

## State of Mind & the Influential Leader

Nowadays we often hear and speak about a person's state or frame of mind without giving it a second thought. What I would like to do is explore this very commonly used phrase - and its role within leadership. Mental state, temporary psychological condition or well-being, mindset, the way an individual sees life in that moment, state of thinking, thinking and feeling in the moment, level of mental well-being - all are descriptions of the same thing - State of Mind. They all share a commonality, that is, they are all about our thinking or the thought processes which occur within our mind via what we think...

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In determining our state of mind, the 'in the moment' nature of our thinking is a vital aspect. And our state of mind is directly linked to our feelings or emotional state. To summarise, State of Mind is:

- ✓ What I think; and
- ✓ What I think is a momentary manifestation of my reality; and
- ✓ What I think affects my emotional experience in the moment

People often refer to state of mind as healthy or unhealthy. In essence, those states manifest as secure or insecure. For instance, there is a buoyancy, robustness or openness to change, when our state of mind is secure. Conversely, in an insecure state of mind, our minds are cluttered, confused, obsessed and fixated by what I think. In consequence, our feelings are unhealthy and not in service to ourselves or others. Of course, the opposite is true when we have a secure state of mind.

Before we move onto the topic of leadership it is important to explore the meaning of influence. In this present context, influence is about a person's ability to bring about change - within a group or organisation or within an individual. The quality of the change is not important; influence is about the ability to move or persuade.

## Influential Leadership

Influential leadership can be both healthy or unhealthy. For example, a leader who has a positive influence may be seen as having:

1. Collegial and friendly relationships, even familial in many ways
2. The ability to both leverage goodwill and focus skills for the common good
3. Enablement of others' self-assurance and confidence
4. Relationships where errors can be a learning opportunity and skill development
5. Self-sustaining productivity: taking action independent of his or her influence
6. High standards of self-performance: doing one's best is synonymous
7. High levels of communication: deep listening and authentic conversations are commonplace

Conversely, unhealthy leaders influence by fear - depend on power and control, use manipulation, seduction, anger, communication by demand and superiority.

The connection between healthy and unhealthy influential leadership is simply the state of mind of the leader. In the healthy or secure state of mind, leaders are not obsessed by what they think. Their minds are open, flexible and curious, and their commonsense guides them. Poor leadership on the other hand, is typified by intractable thinking - a state of mind in which their way of seeing things - their reality - is all consuming. Hence, what I think is more important than anything else, even the quality of my influence or relationships.

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Interestingly, some people, even though they don't have authority, status or position, still have a powerful influence or sway over others. This too can be both healthy and unhealthy. For good or ill, the essence of the leadership relies solely on how secure (or otherwise) our state of mind is in the moment.

Positive influential leadership is about SEEING the power of our State of Mind. ■ ■