

SUPERCHARGE YOURSELF AND YOUR ORGANIZATION'S CULTURE

FROM STRESSED TO RESILIENT

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Have you ever noticed how some people are unflappable while others broadcast stress? We'd all like to be and work with the former.

Consider how behavior affects culture. An organization's culture is the atmosphere that emerges as a consequence of behavior, especially the behavior of the leaders and especially under stress. Thus, culture is determined by the degree to which leaders are resilient or reactive, and act in a manner that communicates a problem-solving mindset, or fears, stress, and blame.

William L. Sparks, PhD, expertly describes the relationship between stress, leadership, and culture with his Actualized Leadership Framework. He based the Framework on the seminal works of Abraham Maslow, David McClelland, Carl Jung, and Viktor Frankl, garnering the following five key concepts:

1. Self-actualization is living to one's full potential (Maslow);
2. The three motivations that drive people to varying degrees are achievement, affiliation, and power (McClelland);
3. Shadow behaviors are the result of the emotional and negative thinking that can be triggered by the stress and fears associated with each motive driver (Jung);
4. People have the freedom to choose a response, attitude, and approach to anyone and in any situation (Frankl); and
5. Paradoxical intent, which posits that the more one fears something, the more likely one is to experience it (Frankl).

Pursuant to the Framework, these concepts mean that a "self-actualized" person lives to his highest potential because of the capacity to operate well -- stay out of the shadow -- when faced with difficulties. A self-actualized person is level-headed, recognizing that he has a choice in how he thinks, feels, and acts. The self-actualized person can choose equanimity over fear. When a leader and team members embody such thinking, the culture is optimistic, resilient, effective, and solution-oriented.



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LEADERSHIP STYLES

Table 1 describes the three leadership styles as defined by McClelland's motive drivers and their respective strengths, fears, shadow behaviors, and self-actualized behaviors. Self-actualized behavior is how a person can act by avoiding the fear-trap and instead maintaining a level-headed mindset.



TABLE 1: LEADERSHIP STYLES

Leadership Style	Strengths	Shadow (Under Stress)	Self-Actualized Behavior
ACHIEVER Motivation: Achievement Fear: Failure	Organized Detailed Structured Thorough Analytical	Micromanager Tedious and cautious Perfectionist Critical Narrow-minded	Detailed, yet conceptual Organized, yet flexible
AFFIRMER Motivation: Affiliation Fear: Rejection	Friendly Helpful Trusting Trustworthy Humble Altruistic	Conflict avoidant Personalizes Indecisive Devalues own needs/wants Sensitive Anxious	Friendly, yet courageous Empathetic, yet candid
ASSERTER Motivation: Power Fear: Betrayal	Confident Decisive Competitive Courageous Strategic	Controlling Arrogant Impatient Condescending Manipulative	Confident, yet humble Competitive, yet caring of others

Let's look more closely at each of the styles.

The Achiever. Achievers are motivated by achievement – success through technical expertise – and consequently develop deep expertise. They are also more likely to succumb to the shadow Fear of Failure when stressed by triggers such as ambiguity of the task, imperfection of the outcome, or the prospect of losing something valuable. The Achiever in all of us can choose the Fear of Failure Shadow, resorting to micromanagement and being overly cautious, perfectionistic, critical, or stubborn. These behaviors disempower the team, all but guaranteeing failure. This is Frankl's concept "paradoxical intent." The more an Achiever fears failure, the more likely the Achiever will cause failure with fear-driven behaviors. The whammy? When in the shadow, the Achiever truly believes that micromanaging is necessary to avoid failure.

The Affirmer. Similarly, Affirmers are motivated by relationships; the corresponding fear is rejection. When stressed by triggers such as potential conflict, hurting another's feelings, or angering another, Affirmers can choose to let the Fear of Rejection drive behavior. When in one's shadow, team members tell themselves their behaviors are necessary to repair or cement the relationship when those conflict-avoidant behaviors actually make matters worse. Indeed, by failing to address obvious problems, performance issues, or anything uncomfortable, the team does not function well. Further, if team members are not candid with each other, problems are left unresolved, and paradoxically conflict festers.

The Asserter. Finally, the Asserter is motivated by power and control, which manifests as independence and the capacity to drive results. The Asserter fears betrayal, which includes being either intentionally or inadvertently undermined by incompetence. When stressed by triggers such as vulnerability, having to ask for forgiveness, or not knowing, and choosing to let the Fear of Betrayal govern behavior, the Asserter can become bullying and controlling. As with the other shadows, these behaviors compromise the team's performance as team members spend more energy on avoiding angering the leader than the work. Members leave the team or are afraid to take the initiative because it feels too risky. Worse yet, when in the shadow, the Asserter tells himself that the behaviors are necessary to avoid betrayal and ensure results.



We all experience all three shadows – sometimes concurrently. Consider the last time you were impatient — you likely were chafing against the lack of control and were concerned that you wouldn't get the desired results. You were in your Fear of Betrayal Shadow. Consider a time when you took things personally or became obsessed over every little detail. Those were the Affirmer Shadow and the Achiever Shadow, respectively. Note also how one person's shadow can be triggering for another.

EFFECT OF SHADOWS ON CULTURE

Now that we've laid the foundation for the connection between the person's shadow and team performance, we can further explore how culture - the group's collective emotional intelligence - is shaped by the manifestation of leadership styles, shadows, and self-actualization.

As you review Tables 2 and 3, know that the ideal culture is a blend of conscious as depicted Table 2, and unconscious behaviors. Table 3 summarizes the impact of an actualized culture, shadow culture, and how to achieve for the former when you have the latter.

TABLE 2: SELF-ACTUALIZATION AND THE CONSCIOUS CORRESPONDING CULTURE

Conscious Behaviors	Dynamic Culture	Maintaining a Dynamic Culture
Listens Candid Respectful Caring Reasonable Empathetic Conceptual Confident Curious Humble Flexible Resilient Thoughtful	Although some emotionality exists, it does not hinder productivity. Team members are rational, realistic, responsible, and mature. They communicate honestly and directly, and diverse opinions are expressed openly and without fear of retribution. The organization is productive and effective, which facilitates learning, synergy, and satisfaction.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect the team from too many external distractions or influences. • Celebrate team successes and achievements. • Provide ongoing performance feedback. • Provide necessary resources for the group to perform at optimal levels. • Stay out of the way! Do not attempt to micromanage.

TABLE 3: ACTUALIZED AND SHADOW CULTURES

Actualized Culture	Shadow Culture	Transforming to Dynamic
Independent	Detached: Anger & Apathy Fear of Failure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Realize that surface problems are often symptomatic of the real underlying issue(s). Allow to acknowledge anger. Resolve issues of power, authority, and responsibility. Develop and implement team decision-making processes that seek input and consensus. Encourage participation from all members to develop or revise the team's charter or mission.
Ownership Dig in Initiative Serious Deliver Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delays making commitments or difficult decisions. Some team members don't participate. Physical and psychological withdrawal. Lacks an overall sense of "us" or "we" or "team". Greater focus on individual agendas. 	
Collegial	Dramatic: Frustration & Despair Fear of Rejection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide honest, critical feedback. Address poor performance, unrealistic expectations, or obvious problems. Set challenging performance goals and standards. Appoint individual members to serve as "Devil's Advocate" to critique the team's performance, plans and decisions. Encourage expression of concerns, doubts, or criticism.
Friendly Inclusive Supportive Community Dedicated Courageous	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Norm of politeness. Warm, friendly atmosphere. Looks to the future for salvation. Differences "smoothed over" rather than resolved. Lacks candor/direct communication. Gossip, triangulation, and unresolved complaints. 	

TABLE 3 - CONT.

Actualized Culture	Shadow Culture	Transforming to Dynamic
Aligned	<p>Dependent: Fear & Anxiety Fear of Betrayal</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide clear direction and purpose. • Involve members in developing specific performance goals. • Provide members with enough information to move from dependence to interdependence. • Allow members to clarify and communicate their roles and expectations to the entire team. • Develop a "Responsibility Grid" that clearly indicates member responsibility.
<p>Interdependent Risk/reward Take charge Progress Strategic Fearless</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members look to leader for direction and protection and expect others to run meetings and complete tasks. • An over-reliance on the opinions of a few select team members. • Leaders act without consulting team members. • Members fail to ask clarifying questions or challenge assumptions or solutions. 	



HOW TO IMPROVE INDIVIDUAL RESILIENCE & ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

Which descriptions most accurately describe your culture? How might your behavior contribute to your organization's culture? What can you do differently to supercharge your organization's culture?

The answer? Make it more Dynamic. Here's how.

- 1 **Take care of yourself.** This means caring for your mind, body, and spirit.
- 2 **Ask yourself, who do I want to be?** How do you want to show up? Be intentional and stretch. It's ok to struggle a bit and you're strengthening your resilience.
- 3 **Recognize** when your fears cloud your judgment. When you are stressed, pause to objectively assess and distinguish fears from facts. Not only does this improve your own resilience, but even if you're not a leader, you improve the culture by eschewing your own shadows. Adopting a problem-solving mindset likewise improves culture. It keeps you present and focused on the work, keeping your mind from wandering into those dark and shadowy places.
- 4 **Note** which circumstances trigger your shadows and take steps to get out of your shadow. Be vigilant, choosing your strengths and self-actualized behaviors. You will be more resilient and feel better as you quiet negative thoughts. Others will appreciate your calm. Remember, shadow behaviors never improve a situation. Rather, they bring about the very disaster you fear. Leaders, you have the greatest impact on culture. Thus, it's incumbent upon you to improve your self-actualization.



5 Focus on what's important; help and empathize with colleagues. The focus on your priorities eschews the distraction caused by another's shadow. Identify the colleague's shadow, listen, be empathetic, and offer supportive suggestions, focusing on the objective facts that refute the fear. Don't let a colleague's shadow trigger your own by taking anything personally.

6 Consider how your behavior might affect culture. Implement the advice in Tables 2 and 3 to transform your team into a more Dynamic team.

We've only scratched the surface, but if you're curious about your primary leadership style, go to <https://alpfree.com/arudia/> and take the short-form free version of the Actualized Leader Profile. And yes, you can supercharge your own and your culture's resilience!



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