

PSYCHOLOGICAL BLACKHOLES

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Meta Learning
Diciembre/2019

I define a psychological blackhole as fixed-point attractor. A point-attractor is a dynamic that traps you and makes it difficult for you to escape it. Differently from cosmological black holes that trap and destroy everything that reaches their event horizon, you can escape a psychological blackhole by using the Meta Learning model. We have done this repeatedly with low performance teams and have never failed in liberating them from this limiting dynamic.

When a person, marriage or team fall into a psychological blackhole we observe the following set of behaviors: 1) excessive self-focus, 2) excessive advocacy, 3) too much negativity, not enough positivity, (P/N ratios below 3:1), 4) very restrictive emotional fields, 5) lack of energy, 6) poor performance, 7) not enough connectivity.

If these behaviors are pervasive over time—they become chronic—we can observe a gradient of deteriorating effects:

1. Languishing
2. Depression
3. Suicide

Languishing is the mildest form, but is very pervasive. It is estimated that about 80% of the US adult population languishes. If languishing persists it can lead to depression. If depression is not treated, in some extreme cases it can lead to suicide.

Is there a way out of this predicament? The answer is yes and is provided by the Meta Learning model. Here are the steps that can take you in order to go from languishing to flourishing:

1. Connect
2. Balance self-focus with other-focus
3. Balance advocacy with inquiry
4. Keep your P/N ratio within the Losada Zone; i.e. at least 3:1, but not more than 6:1.
5. Generate expansive emotional fields where emotions like enthusiasm, joy, content, and other positive emotions predominate over negative emotions such as frustration, anger, and sadness.
6. Feel the energy that an expansive emotional field can generate. Observe how this energy can be maintained over time. Put this lasting energy to good use in some life project, so that you can enjoy the good results.
7. Notice all the spheres in your life that start expanding. Enjoy and celebrate your improved performance. Realize how many things you thought were impossible for you are indeed within your reach.

If you take each of these steps and practice them long enough, you will not only be able to escape the black holes in your life, but you will be on the way to flourish. Once you start flourishing several emergent properties will start manifesting in your life:

A). If you practice balancing self-focus and other-focus, this balance will lead to symmetry. Symmetry is a fundamental principle in science which is linked to the conservation of energy in physics. In psychology, symmetry in this variable leads to LOVE: you will love yourself more and will be able to love others as you love yourself. You will have the energy and determination to continue on this path of love. Love leads to flourishing and flourishing enhances love.

B). Once you practice balancing advocacy with inquiry, this practice will lead to symmetry in these variables given you even more energy to achieve something very valuable in life: you will become a better learner. Symmetry in advocacy-inquiry leads to learning. Your mind will be more open and will expand your knowledge and your wisdom, as well as your creativity. Of all these are essential to face an environment which will become ever more complex as new and powerful technologies are introduced. Learning, like Love is a prerequisite for flourishing.

Once love and learning become part of your daily life, you will then know and experience flourishing. Flourishing cannot be fully described with words. Everyone of us flourishes in a different manner. But no matter what your cultural, hereditary, or educational background is, two conditions will always be present: Love and Learning.

I called my model “Meta Learning” because it represents a learning that goes beyond specific contents. It is about loving and learning. It is a learning for life. One that you will not forget.