# Leadership Lessons for OSH Professionals

## How to Nurture Engagement for Injury Prevention

By E. Scott Geller

**Before introducing seven leadership lessons** to cultivate an injury-free workplace, let's consider some qualities of leaders that distinguish them from managers. Safety managers hold employees accountable to work safely. In contrast, safety leaders motivate others to be self-motivated and self-accountable for safety—to go beyond the call of duty on behalf of their coworkers' safety, health and well-being. Daniels and Daniels (2005) refer to going beyond what is expected as discretionary behavior. How can proactive discretionary behavior for safety be inspired? Answers to this critical question are provided here by proposing evidence-based guidelines that develop, support and sustain an interdependent brother's/sister's keeper culture.

### Distinctions Between Management & Leadership

The roles of leaders are distinct from those of managers. Realizing these differences enables us to empathize with the requirements of managers, and appreciate the value of going beyond managing (or directing) people to leading (or inspiring) them. To be sure, safety managers can be safety leaders.

#### *Leaders Focus on Process*

Safety managers are typically held accountable for outcome numbers. Thus, they use outcome numbers to direct the behavior of those who report to them. Most people are assigned their responsibilities, and they do not choose their manager. In safety, outcome numbers are based on the relatively rare occurrence of an injury. These numbers (e.g., total recordable injury rate or TRIR) are reactive, reflect failure and are not diagnostic for injury prevention.

In contrast, safety leaders hold people accountable for accomplishing proactive process activities that can prevent harm and lower injury rates. When improvement in process activities is observed, leaders provide those responsible with positive recognition for their efforts. Those who feel appreciated for their safety proactivity develop a sense of personal responsibility for continuing to make safety-related contributions and improvements.

**IN BRIEF**

- **This article describes evidence-based leadership strategies for promoting and sustaining employee engagement for occupational safety.**
- **Humanistic behaviorism is explained as a way to enhance the beneficial effect of behavior-based safety and nurture an injury-free workplace.**
- **The article illustrates the history and progress of Actively Caring for People, a process that aims to cultivate a compassionate culture in which people routinely surpass the norm to benefit the safety, health and well-being of others.**

**E. Scott Geller,** Alumni Distinguished Professor at Virginia Tech, is a senior partner of Safety Performance Solutions, Blacksburg, VA. He has authored or coauthored numerous books, book chapters, magazine articles and research articles addressing the development and evaluation of behavior-change interventions to improve quality of life. He is a Fellow of American Psychological Association, Association for Psychological Science, Association for Behavior Analysis International, and World Academy of Productivity and Quality Sciences.

**Figure 1**

## Four Motivational Typologies


Figure 1: Four motivational typologies are defined by achieving success versus avoiding failure.

### *Leaders Educate*

In occupational safety, training is more common than education. Managers want employees to know exactly what they need to do to complete a particular task effectively and safely. With a training mind-set, however, managers can come across as demanding (e.g., "Do this because I said so").

Education involves explanation. The principles or the rationale behind a particular set of procedures are explained for employees. Education answers the "Why?" question—why a certain protocol must be followed. By extension, it also answers the critical "What's in it for me?" question. By taking the time to explain rules and procedures, effective educators help people develop self-accountability for a safety action plan rather than doing something a certain way because a manager or supervisor is holding them accountable.

Proper education of principles underlying a safety process can facilitate creative customization and personal ownership. When leaders explain a rationale and offer examples rather than issue a policy or top-down directive, individuals and teams can select work and safety procedures that best fit their situation. Throughout the process of refining a set of procedures, employees assume ownership and follow through. They become self-directed rather than other-directed (Watson & Tharp, 1987).

### *Leaders Listen First*

Managers often speak first and listen later to concerns or complaints. This reflects the typical top-down urgency to get a job done, and is a reasonable strategy for efficient organizational productivity. After all, managers must execute according to a prearranged plan, implicating explicit directives and a mechanism for ensuring compliance. Managers describe an action plan and the accompanying accountability system, then answer questions from workers who want to be sure they do the right thing.

In contrast, leaders first take the time to learn another person's perspective before offering direction, advice and/or support. This is empathic listening, and is key to diagnosing a work-related situation before urging change or continuous improvement. This is not the most efficient way to complete a work assignment. It requires time, patience and empathic communication. Many questions are asked before giving advice. The payoff: An individual or team willingly and creatively customizes an action plan or process to achieve a particular safety-related outcome.

### *Leaders Promote Ownership*

When leaders give a reasonable rationale for a desired outcome and offer opportunities for employees to customize methods to achieve that outcome, they facilitate self-directed motivation. This is commonly referred to as self-motivation. With this motivational mind-set, employees participate because they want to, not because they have to. This is discretionary behavior.

Managers who direct by edict might get compliance with an action plan, but they might also stifle self-accountability or self-motivation. Compliant behaviors—those following a prescribed standard, policy or mandate—are other-directed. Work is performed and safety protocols are followed to satisfy someone else. These behaviors are likely to cease when that someone else is not monitoring a worker—when a manager is not holding him/her accountable. A common result: Safety-related behavior (e.g., using PPE) is practiced at work but not at home where individuals' self-directed actions are not monitored.

### *Leaders Set Expectations*

Most behavior starts as other-directed. It is performed because it was requested or mandated by another person. Does this behavior remain other-directed or does it evolve to a self-directed or self-motivated state? How one asks for the desired performance outcome can be a game-changer. A behavioral request that comes across as a mandate will likely remain stuck as other-directed. This is often how managers approach safety. Just look at the traditional emphasis on regulatory compliance and the all-too-common slogan, "Safety is a condition of employment."

Leaders facilitate a shift from other-directed to self-directed motivation. How? They initiate a process or action plan with expectations rather than mandates. Expectations imply choice. A certain outcome can be anticipated, but expectations allow room for individual and group decision-making regarding the procedures and methods to reach that outcome. When employees realize what is expected of them, but perceive some personal control in setting goals and determining how to reach them, they are more likely to own the process. Thus, leaders facilitate a transition from an other-directed to a self-directed mind-set.

### *Leaders Look Beyond the Numbers*

Managers focus on numbers. In safety, these are injury records and workers' compensation costs. When the author has discussed people-based safety principles and procedures with managers, inevitably the question arises, "What is the return on investment?" Managers focus on how much a process will cost and how long it will take for the numbers (such as TRIR) to improve. This approach is reflected by the popular management maxim, "You can only manage what you can measure."

This numbers-based analytical mind-set has caused behavior-based safety (BBS) to become much less effective than it could be. Managers want to see the number of behavioral observations and as a result the frequency of completed checklists increases. But this ignores the real purpose of the intervention: To engage employees in meaningful behavior-focused communication with each other about how to work more safely and achieve a vision of zero harm (Geller & Veazie, 2014).

A focus on collecting numbers for a computer database and a statistical analysis leads to repeated use of the same behavioral checklist per work area, and then many workers pencil whip checklist completion. The critical purpose of the observation-and-feedback process—an actively-caring-for-people (AC4P) conversation—is missing. Managers often celebrate invalid and inflated percent-safe scores, rather than recognize the more important purpose of the process: The involvement of workers in giving each other on-the-job behavioral feedback for injury prevention.

Safety leaders appreciate the need to hold people accountable with numbers. But, they also understand that not everything can be measured. Sometimes leaders do things and ask others to do the same because they are the right things to do (Deming, 1991). Safety leaders understand it is important to increase person-states one cannot readily put a number on—self-esteem, self-efficacy, personal control, optimism and a sense of belonging. These five intangibles influence people's tendency to go beyond the call of duty on behalf of another person's safety, health or well-being—to perform actively caring behavior (Geller & Veazie, 2014).

Safety leaders do things on a regular basis to inspire these person-states in employees throughout a work culture. They do not worry about measuring their own direct impact on these intangibles. They have confidence in the research that indicates promoting these five states is important for increasing one's propensity to perform actively caring behavior (e.g., Geller, 1996; 2001; 2014a, b). Analogously, people take vitamins daily even though they do not notice any direct measurable effect on how they feel.

It is a good idea to occasionally assess whether certain actions influence people's subjective feelings or person-states in desirable directions. This can be done informally through personal interviews, unaided by a scorecard. It is also a given that certain interpersonal and group activities are useful. Genuine one-to-one recognition increases self-esteem and self-efficacy; behavior-based goal-setting builds perceptions of personal control and optimism; and group celebrations facilitate a sense of belonging or interpersonal relatedness. Safety leaders perform and support these activities with passion and patience, realizing an improvement in the numbers of an accountability system might not be immediate.

Safety leaders do not need a monitoring scheme to facilitate their attempts to help people feel valuable and part of an important team effort. They are self-directed and self-motivated, and this helps inspire self-motivation in others. Safety leaders set an actively caring example, knowing full well it will help cultivate an injury-free work culture.

The bottom line: Safety management by policy, directive and regulation is necessary at times to motivate people to do the right things for injury prevention. But alone this approach will not achieve an injury-free workplace. Safety managers must understand how and when to step up and become safety leaders. Here is the most important takeaway: Occupying a safety management position is not required to be a safety leader. By following the seven leadership guidelines explained next, people can transition from an other-directed to a self-directed motivational state.

## Seven Fundamental Leadership Lessons

There is no universal, absolute answer to the question, "What are seven crucial leadership lessons to optimize effective safety engagement?" Answers will be biased by personal experience, varied educational backgrounds, and idiosyncratic reading of a diverse, voluminous literature on leadership. The seven leadership lessons presented here were derived from the author's selective perception, which evolved from reading numerous books and research articles on leadership, and from researching the human dynamics of safety for more than 40 years.

The first four lessons connect directly to applied behavioral science, from which BBS was derived. The remaining three leadership lessons reflect humanism, as defined by Rogers (1942) and Maslow (1943), and inspired the author's evolution from BBS to people-based safety (Geller, 2005; 2008). In essence, these seven leadership lessons reflect humanistic behaviorism—the application of some humanistic fundamentals to make behaviorism (e.g., BBS) more acceptable, effective and sustainable on a large scale (Geller, 2015).

### *1) Apply the Power of Positive Consequences*

"The problem is to free men, not from control, but from certain kinds of control" (Skinner, 1971, p. 5). This quote reflects Skinner's concern for people's attitudes and person-states, and his antipathy for the use of punitive consequences to influence behavior. In his seminal research-based book, *Beyond Freedom and Dignity*, Skinner explains that control by negative consequences must be reduced to increase perceptions of personal freedom. Biglan (2015) reverberates this critical lesson in his recent book on applying behavioral science to nurture a

positive prosocial culture and improve human lives worldwide.

Usually, the same situation can be perceived as a) control by penalizing undesired (e.g., at-risk) behavior; or b) control by rewarding desired (e.g., safe) behavior. Consider the four distinct achievement typologies shown in Figure 1, as derived from the seminal research of Atkinson (1957, 1964). These four mind-sets have been researched to explain differences in how people approach success and/or avoid failure (Covington, 1992; Covington & Roberts, 1994).

It is best to be a success seeker. These are optimists who respond to failure (e.g., to a close call or injury) in a positive, adaptive manner. They view a setback as an opportunity to learn (e.g., to identify factors to change in order to prevent another mishap). They take on challenges with self-confidence and a can-do attitude. They willingly go beyond the call of duty to achieve meaningful results. This is a mind-set or attitude that people can influence in themselves and in others through intrapersonal and interpersonal conversation, respectively.

In contrast, failure avoiders have relatively low expectancy for success and a high fear of failure. Much of their behavior is motivated by a desire to avoid appearing incompetent. Failure avoiders are motivated, but they are not "happy campers." These are the employees who say, "I have to attend that safety training; it's a requirement," rather than, "I get to attend that safety training; it's an opportunity."

The lesson: Applying quick, certain and positive consequences is the most efficient, effective way to simultaneously improve both behavior and attitude. But historically, so much safety-related behavior has been supported by negative rather than positive consequences. How do most organizations keep score for their safety performance? What outcome data are used to recognize individuals and organizations with special awards for safety excellence? Are the conversations more about avoiding failure than achieving success?

Ask workers what they have done for safety this week, or what they intend to do for safety today. How readily will they list desirable safety-related behaviors? Discount replies such as, "I didn't get hurt" or "I won't get hurt." The goal is to hear behaviors worthy of positive recognition. It is crucial yet challenging to employ this leadership lesson every day. Today's "click-it-or-ticket" culture relies on negative consequences to manage behavior, from the classroom and workplace to home, and places in between. It is not enough to understand and believe this leadership lesson—we need to act on it. Thus, the next lesson.

### *2) Employ Observational Learning*

Substantial psychological research indicates that observational learning is involved to some degree in almost all human behavior (Bandura, 1969). Indeed, people's actions influence others to a greater extent than they realize. Children learn by watching their parents at home and coworkers are influenced by the actions of other coworkers. Too often, people are not mindful of this modeling influence. Consider what children learn about safety by watching the driving behavior of their parents, including a parent's verbal behavior.

Observational learning is key to the success of BBS and people-based safety at preventing injuries. Consider this basic process: 1) First, coworkers develop a checklist of critical safe and at-risk behaviors on their job, termed a critical behavior checklist (CBC); 2) subsequently, they observe each other while working and use the CBC to record the occurrence of safe and at-risk behaviors they observe; and 3) the observer then shows the completed CBC to the worker who was observed, and the CBC results are discussed.

The connection to observational learning is clear. Throughout the observation process, the observer notes safe and risky work practices, and s/he might learn new safe behaviors to perform and at-risk behaviors to avoid. This suggests behavioral observers will later work more safely on similar work tasks. In fact, this logical assumption from observational learning has been demonstrated through behavioral research (e.g., Alvero & Austin, 2004; Alvero, Rost & Austin, 2008). A crucial component of the peer-to-peer observation process is behavioral feedback—the third leadership lesson.

### *3) Become a Behavior-Based Feedback Coach*

The common assertion that practice makes perfect is a myth; practice makes permanence. Practice can only lead to improvement if it includes behavior-based feedback. Often, the outcome of an action provides useful feedback. The golfer and tennis player, for example, see where the ball lands after swinging a golf club or tennis racket. Yet, even when the outcome of one's behavior is observed, behavior-based feedback from a coach is usually necessary for optimal improvement. This leadership lesson is represented by the letters of coach: *c* for care; *o* for observe; *a* for analyze; *c* for communicate; and *h* for help (Geller, 2001).

Start with caring. "Know I care and you'll care what I know. Because I care about your safety, I'm willing to observe your work routine and note occurrences of safe and at-risk behaviors." While recording occurrences of safe and at-risk behaviors on a checklist, the observer jots down environmental or contextual factors that could be influencing the observed behaviors, from situational conditions to current or anticipated consequences of the behavior. Noting external factors that might influence particular behavior reflects the analysis phase of coaching.

The communication phase is next. The observer delivers the information derived from observation and analysis. Although most people want to improve, many are hesitant to give and receive the level of behavioral communication needed for beneficial change. Some view corrective behavioral feedback as an indictment of their current work style, job skills or dedication. To thwart resistance to change, effective safety coaches facilitate

beneficial change in both behavior and attitude by highlighting the positives—occurrences of safe behavior. They avoid disruptive and dramatic communication unless the individual is in imminent danger. Instead, they emphasize incremental fine-tuning to make the performance of a particular task safer.

Similar to client-centered or humanistic therapy (Rogers, 1942), the perceptions and person-states of the individual observed and coached are considered. Both the behavioral and situational factors are evaluated from the perspective of the person observed, and feedback communication is supportive and nondirective (Geller, Perdue & French, 2004). Typically, feedback is not delivered to direct a change in behavior, but rather to enable personal acceptance and self-motivation for beneficial behavior change. Supportive or rewarding feedback is used to acknowledge employees' safe behavior, thereby contributing to a positive safety culture (Williams, 2010).

### *4) Use More Supportive Feedback Than Corrective Feedback*

How many times have you heard, "We cannot learn unless we make mistakes"? While this might make people feel better about the errors of their ways and provide an excuse for focusing more on other people's failures than on their successes, nothing could be further from the truth. Behavioral scientists have shown convincingly that success—not failure—produces the most effective learning (Thorndike, 1931).

For example, Thorndike (1931) studied intelligence by putting chickens, cats, dogs, fish, monkeys and humans in situations that called for problem-solving behavior. Then he systematically observed how these organisms learned. He coined the "Law of Effect" to refer to the fact that learning depends on behavioral consequences. And, markedly more learning occurred following positive consequences (success) than negative consequences (failure).

Must an error occur in order to solve a problem? Readers can reflect on their own experiences to answer this question. A pleasant consequence provides direction and motivation to continue the behavior. The recipient learns what s/he did to receive the reward and is, thus, motivated to earn another. In contrast, a negative consequence following a mistake only tells a person what not to do. It provides no specific direction for problem solving. An overemphasis on a mistake can be frustrating and discouraging, and may demotivate the participant to continue the learning process.

Errors are not necessary for learning to occur. In fact, when training results in no errors, made possible with certain presentation techniques, learning occurs most smoothly and is most enjoyable (Chance, 2008; Reed, Yanagita, Becirevic, et al., 2016). In fact, errors disrupt the teaching/learning process and can lead to a negative attitude, especially if negative social consequences accentuate the mistake. Even subtle reactions to an error—a disappointed face or verbal tone—can increase feelings of helplessness or despair and turn a person off to the entire learning process.

ILLUSTRATION COMPOSITE: ©ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/BOLKINS AND ©ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/OCULO

The most powerful positive consequence to support a learning process is supportive feedback. Thus, it is important to give people more feedback for their correct behavior than their incorrect behavior. William James, the first renowned American psychologist wrote, "The deepest principle in human nature is the craving to be appreciated" (Carnegie, 1936, p. 19). Then, Carnegie (1936) advocated that the key to winning friends and influencing people is to "always make the other person feel important." How can we readily fulfill the human need to feel appreciated and important? The answer, of course: Recognize the competent behavior of others with supportive feedback.

**Behavioral scientists have shown that success, not failure, produces the most effective learning.**

### *5) Practice Empathy*

The difference in the feeling states activated by rewards versus penalties is the rationale for using more positive than negative consequences to motivate behavior. Furthermore, how an intervention process is implemented can augment or stifle feelings of empowerment, enhance or destroy trust, and facilitate or inhibit a sense of collaboration or belongingness (Geller, 2005). It is useful to assess the perceptions or person-states that occur concomitantly with an intervention process. Such an assessment can be performed informally through one-on-one interviews and group discussions, or formally with a perception survey (O'Brien, 2000; Peterson, 2001).

Both objective observations of behaviors and subjective evaluations of feelings or person-states should inform safety leaders regarding which intervention to implement and how to refine existing safety processes for optimal engagement and beneficial impact. It is usually possible to apply a personal assessment of empathy to evaluate the internal impact of an intervention process. Imagine going through the same intervention protocol and asking, "How would I feel?"

Empathic listening, diagnosing and action planning take patience. Conversations at this level are often not efficient, but they are consistently most effective. Through probing and listening, the objective is to first empathize and regard what it is like to be in the other person's shoes. The objective then shifts to developing a corrective intervention that fits the circumstances as mutually understood by each participant in the conversation. If a personal commitment to follow through with a specific action plan is stated, the coach was empathic and most effective.

### *6) Differentiate Leadership From Management*

As explained previously, management is not the same as leadership. Managers hold people accountable to perform desirable (e.g., safe) behavior and avoid undesirable (e.g., at-risk) behavior. Leaders inspire people to hold themselves accountable to do the right thing—to follow the safest protocol. Managers direct and motivate behavior with an external (or extrinsic) accountability system. Leaders facilitate self-direction and self-motivation by influencing person-states (e.g., perceptions, attitudes, emotions) that facilitate self-motivation. Self-motivation typically leads to discretionary behavior (Daniels & Daniels, 2005)—more desirable behavior than required by the job description.

So how can a safety leader inspire self-motivation in others? In their realistic narrative, Geller and Veazie (2010) used the words choice, competence and community to illustrate the three evidence-based perceptions or person-states that affect self-motivation (Deci, 1975; Deci & Flaste, 1996; Deci & Ryan, 1995). Techniques to enhance perceptions of choice, competence and community are detailed elsewhere (Geller, 2014a; b), and these are consistent with the leadership lessons discussed here. Consider, for example, how proper application of each leadership lesson illustrated to this point can increase a person's perception of competence and fuel self-motivation. Recognize, also, how language can influence each of these three person-states or personal perceptions.

#### Impact of Language

When safety-related language suggests some personal choice or control, self-motivated engagement in safety is supported. However, the common phrases, "Safety is a condition of employment," and "All accidents are preventable," inhibit a sense of personal autonomy. In fact, the term *accident* implies a lack of personal control and influences the all-too-common excuse, "When it's your time, it's your time (for an accident)." In contrast, the slogan, "Actively caring for people is a core value of our company" reflects personal authenticity and interdependence on behalf of safety, health and human welfare.

Similarly, the common phrase "random acts of kindness" (Editors of Conari Press, 1993) is not optimal when pinpointing or promoting actively caring behavior. Random implies the behavior happens by chance, suggesting it is beyond the individual's choice or direct control. An act of kindness may appear random to the recipient, but it was likely performed intentionally and was self-motivated. An alternative: Intentional or mindful acts of kindness.

Clearly, the language used to describe or prescribe behavior influences peoples' perceptions of its meaningfulness and its relevance to human welfare. Language impacts culture, and cultural values influence language.

#### Opportunities for Choice

Participative management implies that employees have personal choice during the planning, execution and evaluation of their jobs. Regardless of varying dispositional and situational factors, people possess a need for autonomy (Deci, 1975; Deci & Flask, 1996; Deci & Ryan, 1995). In the workplace, managers often tell employees what to do, rather than involve them in routine decision-making. Should managers give mandates or set expectations? Should they request compliance or ask for commitment?

Undesirable behavior can be activated by a top-down rule that restricts the perception of personal choice. Skinner (1971) called this behavior "counter-control" and Brehm (1966) referred to such contrary behavior as "psychological reactance." When a rule or direction seemingly stifles personal choice and is issued without a reasonable rationale, some disgruntled compliers will attempt to assert personal freedom by finding ways to subvert the system, or at least avoid complying with the mandate when working alone. With pride, a worker once showed the author his safety glasses—with the lenses removed. To him, outsmarting the safety cop was more important than preventing an eye injury.

#### Involving the Workers

Rules established by soliciting input from those affected by the regulation support autonomy or perceived choice (Deci & Flaste, 1995). Workers are more likely to comply with company safety regulations they helped define. Shouldn't those asked to follow certain safety rules and regulations have input into the development of those policies they will be asked to follow? Those with boots on the ground know best what actions should be avoided and performed to achieve an injury-free workplace.

Try this exercise: Ask wage workers to write down their prediction of where and how the next workplace injury will occur. A content analysis of their answers will be insightful and likely suggest the need for a prevention intervention in a designated work area.

The bottom line: An intervention that applies positive consequences to increase the occurrence of a safe behavior is sustainable to the extent it inspires self-motivation by linking behavioral consequences with perceptions of choice, competence and community. This profound principle of self-motivation is reflected in the final leadership lesson.

### *7) Practice & Promote Self-Transcendence*

Humanism is implicated by this seventh leadership lesson. However, without behavioral science,

it is just a theory with limited practical value. The author proposes that the large-scale practice and promotion of self-transcendence is key to cultivating an injury-free workplace.

### A Hierarchy of Needs

The most popular theory of human motivation is the hierarchy of needs formulated by humanist Maslow (1943). Maslow arranged categories of human needs hierarchically, and presumed people do not attempt to satisfy needs at one level until fulfilling those needs at the lower stages. People are first motivated to fulfill physiological needs, such as survival requirements of food, water, shelter and sleep. After meeting these needs, people are motivated by a desire to feel safe and secure from potential danger. When workers are engaged proactively for safety, they are working to satisfy this need.

Social-acceptance needs are next, or the desire to have friends and feel a sense of social support, belongingness and community. After these needs are achieved, a person's concern shifts to self-esteem—the desire to feel worthwhile, respected and generally successful. Then the individual can achieve self-actualization. Is this the highest level of Maslow's hierarchy of needs? This is how the need hierarchy is taught in most psychology or leadership classes, but it is not true.

In Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Figure 2), self-actualization is not at the top. Shortly before his death in 1970, Maslow revised his hierarchy and positioned self-transcendence at the top (Maslow, 1971). At this level, people go beyond their self-interest and perform actively caring behavior, such as reporting a safety hazard or giving coworkers behavior-based feedback about safe or at-risk behavior.

Common sense suggests that various self-needs require fulfillment before self-transcendent or actively caring behavior is likely to occur. But it is possible to think of people performing various actively caring behaviors before satisfying all of their personal needs. For example, Mahatma Gandhi put the concerns of his entire nascent country of India before his own. In his 50-year struggle to help his poor, downtrodden compatriots, Gandhi was imprisoned, endured extensive fasts and was eventually assassinated.

The connection between Maslow's hierarchy and various positive behavioral consequences provides critical insight for fueling self-motivation and sustaining the benefits of an effective behavior-improvement process. First, an individual's position in the hierarchy determines what types of consequences are likely to be most reinforcing at a particular time. Without food, shelter or sleep, for example, most people focus their behavior on satisfying these biological needs. But after this need level is satiated, human behavior is motivated by consequences linked to higher-level needs.

Indeed, higher-level needs implicate consequences related to self-motivation. Consequences that advance one's sense of connection with others (e.g., community), for example, can satisfy one's need for acceptance or social support. Those consequences that support a person's belief in personal competence to perform worthwhile work connect to the needs for self-esteem and self-actualization. Reaching beyond the self-needs to help others through actively caring behavior contributes to satisfying the need for social acceptance and self-esteem, even self-actualization.

When are people's needs for social acceptance, self-esteem and self-actualization fully satisfied? At what point does a person become satiated on consequences associated with these higher-level needs? These rhetorical questions are asked to reiterate the value of delivering rewarding consequences that reflect the three C-words of self-motivation (i.e., competence, choice, community) and, thereby, support the need states in Maslow's hierarchy that are not readily satiated.

The bottom line: Behavioral consequences that foster perceptions of personal competence, self-worth, belongingness and/or autonomy also fuel self-motivation and self-directed behavior, and are likely to be more durable and nurturing than consequences unrelated to these person-states.

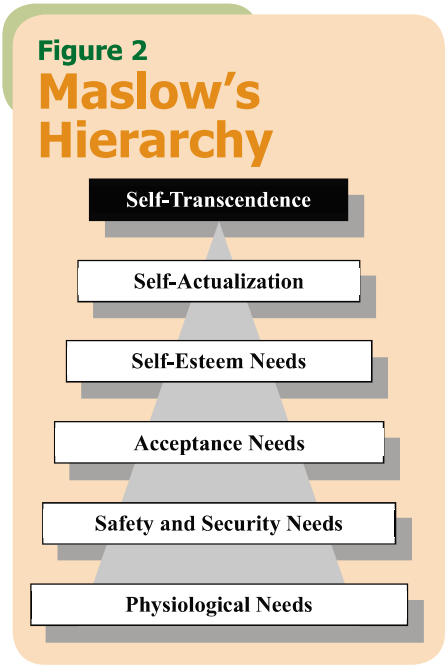


Figure 2: Self-transcendence tops Maslow's revised hierarchy.

### The AC4P Movement

The author coined the term *actively caring* in 1990 when working with a team of safety leaders at the Exxon Chemical facility in Baytown, TX (Geller, 1991). The vision was to cultivate a brother's/sister's keeper culture in which everyone monitors each other's safety—a workplace where people have each other's backs, where people routinely go above and beyond the norm to benefit the safety, health and welfare of coworkers.

Actively caring for people was an ideal description for this site-wide paradigm shift. Of course, most people care about the well-being of others, but relatively few act on such feelings of caring. The challenge was to get everyone to actively care—to take effective action based on their caring. The vision: a company culture with more interpersonal empathy, compassion and AC4P behavior.

To promote this vision, the author began distributing green silicone wristbands embossed with the phrase "Actively Caring for People" (depicted in Geller & Veazie, 2014) to recognize individuals for their AC4P behavior. Two decades later, this recognition approach has been used successfully to reduce bullying by promoting and rewarding AC4P behavior in various educational settings (McCarty & Geller 2011; McCarty, Teie, McCutchen, et al., in press). Plus, organizations have adopted this approach for occupational safety to help achieve an injury-free

Leaders inspire people to hold themselves accountable to do the right thing—to follow the safest protocol.

workplace (e.g., Bolduc, Plunkett, Foy, et al., 2014; Geller, Bolduc, Foy, et al., 2012; Geller & Veazie, 2014; Ludwig, Carvelas, Engelbrecht, et al., 2014; Roberts, 2014; Williams & Geller, 2016). More recently, police departments are training to use the wristbands to promote positive relations between officers and the citizens they serve (Geller & Kipper, 2015).

For those and current applications, each wristband includes a different identification number, and a website (**www.ac4p.org**) enables people to 1) share their stories (with the number of the wristband they gave or received); 2) track worldwide where a particular wristband has been; and 3) order more wristbands. Police officers share positive interactions with citizens and police departments purchase wristbands at the site as well.

Delivery of an AC4P wristband should be accompanied with words that serve higher-level needs. The wristband is not given as a reward for AC4P behavior, including safety-related actions. Rather, it is a token of appreciation for the AC4P behavior observed that reflects a genuine concern for the safety, health and well-being of another person. The recipient is told that s/he is now one of many who have joined the AC4P Movement—a flourishing international effort to nourish cultures of interpersonal compassion and interdependent AC4P behavior.

To date, more than 4,000 stories have been shared on the site, and more than 200,000 wristbands have been purchased, with proceeds going to the Actively Caring for People Foundation or the National Center for the Prevention of Community Violence (**www.NCPCV.com**). The mission of these accountability systems is to activate and reward AC4P behavior globally and inspire the nurturing of AC4P cultures in various settings. The vision: brother's/sister's keeper cultures of compassion and interpersonal activcely caring behavior worldwide, leading to organizations without injuries, families without abuse, communities without violence and nations without wars.

## Conclusion

This article specifies critical distinctions between management and leadership, proposing that leaders promote optimal engagement of employees for occupational safety. It explains seven leadership lessons derived from applied behavioral science and humanism (i.e., humanistic behaviorism) to show how everyone, including managers, can be a safety leader and inspire self-motivation and self-direction for injury prevention in the workplace and beyond. The first four lessons were derived from applied behavioral science and are employed in almost every successful intervention developed and implemented to increase the frequency of safety-related behavior and decrease occurrences of at-risk behavior. The next three leadership lessons connect directly to principles of humanism, which are beyond the empirical applied behavioral science domain of BBS.

It includes operational definitions with each of these humanistic lessons, making it possible to bring them to life. For example, the article describes the concept of self-transcendence in terms of interpersonal behavior, and illustrates a practical application of Leadership Lesson 1 (i.e., the AC4P wristband) to increase the frequency of AC4P behavior and help nurture an AC4P culture.

The leadership lessons reviewed here have successfully improved the human dynamics of safety in many organizations worldwide. This includes many applications with less than optimal quality engagement by all employees. Some organizations have avoided BBS or people-based safety because of select case studies of failures promulgated by consultants "selling" another approach. Still other organizations are unaware of the evidence-based applied behavioral science approach to preventing injuries and how the application of humanistic principles can enhance the effectiveness of a behavior-change process (Geller, 2015).

While this article justifies a behavior-focused coaching approach to injury prevention on a macro scale and explains ways to improve a less than optimal BBS process, the author hopes readers will see broader applications of the leadership lessons. It is hoped readers will translate these lessons into practical procedures to optimize quality engagement throughout their organizations and beyond. An injury-free workplace is contingent on the number of employees performing AC4P behavior for occupational safety, and inspiring others to do the same. And, as increasingly more people look out for the welfare of others, cultures will cultivate cooperation over competition, kindness over cruelty and friendship over conflict. **PS**

## References


Alvero, A.M. & Austin, J. (2004). The observer effect: The effects of conducting behavioral observations on the behavior of the observer. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis*, 37, 457-468.

Alvero, A.M., Rost, K. & Austin, J. (2008). The safety observer effect. *Journal of Safety Research*, 39(4), 365-373.

Atkinson, J.W. (1957). Motivational determinants of risk-taking behavior. *Psychological Review*, *64*, 359-372.

Atkinson, J.W. (1964). *An introduction to motivation*. Princeton, NJ: Van Nostrand.

Bandura, A. (1969). *Principles of behavior modification*. New York, NY: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

Biglan, A. (2015). *The nurturing effect: How the science of human behavior can improve our lives and our world*. Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications Inc.

Bolduc, J.E., Plunkett, T., Foy, M., et al. (2014). Actively caring to keep people safe: Evolving from BBS to AC4P. In E.S. Geller (Ed.), *Actively caring for people: Cultivating a culture of compassion* (pp. 219-225). Newport, VA: Make-A-Difference LLC.

Brehm, J. (1966). *A theory of psychological reactance*. New York, NY: Academic Press.

Carnegie, D. (1936). *How to win friends and influence people*. (1981 ed.) New York, NY: Simon and Schuster.

Chance, P. (2008). *The teacher's craft: The 10 essential skills of effective teaching*. Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press Inc.

Covington, M.V. (1992). *Making the grade: A self-worth perspective on motivation and school reform*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Covington, M.V. & Roberts, B.W. (1994). Self-worth and college achievement: Motivational and personality correlates. In P.R. Pintrich, D.R. Brown & C.E. Weinstein (Eds.), *Student motivation, cognition and learning: Essays in honor of Wilbert J. McKeachie*. Hillsdale, NJ: Earlbaum.

Daniels, A.C. & Daniels, J.E. (2005). *Measure of a leader*. Atlanta, GA: Performance Management Publications.

Deci, E.L. (1975). *Intrinsic motivation*. New York: Plenum.

Deci, E.L. & Flaste, R. (1995). *Why we do what we do: Understanding self-motivation*. London, England: Penguin Books.

Deci, E.L. & Ryan, R.M. (1995). *Intrinsic motivation and self-determinism in human behavior*. New York, NY: Plenum.

Deming, W.E. (1991) Quality, productivity and competitive position. Four-day workshop presented in Cincinnati, OH, by Quality Enhancement Services Inc.

Editors of Conari Press. (1993). *Random acts of kindness*. Emeryville, CA: Conari Press.

Geller, E.S. (1991). If only more would actively care. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis*, *24*, 763-764.

Geller, E.S. (1996). *The psychology of safety: How to improve behaviors and attitudes on the job*. Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press.

Geller, E.S. (2001). *The psychology of safety handbook*. Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press.

Geller, E.S. (2005). *People-based safety: The source*. Virginia Beach, VA: Coastal Training Technologies Corp.

Geller, E.S. (2008). *Leading people-based safety: Enriching your culture*. Virginia Beach, VA: Coastal Training Technologies Corp.

Geller, E.S. (Ed.). (2014a). *Actively caring at your school: How to make it happen* (2nd ed.). Newport, VA: Make-A-Difference LLC.

Geller, E.S. (Ed.). (2014b). *Actively caring for people: Cultivating a culture of compassion* (4th ed.). Newport, VA: Make-A-Difference LLC.

Geller, E.S. (2015). Humanistic behaviorism: Enhancing the positive impact of behavior-based safety (BBS). *Industrial Safety and Hygiene News*, *49*(10), 52-53.

Geller, E.S., Perdue, S. & French, A. (2004, July). Behavior-based safety coaching: Ten guidelines for successful application. *Professional Safety*, *49*(7), 42-49.

Geller, E.S., Bolduc, J.E., Foy, M.J., et al. (2012, Jan.). In pursuit of an actively caring safety culture: Practical methods, empirical results and provocative implications. *Professional Safety*, *57*(1), 44-50.

Geller, E.S. & Kipper, B. (2015, Sept.). AC4P policing: Cultivating positive police/community relations. *The Police Chief*, 41.

Geller, E.S. & Veazie, R.A. (2014, Oct.). Behavior-based safety versus actively caring: From other-directed compliance to self-directed commitment. *Professional Safety*, *59*(10), 44-50.

Geller, E.S. & Veazie, R.A. (2010). *When no one's watching: Living and leading self-motivation*. Virginia Beach, VA: Coastal Training and Technologies Corp.

Ludwig, T., Carvelas, W., Engelbrecht, C., et al. (2014). Actively caring for safety in South Africa: The power of the AC4P wristband (pp. 209-216). In E.S. Geller (Ed.), *Actively caring for people: Cultivating a culture of compassion* (4th ed.). Newport, VA: Make-A-Difference LLC.

Maslow, A.H. (1943). A theory of human motivation. *Psychological Review*, *50*, 370-396.

Maslow, A.H. (1971). *The farther reaches of human nature*. New York, NY: Viking.

McCarty, S.M. & Geller, E.S. (2011). Want to get rid of bullying? Then reward behavior that is incompatible with it. *Behavior Analysis Digest International*, *23*(2), 5, 7.

McCarty, S., Teie, S., McCutchen J., et al. (In press). Actively caring to prevent bullying in an elementary school: Prompting and rewarding prosocial behavior. *Journal of Prevention and Intervention in the Community*.

O'Brien, D.P. (2000). *Business measurements for safety performance*. New York, NY: Lewis Publishers.

Petersen, D. (2001). *Authentic involvement*. Itasca, IL: NSC.

Reed, D., Yanagita, B.T., Becirevic, A. et al. (2016). Actively caring for higher education. In E.S. Geller (Ed.), *Applied psychology: Actively caring for people*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Roberts, S. (2014). Actively caring for occupational safety: Preventing injuries with people-based safety (pp. 180-197). In E.S. Geller (Ed.), *Actively caring for people: Cultivating a culture of compassion* (4th ed.). Newport, VA: Make-A-Difference LLC.

Rogers, C. (1942). *Counseling and psychotherapy*. New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin.

Skinner, B.F. (1938). *The behavior of organisms: An experimental analysis*. Acton, MA: Copley Publishing Group.

Skinner, B.F. (1971). *Beyond freedom and dignity*. New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf.

Thorndike, E.L. (1931). *Human learning*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Watson, D.C. & Tharp, R.G. (1997). *Self-directed behavior: Self-motivation for personal adjustment* (7th ed.). Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole Publishing.

Williams, J.H. (2010). *Keeping people safe: The human dynamics of injury prevention*. Toronto, Canada: Government Institute.

Williams, J.H. & Geller, E.S. (2016). Actively caring for occupational safety. In E.S. Geller (Ed.), *Applied psychology: Actively caring for people*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.