Adaptive Leadership 101
LPHA Conference Breakout Session: November 14, 2022

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"We are definitely paying the price to be first in line."

- New to adaptive leadership and to leading adaptively

- Pressure on public health: Don't mess up

- Excited to share a powerful framework

Do you have a problem…

- where the issues are hard to identify?

- that keeps recurring over and over?

- where there is no expert to resolve it?

Yes? You are in the right workshop!

Going it Alone

Mobilizing People

At the end of this workshop, you will be able to…

- solve the right problems so they stay solved.
- know when to exercise adaptive leadership.
- discuss how adaptive leadership skills can be used to address real world public health challenges.

Adaptive Leadership

practical leadership framework

helps individuals and organizations

adapt and thrive

in challenging environments

Adaptive leadership is

the act of mobilizing a group of individuals

to handle tough challenges

and emerge triumphant in the end.

Reflection: YOUR Leadership Problem or Challenge

- What problem do you have that keeps recurring over and over?

- What challenge do you have where there is no expert or authority to call upon to resolve the problem?

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5-6 sentences

Describe a leadership challenge where you're feeling stuck…there is no expert to call upon…there is a gap between reality/aspirations

Examples:
- Collaborating with community partners to implement a community health improvement plan
- Instilling in others a sense of ownership for the strategic plan
- Addressing health inequities highlighted in data

Worksheet used with permission of Adaptive Change Advisors

Adaptive Leadership and the Nature of the Work

(Martin, 2017)
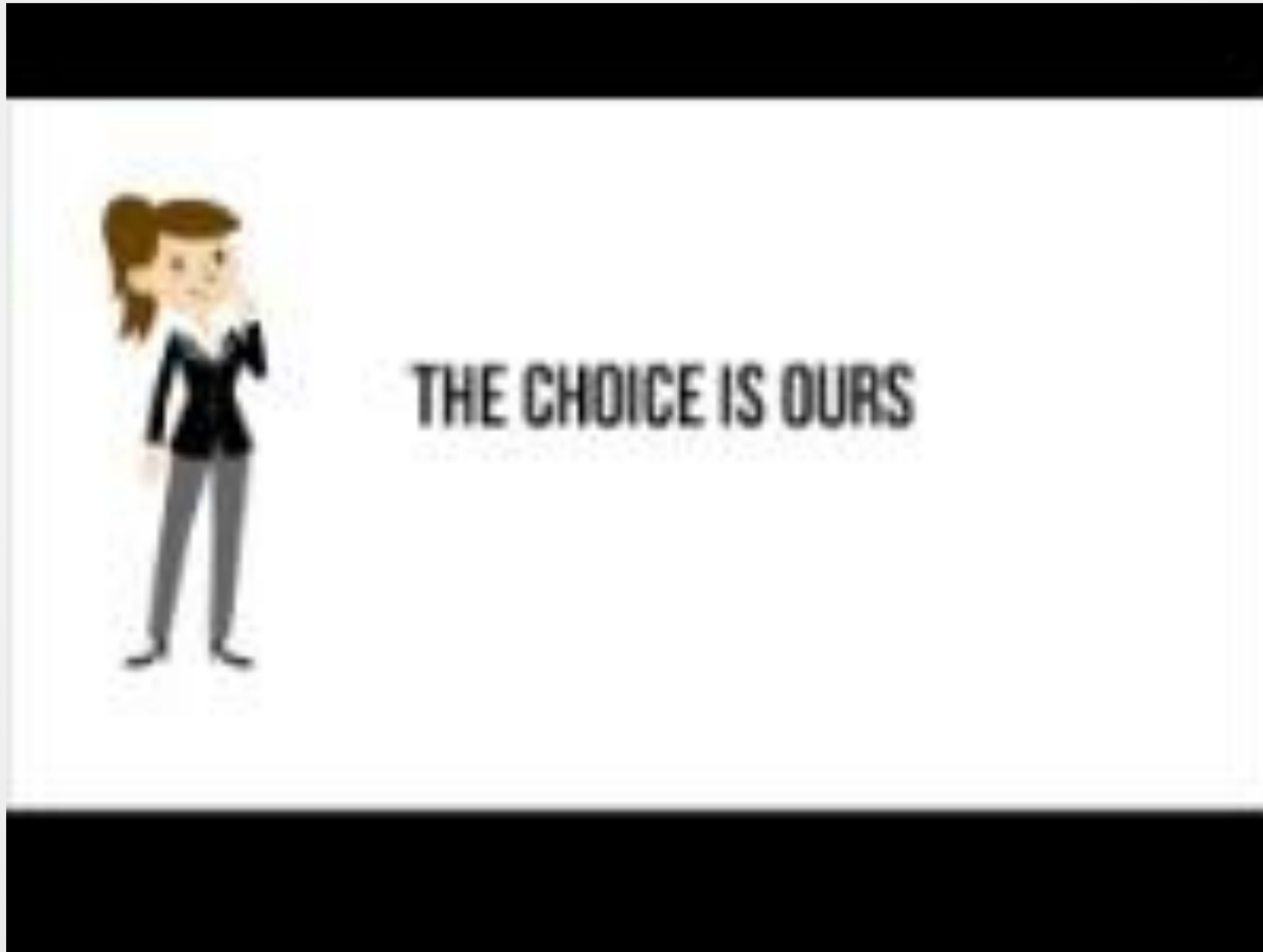
Technical

- Clearly defined.

- Someone knows how to solve it.

- Not necessarily easy or straightforward.

- You do technical things every day with great skill.

Adaptive

- Issues hard to identify.

- No expert can resolve the problem.

- Those involved come together to address it.

- Some loss involved for all parties.

Technical or Adaptive Work?

Build a canoe

Build organizational culture

Write a budget for a new project

Fix a flat tire

(National Association of County Health Officials, 2021)

Stop solving the wrong problem perfectly

(Martin, 2017)

…treating adaptive challenges

as if they were technical.

Solve the right problems so they stay solved, and make more strategic use of limited resources

"[Technical vs Adaptive - What Is the Nature of the Work?](#)"

- Complete worksheet individually

- Share new insights gained after completing the worksheet

Worksheet used with permission of Adaptive Change Advisors

Moving Between the Balcony and the Dance Floor

(Kansas Leadership Center, 2020)

Getting on the balcony: An exercise for developing leadership skills

- So simple

- Gives us permission to pause, to breathe, to reflect...

What are some public health challenges that would benefit from adaptive leadership?

[Eric Martin]. (2017, January 31). Adaptive Leadership - Introduction [Video]. YouTube. Retrieved October 12, 2022, from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pRFXu_jBJec

[Eric Martin]. (2017, February 14). Adaptive Leadership - Technical and Adaptive Challenges - Stop solving the wrong problem perfectly [Video]. YouTube. Retrieved October 12, 2022, from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pRFXu_jBJec

Kansas Leadership Center. (2020, June 12). Moving Between the Balcony and the Dance Floor. YouTube. Retrieved October 17, 2022, from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KFbnoCPt5lQ

Kaufman, E. (2017, December 28). *Adaptive Leadership: How to Prioritize and Align Emerging Issues*. SlideShare. https://www.slideshare.net/erickkaufman/adaptive-leadership-how-to-prioritize-and-align-emerging-issues

National Association of County Health Officials. (2021). *Adaptive Leadership Minnesota Public Health* [Slide show].

- Complete evaluation form
- Consider attending "Adaptive Leadership: Next Level"
- When faced with a leadership challenge…remember to…
  - Determine the nature of your work
  - Get on the balcony…

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Participant Name: _____ Date: _____

Technical vs Adaptive
What Is the Nature of the Work?

In this activity, we ask you to identify a leadership challenge that you are currently facing. Throughout the remainder of the course, you will apply course concepts to help you make progress on this challenge. The submission template will guide you through several questions to outline your challenge.

MY SUBMISSION

1. Your Challenge

In 5-6 sentence (max), describe a leadership challenge you are facing where—as a formal leader or not— you're trying to mobilize people, but feel stuck.

2. Actions Taken to Date

How have you or others tried to solve the challenge already? What key stakeholders have been engaged and not engaged in addressing the challenge?

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Technical vs Adaptive   What Is the Nature of the Work?

3. Value Proposition

Why is making progress on this challenge important to you, key stakeholders, or your organization?
If successful in addressing this challenge, how would it bring value to you, key stakeholders, and your organization?

4. Three Technical Aspects

The way people see the problem often is the problem. Let's start to understand your challenge more deeply by parsing out the technical and adaptive elements. It is important to remember that the technical work is as critical as the adaptive work, though we know how to address it or can delegate to someone who can. Use the space provided to list out three technical aspects related to your challenge.

TECHNICAL ISSUE 1

TECHNICAL ISSUE 2

TECHNICAL ISSUE 3

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5. Adaptive Elements

Let's identify the adaptive issues you are facing in your challenge. Remember adaptive issues have no clear solutions, often appear as a recurring problem. People may avoid the adaptive challenge and you may find there is a gap between what people say and what they do. You may notice an emotional response from those close to the challenge because moving forward feels risky to those involved. **Use the space provided to list out three adaptive issues related to your challenge.**

ADAPTIVE ELEMENT 1
What aspects of your challenge make you feel that engaging others in work is risky and/or disruptive?

ADAPTIVE ELEMENT 2
What aspects of your challenge are not amenable to existing expertise, best practices, skills, or know-how?

ADAPTIVE ELEMENT 3
Is there any loss required on your part or for your key stakeholders as a result of you pushing forward? E.g., sense of identity, competence, reputation, comfort, time, resource, self-reliance, job security, livelihood, relationship.

ADAPTIVE ELEMENT 1

ADAPTIVE ELEMENT 2

ADAPTIVE ELEMENT 3

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6. Reframing Your Challenge

You may be discovering that the way you've been thinking about your problem is itself a part of the problem. Considering other ways to describe or "frame" your challenge can help you better mobilize others around it. Consider the prompts and see if you can articulate your challenge in three different ways, based on the stakeholder you are engaging.

VERSION 1:
Describe it as you normally do in talking with a colleague who is not related to the challenge.

VERSION 2:
Describe it from the perspective of someone who has something significant to lose *if progress is made.*

VERSION 3:
Describe it by filling in the blank, "I myself may be contributing to the problem by _____."

What new insights have you gained on your challenge after completing this worksheet?

_____

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10/26/2022   (National Association of County Health Officials, 2021)   13

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF THE WORK?

Take a few moments. Review the Pictures.

Circle any picture or pictures that represent technical work…