

# ***Leadership Without Easy Answers***

**By Ronald Heifetz**

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## **Seven Heifetz's Seven Principles of Adaptive Work**

1. ***Providing a holding environment-*** Adaptive work is challenging. Leader have to monitor the amount of stress and burden places on followers, and make sure it stays at a tolerable level to incite work, but not to eliminate all stress. A certain amount of stress is healthy.  
Example of healthy stress for some people: Doing papers at 12 am on the night before they are due.
2. ***Direct attention-*** The leader has to direction attention at the issues that are generating distress. Attention is central to leadership because without attention, no one will listen. At the same time, the attention cannot be focused only on the leader. The issues have to remain the central focus.  
Example of directing attention: Martin Luther King, Jr.

3. ***Access to information-*** Authorities are expected to know so they are given access to all kinds of information. In order to mobilize other followers to do adaptive work, the leader needs to share this information at the right time and pace to maintain the holding environment.

Ex: Doctors releasing correct amounts of information to patients.

4. ***Find the razor's edge-***Leaders have to balance how hard and fast they push people. Too hard and they will push followers to a point of unbearable instability. If leaders push too little, they will be blamed for not working hard enough. Leaders have to walk a fine line between being able to read followers and the environment to know when and how to push.

Five sub principles of the razor's edge:

- A. Identify the adaptive challenges- Diagnose the situation with light of the values at stake, and unbundled the issues that come with.
  - B. Keep the level of distress within a tolerable range for doing adaptive work.
  - C. Focus attention on the ripening issues and not on stress reducing distractions.
  - D. Give the work back to the people, but at a rate they can stand.
  - E. Protect the voices of leadership without authority.
5. ***Orchestrate conflict-*** The leader needs to understand that with any issue, there are a lot of different perspectives and opinions on the issue. A leader has to be able to understand these divisions and try to bring multiple groups together toward a common goal in a way that is value clarifying rather than hostile or destructive.
  6. ***Frame issues-*** Issues have to be framed so that people comprehend and challenge them. Urgency is important in framing issues because it urges people to work harder. Issues have to be put in a way that makes people want to take action. Its' the leader's job to help identify this point.
  7. ***Choosing the decision making process-*** Adaptive situations usually require a more participative process (rather than an autocratic process) because adaptive work requires people to do the work. The decision making process occurs as a result of the holding environment.

## **Heifetz's Seven Practical Suggestions of Adaptive Work (Leadership)**

1. Get on the balcony- You need to be able to both lead and observe. To do so, you need to take time to step outside of your organization or challenge to examine how things are operating.
2. Role/self distinction- We have to be able to see the difference between ourselves and the roles we play so that we don't take to heart negativity that is about our role rather than about ourselves as people.
3. Externalize the conflict- if you have distinguished between yourself and your role, you should be able to focus on the issue at hand, and then turn the issue back to those people who are doing adaptive work. Internalizing conflicts allows us to get too wrapped up in them. We personalize them and let our emotions interfere. It becomes a personal problem or attack when that isn't really the case.
4. Partners
  - a. confidant- those you can cry out to and complain to
  - b. ally- partner who has some sort of boundary but with whom you share points of view. You don't share everything.
5. Find a sanctuary- Leaders need a place to get away to really be able to be oneself. Expect to be swept up in leadership, but also need a quiet place to regain perspective and spiritual peace.
6. Preserve a sense of purpose- From time to time, one needs to step back and look at why he or she is in a leadership position and has committed to a cause. More so, the sense of purpose keeps people asking what the next adaptive challenge will be. It also helps us refocus and change the plan of attack if needed.
7. Listen to one's self and others- Leaders need to know their own biases in order to help with others. This requires us to take a step back, listen to what others say, and evaluate if our perceptions of what people say are accurate. Listening requires living with doubt because we can never exactly interpret what about person is saying because we don't have their frame of reference (context).