of these leadership styles? When would appropriate times be to utilize each of these styles?

2. How can all leadership styles be honored within the teams you are part of?

Over functioning/Under functioning/Optimal Functioning:

The goal is for each individual in community to be "optimally functioning – a person who has 100% responsibility for [their] life/role." (Meek³)

Underfunctioning – (Meek)	Overfunctioning (Scazzero⁴)
Rely on others for advice on making decisions	Disguises itself as caring
Communicate a sense of distress/need to others	Responds to people's desire to be rescued from pain
Self Sabotaging	Prevents one from fully functioning in their own roles
Frequently asking for or alluding to need for help	Comes from a place of anxiety

For Reflection:

1. Do you tend to more often fall into overfunctioning or underfunctioning?
2. What do you notice in relationship with others on your team? How might you help support each person on your team to work toward optimal functioning?
3. What's the difference between overfunctioning and supporting?

³ Will Meek, PhD – Licensed Psychologist, <http://www.willmeekphd.com/overfunctioning-underfunctioning/>

⁴ "Overfunctioning" Geri Scazzero, <http://www.emotionallyhealthy.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/overfunctioning.pdf>

The Shadows of Leadership and the Gifts of the Inner Journey (Palmer⁵)

*Parker Palmer is a world-renowned writer, speaker and activist who focuses on issues in education, community, leadership, spirituality and social change. In his book, *Leading From Within*, he describes some of the “shadows”- the dark places – leaders can find themselves in. He also explains that each of these shadows hold an invitation for growth.*

**Insecurity about identity and worth: the plunge into activity to prove that we are worthy, or to evade the question.*

The inner journey helps us understand that identity does not depend on the role we play or the power it gives us over other people. We are valued in and for ourselves.

**Belief that the universe is a battleground, hostile to human interests.*

The inner journey provides the insight that the universe is working together for the good. Harmony is more fundamental than warfare.

**Belief that ultimate responsibility for everything rests with us.*

The inner journey gifts us with the knowledge that we are not the only game in town. We do not need to carry the whole load but can share it with others, liberating us and empowering them.

**Fear, especially fear of the natural chaos of life.*

The inner journey gives us the understanding that chaos is the precondition to creativity.

**Living in denial of the fact that all things must die in due course.*

The inner journey helps us understand that death finally comes to everything – and yet death does not have the final word. By allowing something to die when its time is due, we create the conditions under which new life can emerge.

**The fear of failure.*

The inner journey lets us remember that failure is always a source of new learning.

For Reflection:

1. Which of these shadows most challenges you right now?
2. Where do you see invitations to embrace the gifts of the inner journey connected with that shadow?

***Please come to the session prepared to share a few thoughts on a leader you admire and what traits they exhibit that you respect/would like to emulate.**

⁵ Excerpted from “Leading from Within,” chapter V in, *Let Your Life Speak* by Parker J. Palmer, 2000 Jossey-Bass Publishers.