

GOLDILOCKS, PORCUPINES & CHAMELEONS

PART 2B: THE PORCUPINE LEADER

In our last post, we discussed the challenges working with leaders who are prickly, unapproachable and highly defensive, earning them the title of a porcupine leader. The porcupine leader is rightly termed a fundamentalist. I am NOT using the term to refer to the 20th century Protestant movement that emphasizes adherence to the basic, “fundamental” beliefs of the Bible. I am using it in a broader, generic sense to describe the person (or organization) that operates from a “too tight” and “too large” inner core, and so is **ideologically driven, rigid and uncompromising on a wide range of matters**

on which good-hearted and reasonable people are willing to dialogue and perhaps compromise, or at a minimum, “agree to disagree.” In this sense, fundamentalists are found from left to right along the political, cultural and religious spectrum.

Porcupine leaders are typically passionate and uncompromising people who are **utterly convinced of the “rightness” of their perspective and the “wrongness” of opposing viewpoints.**

Because the porcupine embraces most everything as a non-negotiable, they make no distinction between opinions and convictions, passing tastes and core beliefs. Personal preferences are vigorously defended as timeless principles.

Consequently, the porcupine lives in a black and white world, and of course they are quick to let the rest of the world know what is “black” and what is “white.”

They are self-appointed prophets, delivering from their privileged, final vantage point the ultimate perspective on matters large and small.

In the porcupine’s world, others are either friend—those in accord with the porcupine’s inner core—or enemy—everyone else. If the porcupine perceives that their inner core is threatened—and this is most of the time—they assume an “aggressively defensive” posture. Like their namesake, if you must approach them—and it’s best not to—you must do so with great caution. Because if you’re not a “friend” you might get one of the porcupine’s thirty thousand quills in your face for your opinion.

Porcupines make demands and shun dialogue.

PORCUPINE LEADERS ARE BRIMMING WITH CONVICTION BUT LACKING IN INSIGHT — THE PORCUPINE WOULD RATHER BE “RIGHT” THAN EFFECTIVE. THEY ARE FULL OF PASSION, BUT DEVOID OF GRACE — THE PORCUPINE WOULD RATHER IMPOSE THEIR WILL ON OTHERS THAN ADDRESS THEIR NEEDS.

Not surprisingly, this severity and rigidity make the porcupine unpleasant company, an impossible partner and in most cases—with the exception of a crisis or legitimate external threat where porcupine behavior might be temporarily appropriate—an ineffective leader.

In contrast, and what we uncover in our book, *The Art of Virtue-Based Transformational Leadership*,

is the opposite of a porcupine leader: the transformational leader.

Transformational leaders possess the qualities that allow them to be effective leaders through:

- Serving the best and highest interests of others
- Creating and sustaining healthy organization by imparting hope
- Preparing the next generations of leaders
- Engaging their followers
- Shining in situations where reform is required
- Acting as effective agents of change

Notice the stark contrast between those prickly, ridged and uncompromising porcupine leaders to transformational leaders! The world hungers for transformational leaders. What are you doing today to demonstrate leadership that will make a lasting change?

Work with us
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