

Yhteenveto matkasta / JOLIVE - syksy 2024

I am fairly new and young leader and deputy manager, working in a team with long-term members. The past years as a leader have been a big change for me, definitely interesting and exciting as well as stressful and educational in many ways.

Attending JOLIVE this autumn was a surprising self-confidence boost for my leadership skills and understanding deeper hues of team leading and management.

Even though this essay will be in English, there will definitely be some Finnish words here and there because I read and listen to a lot of Finnish due to my work and courses or trainings I attend.

The core and most meaningful learning subjects for me during the course were: self-management, the gentle tenacity (lempeä sisu) and the manager's intuition skills. These subjects somehow felt to me that were interconnecting and creating this kokonaisuus of skills that felt useful and straightening for my understanding towards leadership. They naturally involved all the other topics discussed during the course, integrating comments and posts from the other participants as well as personal thoughts and notes.

Starting with self-management, it became an umbrella term for me, summarising all the important skills and understanding concerning it. Understanding the importance and the various hues of self-management led me to the following conclusions:

- A manager's understanding and practicing of well-being affects their management skills, capacity and resilience. A good start were of course the meditation moments during our lectures, as well as Huotilainen's lecture concerning sleep, concentration, and how the mind can be strengthened through a balanced daily routine of sleep and rest, exercise, healthy eating habits, breaks and mental rest during work and personal time. Or the importance of creativity, art and being in nature, which were topics brought up by Inkeri Kärkkäinen as well as other participants. Matters of hope towards the future, as well as appreciating one's self in the first place also felt that complete the well-being. How many different aspects actually create a strong base of well-being and self-confidence for the manager! Basic acts and activities that matter so much.

- A manager's understanding of and creating their own ways to recover strengthen their well-being, coping and resilience as well as work organisation even. Sometimes it seems that a manager needs to pull the emergency lever and halt for a moment, but it sounds ideal to be able to create and maintain a conscious routine or slowing down and recovering from the hecticness of the work day, especially with some aspects that Huotilainen and Jaakkola described. Some very useful tips of pausing were actually those discussions from other participants describing their personal ways of organising the chaotic days of leading and managing a team,

- A manager's understanding of their own traumas affect they way they act and react within and towards the team as well as each team member. Trauma-informed practice was not familiar to me until Johanna's lecture, but I had somehow experienced through me and colleagues how trauma actually affects our interactions. Thinking from a personal perspective, I find important to be able to reflect on own traumas, understand them and then observe how they translate into our interactions with other people. I found it quite insightful to utilise our traumas in order to be gentler towards ourselves as well as create the situations that can prevent these traumas from affecting us in a harmful way during work. There is also the aspect of perhaps setting limits, when situations are too triggering because of a trauma, and communicating it to ourselves and hopefully to our team members without necessarily oversharing. Perhaps this also creates a gentle environment for the other team members to express their needs and reflect on their traumas, hopefully to find ways to create together an emotionally safe working environment for everyone

- A manager's ability to set boundaries to one self as well as to others enhances their means to respond to their demanding list of tasks. Being a younger leader and perhaps not having realised the importance of setting limits to the fullest yet, this was a very enlightening topic that got highlighted many times throughout the course, during lectures as well as participants posts and comments. It was very

strengthening to me to basically feel encouraged to explore, accept and really set the limits that can help me be more effective as well as healthy with my work tasks and role.

- A manager's gentle tenacity affects the manager as well as the team's resilience. I very warm realisation for me was that being tenacious does not mean going against all odds no matter what on 100%. Something that really stayed in my mind was what Elisabet mentioned in one of the lectures:

"On the uphill we slow down"; perhaps one of the most self-forgiving thoughts I have ever heard and somehow became my new motto concerning my leadership role. I think this warm and gentle attitude towards going forwards but at the same time adjusting and, if needed, readjusting the speed, not only affected the way I see my work but I was somehow able to start slowly passing it on my team members. Touching moments, to see a relentless team towards mistakes changing adopting a more forgiving and helpful attitude to each of themselves as well as the others!

In addition, an interesting pondering was that tenacity can be provoking, absurd or relentless, a force that does not consider others, which sounds to me a hue of tenacity that can be harmful both for the team and well as the manager's well-being.

Pondering on forgiveness towards mistakes, some other points from the course that strengthened my understanding of gentle tenacity were those concerning art as well as noticing the good in others and valuing them for who they are.

"Pihtaamisen kostonkierre" somehow made it clear to me what we urgently need to change in our workplace culture. And then Pekka Töllä completed my vision by highlighting how the change of the work culture is a collective deed. That was another moment when I got reminded how I need to be gentle to myself and not expect me to pull together all the responsibility of the team's change towards improvements.

It is true that team members are eager and happy to work together when they are recognised and appreciated in one way or another. For one, there are the non-vocal appreciative gestures, but we of course also have the simple word of thank you or pointing out what one is good at. By valuing and consciously utilising all the team members' strengths to achieve our common goals, makes everyone more involved, more helpful, more flexible and understanding towards others, and each member has the feeling of ownership concerning outcomes. It seems to be so empowering for the whole team, when everyone wants our plan to succeed instead of waiting behind the corner for the next mistake to happen!

In addition, thinking about art, I have been pondering about the patience, the lämmin sisu, the trial and error with tenacity but also forgiveness and acceptance towards mistakes and mishaps. If we think of art making, it is so forgiving by its nature because you can always retry until you get the result you would like. Art is also a good lesson of lowering our standards when mishaps or failures happen; art will always be art, and appreciable in itself as it is, no matter our personal expectations and satisfaction concerning the result. The lecture with Inkeri led me to think of the artists or musicians who perhaps spent time, acrylics and music score, creating, and trying and playing around, until at some point they created their masterpieces.

Last but not least, the topics that strengthened the already existing aspects in me were those concerning intuition and hope towards the future.

It was a surprise to me that intuition is indeed a subject that has been researched. Intuitive decisions can create doubts and questions to team members who perhaps do not know how often or not your intuition is correct. A useful observation was perhaps that intuition is the force that leads you to take decisions, not randomly, but because of the aspects and actual facts that you intuitively pay attention to or follow during decision-making. One can think that intuition cannot lead to an informed decision, but after Asta's lecture as well as reflecting with other participants, I realised that my intuition has helped me work very easily and smoothly with children as well as "feel" and "read" situations that are to come up, and thus be better prepared to face them! Very empowering!

In conclusion, as a leader with vision and hope, open eyes and ears towards the future and the new, I realised that this is an empowering aspect that has kept me going with tenacity but also gentleness towards developing various aspects of my leadership skills, and has inspired my team, despite slowly, to take new steps towards the future together.