The Wise Advocate

The Inner Voice of Strategic Leadership

Art Kleiner
art@well.com
Bill O’Rourke and the Belaya Kalitva plant
Decision challenge

**MOMENT OF CHOICE**

**TRANSACTIONAL**
You solve the problem, or make the deal, focusing on what people want. You are expedient and know how to get things done.

**STRATEGIC**
You focus not just on what people want, but on who they are, and what’s best in the long run. You listen to your inner Wise Advocate.
Warning Center
Amygdala, insula and orbital frontal cortex
Mammalian-evolved brain function associated with strong emotion
‘Something is wrong.’

Reactive Self-Referencing Center
Ventral medial prefrontal cortex
Subjective valuation
‘Who I am, what I want, and what others want.’

Habit Center
Basal ganglia
Reptilian-evolved brain function, associated with automatic responses
‘Do what feels right.’

THE LOW GROUND
Focuses on solving problems and expediency, but provides no movement towards strategic leadership capability. Deceptive messages travel easily along this circuit and reinforce it.
Executive Center
Lateral prefrontal cortex

Human-evolved brain function, associated with goal-directed responses and planning

‘Do what is most needed.’

Deliberative Self-Referencing Center
Dorsal medial prefrontal cortex

Mentalizing

‘What others are thinking and what others will do.’

THE HIGH GROUND

Is invoked by mentalizing and mindfulness; develops your capacity for strategic leadership. Messages that call on the Wise Advocate focusing on broad perspective and long-term value, travel easily along this circuit and strengthen it.
EXECUTIVE FUNCTION

*Lateral prefrontal cortex*

Associated with goal-directed responses and planning

“Do what is most needed”

Three attributes of Executive Function:

- Working memory
- Inhibitory control (Free won’t)
- Cognitive flexibility
High Ground: Mentalizing

MENTALIZING
Paying close attention to what other people are thinking and what they are likely to do next

Leaders already think about what other people are thinking. They already practice mentalizing – they just might not call it that. And they might not do it often enough.
High Ground: Applied Mindfulness

APPLIED MINDFULNESS
Mentalizing about yourself
Paying close attention to your own thinking

• Meta-cognition: Thinking about what you and others are thinking
• Meta-attention: Paying attention to what you and others are paying attention to
Your inner voice

Paráklētos

The Impartial Spectator

Pinocchio’s Cricket