

## CHAPTER 5

# Human Interaction: A Mood-Based Perspective

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**Abstract:** During military exercises, crisis situations give the participants mood experiences. By exploring the concept of “mood”, our aim is to contribute to the development of new interaction theory. We will explore three perspectives related to mood and the possibility of changing mood: (1) A Mood-Based Perspective: Heidegger ascribes moods a fundamental role in human life. Before a human being can think or feel something, he or she is already attuned, already in a mood that structures how reality appears to them; (2) A Rhetorical Perspective: Even though Heidegger understands moods as a non-thematized horizon, our moods can nevertheless be changed. Here we elaborate on Aristotle’s ideas on rhetoric as the first systematic hermeneutics of the interacting, everyday human being; and (3) A Pedagogical Perspective: Pedagogy here refers to learning about the development of humans in society. An existential part of human existence is to sense moods and be attuned to “the other”. Then we have the possibility of changing the mood and establishing harmony. Finally, a conceptual model is presented to show the theoretical and practical implications beyond the military exercise that has been the point of departure for this text.

**Keywords:** *Samhandling*, mood, interaction, rhetoric, education, organizational learning, leadership, unforeseen.

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## Introduction

Interaction is the world's easiest process, when we are not exposed to crisis situations. We are inspired here by the concept of interaction as described in the Chief-of-Defense's fundamental view on leadership in the Armed Forces (Sunde, 2012). Moreover, interaction, as described by Steiro and Torgersen (2015), is of particular interest, because the authors connect the concept to risks and unforeseen events in the Armed Forces. In their study, an F-16 pilot and a helicopter pilot address the importance of presence in the moment and interacting with the crew, respectively. Moreover, interaction also gives us associations to music, where interaction is dependent on management, musicians, instruments, voices, plans and practice, something we will elaborate on below.

We use the concept of interaction for two reasons. Firstly, "inter" points to the relationship between things or people – in our case, people. Secondly, "action" is of particular interest as a doorway into the analysis of the mind, as it is so closely linked to thinking and emotions, as illustrated in Bruner's classic triad encompassing action, emotion and thinking (Bruner, 1986). Moreover, action also allows us to look into people's social being, as an action is often undertaken in relation to significant others (Mead, 1934). People create "their surroundings as well as themselves through the actions in which they engage" (Wertsch, 1991:8). Bearing this in mind, we argue that "inter" and "action" fit nicely together in the concept of interaction.

Another important concept in this chapter is the concept of mood. We find that on a deeper level and prior to interaction there is mood. Mood is found in the whole situation, in relationships and in people (Heidegger, 1996).

When it comes to understanding a crisis, we will use the Bow Tie Model in the analysis (see Chapter 1), including the three phases: (1) Warning Signs (Warning Signs), (2) During the Actual Event (UN-0) and (3) Creation Phase (Recovery) (Primrose, Bentley, van der Graaf, & Sykes, 1996). The key here is to gauge the extent to which a leader can enter the actual event, the unforeseen moment, and make a difference. By linking mood to such a model, the main question to be addressed in this chapter is: *How can leaders change mood during crisis situations?*

Through exploring the concept of “mood”, our aim is to contribute to the development of a new interaction theory, and to investigate the possibility of changing mood and establishing harmony, both in crises and in our daily lives. We have been inspired by a crisis situation that occurred during a military exercise and using this we will explore mood, rhetoric and pedagogy.

## Crisis situation

A crisis situation unfolds and is expressed in many dimensions. In an exercise at the Royal Norwegian Air Force Academy, a crisis was an important part of the participants’ experience. Here is a description of the event:

*The actors, women from the National Performing Arts College, approach the control post. The four of them talk together for a few minutes. The guards seem to lower their mental and physical guard, perhaps because of the blue-eyed women. Suddenly, one of the women takes a step backwards and pulls out a gun. One man is down – shot on the post. Mayhem ensues. Was he shot, is he dead? The mood drifts slowly. People come to see the stretcher. They light candles, conduct a memorial ceremony. The coaches are no longer tutoring; they are simply there together with the cadets. Finally, we leave off for reflection.*

*We sit there in a circle, 40 cadets and seven supervisors. It is cold, sad and completely dead in the plenary review session. Then some questions arise. The cadets ask whether there is any point in practicing grief and whether there is academic justification for this. They claim that the situation and the process they have just experienced are irresponsible and unethical. A bad mood engulfs both the cadets and the coaches. Then one of the coaches raises his hand; he asks for permission to speak. “Yes, please help us out of this is,” seems to be the collective response from the others, a response expressed without words.*

*The young man starts by mirroring the mood of the moment. He puts the feeling of anger, fear and grief into words. He asks if these emotions are not precisely part of war. He asks several rhetorical questions in a very humble way. During the process, we discover that death is within our profession, something we as officers have to relate to and cope with. The result is that we are left with the grief. People*

*are crying. There is still a prevalent bad mood in the air. Our thoughts go out to “the dead cadet” and to others we have lost in real life. The grief feels real, it is real.*

*He moves on, takes us further into death and he keeps us there. He tells us about “Zombies” and the people who know about death – and the difference. He uses Heidegger to emphasize that people know about death and that this is something that is particular to human beings. He pushes on and asks us whether death can be a mirror of life, whether the dark can bring us the light. Moreover, he argues that today we have been visiting death, but we can put it behind us; we now have death behind us and life ahead of us. We can be grateful that we are alive, grateful for life. Participants are crying again, not out of sorrow but out of joy. The mood has changed. The mood is now characterized by joy, gratitude and love. He tells us that the operations must continue, this is part of our profession. We were led by the young man, and we declared ourselves ready for battle.*

By utilizing the Bow Tie Model, we can interpret the crisis in greater detail. For the cadets, the actual incident (UN-o) was “the dead cadet”, a case that was written into the script with the subsequent ceremonies. For the coaches, the actual incident (UN-o) was “the reflection”, something which was also written into the script. However, what was not scripted was the fact that both the cadets and the supervisors would be enveloped and paralyzed by such a “bad mood”. We will let this story serve as the backdrop while we adopt a more theoretical approach to the topic, where we will explore three concepts: mood, rhetoric and pedagogy.

## **Mood: An existential dimension**

Although moods are an obvious part of a human being’s daily life, they are not sufficiently emphasized in philosophy and psychology. When investigating the human situation, our starting point tends to be the subject and how it structures the world. Heidegger’s idea is that this kind of investigation starts “too late”. The focus on the self-conscious subject overlooks the fact of human existence *per se*. Before we examine human subjectivity, for example in terms of our thoughts or feelings, we have to examine *our existence*, what it means to exist:

With the *cogito sum*, Descartes claims to prepare a new and secure foundation for philosophy. But what he leaves undetermined in this “radical” beginning is the manner of being of the *res cognitans*, more precisely, the meaning of the being of the “sum” (Heidegger, 1996:21).

Such an examination is what Heidegger understands as ontological. It is an investigation of the human as always already existing in a world, as *being-in-the-world*, and he calls the structures of human existence *existentials* (Heidegger, 1996:49–50). An important “discovery” in Heidegger’s study is that on this fundamental level, human existence is structured by *moods*.

What we indicate ontologically with the term “attunement” is ontically what is most familiar and an everyday kind of thing: mood, being in a mood. Prior to all psychology of moods, a field which, moreover, still lies fallow, we must see this phenomenon as a fundamental existential and outline its structure (Heidegger, 1996:126).

Before humans can think, understand or feel anything, our existence is already in a mood that structures how reality appears to us; we are tuned in to reality. The fundamental ontological role Heidegger ascribes to moods in human life may be clarified by an analogy. The fish lives its life in water, and its “existence” is structured by the water in which it swims. If the fish could reflect on its existence, it would lack objective or “outer” reference points to describe what water is and how it is affected by it. This can only be described from “within”. This is also the case for how moods structure human existence. They are not objects that we can point to, but permeate every part of our existence. The lack of reference points means that moods have to be investigated phenomenologically: “To let what shows itself be seen from itself, just as it shows itself from itself.” (Heidegger, 1996:30) Thus, it is not possible to adequately grasp moods by treating them as objects and understanding them in contrast to other objects. Moods express themselves as a dimension of our experience, and not as an experienced object, because our experience of the world is always already in a mood, and what moods are can only be grasped from “inside” the mood.

Another way of putting this is that moods are part of the background or horizon of human experience, different from the cognitive schema or categories by which a subject structures its reality. Moods are pre-reflective or pre-subjective; the subject is already inside and affected by a horizon of moods when it applies its categories or schemas. “Mood has always already disclosed being-in-the-world as a whole and first makes possible directing oneself toward something” (Heidegger, 1996:129). The mood we are in shows us what meaning reality has for us and the meaning of the situation in which we find ourselves.

Since moods are fundamental in the sense of being *existentials*, they affect *all* human practice, not only the subjective aspects, for example emotional dimensions. That is, moods are more than “fleeting experiences that ‘color’ one’s whole ‘psychic’ condition” (Heidegger, 1996:313). Moods express an existential dimension of human existence; this is ontological, not ontic. “In attunement lies existentially a disclosive submission to world out of which things that matter to us can be encountered. Indeed, in principle we must *ontologically* leave the primary discovery of the world to ‘mere mood’” (Heidegger, 1996:129–130). Thus, moods affect all aspects of how human beings experience reality. If we are in a bad mood, we do not only feel the emotion of anger, but we also experience the car as lousy, our work as boring and other people as incompetent. Even apparently “emotionless” activities, such as theoretical studies, are tuned in to a mood, a mood characterized by calmness and tranquility (Heidegger, 1996:130). Consequently, moods structure all our intentional orientation towards reality on a fundamental level. “The fact that moods can be spoiled and change only means that *Dasein* is always already in a mood” (Heidegger, 1996:126).

## The emotional dimensions of moods

Although moods are not reducible to emotions, there is an important connection between these phenomena. Emotions are *one* aspect of how the mood, as an existential background, shows itself concretely. Because

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1 Dasein means literary “being there” and is Heidegger’s term for the experience of being, the mode of existence, that is peculiar to human beings.

human existence is always attuned to or in a mood, emotional or affective responses to reality may arise.

And only because the “senses” belong ontologically to a being which has the kind of being attuned to being-in-the-world, can they be “touched” and “have sense” for something so that what touches them shows itself in an affect (Heidegger, 1996:129).

Moods are the background that make emotions as conscious, cognitive objects, “visible”. When Heidegger connects emotions or affects with moods, he revalues the role of emotions in human life. Emotions can no longer be regarded as *only* the subjective coloring of the objective situation that humans are a part of (Heidegger, 1996:313). Heidegger’s point would be that there is no “objective” situation independent of the mood. The “objective” is always already influenced by mood, for example, fear. Furthermore, our subjective, emotional responses are affected by mood. This means that emotions are more than only subjective or psychic reactions. Even though they are based on the subject, emotions arise on the basis of the existential mood of the situation.

At this point it is possible to give a brief sketch of how Heidegger’s concepts relate to leadership in crisis situations. As described in the introductory example, a crisis manifests itself among other things in emotional responses, like fear or insecurity. The relation between emotions and moods implies that such situations also have an existential dimension. As a leader, to respond adequately to a crisis, it is not enough to only address psychological and emotional responses. Leadership is also about understanding and influencing the mood of the situation. Moving into the social dimension of mood may bring us closer to the question of how leaders may be able to change mood during crisis situations.

## The social dimension of moods

To see more clearly the link between leadership and mood as an existential phenomenon, the concept must be put into more concrete terms. As Dreyfus relates, Heidegger discusses moods in a more concrete social context in one of his 1929 lectures:

A – as we say – a well-disposed person brings a good mood to a group. In this case does he produce in himself a psychic experience in order then to transfer it to the others [...]? Or another person is in a group that in its manner of being dampens and depresses everything; no one is outgoing. What do we learn from this? Moods are not accompanying phenomena; rather, they are the sort of thing that determines being-with-one-another in advance. It seems as if, so to speak, a mood is in each case already there, like an atmosphere, in which we are steeped and by which we are thoroughly determined. It not only seems as if this were so, it does so” (Heidegger in Dreyfus, 1991:171).

Two points are important here. Firstly, the constitution of a group must be understood according to the concept of mood. A group does not only consist of the members’ shared cognitive understanding or their emotional identification with each other. Heidegger sees mood as primary in that it constitutes the horizon for the group members’ interaction. We do not first understand ourselves as members of a group, whereupon this participation is “colorized” by subjective feelings or moods. The mood or the atmosphere constitute the background where the quality or dynamics of the group interaction are played out. The mood shapes the members’ being-with-one-another – their coherence or harmony. In other words, moods are fundamental for understanding and managing group interaction.

Secondly, Heidegger’s point is that a well-disposed person, a person of *character*, may influence the mood or atmosphere of the group and its interaction. This would be an important way of exercising *leadership*. During crises, for example, a group’s interactions may be challenged and result in a bad mood or atmosphere; there might be disharmony. Although Heidegger understands moods as a non-thematized horizon, it is still possible to master and influence moods (Heidegger, 1996:128).

## Rhetoric: The possibility of changing mood

In traditional, psychological theories of leadership, an important aspect is to create motivation by influencing the group members’ emotions. Heidegger’s theory opens up an alternative existential approach to leadership: Leadership is about mastering the mood of the group. Moods are

neither emotions nor cognitive-psychological objects, and therefore transcend the psychological domain. According to Heidegger, a framework that adequately conceptualizes how the mastering of moods is possible can be found in Aristotle's *rhetoric*.

## Rhetoric

Heidegger perceives rhetoric as a description of social practice and social relations, namely as “the first systematic hermeneutics of the everydayness of being-with-another” (Heidegger, 1996:130). Social practices are embedded in moods; thus, Aristotle's rhetoric provides guidelines for how social moods can be influenced and changed.

An important premise for the mastering of moods is that it is impossible to remove or create moods analogous to emotions. A mood is always already there, and only its quality can be altered: “[W]e never master a mood by being freed of a mood, but always through a counter mood” (Heidegger, 1996:128). To lead the mood in the desired direction, the speaker must first have a sense of the specific mood of a group: “The speaker speaks to it [the mood] and from it. He needs the understanding of the possibility of mood in order to arouse and direct it in the right way” (Heidegger, 1996:130). Thus, there are no objective, consistently effective techniques for changing moods. Leadership is about sensing the group's specific mood and changing its quality.

As mentioned above, the mastering of moods refers to the speaker's character or disposition: “The well-disposed person brings a good mood to a group” (Heidegger in Dreyfus, 1991:171). Aristotle's classic model has three elements of rhetoric: ethos, logos and pathos, where ethos reflects the speaker's character. Through ethos, the speakers disclose their own authority and appear with their values and attitudes. Aristotle describes this as follows:

Persuasion is achieved by the speaker's personal character when the speech is so spoken as to make us think him credible. We believe good men more fully and more readily than others: this is true generally whatever the question is, and absolutely true where exact certainty is impossible and options are divided (Aristotle, 2004:7).

Thus, ethos is fundamentally important for credibility. Just think of the “I Have a Dream” speech by Martin Luther King Jr. It is a good example of the speaker’s character and values and also appears to be highly authentic.

Logos appeals to reason and logical reasoning. It is about transforming the audience from believing one thing to believing another by taking them through a number of reasonable steps. The speakers can use formal arguments, where two terms mean that the argument is true: “syllogism”, the use of reason in a somewhat easier and more flexible way, and “enthymeme”, the use of examples. The latter is an inductive approach, a type of argument that is based on the claim that what is true in one situation also applies to other situations (Keith & Lundberg, 2008).

Pathos is displayed through passion and empathy, where the speaker turns to the listeners and tries to influence their emotions. The case may require the speaker to mobilize the listeners’ sense of anger, peace, fear, shame or kindness. There is a difference between leaving the audience feeling anger or kindness in relation to a counterpart (Aristotle, 2004).

Thus, rhetoric is something more than a blog, YouTube or TED Talks, for instance. The art of speech, in line with upgrading the mood to something existential for the human being, can be upgraded to an opportunity to change the mood, which can bring us even closer to the leader’s opportunity to change the mood during a crisis situation.

## Changing mood

To a large degree, rhetoric is a matter of the speaker’s ability to communicate. The theoretical approach might be the traditional communication model, a linear model with a transmitter and receiver and a message to be transferred. This communication model appears problematic because the reality is that both parties are cooperating in the process (Bakhtin, 1986). The receiver works actively throughout the listening period to prepare his response, while the speaker adjusts his utterances and also considers his opposite’s anticipated response. It is therefore impossible to separate the parties; the two parties will be in contact with each other, influence each other and develop new opinions that neither of the parties had before the dialogue.

Rhetoric must be understood collectively, not as changing the participants' cognitive understanding or feelings, but as having a sense of the mood of a group and meeting in a mood. Only then can he speak into the mood, and by being attuned, also change the group's mood. If one continues with the three classic elements of rhetoric, logos, pathos and ethos, the latter might stand out as the most important factor. As ethos is about being a well-disposed person and person of character, we will now address the pedagogical perspective.

## **Pedagogy: The process towards being attuned**

The Royal Norwegian Air Force Academy has based its pedagogy on the concept of learning from experience (Dewey, 1961; Luftforsvarsstaben [AirForceStaff], 1995), where there are three important processes: theory, practical training and reflection (Firing & Laberg, 2010). This pedagogy has given birth to the crisis situation and the coach's speech presented at the beginning of this text. We were inspired by the man who gave his speech, as we have been inspired by Martin Luther King Jr. They have succeeded in growing through their experiences and were well-trained for interaction.

The Chief-of-Defense expects leaders to be good role models and holds that excellent leadership should be expressed through (1) Mission Focus, (2) Interaction, and (3) Development (Sunde, 2012). Interaction-oriented behavior means improving relationships, increasing motivation, developing trust and encouraging cohesion. Inspired by the pedagogy as it unfolds at the Academy (Firing & Laberg, 2010) and by music, we will elaborate on the development of interaction skills through three processes: (1) Instrument, (2) Voice, and (3) Being Attuned.

## **Instrument**

As leaders, the most important instrument we have is ourselves. The question, then, is how should we tune our "instrument"? Authentic leadership begins with awareness of who we are, which means that leadership emanates from the resources within the leader himself (Avolio &

Gardner, 2005). Leadership development involves becoming aware of oneself, one's own thoughts and feelings, and one's own IQ and EQ. We may start with the sharing of "life history" and "trigger events" in smaller groups, where we seek awareness of how the individual's life story gives meaning to the person's thoughts, feelings and behavior in the present. Furthermore, we conduct psychological tests that indicate which "notes" we have. The cadets write a leader's logbook throughout the process, a written record of what has happened but also how this was experienced and which subjects were disclosed to the individual. The intention behind all this is to increase self-awareness of who one is – one's ethos. We focus on behavior, cognition and emotion. The leaders disclose more and more of their "instrument".

## Voice

As leaders, it is not enough to have a tuned instrument; you also have to use your voice in communication with the other. In interpersonal interaction, the voice encompasses both the formulation of words, that express what you wish to communicate, and the voice timbre, which shows the emotional state the person is in. Thinking and emotion are expressed through what we say and how it sounds vocally. In some ways, the voice is a signature of who we are. The voice may be the carrier of who you are, the actual identity of yourself, in relation to "the other". Having found his voice, the leader continues the process of tuning the instrument.

In leadership development, it is important to use others to broaden our knowledge about ourselves. This is why the practice of feedback, which involves both giving it to others and being able to receive it, is essential. Many of the experiences here are related to awareness of behavior that others experience but have not been aware of themselves. Hence, we argue that feedback is like a gift, giving valuable insight about ourselves from others' perspectives, if we dare to be open to it.

The practice of the processes described above – recounting "life history" and "triggering events", writing the leader's logbook and participating in the process of giving and receiving feedback – all takes place within the group. This gives cadets a lot of experience in listening to others, seeing

others' perspectives and empathizing. The way we work here ensures that we move further from thoughts and feelings to practicing relations and interactions with "the other". This points to the process of being attuned, which is something that may be the core quality for leaders if they are to change mood during crisis situations.

## Being attuned

Tuning our instrument and discovering our own voice means becoming aware of ourselves, our own thoughts and feelings and our own Intellectual Quotient (IQ) and Emotional Quotient (EQ) (Goleman, 2006a). Furthermore, we should tune our instrument according to experiences with relationships and interactions. Tuning our instruments based on such experiences makes us attuned to "the other"; we are developing our Social Quotient (SQ) (Goleman, 2006b).

What does it mean to be attuned? From our instrument, we can use our voice – both words and voice timbre, thoughts and emotions – in relationship to "the other". The counterparts must see each other. Kierkegaard put this best, perhaps, when he said, "If one is truly to succeed in leading a person to a specific place, one must first and foremost take care to find him where he is and begin there" (Kierkegaard, 1859). Thus, we must see the "other" where he is.

We may also understand the concept of being attuned through the term "mentalization". This concept points to the process of seeing "the other" from within and oneself from the outside (Fonagy, Gergely, Jurist & Target, 2002). This ability must be practiced. We must practice such skills as listening, querying and empathizing, to gain experience about how this affects our mentalization ability. The practiced skills will become an integrated part of our leader behavior. This ability provides a good foundation for being attuned to "the other".

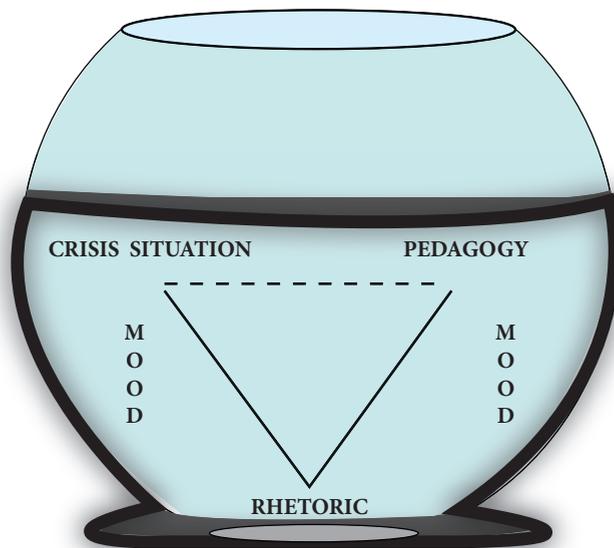
It is in the attuned mode, on the interpersonal level, that mood exists and can be changed. At this level, the individuals will then be affected and changed. Vygotsky points this out through the law of cultural development (Vygotsky, 1978:57). People internalize knowledge from the social context they are participating in. The social mood will be the starting

point from which the individual experiences the mood and the change of mood.

The nature of the mood can be the difference between unhealthy and healthy conflicts, and the difference between distrust and trust. There are examples of how human error and bad relationships have been the cause of accidents in operations. Conversely, we have experienced a mood characterized by flow, companionship and harmony. The difference is enormous.

## A conceptual model of changing mood

Starting with a crisis situation, we have seen how participants may be victims of the mood. Through exploring the concept of “mood”, our aim has been to contribute to the development of new interaction theory and discover the possibility of changing the mood and establishing harmony, both in crises and in our daily lives. For this reason, we have developed a model (Figure 5.1) that integrates the crisis situation, pedagogy and rhetoric with mood.



**Figure 5.1** A conceptual model of changing mood.

The model sees mood as an existential dimension of humans, just as the water would be to a fish swimming in a fishbowl. We have kept the water in the model, seeing mood as a dimension that envelops human existence. However, instead of the fish, we have included such human elements as crisis situation, pedagogy and rhetoric. We propose the following connections:

- 1) The crisis situation unfolds in many dimensions, where one of them is mood.
- 2) Pedagogy is the process of developing a well-disposed person; however, this person cannot reach into the situation directly (dotted line).
- 3) Rhetoric mirrors an opportunity for the well-disposed person to speak into the situation (solid line).
- 4) Mood's connections to the elements give rise to a paradox: all these processes take place within a mood, at the same time as it changes and can be changed by mood.

Through the elements and the indirect and direct connections, the model offers opportunities to change mood. This gives the model both theoretical and practical implications beyond the military exercises that were the point of departure for this text. However, we should not think for one moment that leaders can change mood by simply following a model. This can only be done through the art of speaking, an art that enables leaders to establish harmony and get their troops ready for further operations. Perhaps we can be inspired by the young man who taught us a lesson about human interaction, who turned grief and despair into gratitude and love.

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