



Episode 30

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The Triple Perspective Combo, A Jedi Leadership Trick

This week's **Jedi Leadership Trick** is called **The Triple Perspective Combo** and it is for times when you get stuck between the decision of senior leaders in your organization and the perspectives and emotions of members of your team.

I call it the Triple Perspective Combo because it involves structuring a difficult conversation in a way that embraces the complexity of the situation, in this case complexity that involves not one, not two but three perspectives. It is not easy to do but with practice can help you significantly raise your game and reduce your stress.

So here is the situation, senior leaders in your organization make a decision and asked you to communicate it to the members of your team. You are preparing to meet one-on-one with a member of your team and you have inkling that they may not be happy. So you feel caught between what senior leaders want and have decided and the experience of this person in front of you. So what do you do when you are in such situation?

If you are like a lot of us, you feel stuck. And the reason you feel stuck emotionally, physically and heck even in your mind is because you're caught in between three different and seemingly competing perspectives. First, is the perspective of the senior leaders who have made the decision and expect you to carry it out and communicate it. Two, your own perspective and how you feel about it. And three, the perspective of this member of your team.

Now, the reason that holding three perspectives at once is so difficult it is because often more than our mind can take. And that's because even as adults, even as we are seemingly at the highest stage of our development and our minds have just amazing capacity compared to say when we're kids they can still grow further.

And so what that mean is when we find ourselves in a complex situation it may will be that that complexity exceeds the capacity of our minds to handle it. That's right. And that's exactly why we feel stuck in a situation like this. And why if you're like most of us you will habitually respond in one of the following ways.

One is to dismiss the concerns of your team where you basically say, *"Yeah yeah I know you're upset." I know you don't like this but we have to do this, suck it up.*" Now, the problem with this is that you can appear callous and feel callous and the other person starts to distrust you. In other words they have less trust that you care about them. Now a second common response is to go ahead and actually agree with the concerns of this person.

And there are all sorts of different reasons why you might do this; you might want to avoid conflict to make sure they feel good about you. You might want them to feel loyal to you, all sorts of different reasons. Again, there's a problem and that you may actually appear or feel disloyal to the senior members of your organization. It may just a feeling that you have or you might fear that if senior members of the organization learned about this conversation they might come back to you and say, *"Hey! What are you up to here? Why are you getting the way of this? Are you for this decision or are you against it?"*

Now the third habitual response that you may have and this one could be compatible with either of the other two is to hide your own feelings. And the reason this is so common is that we think, well so many of us think that we have to be logical, rationale and stick with the facts that that's what it means to be an effective manager. And the problem is all sorts of scientific research and probably your own experience suggests is that none of us are purely logical and rationale people.

In fact, we are a more emotional than anything else. And so the risk here is that that person you're meeting with will look at you here you are talking in a logical, rationale way and go, *"You know what I don't really trust that you're being real or sincere with me because you know what your body is telling me something very different from your words. So I don't believe you."*

So again, the three habitual responses, one, dismiss the concern of the person in front of you. Two, agree with their concerns and three dismiss your own feelings. And again the reason that we tend to go in one or two of these directions is that we are caught in between these three perspectives, the perspectives of senior leaders, the perspective of the person in front of you and your own experience.

In order to deal with this situation more skillfully and to fully embrace the complexity I suggests that when you have this conversation you focus on doing three things. Be clear about the decision made by senior leaders, be real about your experience, and be curious about the experience of the person in front of you.

So let us start with being clear about the decision that has been made. Start with the facts that you are aware of. Simply say here's the decision that was made, here's who made it, here's what I know, here's what I don't know. And hopefully what you know is some dimension of the rationale behind the decision and what this means for you, your team and your organization, at least what senior leaders are asking you to do. So step one be clear in describing the decision and the perspectives of the senior leaders who made it.

Now step two, we do not want to ignore you so be real about your perspective. So you say, now that's the decision and those are the facts and that's what I understand. Here's how I am experiencing this decision. Again, you bring yourself into the picture. And there's a lot of different ways to talk about this that may work for you. One that I, a lot of people I've worked with have found helpful is to say, here is what I'm hoping and here is what I am fearing or here is one hope I have and here is one fear. You may also feel another emotion like sadness. Here is the reason I feel sad about this decision or here's a concern that I have.

Again, you don't have to do all of these things but if you can get in touch with what's true for you and express it authentically then you show up as a real human being which is important for a couple of reasons. First of all, you're more trustable. The other person actually trusts you because you are bringing your experience forward and second of all you create by the nature of your experience an invitation for the other person to bring their experience forward as well.

And I have to add there's a third benefit of being real about your perspective which is that you actually bring yourself, bring your whole self to work. And so again, if you feel hope, if you feel fear, if you feel sadness, if you feel concern you bring all those in. And now a really important point to mention when you're doing that you also say and I am committed to bringing about a solution that works for our organization that honors the decision that's been made and that works for you and for the rest of our team.

In other words, I have fears, I have hopes, I have sadness and ultimately I'm committed to making this work for you and for those who've made the decision. And that's really important because by saying that you're actually able to embrace the complexity not just of these three different perspectives but of the perspectives and feelings within you, okay? So be real about your perspective and if it isn't obvious to you before you have this conversation you may need to actually sit down for a while 10 minutes to half an hour and reflect upon what is your experience, okay?

So be real about your experience. And last but not the least; be curious about the perspective of this person in front of you, this member of your team. Now again, your concern maybe that if you ask them to share their feelings or concerns that you'll either dismiss them or agree with them because these are two habitual responses. So being

curious about their perspective means avoiding both of those habitual responses and so here how you do it.

First, you ask that other person some questions like, *“Okay I've just described the decision that's been made and I've told you my own experience, what clarifying questions do you have?”* And then you do your best to answer them. Other questions that you may ask are, *“So how are you taking this? How was this landing for you? How are you feeling about what you're hearing? What concerns do you have? What possibilities might be possible as a result of this which is a question many of us might leave out. So you ask a question and that's an expression of curiosity.*

Now second of all being curious about the other person perspective means listening attentively to what they have to say and that means really focusing and taking in and letting yourself be impressed like you are a piece of clay being impressed by someone hands, really being impressed by what they have to say. Okay so you ask the question, you listen attentively and then you acknowledge what you have heard and this was really, really important because when you acknowledge what you've heard the other person goes *“Aha! they get me.”* And getting me doesn't mean agreeing with me. Acknowledging does not mean agreeing.

So the way that you acknowledge what this other person has said is you say something like the following. *I hear that you're wondering how this is going to impact your day to day work or I hear that you're fearing fear about such and such or it sounds like you're really concern that blank, blank, okay. So you're acknowledging the other person's concerns you're not agreeing with them. And you can even if you're really concern about confusing the two make it clear which is, “Hey look I'm going to take in what you're saying and I'm going to use it to impact what I do. For right now, I just want to acknowledge what I'm hearing.”*

In other words, you make it explicit that you're acknowledging but not agreeing. And you know one other thing that you might actually ask this person as part of being curious about their perspective is *do you have any request of me? Do you have any request of me right now or would you like to think about this for a day or two or a week and comeback with the request? That does not mean I am going to agree to the request but I really, really want to hear it and I'm going to take seriously.*

So again, The Triple Perspective Combo, be clear about what senior leaders who have made this decision have said and meant and intend to have happened. Be real about how are you experiencing this decision and be curious about how this member of your team is experiencing it. When you bring those three together you have brought about the Triple Perspective Combo. And when you practice it over and over again, and I think you know there are a lot of opportunities in life when you can do this. When you repeat

this practice over and over again you stretch your mind so that it can embrace the complexity of life which allows you to act skillfully and with less stress.