

ours, The King's Three Questions² could probably give us some invaluable direction, if not obvious answers. This is something that good managers in leadership positions could inspire us to do.⁶ And the time to do all this is now!

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In Response

Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom.

Viktor E. Frankl

With great pleasure, I read Dr Vighnesh Ashok's letter¹ highlighting 1 aspect of Tolstoy's 3 questions—the questions I want my team to understand.² Dr Ashok's self-care-based interpretation of 1 layer of Tolstoy's short story is the first step in sustained resilience of individuals, teams, and systems.¹

While self-care starts with healthy nutrition, physical exercise, restful sleep, and supportive interpersonal relationships, the concept reaches much further

than recharging our biological batteries. It includes meaning- and mindful psychological self-care. In the absence of a personal search for meaning as ultimate level of profound self-care, patient care likely remains an energy-consuming, thus exhausting extrinsic demand.²

Mindfulness develops through the interplay of time and space and can be trained in any situation, no matter how simple, at the very moment at hand.³ Such practice raises awareness that you are not your thoughts and that you are not reliant on your not-conscious behavioral “default mode networks.”⁴ Finally, this practice nurtures compassionate awareness of oneself and others,⁴ and thereby to take benevolent responsibility for decisions and relationships alike.⁵

As highlighted by Dr Ashok, the amazing adventure of leadership is not only about managing people and systems but also about practicing profound self-care.⁶ As we learn from Viktor Frankl, how we react to any external or internal stimulus is a free choice. By learning to pause upon any trigger, we learn to wait for mindfulness to set in, enabling compassion for ourselves, our patients, our teams, and our health care systems.

Finally, we will be able to understand Taoist philosopher Lao Tzu, who coined the phrase: “true self-interest teaches selflessness.”

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