

Layers of the Making Good Exercise in WeLead Session #2: Making Others Good

STAGE 1: Understanding

1. Concept of Making Bad and Making Good

Often, when we make bad, through judging, criticizing, withholding help, being skeptical, assuming ill intent, we don't even think about it. We just believe that our thoughts are real and accurate. So, the first lesson is to note that making bad is a mental orientation that we fall into.

2. Making Good is a choice

No one wakes up in the morning and decides to Make Bad. Because we are semi-consciously preoccupied with our self worth (e.g., Desired and Dreaded Images), we often fall into proving and defensive routines. All of these self-preservation behaviors, as a consequence, make others bad. Unless we make a conscious decision to Make Good, we will often Make Bad, especially with people who think differently, have different personalities, and/or are in other parts of the organization.

3. Making Good is hard to do—because our ego is invested in Making Bad

The self-fulfilling prophecy chart reveals that it's not just a coincidence that we have beliefs about others that cause them to react in ways that reinforce our initial beliefs. Those beliefs also serve our ego. We feel superior and righteous. We don't have to question our view of reality or how things should work. It's not our fault if things fail or underperform. In many situations and relationships, it is comfortable—even gratifying—to make others bad. We won't stop making bad unless we are willing to experience the vulnerable feelings of not being good enough, perhaps being wrong, or at fault.

STAGE 2: Taking a Stand

4. Committing to Make Good

First, recognizing that Making Good is a choice is different than *deciding* to Make Good. The former is intellectually interesting; the latter strips our ego of its most oft-used defense mechanism.



Then, *committing* moves us from “that would be a good thing to try” to “you can count on me to Make Good.”

This closes our exit doors (excuses).

5. Declaring our Commitment...

Declaring this commitment, out loud to others, raises the stakes even higher. Now my colleagues or family members know what my intentions are and can hold me accountable if I come up short.

It's a first opportunity to act in alignment with what I want, regardless of the mind chatter of my ego.

6. ...In a very specific way, with prescribed words

This is the biggest stumbling block. Why these words, and why do I have to say it this specific way, just like everyone else?

The first reminder is that no one *has* to say anything. It is an opportunity. Many people don't do it, and there is no consequence.

We aim to define "Making Good" through different exercises, so it has shared meaning. We name a number of ways to Make Good, and there are probably 30+ more we don't name. We propose it as a meta-intention that may call on us to listen in one circumstance and give difficult feedback in another; suspend our judgments and beliefs with some people, and admit what feels vulnerable to others. Committing to Make Good is shorthand for not allowing myself to be at the mercy of my ego and perpetuate the consequences of my reactive behaviors onto the people around me.

However, it is also an annoying phrase. “Good” has connotations that can set people off. It can feel like a church revival, or self-serving for LaL. And anyway, “can't I say it my own way (i.e., commit on my own terms)?” (The question is, does it work when team members each commit to a project or a strategy on their own terms? Or are silent, so a leader doesn't really know if his or her team is bought in?)

The point is, this phrase was designed to set off certain common ego triggers (e.g., being unique, feeling peer pressure). This is the provocative piece of the exercise.

STAGE 3: Practicing Constructive Conflict

7. How we talk about our disagreement with the exercise reflects how we talk about disagreement in life

Are we angry? Shut down? Do we think the facilitators are exerting peer pressure, abusing their authority, or asking something unreasonable of us, but we're not saying anything? Or, we're aggressive and critical? Or are we saying the words because that's what's expected, but we don't really mean them?

Whatever the reaction of each participant, it's not a coincidence or isolated to this exercise.

In theory, when we encounter a situation that doesn't make sense to us, we could ask exploratory questions, and create a dialogue. Instead, we often end up in our "Tanks." This happens when we are triggered.

We ask people to note their mind chatter, feelings and reactions on their notebook, so that they can learn to recognize the types of ego threat/hot buttons they have—to catch "their hand in the cookie jar" of their common reactions. It's one thing to fill in a chart analyzing our behavior. It's another to see it happening in real time, in a controlled learning environment, so we can see what we do elsewhere.

Or alternatively, some people use this exercise to practice publicly leaning into conflict in a productive way, as an opportunity to develop constructive conflict skills.

What came up for you?