

Authentic Leadership in Fire Safety Management

Research Scholarship Award

Dr Fiona Beddoes-Jones

I'm *MadebyDyslexia* – expect BIG thinking and small typos

Chartered Psychologist & Founder, The Cognitive Fitness Consultancy

Connect with me on [LinkedIn](#) or via www.cognitivefitness.co.uk





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Research Scholarship Award

1. Why this research?
2. The 4 areas: AL → PS → SC → SO
3. Methodology
4. Participants
5. Results
6. Implications for Fire Safety



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Why this Research?

1. Already a link in the literature between AL & SO, but the mechanism was missing ... we didn't understand the 'how'
2. No research into Fire Safety specifically
3. I'm a Chartered Psychologist with a PhD in AL & a commitment to the Fire Service & peoples' well-being generally
4. Generalizable results to other H&S areas
5. *Potential to reduce incidents, accidents & near-misses*

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The 4 Areas



The ABC of Authentic Leadership 'The Courage to Lead'

A – Authenticity

B – Bravery

C - Compassion

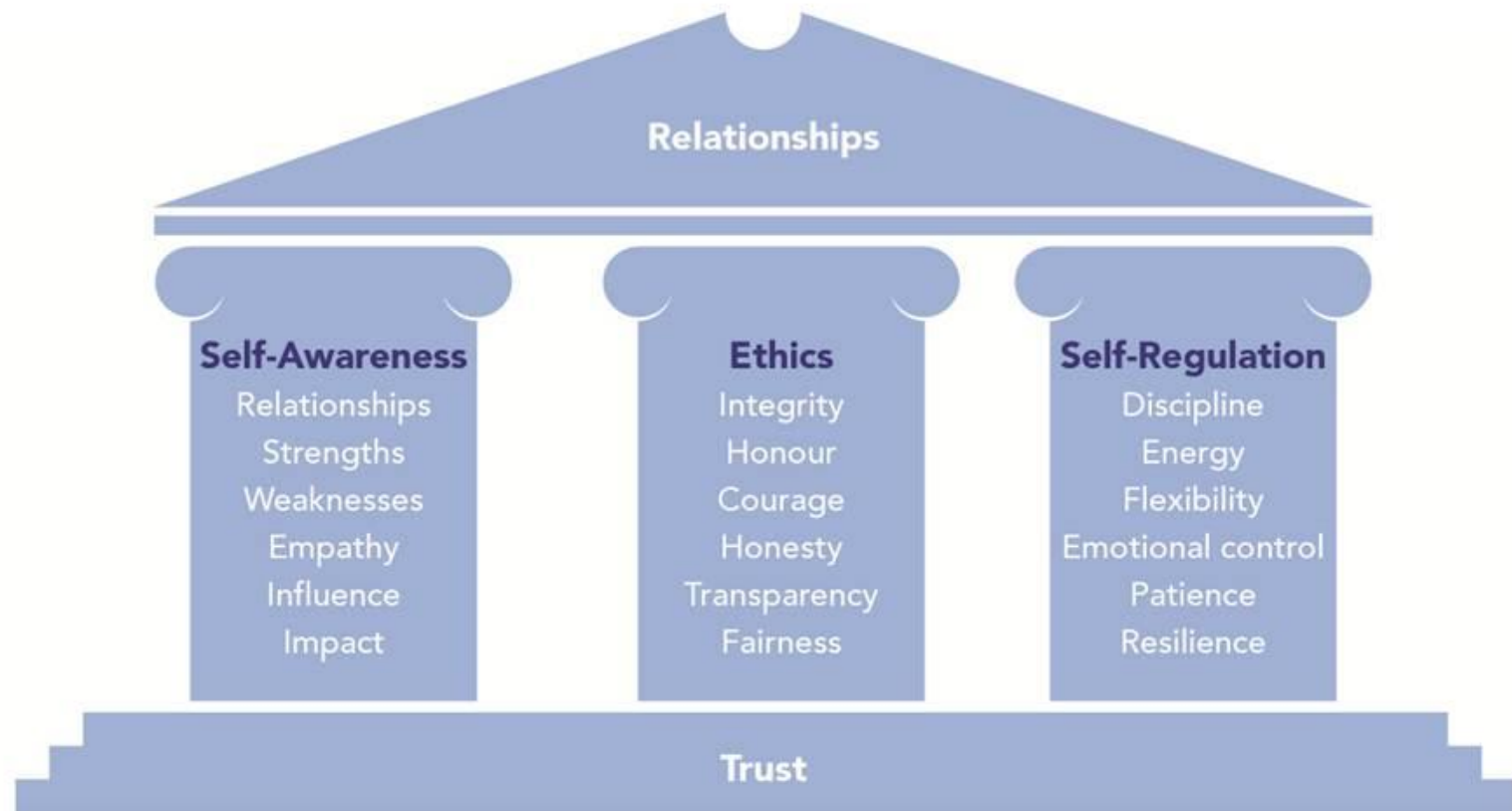
***Courage** from old French
couer meaning heart*



Ref: Fiona Beddoes-Jones, PhD Research

The 3 Pillars of Authentic Leadership

“Driven by passion, driven by purpose, Authentic Leaders combine personal courage with ethical decision-making to deliver successful, sustainable and meaningful results.”



Ref: Fiona Beddoes-Jones, PhD Research

Authentic Leadership in Fire Safety Management Methodology

1. Literature review
2. Design of the 4 areas process model: AL → PS → SC → SO
3. 4 questionnaires / 42 questions accessed via Survey Monkey
4. 20 hours of in-depth interviews with IFSM members
5. Exploration of results and implications

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Who Completed the Research?

1. 175 IFSM members ... 100% completion rate!
2. 70% Fire Safety, 20% Health & Safety, 10% Other
3. Mostly UK, some Europe and a few from Africa / Asia
4. 94% male and 6% female
5. 1 – 55 years industry experience with a mean of 23 years
6. Cumulative industry experience = **4,001** years

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Results – the good news ...

*“Authentic Leaders create a team culture of Psychological Safety
which in turn generates a positive Safety Climate
which leads to greater and more effective Safety Outcomes
and therefore a better safety record.”*

Supported in all 3 ways by the evidence: literature, statistical correlations and data, interviews with IFSM Members.

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Results – the ‘process’ of how this happens

“Team effectiveness is absolutely critical to Safety Outcomes.

*It’s Authentic Leadership that enables the culture of team effectiveness;
via Psychological Safety and the subsequent generation of a positive
Safety Climate.”*

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Results – the bad news ...

Without the right support, Fire Safety Managers and Health & Safety Managers in general, continue to suffer 'moral injury'.

Moral injury is the emotional harm that's caused by taking, seeing or failing to prevent actions that violate our own ethical standards, beliefs and values.

Those Authentic Leaders who aren't happy, i.e. whose values don't match those of their organisation, will leave. However, because of their commitment to their colleagues, they often stay for longer than they want to and this does adversely affect their mental health.

Authentic Leadership in Fire Safety Management Results

88% of Members agreed that their team's safety record was better than industry averages, even though, interestingly, 64% of respondents also agreed that their team's safety record could be improved, suggesting that there is often room for optimisation and improvements even in the most highly performing teams.

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Results

95% of people said that they were proud to work in their teams, and the commitment that Members showed was unanimous. As one Member said, *“Fire Safety bit me 30 years ago and I love it, ... every day’s a school day; there’s always something to learn. Every day’s different and there’s nothing I would rather do”*.

This was indicative of everyone’s comments; they took tremendous satisfaction from their roles and the difference they were able to make, often on a daily basis.

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Results

A surprising lack of management and leadership development offered to Members in their professional careers. Technically highly qualified (especially those with public sector experience), the vast majority of people had learned all of their leadership and management skills on the job.

All of the people interviewed said that they would welcome some specialist management and leadership development and felt that it would be beneficial, not just for themselves but also for their teams.

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Results

The words that emerged from research participants regarding Authentic Leaders and Authentic Leadership were:

Integrity, Trust & Respect

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Results

The role of Fire Fighter requires people with a high degree of '*Protective Instinct*'; those people who will run towards danger rather than away from it to save others.

The role of Fire Safety Manager, requires something more however; the cognitive ability to recognise potential dangers and actively problem-solve to create an appropriate variety of possible solutions while remaining flexible and adaptable in their implementation. (In Incident Command, they need to be 'cognitively fit').

Combined with multiple scenario planning, the generation of contingency strategies and a pro-social ethical orientation means that safety management and therefore Safety Managers are *more likely* to be Authentic Leaders than managers in less challenging roles and industries.

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Results – the most surprising finding ...

According to a 2023 survey²³, 31% of UK households report owning one or more dogs.

Within the IFSM Membership who undertook the research, this figure more than doubles, at 68%!

This also seems to be consistent beyond IFSM Members to the industry in general; many people spoke about their teams and offices where the majority of people also had dogs, sometimes bringing them to work where this was permitted.

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The Implications for Fire Safety

1. You're already at the leading edge of Fire Safety & Safety Outcomes, but only when supported by Senior Management
2. Even in really high performing teams, there's still more that could be done
3. 'Moral injury' is real and needs our support as a part of well-being & health
4. Authentic Leadership development is critical going forward
5. Include dog ownership in the interview process? 😊



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