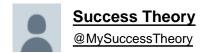
Twitter Thread by Success Theory





What if too much empathy leads to bad decisions?

Is being too empathic holding you back as a leader?

///THREAD///



Empathy is the ability to feel what other people are feeling, and it is seen as one of the most essential leadership skills

Empathy indeed helps you see from the perspective of others and helps build stronger relationships

And all leaders need an element of this...

However,

Some psychologists estimate that one in five business leaders have such low empathy they can be considered psychopaths

We have all worked for one or at least worked in an organization that sees you as employee #2658, not an individual

All numbers

No heart...

Now I know you are not one of the psychopaths

You are like the vast majority of leaders

You have a big heart, and you want to do the right thing
But let's look at a typical example
You have a team member
They've been with you years, your team loves them, and you can't imagine work without them
However, they're failing with the new demands of their role
People are starting to notice, some complaining to you
Results are being effected
What do you do?
Well, the psychopath would have most likely already fired them years ago
But that is not you
You are empathic; you were trained to be so
You are now stalling, using your empathy because you like them
But this is where you need to be careful, empathy's dark side is coming out to play
Empathy's significant weakness is that it can lead you to make terrible decisions
Here are three reasons for that
1) Empathy for the familiar
If you have known someone for years, know them socially, or they could even be family members, you are more likely to have higher levels of empathy and forgiveness for bad performance
2) Empathy is biased
You're more likely to empathize with people who are like you. That's why we're more empathetic to our group's concerns than the concerns of other departments or organizations
3) Empathy can be the easy way out
You can't always trust your feelings to look out for the organizations best interests at large
Because you don't want the hassle of hiring and firing and making people sad, you put off making a decision

Now your thinking maybe a lack of empathy might be useful
Maybe I should be more of a psychopath
Woah, that did not take much of a push, did it?
But slow down there, Darth Vader
There is another way
And that is by using rational compassion
You can be both rational and show compassion at the same time
Making decisions based on sound reason while showing compassion to those who are negatively affected
Are compassion and empathy the same thing
No
Unlike empathy, compassion doesn't mean you truly feel how someone else feels
It does mean that you care and are trying to understand them
As a leader, you need to be compassionate while preserving an emotional boundary
When it comes to making tough decisions like in the example earlier
You know it is not working out, and decisions need to made to change the situation
You should do the right thing for the team and the organization while showing compassion and care for the individual
That might mean letting them go (with a good package obviously)
Or it might mean a demotion and transfer to another team
You will be in gut-wrenching situations often as a leader
There will be winners and losers
But you don't need to be a cold-hearted psychopath
Think about what is the rational thing to do for the team
Then how you can be compassionate to all involved

