

Leadership and Self-Deception Book Summary, by The Arbinger Institute

by Allen Cheng

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1-Page Summary of Leadership and Self-Deception

Overview

Leadership and self-deception is a business fable that describes ways in which we deceive ourselves. It begins with the new product line leader at Zagrum, Tom Callum, who meets with executive vice president Bud Jefferson. Bud explains to Tom that all of them are guilty of self-deception and gives him advice on how to avoid it. He also tells about his experiences as an employee at Zagrum, along with Kate Stenarude's experience as well.

Self-deception is when people look at others as objects rather than human beings. They take on an attitude of helping them, but in reality they justify their decision not to help by making themselves seem virtuous and the other person seem like a problem. The more often this happens, the more people reinforce a mindset that keeps them from forming better relationships with others.

When people blame others for their problems, it's sometimes because they're self-deceived. When co-workers or employees are blamed, they may also be self-deceived and objectify the person who is blaming them. This causes a vicious cycle of blaming each other that reinforces the box instead of focusing on solutions to meet everyone's needs. People who are self-deceived use blame to avoid improving themselves and forming a negative feedback loop in which everyone blames each other

without trying to improve anything.

In order for people to end self-deception, they must accept that everyone has emotions. They should embrace the urge to help others and question their own virtue. Also, if they're more open toward some people, then this will spread to other people as well.

Zagrum's previous president, Lou Herbert, joined the meeting on the following day and explained how he was once a self-deceived leader who pushed others away and caused problems for them. He realized that while attending a counseling class related to his son's rehabilitation. He promptly sought out an employee who had quit and won her back by offering to change his behavior and asking for her help. This was Kate, the company's current president.

Leaders can only see others' flaws and mistakes clearly if they don't deceive themselves. Most people start their jobs without deceiving themselves, but engage in workplace self-betrayal when they blame others for their own problems. The best anyone can do is to always strive for improvement and accept responsibility without blaming others.

If you're going to hire someone, it would be helpful to find out if they are open to new ideas. You can do this by including self-deception awareness training in the hiring process. This should also be a part of leadership and team training, accountability programs, conflict resolution strategies and personal development plans.

This book was first published in 2000. It has been updated for 2010.

Key Takeaways

Some people are self-deceived. They view others as problems rather than humans. This is dehumanizing and damages relationships because the other person can tell that they're being treated as a problem instead of a human. People become self-deceived when they betray their feeling to help another person, which reinforces beliefs of innocence and victimhood. Self-betrayal creates a box where one feels like he or she is innocent in all things, but victimized by everyone else around him or her. The self-deception continues throughout life unless it's changed somehow, such as through therapy or new experiences. Self-deception spreads from person to person by mutual reinforcement—where both parties focus on themselves rather than each other's feelings about the situation at hand (which could be productive). Productivity suffers due to lack of productivity between two people who might otherwise be able to work together well if not for their sense of self-inflicted persecution against one another—a sense that stems from their own personal brand of self deception.

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