



The Life Stream

Leadership Capacity Building

The *life stream* represents events you accumulate from birth to the present that shape how you choose to influence others and yourself. Two people may experience similar events in their respective life streams at the same point in their leadership development, but end up being very different in terms of their leadership potential. One person

may become devastated and unable to ever fully recover, while the other becomes inspired, and goes on to change the world.

Finding Meaning

How meaning is attached to significant life events, and then what we do with that meaning, determines what we learn and incorporate into our own developmental potential. There are many great opportunities to learn from events, reflect on them, and enhance our model of leadership potential. Erich Fromm said that, “Some people die before they are fully born.”

Leadership development is event-driven, whether those trigger events occur naturally or are inserted in a more strategic or systematic sense. The choices you make can help determine how your leadership development emerges. Not every event is critical, but the accumulation of many events over time gives us choices that can shape how we develop as leaders.

Reflecting on Events

Reflection is one of our most powerful tools to help us challenge the way we view the world around us. Whether events that we create or events that we have no control over, squeeze out as much as you can learn about your personal development and the development of others! During or after events you can reflect on what was important, what caused the event, how you dealt with the event while it was happening, and how you could have avoided this event. If the event was positive, how could future similar events be replicated and continue to add value? Successful leaders do not move away from failures without learning something significant. Not learning from failures is yet another compounded failure.

Living and Learning from Events

We know the future by carefully observing the present in which we are embedded. Many leaders are described as seeing the future in the evolving present. A guide on the river will describe the types of rapids ahead by her observations of the water around her. You can think in advance of how to prepare for them, even avoid them if they are too treacherous. By exploring alternatives in the future of what you dream about in terms of what you can accomplish, you can begin to configure events and experiences that can shape the course of your life stream. Think of the power that we have to define our own leadership potential just by the way we interpret events or make sense of events. The interpretation of events builds in each of us a unique life construct or internal model, which becomes the lens that we use to view the world around us. ***How do you view the world?***

Adapted for the CPEC HS/EHS Team from:

Avolio, B. (2005) Leadership Development in Balance: Made/Born. Mahwah, NJ. Erlbaum Associates.