



mhca's e-Newsletter

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## Leading with the Brain in Mind

*A Guest Article from Speaker, Author & Coach Dee O'Neill*

Leadership approaches are as varied as leaders themselves, as well as their organizations or industries. A couple of common leadership theories are to “lead from the front” or “lead from behind” - but what if there were a more brain-science-based, strategic and significantly more impactful “way” to lead?

One constant across all organizations is that the individuals who are serving in and being served by them all have brains! At a former workplace, I co-developed and led an executive training program we called “Leading from the Frontal Lobe” (frontal lobe definition: the front-most part of your brain, responsible for control over many abilities, including critical thinking, processing, and memory. It also helps regulate social skills, helping understand and control behavior and interacting with others).

The work centered around the advancing brain science on what drives and what drains brain health and performance, particularly the prefrontal cortex and the executive functions based in that area. The curriculum informed ways to not only better manage, but to also optimize how brains respond and relate to stress and burnout, and to increase critical thinking and problem-solving.

During those years, I was struck by the utter simplicity of most of the tools and tactics covered, such as why

multitasking is not only ineffective but possibly harmful to the brain. As well as the science behind taking brain breaks and prioritizing task lists to enhance productivity.

The more advanced set of strategies under the umbrella of "Innovation", focusing on ways to expand perspectives and curiosity were never fully developed or well-designed. In full transparency, these often fell flat with corporate groups and were never well understood, nor actionable.

In my own dedication to further elucidate brain-based strategies for innovative and creative thinking, I am excited to showcase for you at the spring conference in Milwaukee a couple of highly-researched, efficacy-based, and overall very cool forward-looking topics that I expect you will find interesting, informative and ideally impactful and inspiring.

Two new brain science advances we will cover will be how the fundamental human emotion of "Awe" has been shown to have benefits surpassing many traditional mental health interventions, and the advances in understanding the complex ways our brains respond to stories from both the speaker perspective as well as the listener perspective.

Emotions and how they impact are the foundation of both sessions. In the realm of emotion research, there are multiple theories on how many basic human emotions we possess, anywhere from 5 to 10 or more have been postulated. If you have seen the wonderfully adorable yet amazingly accurate-based-on-neuroscience movie "Inside Out", remember that it depicted five different emotions as animated characters: Joy, Fear, Sadness, Disgust and Anger. Other researchers in psychology have added more fundamental emotions such as Surprise, Trust, and Anticipation to the list, and still another adds Excitement and Contempt.

Note that only one of the five core is a positive emotion, Joy, with the other four being essentially a continuum of negative, or certainly less resourceful emotions, from sadness and fear to disgust and anger. The future will optimistically involve longer lists that may more precisely capture the experience of awe, such as surprise and excitement.

Please look forward to interactive and conversational experiences to more fully appreciate and actionably apply the concepts and strategies we will explore. The goal of sharing this content is to provide science-informed strategies to increase our capacity to be more mindful, resilient and empowered.

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*Dee O'Neill is a keynote speaker (check out her [Tedx on Stress](#)), author ([Brain B.A.S.I.C.S.](#) on Amazon), facilitator, and licensed professional counselor ([neurofitnow.com](#)). She has been in the field of brain science for over 20 years helping clients and leadership teams create and sustain fulfilling and high-performance roles, workplaces, and lives, by educating, enhancing, and empowering optimal brain health. We look forward to her sessions at our [Spring Conference in Milwaukee](#). Her sessions will be video recorded so you can play them for your whole team following the conference.*



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