How Leadership Questions Change in a Living Systems Framework: An Assessment

I am developing short handouts to help people pause and check their default behaviors. Here is a quick assessment that helps people look at the leadership questions they are using to frame an issue or solve a problem. I invite you to do a quick reflection on how you might be shifting your practice.

Traditional Leadership Questions	Living System Leadership Questions
What do I need to control? I spend time controlling all aspects of the change project I anticipate group dynamics and control for behavior that may not be helpful using processes and positional authority	**What do I need to unleash?** I recognize that people support what they help to create I authentically invite people to share their experience and wisdom to help us solve problems I encourage people to initiate and organize their own learning and work
1 2 3 4 5	
Who can make this change work? I look to an individual who will be responsible for getting this job done I hold the person accountable for their leadership role in making this change happen	**What interactions will make this work?** I recognize that our systems are interconnected I reflect on who and what departments will be affected by this change and invite them to the table to figure out the best approaches I keep asking who isn't here that should be here to help with this change
1 2 3 4 5	
How do I avoid resistance? I use positional leadership to dampen resistance when it crops up I carefully select my change team and only bring people who agree with the goal on board	**How do I welcome resistance and different opinions?** I recognize that a networked system can't be fully understood from one position in the system I actively invite perspectives and opinions that I may not agree with or understand to gather a more integrated picture of the decision we are making I suspend judgement and ask questions to help me and others understand different points of view.
1 2 3 4 5	
How do I influence individual actions? If an individual is problematic, I use performance reviews and performance development plans to influence change I motivate individuals to support my work	**How do I influence the organizations culture, so it supports adaptation and innovation in individuals?** I foster a culture that is constantly evolving, learning, and experimenting I recognize and support individuals who adapt and innovate in their work
1 2 3 4 5	
How can I create change? I work on getting people motivated in their work I gather resources and positional support to make the change I oversee	**How can I transform existing energy to fuel change?** I realize that change is fueled by positive energy in the organization I actively encourage authentic relationships between staff members because it increases positive energy I connect the change we are proposing to our higher shared purpose of the organization I explain why this change matters to individuals, customers, teams, and our organization I use energy as a diagnostic to help me know when something is getting in the way of our work. When positive energy turns neutral or negative—I need to learn why
1 2 3 4 5	

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Kathleen Allen
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