

Conflict Recovery - The Four Fundamental Principles (Part 2)

Principle # 2

“A Lion’s Heart” – Courage To Act

Reflection is the first step. After taking strategic pauses, leaders need to act and act decisively. Conflict recovery takes courage. Leaders need to make personal decisions to help them recover. It may mean acknowledging our role in conflict, adopting a new mindset, making lifestyle changes, and moving on.

Relationally, there is no guarantee that relationship with conflicting parties will return to normalcy. A failed relationship must not prevent us from building new relationships and forge stronger old relationships. Paradoxically, acting courageously sometimes may mean waiting for ourselves and the conflicting person to recover. It takes time.

Thirty odd years ago, I fractured my right thigh while playing rugby. Till today, I had never fully recovered from that injury. My left leg is shorter than the right and I still have difficulty stooping. If physical fracture takes so long to heal, how much more will emotional scars?

However, that fracture did not stop me from walking, running, or bicycling. I recovered by continually using it, knowing at the same time, my limitations and that I may fracture it again.

This is the same as relational recovery. Relationship may not return to 'business as usual'. It will not stop me from risking new relationships and strengthening old ones.

Organizationally, to act means to rebuild the team that is left behind by re-challenging them to a fresh vision, re-establishing core values, re-setting realistic goals, re-prioritizing activities, re-learning from mistakes and most of all, re-strengthening the trust. In other words, the leader needs to take charge and move the team on.

Remember, indecision is decision. As someone wisely says, "Procrastination is the door to 'too late'."

Principle # 3

“Gentle as A Lamb” – Humble Enough to Apologize & Forgive

After the humiliating and domino-effect type failures, humility is a key ingredient to making conflict recovery work. Pride is the great curse of most CEOs and it often prevents them from recovering effectively. In Asia, face-protection is another culprit that prevents conflict recovery.

Obviously, we have made some errors in judgment. We have made mistakes ourselves. But we refuse to acknowledge or/and apologize. Instead, we justify. We blame others. There is no doubt that others may have precipitated the downfall. But we need to bear our responsibility in the conflict.

I have seen this often enough. Leaders refused to acknowledge their roles in the conflict and in areas that they have done wrong. The irony is that their failures are so obvious to others except to themselves.

One CEO confessed, “‘I am wrong’ is the most difficult three words to say. But when I say it, it frees me to reconnect with my team. Somehow, there seems to be a renewed energy that flows out of this.

They begin to realize that the boss is human after all. They are also freed to learn from their mistakes.”

Self-deception is a great enemy in the recovery process. We believe we are right when most people see how wrong we are.

Sometimes, our refusal to admit mistakes is because we want to cling on to power at all cost and we refuse to bear the consequences of our failures.

Sometimes, we may truly have been innocent victims of conspiracy. Humility in this case may involve accepting the consequences and moving on. Groveling in self-pity or/and bitterness only worsens the situation. Retaliating in revenge often spiral us downwards. Humility may involve non-retaliating and agreeing to disagree.

Recovery is only possible when there is humility.

The Enron trial is a case in point. It was heartening to note that Andrew Fasco, the Financial Wizard and the supposedly master-mind behind the Enron affairs, finally admitted his mistakes, as reported by the April 2006 issue of Fortune Magazine. In that I see hope. In contrast, Jeffrey Skilling and Kenneth Lay are still in denial. In that I see disaster.

Principle #4 “Wounded Healer” – Reach Out to Reach In

That is the paradox of our recovery. Recovery begins with self-reflection but it must move on to be other-centered again. “Self Pre-occupation” will suck us in. “Other Pre-occupation” will lift us out.

Being wounded is part and parcel of all relationships. In the process of cultivating the ability and capacity to rebuild relationships again that the healing takes place within us. To recover is to recognize our frailty and fallibility and yet have the ability to reach out to other relationships with warmth and genuineness.

To borrow a term from Henri Nouwen, a noted Jesuit priest and author, “We are truly wounded healers: Healing to Heal.”

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What are the principles to keep in mind in Conflict Recovery? Read ***Conflict Recovery - The Four Fundamental Principles (Part 1)***

“When the conflict gets tougher and tougher, recovery is all the more necessary”. Learn the importance of conflict recovery. Read ***Conflict Recovery – A Fresh Approach To Conflict Management.***

Learn Leadership lessons from the NKF saga. Read How the Mighty Can Fall... Unraveling the NKF Leadership Fallout (Part 2).