

LEADERSHIP FILES

NEWSLETTER



MORALE

"A room without books is like a body without a soul."
- Marcus Tullius Cicero, Philosopher and Lawyer

Peruse leadership literature and you may have seen scores of mentions about motivation.

Success literature describes motivation as a fundamental quality for taking steps towards realizing goals.

One could also say when motivation dissipates one should still be able to go on, to take steps forward even when unmotivated. The days you don't want to exercise and still do it because reasoning leads (exercise, motivated or not supports health) instead of feelings. The hours committed to practice in any form when the feeling isn't there demonstrates self-discipline beyond a feeling.

This exceeding drive represents morale.

Let's check out [Webster's](#) definition on it:

"The mental and emotional condition (as of enthusiasm, confidence, or loyalty) of an individual or group with regard to the function or tasks at hand"

"A sense of common purpose with respect to a group"

"The level of individual psychological well-being based on such factors as a sense of purpose and confidence in the future"

From these we can see that morale is a more complex energy state than mere motivation. While the motive power in motivation may last for a singular experience, an on-off light switch, morale is like a flame that continuously burns, can brighten or dim depending on internal and external conditions.

Morale has a thermometer; it requires a leader's consistent observation. Responsible for a team or one person, the leader aware of the group's morale keeps a pulse on this collective energy.

You cannot assess morale through all of the senses. It can't be touched, tasted or smelled.

Morale also isn't easily seen in data. You can't say, "Jane has 10 points of morale and John has 5 points." Contrary to Yuval Noah Harari's idea that [humans are just hackable animals](#), I daresay morale is a more spiritual element beyond that kind of dataism.

But you can hear morale in your members' voice tone. You can see it expressed in how much zeal and resilience they have for the work and trials undergone. It shows up in their gestures and the word choice used. It's revealed in their initiative to originate and create.

With high morale, you're capable of making requests that challenge members beyond the performance comfort zone. When it's depleted, you will have resistance against the most basic asks, partly because the endurance is low, partly because they no longer trust you.

To cultivate this morale awareness, the leader needs a [harmonized brain](#); right and left hemispheres synced to apply intuition and logic in relationships.

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Intuition enables sensing the unseen, detecting hunches about your team member's thoughts. Logic provides crystallization of what was sensed so practical action can be taken.

Example: for some reason, a simple project you know your member could easily take care of is providing unusual difficulty. You know it's not a competency issue. In a meeting, you observe the slouched shoulders, eyes diverting from conversation, defeatist language. Intuition alerts you that something is off. Clearly there is something deeper going on. To ignore this and continue focusing on the project would be a long-term detriment; the project wouldn't be completed to expected caliber and your member's morale continues to diminish.

Intuition activated, you then use logic and practicality; perhaps this is not the time to focus on the project. You inquire what's going on because you notice the energetic shift. If the member trusts you, it becomes a discussion. Tension gradually released.

This may be a better time to create an experience that raises mood, reignites project vision, to connect the member's aspiration to the project outcome.

3 WAYS TO ENHANCE MORALE

Embody the Vision: simple to understand but complex to realize. You actually have to become or strive to be an embodied version of the vision. Especially if the vision is yours, you represent it in the flesh. No way around it. This means understanding the vision, its purpose, principles and embrace of the treacherous pitfalls standing in the way of it. The degree to which you are the vision is the scale your members respect you. If they can see you genuinely striving to live up to it, you can spark their morale to strive for their version of that height.

Listen: in this newsletter's coaching arm, I wrote about silence's importance. The skill endows the leader with the listening art where you're able to receive information and subtle nuances within. Different from just hearing, listening helps you understand what's being communicated beyond the surface so you can skillfully create resonance. If you truly listen, morale, its strength or weakness is always revealing itself, signaling to you how to nurture it in the team.

Versatile Communication: gives you range. With range, and an understanding of who you're connecting with, you increase your power to synchronize with others at a visionary level.

There is one way to improve versatility that doesn't require you to pay \$20k for someone's mastermind conference: read.

Read often and widely. Absorb stories. Consider fictional stories and historical tomes. Read about various cultures, thought patterns different from your own. Biographical or fictional, each story you absorb integrates within your being. It's a part of you.

I can delve into the metaphysics of reading at some point on LinkedIn but simply put: a story and its characters, real or imaginary becomes an aspect of you that you can access and express. When a character triumphs in their story, you live that process through the imagination and neural pathways. The deeper you're immersed in the experience, the more "real" it becomes in your consciousness. This is understood in the acting profession.

A bit deeper: for someone struggling with a character flaw, you can reverse-engineer this process and write yourself in a story as a character, overcoming the challenges from the flaw in that world, which can then help you access that new power in your life. One technique to rewrite the software in your own brain without someone having to put a chip in it.

If you're a leader, you don't have the luxury to rely on entertaining videos and short-form content. The depth, cognitive exercise and contextual layering necessary to develop the EQ for a versatile communication style will not sprout from Tweet-level information.

"The best leaders are readers of people. They have the intuitive ability to understand others by discerning how they feel and recognizing what they sense." - John C. Maxwell, Author

Trent Rhodes is an autodidact, career development leader, polymath writer & educator. With a passion for martial arts, tea and tech, he's an avid reader and writes on topics bridging futuristic career education and self-directed learning. Discover more of his work on his blog, [Crown of Mind](#) and [MasterLearn](#).

