

AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP MODEL

The Healing Potential of Human Relationships



Authentic Leadership Model

The healing potential of human relationships

*"Our relationship lives in the space between us –
it doesn't live in me or in you
or even in the dialogue between the two of us –
it lives in the space we live together
and that space is sacred space."*

Martin Buber

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The Authentic Leadership Model came out of a dedicated co-creative process of reflecting and researching what are the ingredients that would cause the magic we experience over and over in our therapeutic work.

I thank you for your trust and belief in me.

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I would like to thank my wonderful teacher Anna Timmermanns and my advisor Brian Gleason for encouraging and supporting me to write this paper and thereby complete the 5th year of the professional training in Core Energetics.

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Introduction – My personal relationship with leadership

Choosing the Authentic Leadership model as the topic for my postgraduate paper felt very organic and aligned with my personal and professional development since I graduated from the four year Professional Training in the Netherlands Institute of Core Energetics in 2016. It was exactly four months before I would give birth to my son at a moment in my professional life where I ran two process groups a week and had a full practice with individual clients.

Obviously, I was in the role of a leader most of the time during the day but somehow my internal experience differed from what I was actually doing. I was deeply questioning myself and with the sensitivity of being pregnant, I felt even more insecure. Especially with my weekly groups, I had fear and self-doubt was often taking the lead. Behind this, there is a long story of being afraid to speak and feeling inadequate when I did which occurred frequently from secondary school on. Although I was a very good student with high marks, I experienced so much stress in relation with verbal expression that I even took the decision to become a dancer instead of studying at the university. Speaking with my body was a way to freely express myself without being constricted and caught by my fears.

It came from this deeply rooted anxiety that I considered myself incapable of being a leader. I had a certain image of how a leader should look like, mostly an eloquent and self-confident person, that I would never achieve to be. Even though, I was successful as a therapist and started to have a waiting list for

my groups, I would not consider myself as a leader. I felt too insecure, timid and shy which did not fit in my picture of leadership.

My actual initiation into inevitable leadership was the reality of becoming a parent of a child that chose me to be his mother asking 24/7 to be led by me. What a shift in consciousness! And clearly, becoming a parent asked me to show up in my leadership as a human being and not as a professional. It was a journey of including all of my vulnerabilities, flaws and deficiencies and still get up every morning and give to my child what I have to give.

Since I stepped into parenthood, I feel like a passionate member of a daily leadership training exploring how to be a lighthouse for my son, to give him orientation from a warm, deeply loving, secure and unmistakably clear place. To accompany a child, especially with all the awareness we have as Core Energetics therapists about developmental trauma, feels to me like a practice in failing while simultaneously being non-stop in charge. At the very core of it, it is about the relationship I create with my child, how I am attuned to his core needs, welcome his life force energy and realize who he is beyond his immature behavior of a 4 year old.

After being officially occupied in the leadership business through motherhood, I also felt in other areas of my life the call to show up in my full potential and stop playing small. After an abrupt and unexpected ending of my role as an assistant in the Berlin Institute of Core Energetics, I had a strong desire to create my own Self-Empowerment Program which I developed together with

my colleague and partner Nuno Salema. We were wondering what input we would like to add to the process work that we would facilitate in a continuous group that meets for 6 weekends. We've spend many hours sharing and discussing about how we work with our clients and what was helpful and what not, what made a difference and brought the process to another level.

One thing that became very obvious in our observations was the impact of the relationship and the quality of connection between therapist and client.

This impression is confirmed by scientific research that show that the therapeutic alliance is the most transformative element in the healing process.

I find that striking. And at the same time it makes a lot of sense because it is exactly in our primal relationships where we got hurt by inappropriate relating with our caretakers. Through that process of exchange and reflection we gave birth to the Authentic Leadership model which I would like to introduce in this paper writing it right after completing our first edition of the Holistic Embodiment for Authentic Leadership (H.E.A.L.) Program.

Before I dive deeper into the content of the model, I also like to mention the spiritual aspect of my personal relationship to the work. I was in a spiritual group for 7 years where we would meet two times a month starting the session with a meditation to tune in and then come together in dyads or triads to give readings. We sat in front of each other, closing our eyes, connecting with our body and inner space to then expand that space and perceive the person in front of us. Sometimes they would share a bit about what's going on

for them or answer a specific question and sometimes there would be no words. In the role of the listener, the task was to be open to all the information we would get from our partner beyond the actual words, feeling with our whole body, sensing the energy, the frequency, the tone, the voice, the body, the unspoken words etc. in order to give a reading to them. I recall how in the beginning of, what I would call a spiritual practice, I often felt blank not knowing what to say about the other person not really knowing them.

My teacher encouraged us to speak anyway and to trust anything that would come up during the reading. It felt like an ongoing meditation and the more I practiced it and dared to truly look and see what was going on, information was flowing through me and I could see my sharing partners being touched by what I was reflecting back to them. In a way, I was already practicing the principles of the Authentic Leadership model without consciously knowing it as a reference to what we were doing in this group. The biggest teaching I got from these readings is that people often express with words just a tiny part of their reality. Beyond what they are saying lays a whole universe. Discovering this universe together with my clients, is for me one of the most inspiring and rewarding aspects of the process.

By mapping this model and principles, I trust it will speak to many of us because it is not about acquiring new tools and skills. It's about reconnecting with our innate abilities that we've always possessed. My intention is to shine light on the art of relating and to bring more awareness about its dimension so that it becomes easier to access and to integrate it in our relational fields.

THE AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP MODEL

In the old fashioned patriarchal paradigm, leadership is based on power, oppression, dominance, exploitation, financial wealth in a society where there are winners and losers and where the ruling classes exert control over the majority. A leader concentrates all knowledge, all power and all decision making constructed in a pyramid structure of top-down policies.

Therefore, the leader pays the price of having to be always in charge and not affording to be vulnerable. This took and takes place in governments, institutions, corporations and families.

The way we like to define Authentic Leadership is first and foremost about Self-Empowerment. It is about connecting to our core qualities and trusting they can be expressed and shared with others. The manifestation of our soul and of our life journey makes us all unique human beings. No matter what we may think, judge or block in ourselves, the truth is that all of us have the creative potential to enrich our world.

However, we judge ourselves so harshly, suppressing our creative impulses and visions. We block our self-expression to a point that, when we actually express something, the original impulse is already so much filtered that all that comes out is just a mere glimpse of what we can actually manifest.

We are blocking our originality, conforming to the norm, conditioned by what has been imposed on us by others. The "leaders" who come into our lives,

people we look up to, wishing that some day we can be like them. Our parents, older siblings, uncles and family friends. Our teachers, the sports women and man we admire, the movie stars and the pop stars whose posters we stick to our walls in our teenage years. These leaders are the politicians we see on TV, the millionaire entrepreneurs, the scientists, writers and so forth.

We project into them an idealized image and are conditioned to believe that to achieve their status is either impossible or the result of a lot of sacrifice and hard work. As children, we are not inspired to connect with our natural born talents, we are not taught to connect with nature, to privilege play time over study time and we are led to believe that happiness will come through the sacrifice of our dreams and conforming to the reality of the real world built on career achievements and financial prosperity. Study, work, buy a car, own a house, retire and die. This is the mantra. We've seen our parents do it, as they have seen theirs, so we should comply to it as well.

In a moment where the politicians lack the courage to make a shift to save our existence in the planet, in a society where the school system is castrating the students originality and creativity, in a community where oppression (whether it's religious, sexual, racial,...) still rules over equal rights and freedom to self-express oneself, the shift has to come from within each one of us.

It is about taking the self-responsibility of claiming what we long for the most, to manifest our deepest intentions and to lead through example so that others may feel inspired to do the same.

Authentic Leadership is about coming forward with all of you instead of copying someone else's leadership style. It's about taking the risk of coming with your truth and your vulnerability as well as the willingness to receive negative push-back. It's about connection to the whole and acting in a responsible way that creates a respectful and sustainable living in communion with all life forms. For those who already are in leadership roles, authentic leadership means to empower and support other people to achieve their full potential and stepping into their own leadership.

In my own therapeutic process, I remember these moments when my therapists would truly relate and respond to me, my story and my energy as deeply moving and healing. When I got to see their tears, feel their compassion or hear their laughter as a resonance to what I was showing.

The Authentic Leadership model is a relational model. It works as a map of connection guiding us in the relational space with ourselves and others.

The model combines 6 Principles such as Sacred Space, Embodied Presence, Empathic Resonance, Deep Listening, Authenticity and Encounter.

As we can see, these principles are all fundamental human abilities that become alive when we bring forward our intuition, inner wisdom and guidance.

Thereby this model serves as a foundation for how we truly connect with another human being. From that place, we can use our knowledge, the methods and techniques we've learned to apply it in the most beneficial way to support our clients.

So if the relationship is so important how can we find a way to cultivate it, to explore it, to practice and deepen our capacity to connect with another human being? What principles are supporting the therapeutic alliance beyond our knowledge about the character structures and techniques?

With the 6 principles of the Authentic Leadership model, we intend to shine light on the questions above and to bring awareness to each one of these human traits that at the same time are all intertwined.

1st Principle – SACRED SPACE

In the Authentic Leadership model, we consider the essence of the ritual as one of the most important principles that shapes an authentic relationship with ourselves and with others.

Rituals are as old as our species. Since the dawn of time, human beings have created rituals to connect with nature, to access the spirit world, relate with the unknown and to celebrate life and its renewal. For thousands of years, these rituals evolved into culture, religion and art but their purpose remained the same: To enable us to transcend ourselves and connect with higher realms.

Talking specifically about the therapeutic relationship, the importance of the ritual has two complementary intentions.

First, it creates safety. With every client, we sign a therapeutic contract that sets specific times and dates for our sessions. The location, duration and purpose of the sessions is determined and the objectives of the therapy are agreed upon. We make clear what are the rights and the obligations of both the therapist and the client including the ethical code. All this procedure gives a work frame, it promotes clarity and reinforces predictability which are essential for the client to feel safe to embark on the challenging journey of the therapeutic process.

Secondly, after this work frame is established, comes the deeper connection with the symbolic importance of the ritual.

In our sessions, we invite people to take off their shoes and leave them outside our working room. This simple ritual is an act of honor and respect towards the holy ground of our meeting. Like we are going to the temple.

Jackets, bags, phones and so on also stay outside. We are inviting our clients to step into a different space that is symbolically separate from our daily routine and busy lives. By leaving these objects outside the room, the person strips off this superficial layer of self-identification.

In our case, at the beginning of each session we light a candle, say a prayer asking for guidance and then attune with our clients by breathing together, holding hands and sharing our intentions for the session. This is our ritual and by doing so we wish to, together with our client, go from the ordinary world to an extraordinary space. It is in this sacred space that a deeper connection and relationship can develop. And still you need to be able to attune to the client values, mind-set and spiritual connection or absence of it in order to serve them.

As therapists and leaders we are responsible to create, communicate and maintain that sacred space. It comes with an invitation to our clients to ground, connect, feel safe and expand in the container of our relationship. If we are leading a group, we provide a common ground for the diverse and shattered energies to settle down and find connections.

The therapeutic setting is a very specific one but this quality of connection in an extraordinary space can be created and nourished in basically any form of relationship, starting obviously with yourself. We can promote this quality when interacting with our partners, as parents when relating to our children, as well as in our professional environment. It is certainly not achievable all the time and every time but in some moments it is crucial that we strive for this quality in relating.

We all have our individual ways of evoking that sacred space.

In case you think you have no rituals, look closer. We all develop ways to connect deeper even when we are not fully aware of it and, in any case, we can always be creative and find (new) ways of nourishing this innate qualities in us.

2nd Principle – EMBODIED PRESENCE

The Sacred Space is an invitation to come here. A call into presence.

We want to be aware of who we are in this present moment including our past and future. What helps us to become present is to connect with our body. To breath, to move and touch ourselves in a way that we open up our perception to feel and notice what is happening inside and outside of us. Being present, fully present to oneself is like coming home.

Why is Presence so vital for us?

In our daily lives, we spend most of our time focused on the outside, reacting

to all the stimulation the world is offering including the relational, social and professional interactions that we constantly face. What we sacrifice is a deeper sense of self-awareness. We are certain of who we are, what we are thinking and doing but can we actually say that we are present to what is going on in and around us? Most of the time, we cannot. Our mind functions like a little monkey in a tree jumping from branch to branch. It jumps to the past, recalling pleasant or unpleasant situations in order to predict and control future events or jumps to the future fantasizing about something rewarding or, instead, anxiously anticipating what is still to come.

It is actually quite challenging for us to stay in the moment. Besides the fact that we rarely invite ourselves to experience the present moment, when we actually try to do so, it is extremely difficult to stay there - here - for more than just a few seconds.

To be present to one self is to bring our awareness to what we are experiencing at any given moment. To acknowledge our inner world is the first and most fundamental step when relating with someone because it will play a role on how we perceive and respond to them. We can say that before we go into relationship with the outer world we need to establish a relationship with our inner world.

As therapists, we know the importance of first attuning with ourselves before relating to our clients but this is valid for every kind of relationship. It is not what we are saying but how we express it- with our bodies, facial expression,

voice tone - that is received by others well or as disconnected or even harmful. When talking to our loved ones, addressing our team at work or doing a public speech, we should acknowledge how we are feeling in that moment, notice the tension or the relaxation in our bodies, where is our energy moving and where it is not, how are we breathing, how do we feel and how do we perceive the receiver(s) of our message.

It's through that awareness and attunement that we allow our clients to do the same and connect with a more centered and grounded state of being. The way we will communicate will be adjusted to our intention which in turn, will have a positive impact in the people we interact with.

Working with the body-oriented approach of Core Energetics, we include all dimensions of the human being which is considered as a unity between mind and body. At the same time as we focus on developing mindfulness and self-consciousness, we transmit the relevance of grounding and embodiment.

In our H.E.A.L. Self-Empowerment Program, we explore the principle of Sacred Space and Embodied Presence in the first module together with the Schizoid Character Structure which is all about creating safety and the container of the group. It relates to the Schizoid stage in a way that it's important to feel welcomed and safe enough to be fully present in the group. At the same time, we experience the spiritual dimension of our being through ritual and the connection to something bigger than ourselves.

3rd Principle – EMPATHIC RESONANCE

When we become present to our own embodied inner state there is an awareness and space that opens up which resonates with the outer world. Our system has the ability to empathize and mirror the felt experience of another human being. This process is deeply connecting and healing in itself.

Essentially, it is the experience of, "I am feeling that you feel me". A moment in the relationship where I feel seen by you and through that reflection see even more of myself.

Physical reality, we now know, is composed by a constant energy flow, exchanged between particles vibrating at different frequencies. Energy and vibration are fundamental principles working in and all around us. One popular example is found in music. Sympathetic resonance or sympathetic vibration is a harmonic phenomenon where a vibratory body, such as a tuning-fork, responds to external vibrations of another tuning-fork to which it has a harmonic likeness. Working with people, we know the importance of tuning in with ourselves and our clients in order to create a shared reality of resonance. In our primal relationships, most of us were lacking parents that were able to attune to our needs and the nature of our being. It is the source of developmental trauma and the negative defense patterns that arise out of it. With that comes a sense of not being met and seen by the world. If we allow ourselves to experience a healthy relationship in therapy, we will get an appropriate response from the outside that enables us to grow our capacity to socially engage and as a result resume responsibility, i.e., the ability to

respond. Through this process of transference we are reenacting our relational patterns from the past and when we are met by an empathically resonating therapist, we create a new healing reality about ourselves and life.

In recent times, there has been a great deal of research in the field of trauma therapy. What Interpersonal Neurobiology (Dan Siegel) and the Polyvagal Theory from Steven Porges are confirming is that humans are relational beings. This scientific knowledge is only confirming what various cultures, spiritual teachings and matriarchal social systems knew for thousands of years. Coming into this world, our brain and nervous system are wired to engage in social interaction, communication and co-regulation. Without the nurture of another being we wouldn't be able to survive.

The term Empathic Resonance has been brought into the foreground of the therapeutic relationship. The ability of the therapist to mirror and feel into and together with the client is as important (if not more important) than the theoretical models and the techniques employed during a therapeutic process. As obvious as this may sound, rarely are we trained to develop the ability to tune into ourselves and, from that place of emotional availability and vulnerability, connect with others.

The principle of Empathic Resonance is building on the first and second principle of the Authentic Leadership Model: Sacred Space and Embodied Presence. To empathically resonate in the therapeutic process, first we need to be present to ourselves. We breathe, we ground ourselves bringing into

awareness how we feel and how our energy is flowing in our system. We open our hearts allowing ourselves to be affected by what we hear, see and sense from our client. In a way, we step out of the role of the therapist putting aside the theories and any pressure to intervene with the right techniques in order to fully receive the client without the need to act, react, fix or heal them.

Accessing a fundamental human resource which is: to relate.

Then, we are able to connect with another human being, receiving their verbal and non-verbal communication as energy and information that will affect and influence our inner state. All emotions, feelings, physical sensations or memories that might surface in us are correlated to the relationship dynamic established in that moment and all of these responses are meaningful information enabling us to identify and experience what is being shared with us.

Empathic resonance is one of the most vital tools in interpersonal relationships and we need to trust it as valid information whether we receive and process it as positive or negative experiences within us, i.e. positive and negative countertransference. It is information that we can and should use when relating to the other person in the relationship because it will bring a deeper and more human understanding of the struggle, pain and suffering that they might be experiencing.

All human interactions create resonance or dissonance. Our inner state influences and is influenced by others whether we are conscious of it or not.

Connecting with someone might be inspiring, filling us with creative energy or it might drain us and drag us into depletion. Simultaneously, our individual and collective actions resonate with our planet and the state of our planetary ecosystem resonates back into us.

In our H.E.A.L. Self-Empowerment Program, we explore the principle of Empathic Resonance in the 2nd module together with the Oral Character Structure. Participants experience the impact of both absent and healthy attunement on their relational dynamics.

4th Principle – DEEP LISTENING

When in a state of Presence (1st & 2nd Principle), we start resonating empathically with the world around us and the people we relate with (3rd Principle). While we are in resonance with another being, it evokes in us a response based on our intuitive self and spontaneous impulses.

The principle of Deep Listening describes the ability to access and express our creativity, wisdom and inner guidance beyond logic understanding. We become attentive to the whispering of our soul, hearing the voice of our hearts and tap into the magic realms of our *beingness*. It's like a download of information and knowledge that is always existing in the individual and collective consciousness.

Whereas the 3rd principle of Empathic Resonance is about how we receive

another person, the principle of Deep Listening describes the process of how this gives rise to a response in us based on how it impacts us as well as the conscious step of delivering this response to the other and our shared relational space.

When actively listening to our inner world, we connect to a deeper layer of our being. Beyond the social and cultural conditioning that inform our actions, there are spontaneous impulses that constantly try to reach the surface and be expressed in the world. Because of our fears of rejection, humiliation and shame, these impulses are often filtered to conform to social rules in such a way that, when finally expressed, they have lost their originality and authentic nature. They no longer are an expression of your unique being and have transformed to an adaptive response based on the norm. Self-judgement becomes the filter and the blockage for our full self-expression.

However, we've all experienced moments when we give space to these impulses. Whenever we express our creativity, when we follow our intuition and when we react in such a spontaneous way that we don't have the chance to stop ourselves from expressing whatever is there to be expressed.

We all know these moments when suddenly we get an insight of what is happening. We are seeing the whole picture, having an image, a word, a sentence coming up to our conscious mind. We want to move, touch and position our body in a certain way. We know exactly what to do or say without even thinking about it. Our innate knowing expresses itself through a creative impulse and we are connected to the flow of life within us.

Bringing this principle of Deep Listening into the therapy room, we are not only practicing psychotherapy as a science and a craft with particular techniques but also as a form of art where we are in touch with our impulses, spontaneity and creativity.

In our Authentic Leadership model, we emphasize the importance to include in our professional practice what lays beyond the theoretical knowledge and our technical expertise. That is, the wisdom that sits deep within us and the ability to trust that our spontaneous response in a given situation will serve the relationship and support the other person's process.

We explore the principle of Deep Listening in our H.E.A.L. Program together with the Rigid Character Structure giving space and time to truly listen to the inner universe of feelings, movements and impulses and to encourage their free expression.

5th Principle – AUTHENTICITY

Being in touch with our creative life force energy and letting its flow inform our actions and the way we relate to the world, we show up in our authentic self.

We speak our truth and hold on to it even if no one is applauding us.

Authenticity comes with the vulnerability of being seen in our strength and vulnerability. We might be criticized or judged and at the same time feel appreciated and loved for who we truly are. Independently from the reactions

we get from the outside, we surrender to our core essence letting our unique qualities shine. It takes a powerful combination of humility and courage leading to a sincere rootedness in our being. That way we become leaders of our lives and an inspiration for the people we meet on our path.

Throughout life, we play many roles. As newborns, we soon start to detach from a symbiotic relationship with our mother or primary caretaker and develop a sense of self. By then, with no or little conscious of it, we play the role of son/daughter, brother/sister and the role of the child. As we develop into adulthood, these roles multiply and vary in terms of responsibility and demands. We assume the role of man/woman, father/mother, husband/wife, friend and the professional. The ability to do so is a sign of a healthy adjustment to the different environments and contributes to build and expand our personality.

However, these roles might turn against ourselves. When we over-identify with a certain role, it becomes a mask and it cuts us from our essence.

We've all gone through the process of needing or wanting to become someone or something which we are not. In different extent, each of us has experienced the feeling of not being enough, the need for approval of others and the adaptation of our behavior to match a certain idealized self-image. We already start this process at a very young age, adapting to our environment in the search of acceptance, nurture and love. In essence, we might end up betraying our essence for a sense of belonging.

Whether it's a personal, a professional or a therapeutic setting, showing up in our masks or in our authenticity will determine how our relationships will unfold. Unfortunately, when we are too tied up to our personality and too fearful to showing up in our truth, the easiest way to show up is our masks.

As a therapist, relating to our clients from a place of authenticity means to hold, empower and confront them while connecting to their true self. At the same time, we let them into our universe, allowing them to see us, to read our minds and emotional body creating a coherent and trusting bond. Here, we also need to be aware about when and to what extend we reveal ourselves depending on what is in service of the person we are working with.

Through this process, we invite our clients to truly touch us and by reflecting back their unique ways of being we offer an authentic response that strengthens their sense of self.

By bringing our core qualities to the session and into the relationship with the client, we inspire and stimulate them to discover their core. It is challenging to apply the principle of Authenticity in our professional and personal relationships because it requires a tremendous amount of self-work so that we are able to show up in our vulnerability. We need to tap into our own evolutionary process as a therapist as we are being pushed to the edges of our self-awareness in order to expand beyond our limitations and discover more about who we truly are.

Authentic expression invites us to take risks, to accept mistakes as part of a

learning process and to have the courage to stand up and admit the mistakes that we will make during the journey. However challenging it may be, to connect to our core qualities and express the essence of our being is what we will gain in return.

We explore the principle of Authenticity in our H.E.A.L. Program together with the Psychopathic Character Structure taking a closer look at the idealized self-image versus our true self and revealing it to ourselves and the group.

6th Principle – ENCOUNTER

In the Authentic Leadership model it is the interplay of these five Principles - Sacred Space, Embodied Presence, Empathic Resonance, Deep Listening and Authenticity - that enables us to relate to others in such a way that the outcome will be an Encounter. Together we enter a sacred space beyond our personal limitations co-creating a transpersonal experience which can be deeply transformative and healing. A meeting from soul to soul.

Although it's difficult to describe it in words, we all know these moments in life when we are completely in flow. Where we become a channel for life to move through us mastering the effortlessness of our true nature revealing itself. These transcendent experiences offer a deeper understanding of who we are meant to be and provide us with a sense of newness beyond the world as we know it. These events are not limited to spiritual practices. In many different situations, we enter into a state of flow where the limits of our physical body

fade away, giving us an experience of being merged with the world around us. As we come into our heart, unite with God, become the Universal Consciousness or however you prefer to call it.

In our therapeutic practice, we get out of the way following our inner guidance and allowing the divine impulse to operate through us in service of the client. We let go of control and the ambition to achieve a particular outcome trusting the intelligence of the shared energy field.

In our personal lives, we might access that state of Encounter through any form of indulgence in our beingness such as dancing, playing an instrument, walking in nature or holding a newborn baby for the first time.

This Encounter between me and you, Self and Other brings us to the present moment. It's the completion of the practice of the principles that gives space for a natural encounter to unfold. Time seems to dissolve and the space of interaction becomes sacred. In this place, our being shows itself in all its potential, becoming authentic because its originality and uniqueness shines through. We resonate with the other as they resonate with us, both making space for a deeper listening and allowing a fine tuning to take place. The quality manifested in such Encounters unfolds the potential of healing and allows creativity to flow freely. Consciously or unconsciously, we are striving for these sacred moments to enrich our existence as a human being.

With the Authentic Leadership model we intend to create the conditions that this is more likely to happen. When it does, still I believe it's a blessing.

Summary

In this summary, I intend to point out how the 6 principles of the Authentic Leadership model are interconnected and intertwined and how they are build on top of each other.

The Principle *Sacred Space* invokes this extraordinary reality and through it we wish to create a safe space for exploration and deep connection. The purpose of these actions is to transform the ordinary day-to-day reality into a space of higher vibration where we can access what lays beyond the limitations of space and time.

In a contained safe space, our systems start to relax and we transition from a state of doing into a state of being. We attune ourselves with our internal needs and access a field of higher self-awareness.

The quality of *Embodied Presence* invokes a deeper connection with ourselves and, simultaneously, enables us to connect with others from a different inner space. To nourish the state of presence we need to integrate body and mind. When we look and relate with the world from this place, we start to be in resonance with the people around us, seeing their beauty and vulnerability.

The 3rd Principle, *Emphatic Resonance*, invites us to see life as energy and vibration and how we can co-create a shared reality by attuning and resonating in the same frequency.

When in Presence and in Resonance, we access a state of *Deep Listening*, the 4th Principle. We connect to our essence and we are able to listen to the deep

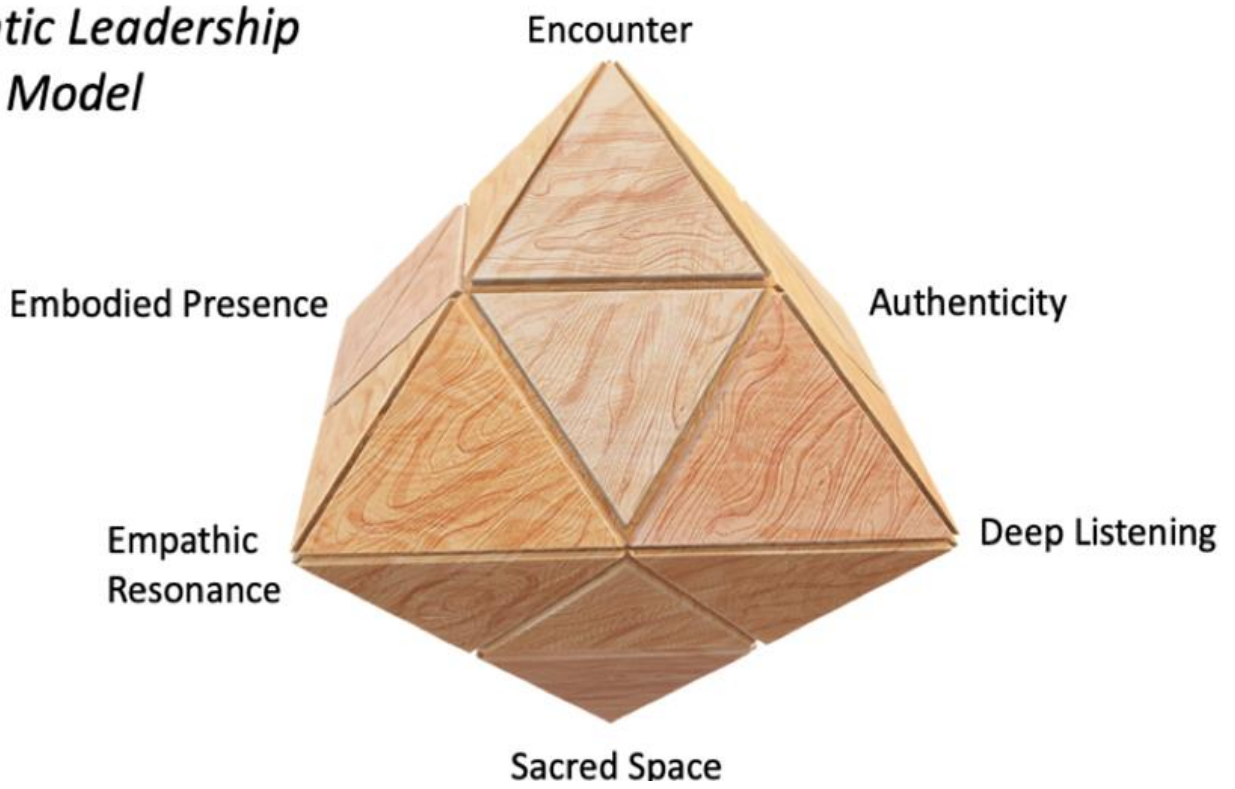
wisdom of our inner guidance. The creative impulses coming from our core are expressed in the world, giving us a sense of wholeness and full self-expression.

As we allow our core impulses to be expressed, the uniqueness of our being starts to shine through. We let go of idealized self-images and the fear of not meeting others expectations. To be in a state of *Authenticity*, 5th Principle, is to allow both: Our core qualities and our vulnerabilities to be seen by others, trusting that we will be received.

The integration of these principles originate an *Encounter* of self and other, 6th and last Principle. A transcendent experience where the space of interaction becomes non-dual. In such moments, we show ourselves in all our potential, resonating with the other by surrendering to the free flow of creativity and its healing potential.

Through this, we become leaders of our own life, empowering ourselves to freely express our life energy and allowing it to be seen in the world. By embracing our vulnerability, we connect with our biggest strength and our hearts become the doorway to perceive and interact with to the world.

*Authentic Leadership
Model*



Clinical Case – Practical Dimension of the Authentic Leadership Model

In this chapter, I like to share my experience with a client that turned out to be the most challenging process I've led so far. Through this example, I intend to show how the principles of the Authentic Leadership Model are relevant in the therapeutic process and how they shape the relationship with the client.

When I met this client for the first time, she had just given birth to her daughter experiencing flashbacks and memories of sexual harassment while breast feeding her baby. Being a fresh mother myself at that time, I was touched by her experience and willing to support her.

Reading her body, I saw mainly masochistic traits whereas her defensive behavior suggested a psychopathic structure.

We started by exploring the negative feelings coming up while nursing, which were mostly disgust, anger and a deep pain underneath.

The client would express her „NO“ towards her abusive father, hitting and moving her highly charged pelvis and legs against the block. I would receive her aggressive impulses and provoke her in order to get her going always moving quickly between the object of transference and the encouraging therapist.

Although there was a huge amount of anger, it was not easy for her to let it out and direct it at me. Very often, I observed the tendency to block it, stop moving or when she allowed herself to have it for a moment, the moment after

she collapsed again unable to contain the energy. This reinforced my perception of the masochistic wound where the negative intent was present „I won't show/express myself“. It was a delicate process to guide her in a way that she could integrate that energy and experience it as her power instead of using it to put herself down again. Or, conversely, lashing out at me.

During that initial phase of the process, the principles of the Authentic Leadership Model were naturally in place.

Sacred Space - Starting with the Sacred Space where it had to be safe enough for a 3 weeks old mother to share about the intensity of negative feelings and sensations while being close to her newborn which is supposed to be a loving and fulfilling experience for both mother and child.

Having had my own process around sexual abuse coming up during pregnancy and knowing the traumatic event of simply becoming a mother it was easy for me to empathically resonate with my client. Due to the therapeutic work I did myself and 2 years of time advantage, the potentially triggering material this client was presenting was making me even more available and present for the current process.

Embodied Presence - I felt grounded in myself, connected to my energy and passion for life, breathing and feeling my female body which allowed me to stay connected to my client. I recalled the sweet memories of nursing my son as one of the most comforting and heart opening experiences in my life and although my client was having a complete oppositional experience these

positive feelings were present in my body as a resource to hold space and be with her pain.

Empathic Resonance - I felt compassion and a fierce willingness in me to stand next to my client going through this hormonal rollercoaster and confusing experience of past wounding and present defiance simultaneously. I knew myself how deeply connecting and challenging motherhood can be and how (new) life itself brings up the darkest corners of our soul as an evolutionary update.

Deep Listening & Authenticity - I was connected to my impulses, intuitively responding to my client finding a good balance between empathy and confrontation. Although, the process was not an easy one and my client got stuck over and over again, most of the time I experienced myself in flow holding the bigger picture of the meaningful work we were doing.

I've been seeing this client consistently for almost 5 years with longer gaps of 4 to 5 weeks between sessions. And although in the end I failed to maintain a supportive therapeutic alliance with her she sent quite a few clients to me from her circle which reflects back the healing connection we established during the first years of her process.

After her husband attended our first H.E.A.L. Program she applied for the second edition and we happily accepted her. In addition to the individual work I was doing with her, she had already completed the first year of the Core

Energetics Training in Berlin which I co-organized and accompanied as an assistant.

Starting off with the first weekend of our Program, the client would unexpectedly attack us with criticism and allegations (outside the process group) that we've created that presentation or exercise just to make her feel bad. She felt and expressed repeatedly that the way we are doing things is offending her, insulting and accusing us of incompetence.

Looking back at the episodes of her acting out, their specific timing and frequency, I realize that the Sacred Space was violated by disrespecting what was happening for the group or individual group members. Instead of protecting it and the group we would repeatedly make space for her negativity to be expressed and received by myself, Nuno or both of us as we do it in process group. After a few times, this of course became annoying and not making her stop, calm down or shift her unsettling experience.

Sacred Space - Besides our inability to maintain and recreate a Sacred Space in this dynamic, what happened to me internally is that I often felt caught by surprise when my client would be triggered and acted out which I did not foresee. Being her therapist, I felt paralyzed for a couple of minutes, judging myself, judging my client, feeling inadequate to deal with this distorted behavior in a proper way, being lost, helpless and angry. I was caught up in the countertransference towards my client experiencing a mixture of intense and very challenging emotions while standing in front of a group that expects me and us to lead the way. Being raised with a lot of pressure to perform, I

learned to push myself to do whatever was expected from me. Accordingly, I tried to function „well“ and hide my internal turmoil at the cost of connection with myself and with my client. As one can imagine, I was repeatedly in a state of overwhelm not being able to respond to my client from a grounded place of what we call - Embodied Presence.

Empathic Resonance - Instead, I was in survival mode trying hard to do things right and fixing it. In these moments, there was no inner space to relate to the intense feelings I myself was experiencing and as a consequence I had no capacity to see and feel my client beyond what was happening on the surface. I completely lost my ability to resonant and be empathic with her. I just wanted to find a way to resolve „it“ as fast as possible. Again and again, I invited her to move her energy and bring out her negativity as I thought this is the right intervention for her to come out of it or push through to access her underlying pain. I was using powerful tools and techniques in order to reach a goal which when I am fully honest was to change her way of being and interacting without being connected to her.

Deep Listening - She became the difficult case for me where I had to effort and work as hard as I could but our relationship was lost. I had no access to any impulses from within, or to a deeper listening of what this whole drama was calling for. In my instability, I would latch onto my tool kit pressuring myself to keep the „professional“ stance of knowing what to do and what she needs to do in order to process her spilling negativity.

Authenticity - As for the 5th principle of Authenticity, by inviting my client over

and over again to discharge her „unreasonable“ anger against me, I was wearing the mask of the good mother receiving her with everything whilst being offended internally. I wasn't honest and pretended to be there for my client which of course a part of her would pick up immediately and as a result she got upset even more. The natural impulse to stop her and set a healthy boundary (including taking her out of the group setting and continuing individual therapy) would have been an authentic response. Communicated with compassion this might have calmed her down and provided containment not only for her but for the whole group.

Obviously, I was reacting from my countertransference towards the client and simply missing all five principles that prepare the ground for healing to happen in a (therapeutic) relationship.

The whole process ended by her exploding in our last weekend during the final round of completion where several participants expressed their gratitude for what they've learned and experienced in the Program as well as appreciating our leadership. After her last outbreak, she left the group abruptly with the unspoken expectation on us to take care of the mess she created.

I was exhausted and full of anger not replying to her emails for a week since we were on holidays. As a reaction, the client began threatening me and us to file a complaint. At some point, I had to end the therapeutic relationship due to the ruptures and impossible repair at this point of escalation. As a dedicated therapist this has been a tough learning experience for me.

If I look at this described dynamic with more distance, I see this person in moments of distress relating to a therapist that is not present and compassionate with her but occupied with their own internal struggle and agenda to do something they know with that person in order to change her for the better. I understand that a sensitive person will feel even more distressed and unsafe with the probability to act out even more.

I consciously chose this example that is going from one extreme to the other which on one hand is related to the internal organization of this particular client switching in her transference from the good to the bad mother. My hypothesis is that she had to annihilate me because she couldn't tolerate sharing me and seeing me giving nurturance to others and vice versa. It seems that this client has Borderline qualities which means that there is a big need for authenticity whereas its absence provokes a strong negative reaction.

On the other hand, this example is showing how sensitive the process of relating is and how much it requires the principles that I've explored in this paper. Of course, this movement in and out of connection is happening all the time within the course of a session and a long-term process. As long as our own wounding is not triggered and we don't react from a place of countertransference, our innate abilities to relate are naturally on board in service for the client. We are able to notice the subtle and more profound ruptures in the relationship and together with the client we find a way to repair and deepen the connection over and over again.

What I learned and intend to emphasize with this paper is the importance of

the therapeutic relationship as the core element in the healing process. For that reason, it makes only sense to use the techniques as an outgrowth of the relationship – not as a substitute.

Practical Exercises for each Principle

In this chapter I would like to suggest a simple practice to explore each principle of the Authentic Leadership Model in order to transmit the conceptual content of this paper into a rather embodied experience. My intention is to inspire you to lead your own explorations accessing the different qualities of each principle. It might be useful for you as you practice for yourself, with a peer or bring this material to your clients and group work.

As we already know, all principles are always present. In the following exercises I will focus on one at the time.

Sacred Space

I invite you to reflect on a ritual that you've already created to connect with yourself and to your environment. To connect with its value, importance and meaning.

What helps you to enter a state of honoring the sacredness of (your) existence? It can be a simple gesture, or a certain sequence of actions, a daily or weekly routine.

See if you can bring your awareness to what it is that you are doing that opens up your consciousness. Explore that ritual while you are performing it and notice the impact on your relationship with yourself and your surroundings.

What rituals support you to step into the divine ground of meeting your clients?

Embodied Presence

As Core therapists, we have a wide range of grounding exercises using breath, movement and voice in order to become present in our bodies.

Following a guided meditation or internal body scan while consciously bringing our awareness and breath to different parts of our body is another way of accessing a state of Embodied Presence.

One of my favorite exercises exploring Embodied Presence in a group setting is the following:

Each person finds a partner standing shoulder to shoulder. Take a moment to ground in your own body and then become aware of the space around you including your partner by opening your peripheral vision. Bringing your eyes on to the horizon / wall of the room. The task is to become as present with your whole body that you are aware of what your partner is doing without looking at them. In the first round one is leading and slowly starting to move and the other person is following this movement simultaneously. You don't turn your head or look at your partner directly. As you perceive them move through your peripheral view you embody the same movement as they are doing.

At some point you switch roles. After both experienced being leaders, there is a third stage where there is no assigned leader. Both are leading and following and this exchange happens organically in a nonverbal way.

As a next step, two/three/four couples can form a group of four/six/eight people standing in one line following the same instruction of sensing each other and moving as one.

You can divide the group and even invite one half to sit down and watch the other half doing it. It increases the presence in the room and allows people to experience the impact and quality of Embodied Presence.

This exercise brings forward the power, aliveness and silent beauty of presence through movement. It is very touching and inspiring to witness this process from the outside as well as performing it.

Empathic Resonance

To practice the principle of Empathic Resonance, I suggest a simple but profound sharing exercise in a dyad. Sit comfortably in front of each other. Take a moment to tune in with yourself. Close your eyes, become aware of your breath and feel your body.

Whenever A is ready, they are going to share for a few minutes about how they are doing and what's going on for them. B is receiving A and tracking what happens internally with them while listening to A.

After A has finished the sharing, B is reflecting back to A how it resonated on the body, emotional, energetic and mental level:

“When I listen to you I sense... I feel... I experience the energy... I think...”

This is not about making any interpretation about what A was expressing but to truly deliver the resonance that B was tracking on different levels of their being. When B has finished both take a moment to reconnect with yourself before changing roles.

Deep Listening

I like to suggest an exercise to practice Deep Listening in a group setting but you can do it with just one partner. In this case, you form a group of 5 people where one person is receiving physical support from the other 4 people.

The receiver is choosing a position in the space which can be lying, sitting or standing. The support team is gathering around that person taking a moment together to become present and tune in with each other.

The assignment for this exercise is to open up to any impulses that come up and to express them through movement and touch. At any given moment, the receiver is invited to allow involuntary movement as an expression of what is alive in them from moment to moment. The group is present to support these movement impulses by listening to them and each one following their own spontaneous responses. It can be through touch, pressure, resistance or giving direction in order to encourage the energy to flow and express itself.

It can also be a movement of giving space to the receiver, holding a strong and safe energetic container for them to express themselves. And it might change from one to the other.

Of course, this is a very individual and unique process in every constellation and moment of time. It's important to keep it a nonverbal space but it's even more powerful to encourage sounds and voice to be part of the exploration. I really like this exercise because in both roles as the receiver and the support team the practice is about listening, allowing and following our intuitive impulses. It's like dance because one's impulse might not feel good to another and each one has to adjust.

Authenticity

For the principle of Authenticity, I propose another non-verbal exploration to play with. Pair up with a partner. A is taking a space in the room closing their eyes. B is watching A from the side of the room providing their full attention and supportive presence. B is also taking care of A to not bump into the wall, objects or other people.

Whenever A is ready they start moving with the idea of expressing with their body and voice what is alive and true and moving internally while in the presence of B. In a way it's a nonverbal sharing where one is talking (with the body) and the other one is there to witness and receive them.

It can be a time frame for 5 to 10 minutes for each person to express.

After exchanging roles it is good that the witness is giving feedback about what they have seen and how it made them feel to experience the authentic expression of their partner.

Encounter

I invite you to go to your inner data base of transcendent peak experiences and to remember a moment in your life that you felt completely in flow. A point in time where time and space would fade away as well as the borders of your being became permeable and one with the world around you.

Close your eyes, take a deep breath and let yourself dive into this memory of transcendence. Where are you? How does it feel? Who is there? Who are you? Allow yourself to bathe into the sensations, feelings, energy and revelation of this moment of Encounter. Enjoy it. Be aware of the divine quality of life as a part of who you are.

Maybe you feel like writing a few words or make a drawing or put on some music finding your dance as reflection of your experience of Encounter.

Conclusion

In the therapeutic world the focus was - and mostly, still is - to equip therapists with theoretical knowledge and technical skills. And this is the reality for most of our professional fields. The pitfall here is that it may cause a reinforcement of the professional mask because it projects an image of the knowledgeable and skillful professional versus a disempowered client, patient or listener.

Already in his 1961 book, *On Becoming a Person*, the American psychotherapist Carl Rogers was stating the most impactful factor of change and improvement in psychotherapy: the relationship itself and, of particular importance, the quality of response from the therapist when relating to the client. More than half a century later, research in this field has come to the same conclusion.

So, why are Psychology degrees and the psychotherapeutic training curriculums filled with theoretical and technical information? Why are not psychologists, therapists and health workers trained to improve their relating and communication skills in order to make their practice more human and impactful? This is a question I do not wish to explore here. Instead, I choose to name its consequences.

At least in some cases, focusing the education on theoretical knowledge and technical expertise, generates therapists who contribute to an unbalanced

therapeutic relationship. The therapist is perceived as the one responsible for treatment who evaluates and determines the steps of therapy. They are seen as the specialist who intervenes and “fix” the patient, therefore they are the cause of change in the patient. Historically, western medicine has disempowered patients and their innate ability for healing. A similar situation might surface in related fields such as the case of some psychotherapeutic approaches and trainings.

But, ultimately, it leaves aside a fundamental aspect that can and should be stimulated and developed which are our relational, intuitive and communication skills. And that’s not only true for psychotherapists, doctors or professionals of any kind, but for each human being living on this planet in the midst of a global crisis. It needs all of us with all our power showing up and stepping into leadership as self-responsible human beings. To protect Life for our future generations it requires each one of our unique qualities as a response to what is happening.

At this moment of writing this paper, Nuno and I are still in the process of discovering and exploring the Authentic Leadership model in the individual and group work we do, especially in the H.E.A.L. Program where we teach and practice the 6 principles.

What fascinates me is how much the principles are connected to the five Character Structures, our core needs and how important our ability to relate is for an appropriate response to those needs.

That’s why, at the end of the description of each principle, you find a short

paragraph on how this particular principle is explored together with a particular character structure. I trust in a few years time there is much more to say about that correlation as well as about the transformational potential of the Authentic Leadership model in meaningful relationships.

In the meantime, we completed the 2nd edition of the H.E.A.L. Program in Berlin and intend to create an online version of the training to share it with an international community. We are also introducing the Authentic Leadership model in the corporate world.

What's next?

We've created the Authentic Leadership Model in October 2020 and started our first H.E.A.L. Program in February 2020 just before the pandemic hit us all on a global level. More than ever, I feel the necessity of humankind to step into authentic self-leadership to preserve mother nature, our social ecosystem and the sacredness of life for the future generations.

In a moment where we are faced with contradictory messages and information, the damaging consequences of the climate crisis, ongoing exploitation and violence, the corruption in the power structures that govern human society as well as increasing isolation on an individual and collective level, the most important currency of our time is our relationships with other human beings.

In order for a shift to happen, we need to relearn how to honor life and experience ourselves as part of what is happening in the world. By acknowledging the sacredness of life, reconnecting with our bodies and innate wisdom, we become again feeling creatures that resonate with one another and the pain of the Earth. What impulses would arise from our individual and collective consciousness if we regain the capacity to empathize and be compassionate as we witness what is happening not only in our small world but on a global scale of our human family.

If we reclaim our own authority and show up in alignment with our authentic self, society and outer authorities wouldn't get control over who we are. The

urgency and meaning of the work we are doing with Core Energetics and other modalities goes beyond the therapy room and needs to diffuse into our social, economic and corporate networks. We can only do it together.

I trust that the practice of the principles of the Authentic Leadership model will be helpful in the process of moving from separation and numbness to a sense of meaningful connection and the deep desire to protect everyone and everything that is alive. In my eyes, it requires a strong commitment to do this inner work and integrate it in our daily lives with our partners, family, friends and community. It's not a matter of self-development and aiming for a more fulfilling life but it becomes a responsibility we all have as a species inhabiting this planet.

Healing trauma goes beyond working one on one and with groups around individual developmental trauma. Collective and ancestral trauma requires a bigger container to heal and that can only be held by a community.

How can we expand the work that we do to more broader fields and create healing environments with individuals that support, nourish and challenge each other? This is what I am interested in figuring out now.

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