



Greater Valley Forge HR Summit

# Help Your Leaders Lead Across The “Optimism Gap”

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## What we're going to do

- Define the problem
- Establish some context
- Look at a real case
- Study the underlying causes
- Develop a solution

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## Define The Problem

### **FACT:**

Leaders are more resilient and more optimistic than the people they lead.

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## SO WHAT???



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- Communication disconnects
  - Change resistance
  - Blown deadlines
  - Incomplete projects
  - Lowered engagement
  - Etc.

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## Some Context

- 1997 – Adaptiv Learning Systems
- Core content licensed from University of Pennsylvania – Dept. of Psychology – Seligman lab

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## Some Context

- Research-based, empirically validated, skills-based training

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## Some Context

- The RFI - Valid & reliable resilience assessment

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## Some Context

- To date:
  - 32,000+ measured
  - 25,000+ trained
  - 1,800+ coached

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## The 7 Adaptiv Resilience Factors

Emotion Regulation  
Impulse Control  
Causal Analysis  
Self-efficacy  
Realistic Optimism  
Empathy  
Reaching Out

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## The 7 Adaptiv Resilience Skills

1. Discovering Your Emotion Radar
2. Avoiding Thinking Traps
3. Navigating Problem Icebergs
4. Getting Flexible Around Your “Why?” Style ✓
5. Harnessing Positive Emotion Radars
6. Tapping Into Positive Icebergs
7. Creating Connection

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## Case Study

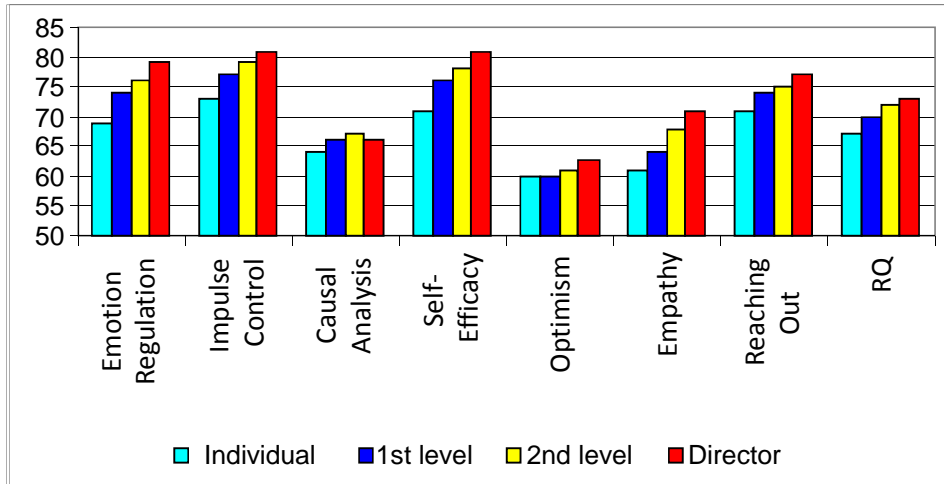
### Verizon Telecommunications

- Business unit – 375 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> level managers
- We measured their resilience
- What we found...

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## Resilience by level



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## “Why? Style”

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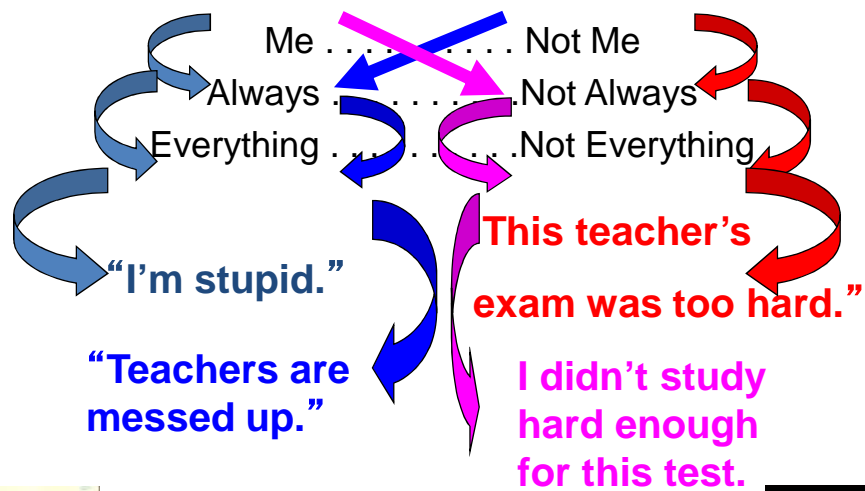


## “Why?” Style

- Our thinking style for explaining the bad stuff to ourselves
- Learned by middle childhood
- Becomes a habit
- Automatic belief about **why** it happened
- Sometimes right, often wrong
- Made up of 3 parts

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## The 3 Dimensions of Why? Style





## Why? Style – Me vs. Not Me

A task you delegate doesn't get done right or on time. **WHY?**

**ME** – I'm not good at delegating.

**Not ME** – She doesn't take direction well.

You have a brief but heated argument with a colleague. **WHY?**

**ME** – I've been under stress and had a short fuse lately.

**Not ME** – She's been under stress and had a short fuse lately.

## Why? Style – Always vs. Not Always

Event: Your boss takes issue with your idea for a new onboarding process. **WHY?**

**ALWAYS** – He never agrees with anything I say.

**Not ALWAYS** – I haven't given her enough detail about my plan.

Event: One of your friends is struggling with math. **WHY?**

**ALWAYS** – He's bad at math.

**Not ALWAYS** – He didn't study enough last time.

**ALWAYS** – I'm not good at helping him with math.

**Not ALWAYS** – I didn't have time to help him study for the exam.

**Bad  
At  
Math  
F**

## Why? Style – Everything – Not Everything

Your spouse or significant other rejects every suggestion you make about where to go out for dinner. **WHY?**

**EVERYTHING** – She's stubborn.

**Not EVERYTHING** – He's a finicky eater.

A new HRIS implementation is creating headaches in your organization. **WHY?**

**EVERYTHING** – Our IT department is incompetent.

**Not EVERYTHING** – This new system is complex but worthwhile.

## What is your *Why?* Style?

I tend to be more of a:

- Me .....  Not Me  
 Always .....  Not Always  
 Everything ...  Not Everything



## Leading Across The “Optimism Gap”

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## The Optimism Gap

- Most of your leaders are:  
**Me, Not Always, Not Everything**  
or  
**Not Me, Not Always, Not Everything**
- But their staffs will be overrepresented on  
**Always & Everything**

What is the impact of this?

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## Discussion

- What are some attributes of a resilient, optimistic leader
- How do their reports perceive these attributes?
- What are some problems this can cause?

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### Leader is:

Optimistic  
Assertive  
Persistent  
Directive  
Mission Driven  
Results-oriented

### Employee thinks leader is:

Unrealistic  
Pushy  
Stubborn  
Disinterested in my ideas  
Pushing the “party line”  
Impatient

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## Table Talk

Discuss among yourselves:

- How to guide a leader to communicate down with greater impact and better results
- Be prepared to report out

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## Additional Resources

GVFHRA Summit Resilience Resource Page

<http://adaptivlearning.com/gvfhra14>

Contains:

- Today's slide set
- Access to the Resilience Factor Inventory® (RFI)
- A checklist to help you help your leaders
- By bio with contact info
- Some additional documents about resilience

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