



Applying Neuroscience to Leadership Our Recommendations

Here are brief ideas on how to incorporate neuroscience and psychology-based approaches into your leadership of others.

<p>1. Pay attention to managing the emotional climate in your workplace e.g. cultivating a safe but challenging environment</p>	<p>All conscious thoughts pass through emotion centres - emotions will affect what and how we think.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Manage workloads and priorities effectively and realistically• Identify and remove emotional 'downers' in policies, processes, procedures etc• Compare and contrast performance in times of positive/negative affect – extract and act on learning from this
<p>2. Challenge your habituated thinking and behaviour on a regular basis</p>	<p>Estimates suggest 40-80% of what we do on a regular basis is driven by habits!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Make minor changes to routines – e.g. routes you take to work and within the work environment• Interact with people who hold different views to you and consider the merits of their thinking• Actively use frameworks & tools that help you to think in alternative ways
<p>3. Use brain-friendly techniques to support problem solving e.g. taking time away from the problem, changing your environment etc</p>	<p>A positive mood compared to an anxious/negative one leads to more ideas and 'better' ideas – Perfect for solving problems!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use models/frameworks to help broaden and diversify what you consider and think• Initially do brainstorming individually, then share/compare ideas• Try to do your problem solving away from your usual work environment – outdoors is great
<p>4. Apply good brain health practices e.g. sleep, exercise, diet, challenge, novelty, rest etc</p>	<p>Approximately 20% of all the calories you ingest will be used by your brain – it can't store them like the body and will need a regular supply to help you be at your cognitive best.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure you 'fuel' your brain by not missing fuel stops such as breakfast, lunch, breaks etc• Sleep has a huge effect on all the cells in the body, your emotional regulation and many cognitive tasks – Aim for a regular seven hours a night• Your conscious, rational thinking ability will be reduced as you do activities that require it – you will need rest and 'refuel' during the day to restore your abilities





CHECKLIST

<p>5. Practice developing a positive mindset and nurture positivity in those around you</p>	<p>Individuals and organisations that adopt a high level of positive focus show a wide range of benefits re. interpersonal relationships, creativity & innovation, reduced stress and higher levels of profitability.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• In regular meetings balance any exploration on what hasn't gone to plan with specific time spent on what has worked well• When things go well or to plan, ask why – share insights gained to improve other projects or to maintain current success• Help people visualise what a positive future will look like, how they will feel and what is required to get there
<p>6. Provide as much certainty and control to others as you can</p>	<p>The brain wants to be able to predict the future, so it can help keep us safe when it arrives. Inability to do this fuels anxiety and other negative emotions – reducing morale, creativity, risk taking, engagement etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• In times of uncertainty be clear on how long the period of uncertainty will last and what is happening during this time• Be clear about what is and isn't up for discussion and how people can get involved• Create time, structure, support for people to explore contexts and discuss and share ideas/opinions
<p>7. Consider PFC capacity (cognitive & attentional resources) when planning schedules and workloads</p>	<p>The Pre-frontal cortex (PFC) runs our conscious, rational thinking. It's a very limited resource that runs out of fuel much like a battery, this is when emotions and habits will take over until it is 'recharged'.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prioritise and schedule effectively – tackle mentally challenging tasks when you feel most 'mentally charged' often earlier in the day/week• Focus – avoid 'multitasking' and interruptions• Recharge – look back at good brain health practices (see No. 4)
<p>8. Consider 'Head, Heart and Hands' aspects equally?</p>	<p>Our desire to see progress at work can often mean we expect people to move from understanding to action without appreciating the psychological journey we have navigated and the resources and control we had.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Logic/data alone is a poor persuader so pay equal attention to emotions & feelings as well as to the practical aspects of change• Depending on the context, ensure time is given to allow people to express their feelings (anxiety and enthusiasm) and then take appropriate actions• Make sure people know what is expected of them and have the information, resources to help them do it.
<p>9. Provide constructive, future focussed feedback to others</p>	<p>People are more motivated by recognising a sense of progress than attaining an end goal.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure a supportive climate and process for delivering feedback is in place and used• For complex tasks/roles use specific 'SMART' goals in small doses and focus on adopting a supportive style; emphasise learning, behaviour and how challenges will be overcome• Life has more regular small events than big events – deliver feedback in this manner – little and often





CHECKLIST

10. Take a structured approach to embedding new habits e.g. reminders, repetition, reward

Initial learning uses existing neuronal pathways and quickly decays without repeated use. To develop new pathways that ensure new habits stick:

- 'Convince' your brain you mean things to change, use attention density (Frequency – Duration – Depth of interacting with the new thinking/behaviour)
- Break habits into Cues – Routines – Rewards. Use these aspects to help break or build habits
- Frame habit changes positively – document progress – remember to reward

At think. change. we are passionate about sharing our knowledge of neuroscience and psychology and their practical use in the workplace. If you would like to know more about any aspect of this then please get in touch.

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