

# TRANSFORMING YOUR LEADERSHIP

For those of us that lead others in the outdoors it is a privilege we should not take lightly. Everyday I am fortunate enough to be out on the water exploring a section of river, sea or loch with a group of less experienced paddlers I see it as a huge responsibility. The group's safety is the obvious responsibility, but for me my leadership role is far bigger than that. The experience they have with me as their leader will shape their thoughts about paddling, their thoughts about the environment and their thoughts about the people around them. These thoughts and memories will last forever and as leaders I believe the responsibility of the experience the groups have with us is one not to be overlooked. So the question is; what type of leader are you and what experiences do you want to create? Having considered this it then all boils down to the next question; how do you lead to ensure this?

Research would suggest that a theme of great leadership is the ability to motivate and inspire those who are around you, but the question is how do we do this? There are many leadership theories out there to help us with this, but one worth having a look at to help us inspire and motivate our paddlers is as follows:





# TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP

There are many reasons why this leadership style is worth considering, however I feel there are three key reasons help us:

- It supports intrinsic motivation – the paddlers we lead are usually with us because they want to be, not for external reward, they are intrinsically motivated.
- It works well to help manage arousal and anxiety – the paddlers we lead are often in a real risk environment that they could be challenged by.
- It is simple!

## SO HOW DO WE DO IT?

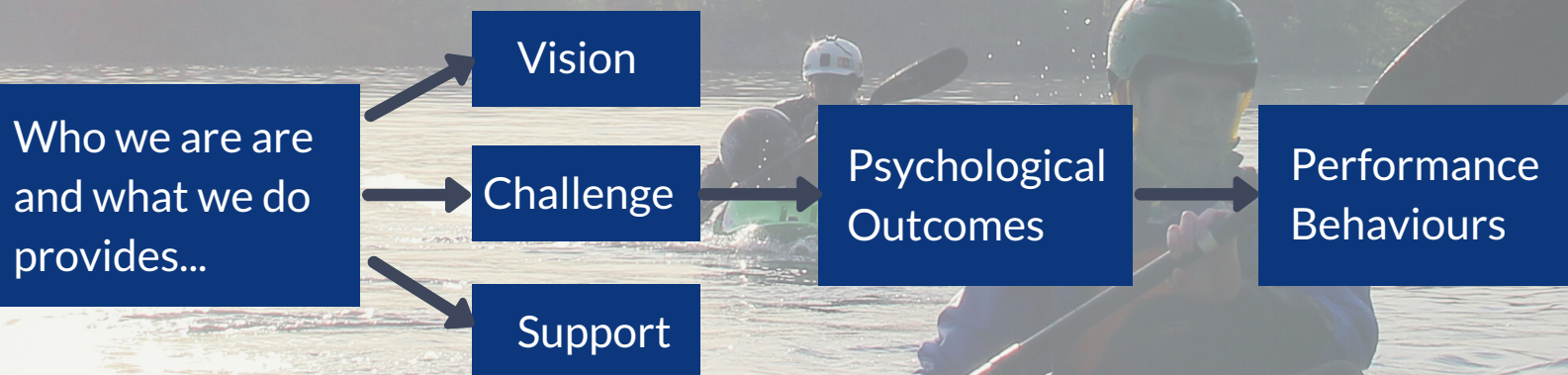
In our leadership we need to ensure what we do and how we act provides our group members with the following:

**Vision** - a defined 'aspirational goal' that the journey you are on is either going to achieve or help towards.

**Support** – this needs to be physical and psychological, and even if it is not needed people need to know and feel that it is there.

**Challenge** – people thrive and grow on challenge, if it is the right amount! Our job is to provide opportunities for the right type of challenge to be found, and in the right amount.

By providing the right 'cocktail' of these three ingredients then psychological outcomes will happen within the people we lead, from this behaviours and how the groups perform will be developed.



(Arthur, 2010; based on Bass, 1985)



It's a simple process to consider, reflect when things have gone well or not so well in your leadership – what was your cocktail of ingredients? Would a bit more or bit less vision, support or challenge have made the difference?

Next time you are heading out on the water leading a group on a journey consider asking yourself these three golden questions:

1. What is the vision of those I am leading and how can I help shape it?
2. What support do they need and am I offering it?
3. What type of challenge do they want and how much should I provide?

If you can answer these questions and then monitor you have got your cocktail mixed in the right way as the journey develops, then you might just have 'transformed your leadership'!

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Scottish Paddler, July 2015

