

Transcript of Be Well Lead Well® Connect Audio Series on Physiology of Wellbeing, Stress, and Leadership, Part 4 – Co-Regulation

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Voiced by Renee Moorefield, Phd, CEO of Wisdom Works Group

From 00:00:00 to 00:00:41

[MUSIC PLAYING] For many leaders, it's a new realization that their internal sense of wellbeing can uplift people, and their constant worry can tax people. Some leaders have no idea how the state of their nervous systems radiate outward to everyone else. I believe the leaders who understand this are better equipped to lead well.

Why? Because good leadership is all about co-regulation. Leading well is about actively creating the conditions where people can be effective, grow, and thrive, individually and together, during the stress-free and the stress-filled times.

From 00:00:41 to 00:00:57

[MUSIC PLAYING] You're listening to Be Well Lead Well Connect, where we unpack the latest research, approaches, practices, and case studies to help leaders make thriving a new standard of success.

From 00:00:58 to 00:02:10

[MUSIC PLAYING] Welcome, everyone. My name is Renee Moorefield. I'm CEO of Wisdom Works Group, a firm that makes the science and cultural insights about human thriving practical for leaders using our Be Well Lead Well platform of assessment, development, certification, and strategic advisory services. My team and the growing Be Well Lead Well community across the globe are interested in the kind of leadership that foster organizations and a world where everyone can thrive.

In this four-part audio series on wellbeing, stress, and leadership, we're exploring principles of the autonomic nervous system, that division of the nervous system, which is typically not under our voluntary control, yet shapes our experience and effectiveness. In the first three audios, I talked about the principles of neuroception, interoception, and self-regulation. These are important resources you can use to live and lead from a place of thriving and resilience and help others do the same. Please check out those audios to learn more about these principles and their application to leadership.

From 00:02:10 to 00:03:03

In this fourth audio, we'll focus on the final principle of your autonomic nervous system, and that's co-regulation, the way we affect each other, not just through how we act and communicate, but through the very state of our nervous systems. I don't think we fully appreciate the countless ways we influence and are influenced by others. We often experience ourselves as flying solo, perhaps even more so as more of our jobs are getting done remotely or in hybrid work environments. Yet nothing happens by or through one person alone. For

thousands of years, many worldviews have instructed us on the profound truth that we are connected. As leaders, we must learn how to lead with a deep understanding that mindsets, emotions, and actions are contagious.

From 00:03:03 to 00:04:24

From a cultural point of view, the South African Zulu concept of Ubuntu means "I am because we are", a belief in the universal bond across humanity. A central idea in Buddhism is that, at the most basic level, interconnectedness is our true nature. And popular physicist Neil deGrasse Tyson once said, "We are all connected to each other biologically, to the earth chemically, and to the rest of the universe atomically." The truth that we are connected is a shift in consciousness for many of us, and it's a source of practical power for amplifying thriving through your leadership.

As we explored in the first audio of this series, your autonomic nervous system already knows we are connected. Think of a time you walked into a room where people were yelling at each other. Did you feel annoyed? Did you want to escape? Or did you shut down? Perhaps your heart started to pound, or you felt nervous or tense. Any of these signals would be a natural response to a situation where your autonomic nervous system unconsciously picks up on a potential lack of safety for you and a real or perceived need to protect yourself.

From 00:04:24 to 00:05:10

Now think about a time you witnessed people laughing, singing, dancing together, perhaps at an event in your local park. Their joy was infectious. You likely felt an inner buoyancy and a liveness, a spring in your step, just by being around them. You were connecting with them, co-regulating with their delight.

For many leaders, it's a new realization that their internal sense of wellbeing can uplift people, and their constant worry can tax people. Some leaders have no idea how the state of their nervous systems radiate outward to everyone else. I believe the leaders who understand this are better equipped to lead well. Why? Because good leadership is all about co-regulation.

From 00:05:10 to 00:05:59

Leading well is about actively creating the conditions where people can be effective, grow, and thrive, individually and together, during the stress-free and the stress-filled times. That includes creating work norms and environments that inspire people and invite them to show up authentically, that support warm and inclusive relationships, and that maximize the abilities of people to productively learn and get work done. In our wellbeing leadership framework and assessment system, Be Well Lead Well Pulse, we measure this in a set of psychometrics we call Thriving Amplified. You can find more information about that assessment in the show notes if you're interested. What all this fundamentally means is learning how to proactively co-regulate with each other is essential.

From 00:05:59 to 00:06:52

Our abilities to co-regulate build on our abilities to self-regulate, which build on our abilities for interoception and neuroception. That's how all four of these audios in this four-part series fit together. When we co-regulate, we are shifting into the neural state that supports safety and trust in our relationships. Therapist Deb Dana says that from birth, we have a biological need to be in connection with safe others in order to experience physical and psychological wellbeing. It is co-regulating in those safe, trusting, caregiving relationships-with those other safe, trusting, caregiving nervous systems-that we initially learn how to self-regulate our own nervous system. And we don't lose that desire to co-regulate in life-enhancing relationships as adults.

From 00:06:52 to 00:07:32

How can you make this principle of co-regulation practical as a leader? Well, here are a few ways to begin. First, use it as a lens for noticing the interactions and behaviors of people and teams you lead. As an example, if you notice erratic behavior or people shutting down on your team, instead of labeling or discounting people, consider the possibility that they don't feel safe in some way. How can you best support them and empower them to support themselves? Having a genuine conversation with them, where you get curious and deeply listen to their perspectives, is a good way to find out.

From 00:07:32 to 00:08:49

Second, become aware of what you're radiating. Who you are, what you say, and what you do matter, especially if you're in a position of power. Your body language, facial expressions, and the pace and rhythm of how you move and interact with people all communicate something. Today, without changing a thing about yourself, notice yourself in action. Then ask, what am I broadcasting with my being? Am I radiating anxiety and agitation? Disenchantment? Depletion? Calm presence? Enthusiasm? There are no right or wrong answers here. Just an opportunity to become more aware.

As leader, your ability to manage your own emotions, thoughts, and behaviors-to role model self-regulation as we explored in the third audio-is key to helping people learn how to self-regulate, plus become a positive avenue of co-regulation for others. We really are that connected. And if you aren't sure of the vibe you're sending out, ask people you trust for their honest feedback. I can promise you that your family members, friends, partners, and team will be an excellent source of insight if you're willing to learn from them.

From 00:08:49 to 00:10:01

Third, set the tone where everyone is accountable for contributing to a psychologically safe and well work environment for themselves and others. We aren't just responsible for our own nervous systems. We are responsible for the nervous system of each other to some extent.

I love the notion here from psychologist Carl Rogers. It's the notion of unconditional positive regard. This is about centering yourself, or in this case, your team, in the belief that all people have the internal resources for their personal wellbeing, their resilience, and their growth. Make sure everyone on your team knows that one of their jobs is to help maximizing the wellbeing

resilience of growth of each other so that the team can create something of value that individual members cannot create alone. This is the heart of vibrant collaboration. And it isn't just good for the organization. It creates life-enhancing, fulfilling employee experiences. Most people find their work and entire lives much more meaningful when they amplify thriving for others. And by doing so, they experience greater thriving themselves.

From 00:10:01 to 00:10:36

This wraps up our four-part series on the autonomic nervous system and why it should matter to you as a leader. If you want to dive deeper into the science or the concept of co-regulation, please check out the audio show notes. I've listed excellent resources there. To end this series, I just want to say one more time how much I believe every person possesses an innate capacity to thrive and evolve. And I believe we can lead work and work environments where people leave more refreshed, more capable, and more well than when they came.

From 00:10:36 to 00:11:09

Thank you for being part of a growing community of leaders who want to amplify thriving in their teams, their organizations, and the world, as well as in their own lives. To learn more about how we can help you thrive, visit wisdom-works.com or bewellleadwell.com. We look forward to advancing thriving with you. [MUSIC PLAYING]