

FOLLOWERSHIP

Believing you matter within a team

Have you ever worked in a team and felt like a “cog in the wheel”?

Have you ever felt reduced to feeling like you are only valued for making phone calls and putting in orders?

You are not alone.

There are many ways to operate within a team, no matter your role. Despite your role, the one thing you can control is how you show-up for your role, and what your beliefs are about your purpose and value within the team.

Our relationship to the team is simply our thoughts about the team and our thoughts about ourself.

Let's explore the painful thought that we are a “cog in the wheel”.

C: 24-bed ICU. I am the APP on a team with an ICU fellow and ICU attending. It is July and rounds, the fellow and attending are discussing the patients just among themselves. They then turn to me when they need an order put in. Rounds are taking three hours compared to two hours last week.

T: This is not what I went to school for.

F: Frustration.

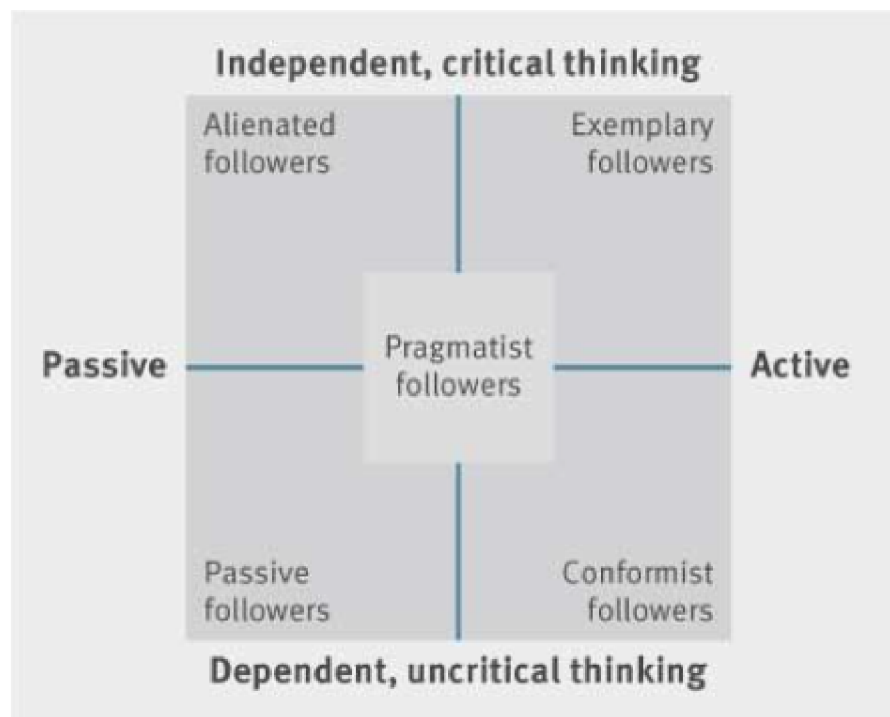
A: Putting in orders for plans I did not develop, judging the attending for not being inclusive, resentful of the fellow for taking over my role, not paying attention, zone out, not communicating with the team throughout the day.

R: You are not allowing yourself to engage in the team or patient care.

I've been here before. It feels terrible, frustrating and I dread being part of that team again. I think things like: If I were the team leader, I would engage the whole team. Since I'm not the lead, it's useless. The ICU attending will never change or get better. This ICU fellow is going to think this is how a team operates.

But there is some hope. Robert Kelly's framework of Followership types show 5 types of followers. Followership is the act or condition of following a leader. Being an exemplary follower is distinct from passive obedience to orders but a process whereby followers engage constructively in critical thinking and interact with and support the leader to help achieve a common goal or task. In fact, Exemplary followers can influence and mold the leader's views. When necessary, they can even substitute for the leader.

In each of the 5 types of followers, they all share they are part of the team and not the leader. So...what makes the difference between an Exemplary follower and everyone else?



Kellerman B. Followership: how followers are creating change and changing leaders. Harvard Business School Press, 2008.



Simply their beliefs about themselves.

These are people who may believe they are needed to challenge group think. They may believe they are needed to keep the team engaged and motivated. They believe in their capability and value, no matter their role or how “small” the task is.

Let’s explore a time when you had a “small” task and felt small because of it. What was the situation? What was the task? What did you make that mean about your role or value to the team?

Pick 1-2 beliefs above that you made the “small” task mean. What would happen if we looked at those thoughts in isolation? As in, do you really believe that about yourself or your capability? Can you see that it was related to your judgment of the task, and not your true judgement about yourself? Why or why not?

Now let's explore a time when you felt like you were at the top of your game. What was the situation? What was the task? What did you make that mean about your role or value to the team?

Pick 1-2 beliefs above when you were at the top of your game? What would happen if we looked at those thoughts in isolation? Meaning, do you still believe that about yourself or your capability? Can you see that those beliefs are really about you, and not about the difficulty or grandeur of the task? Why or why not?



Better Together

Let's go back to our original example.

The circumstance hasn't changed.

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Now I know how I am affected when I think "This is not what I went to school for." I know my worth. I know my patients and I have ideas to contribute to their care.

T: No matter the team dynamics in this moment, I am here for the patients.

F: Purposeful.

A: Ask probing questions to the fellow and attending, remind the team of past experiences with this particular patient, trouble shooting, and offering modifications of the proposed plan.

R: Allowing yourself to care for the patient and acknowledge your own expertise.

There is so much we cannot control... especially adding in various team members in uncertain clinical situations.

But no matter my role, I decide what I believe about myself.

I decide how I show up.

I decide to connect with my purpose.

I decide to show my value.

Better Together

